



# Longfield Solar Farm

Consultation Report EN010118

EN010118/APP/5.1(A)

Revision 2: August 2022

Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd

Section 37(3)(c)  
Planning Act 2008

Regulation 5(2)(q)  
Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure)  
Regulations 2009

Quality information

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## List of abbreviations

Term	Abbreviation
Above Ground Level	AGL
Agricultural Land Classification	ALC
Applications Prescribed Forms and Procedure	APFP
Air Quality Management Areas	AQMAs
Alternative Sites Assessment	ASA
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	AONB
'As Low As Reasonably Practicable'	ALARP
Balance of Solar Systems	BoSS
Basic Noise Level	BNL
Battery Energy Storage System	BESS

Battery Safety Management Plan	BSMP
Best and Most Versatile	BMV
Best Practicable Means	BPM
Biodiversity Action Plan	BAP
Biodiversity Net Gain	BNG
Braintree District Council	BDC
British Standard	BS
Campaign to Protect Rural England	CPRE
Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management	CIEEM
Chelmsford City Council	CCC
Chelmsford North East Bypass	CNEB
Combined Cycle Gas Turbines	CCGT
Community Benefit Fund	CBF
Construction Environmental Management Plan	CEMP
Community Liaison Group	CLG
Construction Resource Management Plan	CRMP
Construction Traffic Management Plan	CTMP
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design	CPTED
Critical Drainage Area	CDA
Decibels	dB
Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan	DEMP
Decommissioning Resource Management Plan	DRMP
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	BEIS
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	DEFRA
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	DLUHC
Department of Energy and Climate Change	DECC
Development Consent Order	DCO
Direct Current	DC
District Level Licensing	DDL

Electromagnetic Field	EMF
Environmental Impact Assessment	EIA
Environment Agency	EA
Environmental Statement	ES
Essex County Council	ECC
Essex Local Access Forum	ELAF
European Protected Species	EPS
European Union	EU
Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan	FCTMP
Full Time Employment	FTE
Geographical Information System	GIS
Great Britain	GB
Great Crested Newt	GCN
Greenhouse Gas	GHG
Gross Value Added	GVA
Ground Investigations	GI
Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	GLVIA
Habitat Regulations Assessment	HRA
Hectares	Ha
Health and Safety Executive	HSE
Heavy Duty Vehicles	HDV
Heavy Goods Vehicles	HGVs
High Voltage	HV
Historical Environmental Record	HER
Homes and Communities Agency	HCA
Horizontal Directional Drilling	HDD
Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009	APFP Regulations
Institute of Air Quality Management	IAQM
Interim Advice Note	IAN
Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles	JESIP
Joint Nature Conservation Committee	JNCC
Kilovolt	kV
Kilometres	Km
A-weighted, sound level exceeded for 10% of the measurement period.	LA10



A-weighted, sound level exceeded for 90% of the measurement period.

L<sub>A90</sub>

A-weighted, equivalent sound level over the measurement period.

L<sub>Aeq</sub>

A-weighted, maximum sound level over the measurement period, measured on 'fast' response

L<sub>AFmax</sub>

Local Air Quality Management

LAQM

Landscape Character Area

LCA

Landscape Character Type

LCT

Landscape Environment Management Plan

LEMP

Landscape Visual Impact Assessment

LVIA

Lead Local Flood Authority

LLFA

Light detection and ranging

LiDAR

Local Geological Sites

LGS

Local Landscape Character Areas

LLCA

Local Wildlife Site

LoWS

Lowest Observable Adverse Effect Level

LOAEL

Mineral Infrastructure Impact Assessment

MIIA

Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government

MHCLG

National Character Area

NCA

National electricity transmission system

NETS

Natural Flood Management

NFM

National Infrastructure Commission

NIC

National Grid Electricity System Operator

NGESO

National Nature Reserve

NNR

National Planning Policy Framework

NPPF

National Planning Policy Guidance

NPPG

National Policy Statement

NPS

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project

NSIP

Natural England

NE

Noise Impact Assessment

NIA

Non Motorised Users	NMUs
Non Technical Summary	NTS
No Observed Effect Level	NOEL
Office for National Statistics	ONS
Ordnance Survey	OS
Outline Battery Safety Management Plan	OBSMP
Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan	CEMP
Outline Environmental Management Plan	OEMP
Outline Design Principles	ODP
Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan	OLEMP
Overhead Lines	OHL
Parish Council	PC
Photovoltaic	PV
Planning Act 2008	PA 2008
Planning Inspectorate	PINS
Planning Policy Statement	PPS
Point of Connection	POC
Preliminary Environmental Information Report	PEIR
Proposed Development Area	PDA
Public Rights of Way	PROW
Radial Distributor Road	RDR
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	RSPB
Registered Park and Garden	RPG
Representative Viewpoint	RV
Residential Visual Amenity Assessment	RVAA
Right of Way Improvement Plans	ROWIP
Scheduled Monument	SM
Secretary of State	SoS
Section 42	S42
Section 43	S43
Section 44	S44
Section 46	S46
Section 47	S47
Section 48	S48
Secretary of State	SoS
Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level	SOAEL
Site of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI
Soil Resource Management Plan	SRMP

Special Area of Conservation	SAC
Special Protection Area	SPA
Statement of Community Consultation	SoCC
Statement of Common Ground	SoCG
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	SFRA
Strategic Road Network	SRN
Suitably Qualified and Experienced Personnel	SQEP
Supplementary Planning Document	SPD
Sustainable Drainage Strategy	SuDS
Transport Assessment	TA
Tree Protection Order	TPO
Viewpoints	VP
Water Framework Directive	WFD
Written Scheme of Investigation	WSI
Zone of Theoretical Visibility	ZTV

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# 1 Executive summary

- 1.1.1 This Consultation Report relates to the proposed Longfield Solar Energy Farm (the Scheme). The Scheme meets the criteria to be considered as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the PA 2008 and therefore requires a Development Consent Order (DCO).
- 1.1.2 This Consultation Report has been prepared in fulfilment of Section 37(3)(c) of the PA 2008. This requires the DCO application to be accompanied by a consultation report giving details of the matters specified in section 37(7).
- 1.1.3 It explains how the Applicant has complied with the consultation requirements set out in the PA 2008 (as well as the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (APFP Regulations) [REF-1] and Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (EIA Regulations 2017)) [REF-2].
- 1.1.4 Its primary function is to provide evidence to the Planning Inspectorate about the Applicant's compliance with the requirements of the pre-application procedure and to demonstrate to people who responded to the consultation how regard has been had to their responses.
- 1.1.5 The Applicant has conducted extensive pre-application consultation in preparing its DCO application across a period of around two years. This included early engagement with stakeholders and the community to introduce the Scheme, a period of non-statutory consultation, a period of statutory consultation intended to meet the requirements set by PA 2008, and targeted statutory consultation in relation to changes made to the Scheme prior to the submission of a DCO application.
- 1.1.6 Consultation on the Scheme took place in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic. In common with the rest of the country and reflecting guidance provided by the Government, the Applicant worked in a flexible and proactive way to deliver consultation which allowed people from across the community to respond. This included significant voluntary activity over and above the consultation methods set out in the Applicant's Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC).
- 1.1.7 **Chapter 2** of this report sets out the purpose of the document, summarises the context for the consultation and provides an overview of the different stages of consultation which the Applicant carried out.
- 1.1.8 **Chapter 3** summarises non-statutory consultation carried out by the Applicant in relation to the Scheme. This includes early engagement (set out in section 3.2), a period of non-statutory consultation from 2 November 2020 to 14 December 2020 (set out in sections 3.3-3.5) and engagement carried out by the Applicant following the non-statutory consultation and prior to statutory consultation (set out in section 3.6). It should be read alongside **Appendices A-1 to A-3**.
- 1.1.9 **Chapter 4** confirms that the Scheme is EIA development as defined by the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2] and that the Applicant sought a scoping opinion from the Secretary of State as a result. It should be read alongside **Appendix B-1**.

- 1.1.10 **Chapter 5** sets out the process through which the Applicant developed its SoCC. This includes the identification of local authorities under s43(1) of the PA 2008 (section 5.2), how the Applicant developed the SoCC including through early engagement with the local authorities under s43(1) of the PA 2008 (section 5.3), the contents of the draft SoCC (section 5.4), how the Applicant consulted on the draft SoCC (section 5.5), details of local authority responses to the draft SoCC (section 5.6), the regard had by the Applicant to the responses (section 5.7), and details of the publication of the SoCC. It should be read alongside **Appendices C-1 to D-1**.
- 1.1.11 This report demonstrates that the Applicant has undertaken a consultation process which complies with the MHCLG guidance on the pre-application process (March 2015) [REF-3], as well as relevant advice from the Planning Inspectorate.
- 1.1.12 **Chapter 6** reports on consultation carried out by the Applicant in fulfilment of statutory requirements over the period from 1 June 2021 to 13 July 2021. This includes an overview of the statutory consultation (section 6.1), consultation under s42 of PA 2008 (section 6.2), the notification of PINs under s46 of PA 2008 (section 6.3), consultation with the local community in accordance with the SoCC as prescribed by s47(7) of PA 2008 (section 6.4), and publicity under s48 of PA 2008 (section 6.5). This chapter also summarises supplementary community consultation which the Applicant conducted in the statutory consultation period, over and above that prescribed by the SoCC (section 6.6). It should be read alongside **Appendices D-2 – I-1**.
- 1.1.13 **Chapter 7** sets out responses to the statutory consultation and summarises the regard had to them by the Applicant. This includes responses from consultees under s42(1)(a) and (b) of PA 2008 (section 7.2), s47 of PA 2008 (section 7.3) and s42.1(d) of PA 2008 (7.5). As none of the consultees who responded identified themselves as specifically responding to the s48 notice and given those required to receive the s48 notice are the same consultees as prescribed by s42(1)(a) and (b), those consultees are dealt with together in section 7.2. This chapter should be read alongside **Appendices J-1 and J-2**.
- 1.1.14 **Chapter 8** details engagement conducted by the Applicant following the statutory consultation and prior to the submission of the DCO application. This includes engagement with stakeholders following statutory consultation (section 8.2) as well as targeted statutory consultation held between 26 October 2021 and 23 November 2021 and 11 January 2022 and 8 February 2022 in relation to proposed changes to the Order limits (section 8.3). It should be read alongside **Appendices K-1 to K-2**.
- 1.1.15 **Chapter 9** concludes by providing an overview of how the Scheme's design has evolved in response to consultation feedback (section 9.1) and finally confirming the Applicant's compliance with requirements and guidance for consultation (section 9.2). It should be read alongside **Appendices M-1 to M-2**.
- 1.1.16 The Applicant considers that it has complied with MHCLG guidance on the pre-application process (March 2015) [REF-3] and the Planning Inspectorate's Advice note fourteen: Compiling the Consultation Report [REF-4]. Detailed information on compliance with this guidance is included in **Appendices M-1 and M-2**.
- 1.1.17 The Applicant considers that it has met the statutory requirements of the pre-application process. As set out in section 2.3, the Applicant has undertaken a programme of non-statutory and statutory consultation.
- 1.1.18 At each stage, the Applicant has considered and complied with relevant advice and guidance. The information included in **Appendices M-1 and M-2** supports this through direct reference to MHCLG's and the Planning Inspectorate's guidance and advice on the pre-application process.
- 1.1.19 As well as preparing this report, the Applicant has set out how it has complied with guidance and advice on consultation in the **s55 checklist [EN010118/APP/1.4]** that is also part of the DCO application documents.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Purpose of document

- 2.1.1 This Consultation Report relates to the proposed Longfield Solar Energy Farm (the Scheme). In seeking the legal powers to construct and operate the Scheme, Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd (the Applicant) is making an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to the Secretary of State. Section 37(3)(c) of the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008) requires the DCO application to be accompanied by a consultation report giving details of the matters specified in section 37(7).
- 2.1.2 Section 37(7) defines the Consultation Report as a document giving details of:
- what has been done at the pre-application stage in compliance with section 42 (duty to consult prescribed consultees, local authorities and persons who fall within one or more of the categories listed in section 44), section 47 (duty to consult the local community), section 48 (duty to publicise) in relation to a proposed application that has become the application;
  - any relevant responses, as defined in section 49 of the Act; and,
  - the account taken of any relevant responses.
- 2.1.3 This Consultation Report has been prepared in accordance with these requirements.
- 2.1.4 The Scheme meets the criteria to be considered as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the PA 2008. The Scheme is a 'generating station' Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under section 15(2) of the PA 2008 (as amended) as it is a proposed generating station which would be within England, does not generate electricity from wind, would not be offshore, and would have a total generating capacity of more than 50MW.
- 2.1.5 The Applicant recognises the importance of consulting on the proposed development at an early stage in its development, and the benefits this can bring in terms of delivering an improved scheme. This Consultation Report explains how the Applicant has complied with the consultation requirements set out in the PA 2008 (as well as the APFP Regulations [REF-1] and the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2]).
- 2.1.6 Its primary function is to provide evidence to the Planning Inspectorate about the Applicant's compliance with the requirements of the pre-application procedure.
- 2.1.7 As stated in MHCLG pre-application guidance (2015) [REF-3], the Consultation Report should:
- “provide a general description of the consultation process undertaken, which can helpfully include a timeline;*
  - set out specifically what the applicant has done in compliance with the requirements of the Planning Act, relevant secondary legislation, this guidance, and any relevant policies, guidance or advice published by Government or the Inspectorate;*
  - set out how the applicant has taken account of any response to consultation with local authorities on what should be in the applicant's statement of community consultation;*
  - set out a summary of relevant responses to consultation (but not a complete list of responses);*

*provide a description of how the application was informed and influenced by those responses, outlining any changes made as a result and showing how significant relevant responses will be addressed;*

*provide an explanation as to why responses advising on major changes to a project were not followed, including advice from statutory consultees on impacts;*

*where the applicant has not followed the advice of the local authority or not complied with the guidance or any relevant Advice Note published by the Inspectorate, provide an explanation for the action taken or not taken; and*

*be expressed in terms sufficient to enable the Secretary of State to understand fully how the consultation process has been undertaken and significant effects addressed. However, it need not include full technical explanations of these matters”.*

## 2.2 Consultation context

- 2.2.1 The Scheme is located within the local authority areas of Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council.
- 2.2.2 Parts of the Scheme are located in the parishes of Boreham, Fairstead, Great and Little Leighs, Hatfield Peverel, Little Waltham and Terling in Essex.
- 2.2.3 Of these, Hatfield Peverel (population 4,251) Boreham (population 3,617) and Great and Little Leighs (population 2,806) are the largest. These were the only parishes that included part of the Scheme that had a population greater than 1,000 according to recent estimates by the Office for National Statistics [REF-5].
- 2.2.4 The context for the Scheme is predominantly rural.
- 2.2.5 The Scheme would be located on farmland north east of Chelmsford, and north of the A12 between Boreham and Hatfield Peverel, covering an area of approximately 459 hectares (ha). The Scheme will be located within the 'Order limits' (the land shown on the **Works Plan [EN010118/APP/2.2]** within which the Scheme can be carried out). The area subject to the Application comprises the Solar Farm Site, the Grid Connection Route, and the Bulls Lodge Substation Site.
- 2.2.6 The Applicant identified seldom heard audiences in the area as including those without internet access, young people aged between 11 and 19, older people aged over 65, Gypsies and Travellers, the time poor, the economically challenged, ethnic minorities, and LGBT+ people.
- 2.2.7 The statutory consultation period coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that consultation was carried out in a manner consistent with Government requirements for social distancing. Further detail is set out in chapter 6 of this report.

## 2.3 Summary of consultation activities

- 2.3.1 **Table 2-1** provides a summary of consultation activities, including non-statutory consultation, ongoing engagement following the non-statutory consultation, and statutory consultation.

**Table 2-1 Summary of consultation activities**

<b>Consultation Activity Undertaken:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Chapter of Report:</b>
<b>Non-statutory consultation:</b>		
Early engagement with local authorities and statutory consultees (Section 3.2)	September – October 2020	Chapter 3
Non-statutory public consultation (Sections 3.3 – 3.5)	2 November 2020 to 14 December 2020	
Ongoing stakeholder engagement to inform design development (Section 3.6)	December 2020 – May 2021	
<b>Development of SoCC:</b>		
Consultation of host local authorities on the SoCC as prescribed by s47(3) of the PA 2008 (Section 5.3)	10 March 2021 to 9 April 2021	Chapter 5
Notice of availability of SoCC in the vicinity of the proposal as prescribed by s47(6) of the PA 2008 (Section 5.4)	27 May 2021	
<b>Statutory consultation:</b>		
Proposed application publicised as prescribed by s48 of the PA 2008 (Section 6.6)	27 May 2021 and 1 June 2021	Chapter 6
Notification of the Inspectorate of proposed application as prescribed by s46 of the PA 2008 (Section 6.4)	31 May 2021	
SoCC made available in the vicinity of the proposal as prescribed by s47(6) of the PA 2008 (Section 6.2)	1 June 2021 to 13 July 2021	
Consultation as prescribed under s42 of the PA 2008 (Section 6.3)	1 June 2021 to 13 July 2021	



Consultation in accordance with the SoCC as prescribed under s47(7) of the PA 2008 (Section 6.5) 1 June 2021 to 13 July 2021

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**Further engagement after statutory consultation:**

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Ongoing non-statutory engagement prior to submission of DCO application (Section 8.2)	July 2021 – February 2022	Chapter 8
Targeted statutory consultation on changes to Order limits (Section 8.3)	26 October 2021 to 23 November 2021	Chapter 8
Repeat of targeted statutory consultation on changes to Order limits (Section 8.3)	11 January 2022 to 8 February 2022	Chapter 8

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## 2.4 Covering letter and completed section 55 checklist

- 2.4.1 A covering letter and completed **s55 checklist** is submitted within the application documents **[EN010118/APP/1.4]**.
- 2.4.2 The completed s55 checklist provides evidence of compliance with the pre-application consultation requirements within the PA 2008, APFP Regulations [REF-1], EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2], and the MHCLG pre-application guidance [REF-3].

## 3 Non-statutory consultation

### 3.1 Overview of non-statutory consultation

- 3.1.1 The Applicant conducted consultation outside of the statutory consultation period. This included a period of non-statutory consultation on the Scheme between 2 November 2020 and 14 December 2020.
- 3.1.2 The purpose of this period of non-statutory consultation was to inform the design development, the process of environmental impact assessment and environmental receptors and other sensitivities, by gathering feedback from consultees on the Scheme and our environmental impact assessment at an early stage in the design process.
- 3.1.3 This chapter sets out the consultation and engagement activity conducted by the Applicant outside of the period of statutory consultation.

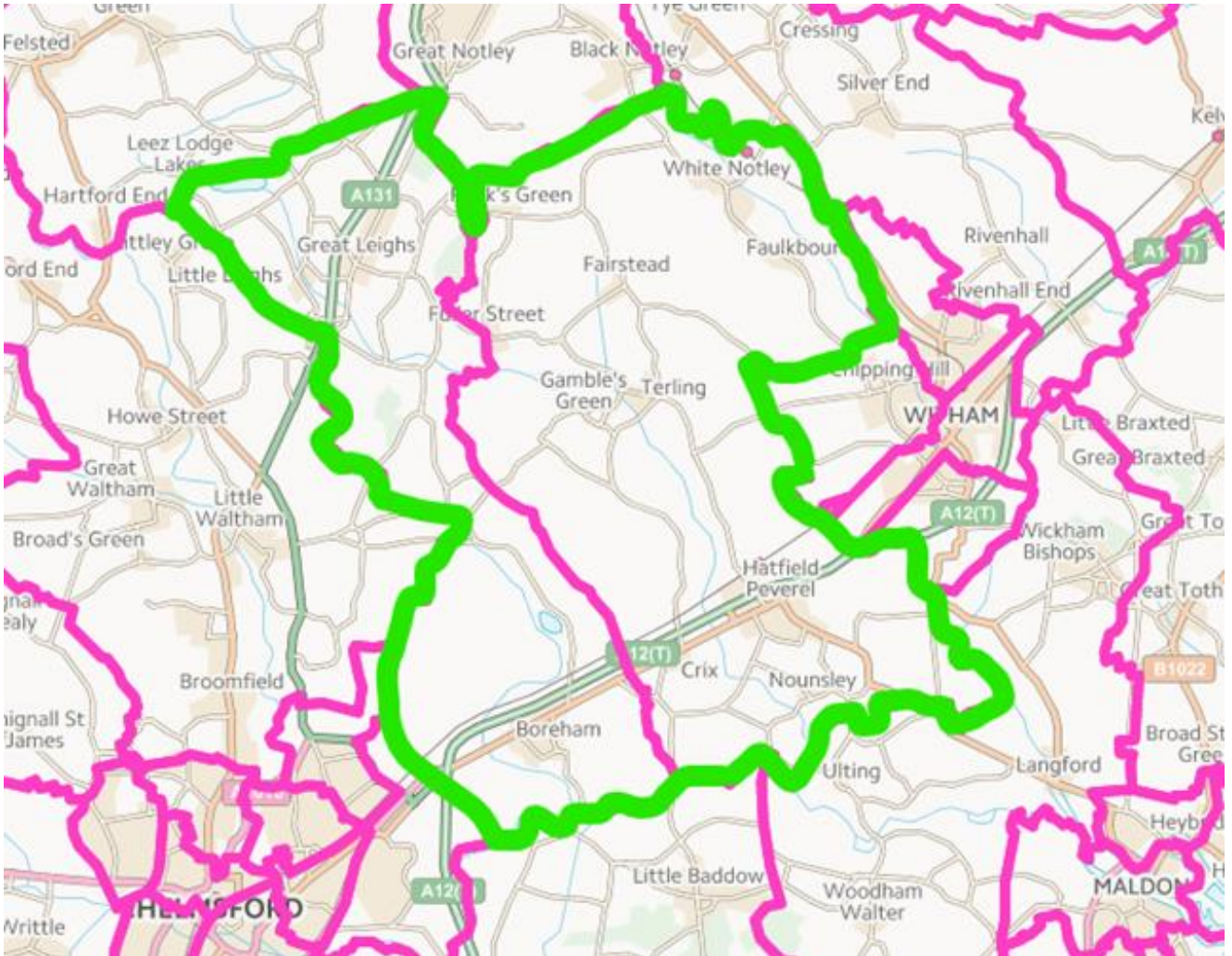
### 3.2 Early engagement

- 3.2.1 Prior to the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant engaged with host authorities, relevant statutory consultees, and other stakeholders to introduce the Scheme, seek early feedback, and develop the scope and methodology for the non-statutory consultation. Details of these meetings are set out in **Table 3-1**.

**Table 3-1 Summary of early engagement**

Stakeholders met:	Date:	Topics discussed:
Chelmsford City Council	3 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of the Applicant</li> <li>• Introduction to the Scheme</li> </ul>
Essex County Council	9 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning process and timetable</li> <li>• Environmental surveys</li> </ul>
Chelmsford City Council – member briefing	21 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation</li> </ul>
Braintree District Council	24 September 2020	
Hatfield Peverel Parish Council	13 October 2020	
Terling and Fairstead Parish Council	22 October 2020	

- 3.2.2 The initial engagement set out in **Table 3-1** informed the early development of Scheme, the approach taken by the Applicant to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping and approach taken to the non-statutory consultation set out in this chapter.
- 3.2.3 The Applicant also introduced the Scheme to the local community prior to the commencement of the non-statutory consultation. This involved issuing an introductory leaflet to all addresses within the area shown in **Figure 3-1** on 23 September 2020 and launching a website [**Appendix L-1**].



**Figure 3-1: Distribution area for introductory leaflet**

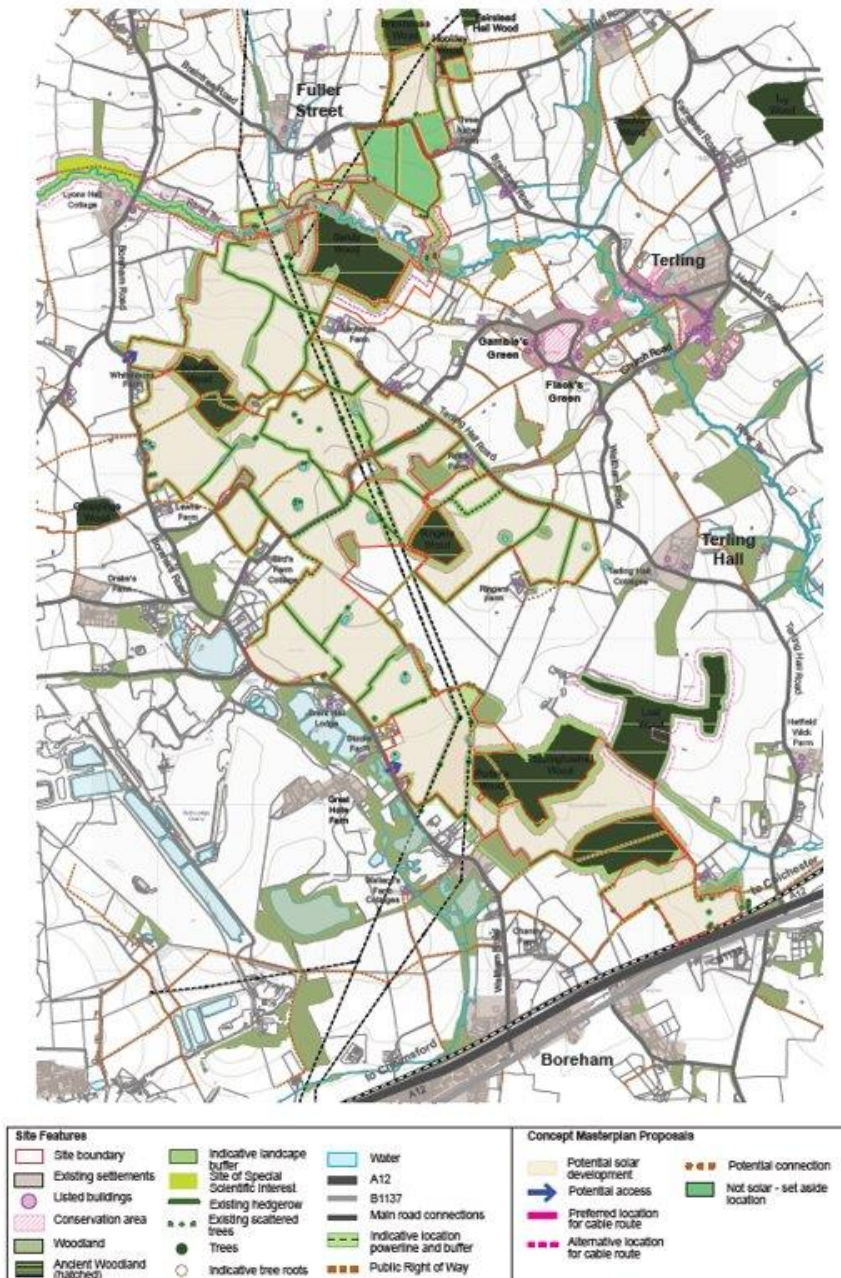
- 3.2.4 The area comprised the two district-level local authority wards which include part of the Scheme – Boreham and the Leas at Chelmsford City Council and Hatfield Peverel and Terling at Braintree District Council. A copy of the leaflet is included in **Appendix A-1**. The purpose of contact with the local community at this stage was to introduce the Scheme and raise awareness of the upcoming non-statutory consultation.
- 3.2.5 The Applicant contacted elected representatives for the area included in **Figure 3-1** to share a copy of the leaflet. This included members of Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council, Terling and Fairstead Parish Council, Hatfield Peverel Parish Council, Boreham Parish Council, Great and Little Leighs Parish Council, and also Priti Patel MP and Kemi Badenoch MP.
- 3.2.6 The Applicant also offered to brief Parish Councils, either in advance of the start of the non-statutory consultation or during the non-statutory consultation. As set out in **Table 3-1** and **Table 3-2**, meetings with Terling and Fairstead Parish Council and Hatfield Peverel Parish Council took place prior to the start of non-statutory consultation and a meeting with Boreham Parish Council took place during the non-statutory consultation.
- 3.2.7 The host authorities for the Scheme are identified as Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council. The Scheme is also within the boundaries of the parishes of Boreham, Fairstead, Great and Little Leighs, Hatfield Peverel, Little Waltham and Terling.
- 3.2.8 The Applicant also wrote directly to 36 addresses in the immediate vicinity of the site to offering to meet to discuss the Scheme on 19 October 2020, meeting with the residents of 13 properties as a result. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce the Scheme and begin to understand potential impacts from development on properties close to the site. **Appendix A-2** includes a list of addresses contacted and the letter sent to them.

### 3.3 Scope of the non-statutory consultation

- 3.3.1 The Applicant conducted a period of non-statutory consultation between 2 November 2020 and 14 December 2020.
- 3.3.2 As part of the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant presented information on:
- the background to the Scheme;
  - the Applicant;
  - the site proposed for the Scheme;
  - technology to be used in the Scheme;
  - the need for development;
  - initial proposals for development, including the Site Features and Concept Masterplan included at **Figure 3-2**;
  - the environmental impact assessment process and environmental constraints relevant to the Scheme;
  - the planning process for NSIPs;
  - how to take part in the non-statutory consultation; and,
  - the timeline for development.

3.3.3 Through the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant sought consultees' views on:

- its initial proposals for the solar energy generation element of the Scheme, the battery energy storage system (BESS) and the cable route and grid connection;
- the construction and operation of the Scheme;
- the potential to include environmental enhancements in the Scheme;
- the potential for the Scheme to contribute to local employment and skills development;
- any information relevant to the Scheme and/or the local environment; and,
- any information it would be helpful to include in the statutory consultation.



**Figure 3-2: Site Features and Concept Masterplan published for non-statutory consultation**

### 3.4 Non-statutory consultation activity

- 3.4.1 The non-statutory consultation took place during a period of ongoing restrictions on social contact due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The Applicant therefore used a range of measures as part of the non-statutory consultation programme to ensure that the community could access the consultation information and respond.
- 3.4.2 This included directly issuing consultation materials and questionnaires by post, publicising the consultation online and in the local media, holding virtual events, hosting a virtual public exhibition online, offering telephone and online briefings, and accepting responses to the consultation in a variety of formats.
- 3.4.3 The primary audience for the non-statutory consultation was the local community. The Applicant consulted with:
- The host authorities: Essex County Council, Braintree District Council and Chelmsford City Council;
  - Parish councils in the vicinity of the Scheme: Terling and Fairstead Parish Council, Boreham Parish Council, Hatfield Peverel Parish Council, Great and Little Leighs Parish Council and Little Waltham Parish Council;
  - Members of Parliament whose constituencies include part of the Scheme: Kemi Badenoch MP and Priti Patel MP; and,
  - The local community, identified as all residents, businesses, and organisations located in the two district-level local authority wards which include part of the Scheme – Boreham and the Leas at Chelmsford City Council and Hatfield Peverel and Terling at Braintree District Council. This comprised 5,376 addresses and is shown in **Figure 3-1**.
- 3.4.4 The Applicant publicised the consultation by:
- writing to elected representatives, including parish councillors, district councillors, county councillors, and Members of Parliament within the consultation zone shown in **Figure 3-1**;
  - writing to the 5,376 addresses within the consultation zone included in **Figure 3-1** at the start of the consultation period;
  - issuing a press release to media outlets including the Chelmsford Weekly News, Braintree and Witham Times, Essex Chronicle and BBC Essex on 2 November 2020;
  - placing adverts in the Chelmsford Weekly News, Braintree and Witham Times and Essex Chronicle on 2 November 2020;
  - updating the Scheme website [**Appendix L-1**] with details of the consultation; and,
  - a booklet summarising the Scheme and setting out how to respond to the consultation and a questionnaire for responses was made available online at the Scheme website [**Appendix L-1**].

- 3.4.5 The Applicant made a range of means available for consultees to find out more about the Scheme in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic.
- 3.4.6 At the outset of the consultation, the Applicant launched a Scheme website **[Appendix L-1]**. This included a summary of the consultation information, download links for consultation materials, details of how to take part in the consultation and contact details for the Applicant.
- 3.4.7 The Applicant also made a virtual public exhibition available at its website. This presented a summary of the Scheme at that stage and information about how to take part in the consultation.
- 3.4.8 The Applicant published a booklet summarising the Scheme and setting out how to respond to the consultation as part of the consultation. This was sent directly to the consultees identified in 3.4.3 alongside a consultation questionnaire, to ensure they had direct access to the core consultation information and could respond in a convenient manner **[Appendix A-3]**.
- 3.4.9 The Applicant hosted online information webinars during the consultation period. These included a presentation from the Applicant about the Scheme and offered an opportunity to ask questions about the proposals. Details of how to register for the webinars were included in consultation publicity, and recordings were placed on the Scheme website after each webinar.
- 3.4.10 Details of the date and time of each webinar, alongside a recording of the webinar, are set out in **Table 3-2** below.

**Table 3-2: Non-statutory consultation webinars**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
12 November 2020	1830	This recording can be provided on request.
14 November 2020	1400	This recording can be provided on request.

- 3.4.11 The Applicant recognised that some consultees might not be able to make use of the online consultation channels provided as part of the non-statutory consultation. It therefore invited consultees to book telephone meetings to allow a further opportunity for them to ask questions about the Scheme. The Applicant held seven telephone meetings, with individual people, during the consultation period.
- 3.4.12 The Applicant also offered briefings to stakeholders during the consultation period. Details of meetings in the non-statutory consultation period are set out in **Table 3-3**.

**Table 3-3: Stakeholders met during the non-statutory consultation period**

Stakeholders met	Date	Topics discussed
Boreham Parish Council	30 November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of the Applicant</li> <li>• Introduction to the Scheme</li> <li>• Planning process and timetable</li> <li>• Environmental surveys</li> <li>• Consultation</li> </ul>
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	9 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on consultation</li> <li>• Lessons for statutory consultation</li> </ul>

3.4.13 Throughout the consultation, the Applicant maintained several communications channels for enquiries. These included a Freephone number (08000194576), email address and Freepost address (Longfield Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUJJ-AGBY, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE).

3.4.14 All materials published as part of the non-statutory consultation were made available at the Scheme website for the duration of the consultation period. Copies are included in **Appendix A-3**.

### 3.5 Responding to the non-statutory consultation

3.5.1 Respondents to the consultation were invited to complete a consultation questionnaire. This included the following questions:

1. Do you have any comments on our initial proposals for:
  - the solar energy generation element of the scheme?
  - the battery storage element of the scheme?
  - the cable routes and grid connection?
  - the construction and operation of Longfield solar farm?
2. Are there any environmental enhancements you feel could be included as part of the scheme?
3. Do you have any comments on how the scheme could contribute to local employment and skills development?
4. Do you have any information relevant to the scheme and/or local environment which you think we should take into account?
5. Is there anything you would like to know more about at the next round of consultation events?



6. Do you have any further comments?

3.5.2 The consultation questionnaire was sent directly by post to addresses in the area set out in **Figure 3-1** and by email to other consultees. It was also made available at the Scheme website, **Appendix L-1**.

3.5.3 Consultees were able to respond via the consultation website or in writing by email and to Longfield Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUJJ-AGBY, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE).

### 3.6 Outcomes of the non-statutory consultation

3.6.1 Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant analysed all of the responses received by the deadline of 14 December 2020.

3.6.2 Overall, the Applicant received 246 completed questionnaires in response to the non-statutory consultation. The Applicant also received written responses from the following groups and organisations:

- Chelmsford City Council;
- Braintree District Council;
- Boreham Parish Council;
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council;
- Little Waltham Parish Council;
- Anglian Water;
- National Highways;
- Essex Area Ramblers; and,
- Essex Local Access Forum.

3.6.3 Copies of responses from each of these organisations are included in **Appendix A-4**.

3.6.4 **Tables 3-4 to 3-12** summarise responses to each question set out in 2.5.1 received via the non-statutory consultation questionnaires, including the frequency with which key themes were raised.

3.6.5 Overall:

- 191 people responded to question 1.a);
- 182 people responded to question 1.b);
- 164 people responded to question 1.c);
- 181 people responded to question 1.d);
- 179 people responded to question 2;
- 141 people responded to question 3;
- 135 people responded to question 4;
- 147 people responded to question 5; and,
- 137 people responded to question 6.

**Table 3-4: Responses to Question 1 - Do you have any comments on our initial proposals for a) the solar energy generation element of the scheme?**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No comment	36
The scheme is far too large	33
It will destroy prime agricultural land	23
I support this scheme	15
It will have a significant visual impact on the landscape	18
I support renewable energy in principle, but the scheme is in the wrong location	11
Concerned about the effect on wildlife	10
I support renewable energy in principle, but the scheme is too large	9
We need more renewable energy	8
There are plenty of alternative sites such as brownfield or roofs	7

**Table 3-5: Responses to Question 1 - Do you have any comments on our initial proposals for b) the battery storage element of the scheme?**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No comment	45
Concerned about the fire risk	10
The battery storage is too big	9
How big is the battery storage?	8
Is it safe?	7
More information is needed	6
The information provided does not detail the size, height and visual impact of the battery units or how many are planned.	5
Concerned about the proximity of battery storage to residential properties	5
It is a necessary element of the scheme	5

**Table 3-6: Responses to Question 1 - Do you have any comments on our initial proposals for c) the cable routes and grid connection?**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No comment	63
The entire route should be underground	24
This question can't be answered without more information	14
Underground cables would have less visual impact	10
It will destroy the countryside views and landscape	8
I do not support the scheme	8
We have no information about the cable routes and connections	6

**Table 3-7: Responses to Question 1- Do you have any comments on our initial proposals for d) the construction and operation of Longfield solar farm?**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No comment	46
The roads are very narrow and unsuitable for HGVs	17
The scheme is too large	10
The proposed construction will be extremely disruptive	8

I do not support the scheme	7
Concerned about the noise level	7
The number of construction vehicles will place strain on local infrastructure	6

**Table 3-8: Responses to Question 2 - Are there any environmental enhancements you feel could be included as part of the scheme?**

Theme	Frequency
No comment	48
Scale it back significantly	11
The scheme should have wildflower meadows	7
The scheme should plant trees	6
Don't build it	6
The proposals will damage the local environment and not enhance it	5
No footpaths should be closed	5
The woodlands should not be disturbed	5

**Table 3-9: Responses to Question 3 - Do you have any comments on how the scheme could contribute to local employment and skills development?**

Theme	Frequency
No comment	86
I do not think the scheme will provide employment	20
There will be a loss of farming jobs in the communities	12
Any additional employment in the local area is positive	10
The scheme will only provide short-term employment	9
I do not feel the scheme will have a significant enough effect to justify the negative impacts	8
The scheme should hire apprentices from local schools	4

**Table 3-10: Responses to Question 4 - Do you have any information relevant to the scheme and/or local environment which you think we should take into account?**

Theme	Frequency
No comment	92
Your development is on productive agricultural land	21
The visual impact of the scheme would ruin the countryside	10
The loss of food production will be significant	6
There will be a loss of wildlife	5
The scheme is too large	4
Please move panels away from homes	4
The area is popular by dog walkers, hikers and horse riders and the development will ruin that	4

**Table 3-11: Responses to Question 5 - Is there anything you would like to know more about at the next round of consultation events?**

Theme	Frequency
No comment	80
More detailed proposals are needed	14
What other sites have you considered and why was this site chosen?	8

We need timescales for development	4
When will the next event be?	4

**Table 3-12: Responses to Question 6 - Do you have any further comments?**

Theme	Frequency
No comment	90
Loss of good agricultural land as a result of the scheme	8
I support this scheme	6
In principle we support the scheme, but the development is too big for the location	5
I find it difficult to comment when so little information is not provided	4
What effect will this have on wildlife?	4
Why was this area chosen?	4
Concerned about noise levels	4

3.6.6 Comments from the non-statutory consultation influenced the ongoing evolution of the Scheme design. The iterative process of designing the Scheme, including the way that consultation feedback and EIA informed design, is set out in detail in the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**.

3.6.7 Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant refined its proposals, paying attention to all comments made through the non-statutory consultation, as well as continuing environmental surveys. These included surveys into the quality of the agricultural land, views in and around the site and ecology.

3.6.8 The Applicant also received confirmation from National Grid that it was no longer considering connecting Longfield Solar Farm to the national electricity transmission system at the northernmost option included in the non-statutory stage of consultation.

3.6.9 The Applicant therefore:

- reduced the site area considerably, including removing development north of the River Ter;
- confirmed the location of the grid connection at Bulls Lodge substation;
- removed the HGV access to the site from Boreham Road and Waltham Road proposed at the non-statutory consultation from the scheme;
- refined our proposals to minimise the use of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land; and,
- moved development away from specific views.

3.6.10 Overall, the Applicant believes these changes significantly reduce the visual impact of the scheme and in many cases remove it altogether compared to the original plans.

3.6.11 Further detail on the key topics raised by consultees during the non-statutory consultation and the Applicant's response is set out in **Table 3-13**.

**Table 3-13: Key topics raised by consultees during the non-statutory consultation and the Applicant’s response**

Comment	Regard had to response
<p><b>BESS</b></p>	<p>Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant confirmed the proposed location of the BESS at the site close to Toppinghoehall Wood. This considered the potential to minimise and mitigate impacts from the BESS. The BESS and Longfield Substation have been sited to benefit from good screening from existing mature vegetation. The Applicant has also assessed impacts on landscape and visual impact, heritage and ecology from the BESS in the <b>Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b>.</p>
<p>Currently there are 3 possible locations identified for the battery storage locations and only limited information is provided in relation to the size, scale and appearance of these storage areas. The battery storage areas have the potential to result in harm to the character, appearance and ecological value of the countryside and the landscape within which they are located if they are not cited carefully and with adequate mitigation. The impact upon designated heritage assets in the area is also an important consideration. Therefore, the battery storage facility locations should be selected specifically to ensure that they meet not just the operational demands of the Solar Farm but also so that their wider impact is minimised and mitigated. It is also unclear what degree of noise and associated lighting they could or would generate.</p> <p>There are known fire risks associated with battery storage and most particularly with lithium ion battery technology.</p>	<p>A plume assessment has been undertaken with respect to the BESS to assess the likelihood of a fire occurring, and the level of impact on receptors in the unlikely event a fire occurs. The assessment demonstrates that under day to day operation there is a low risk of an incident, and in the event of an incident the credible hazards are understood and have been evaluated to demonstrate that the risk to the local population would be very low. The <b>Plume Assessment</b> has been submitted as part of the Application as <b>Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b>. The Applicant has prepared an <b>Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]</b> which details design measures and controls for the BESS to minimise the risk of a fire and includes a framework for responding to an incident.</p>
	<p>The design of the BESS and its impacts are controlled in several ways. Prior to commencement of</p>

construction of the BESS, a Battery Safety Management Plan (in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** submitted with the Application) is required to be submitted to the relevant local planning authority and approved, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency. The Applicant must operate the BESS in accordance with the approved plan.

Further, pursuant to a requirement of the DCO, the detailed design of the BESS must be in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** (which includes safety requirements for the BESS design) and the Design Principles submitted as an appendix to the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**. The Outline Design Principles contain controls over the BESS, which include: 1) that the chemistry of the BESS will be lithium ion, and 2) that an assessment will be undertaken, based on the detailed design for the BESS, to demonstrate that the risk of fire and impacts from such a fire will be no worse than as assessed in the **Plume Assessment** submitted with the Application as **Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

In this way, the Applicant can confirm that if the BESS constructed is different to that assessed in the plume assessment, its impacts in the event of a fire would be no worse than those assessed in the plume assessment, and therefore the risk to the local population would be very low.

Further consideration of the locations proposed for the BESS is needed in terms of their scale, design, access for maintenance, landscape and visual impact, impact on the biodiversity, flood risk and drainage, and amenity impacts such as noise.

It should be noted that, following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant confirmed that the BESS would be located at a site close to Toppinghoehall Wood. Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant assessed potential impacts on landscape and visual impact, impact on the biodiversity, flood risk and drainage, and amenity impacts such as noise and presented further information first in the PEIR and now in the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** included with this DCO Application.

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It is requested that the site adjacent to Toppinghoehall Wood, which is in close proximity to Terling public footpath 32 (PROW 113\_32) is removed as a possible location for the solar & battery storage infrastructure / new sub-station compound. This compound is stated as having an approximate built footprint of up to 150m x 100m x up to 10m high (2.2.42) and so would be extremely visible both visually and aurally. The Bulls Lodge substation or another site near the A12 would be less disruptive.

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Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant confirmed the proposed location of the BESS at the site close to Toppinghoehall Wood. This considered the potential to minimise and mitigate impacts from the BESS. The BESS and Longfield Substation have been sited to benefit from good screening from existing mature vegetation. Toppinghoehall Wood to the north and south and Lost Wood to the east provide thick coverage.

Additional planting will be implemented to screen the BESS to the south west and will be allowed to mature to a substantial height.

Phase 2 of the BESS is intended to be undertaken five years after the Scheme becomes operational, to allow sufficient time for screening implanted to the south east of the BESS to mature and provide sufficient screening – this will provide a “bridge” between Toppinghoehall and Lost Woods, until planting has had sufficient time to mature to a point that it provides sufficient screening. Further information is presented in **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the**

## Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]

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The battery storage element when combined with sub-station equipment could be particularly intrusive in a rural setting. The information provided does not detail the size, height and visual impact of these units. And it does not explore how many units are planned. The drawing on page 8 of the consultation booklet is particularly misleading. It shows the battery storage as being half the height and very much smaller than the representation of the solar panels, a sub-station or the fencing. It is understood that these will be much larger than the panels and fencing and probably bigger than the switchgear housing.

The suggested positioning of battery storage in the Fuller Street area would be entirely inappropriate. It would be difficult to access and would have a major environmental impact including a road and bridge across the Ter. This would extend the site unnecessarily into un-spoilt countryside to the north and leave the battery storage exposed. If the battery were to be situated in the middle of the site instead of Fuller Street, it would be away from roads and public access. It would thereby minimize the detrimental effect on its visual amenity. It would be a more secure location for potentially hazardous installations and mitigate the danger posed by them to the public. If the battery storage is placed in the Fuller Street position as indicated on the plan, the attendant cabling connections would have to cross the River Ter and 'The Essex Way'. This would negatively impact an important walking route and would be rendered objectionable to countryside walkers.

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### Grid connection

It is not yet clear whether underground cables or overhead lines would be used to connect to the existing grid. These two options are quite different in terms of their visual impact and their physical impact upon the land and the mitigation measures which may be employed to help to minimise this. It is noted that the indicative route shows power lines running in very close proximity to local wildlife sites (woodlands) although it is also noted that there are existing lines in this location. It is not clear to what extent existing overhead cables could be used or whether there would need to be significant re-routing of such cables if the overhead line option were selected. The Council would wish to see a clear justification for the selection of a cable or a line option and for detail to be set out with regard

Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant confirmed the proposed location of the BESS at the site close to Toppinghoehall Wood. This considered the potential to minimise and mitigate impacts from the BESS. The drawing on page 8 showed the way that different components of a solar farm relate to each other and is clearly labelled as being indicative and not to scale.

Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant confirmed that the BESS would be located at a site close to Toppinghoehall Woods. This avoids the potential impacts set out in this response.

It has been confirmed electrical cables within the solar PV array fields will be secured to the PV Mounting Structures, the BESS, or will be underground. No new overhead lines will be constructed. The maximum underground cable depth will be below existing ground level or ditch bottom (except where other separation is required to avoid existing services). Underground cable circuits will avoid root protection areas of trees and hedgerows, except where a hedgerow crossing is required. Further information is presented in



to what the physical impacts of the selected option would be and how such impacts would be mitigated.

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It is noted that the proposal includes indicative locations for powerlines, the proposal will need to assess the visual and landscape impact and take into account the amenity impacts to the existing communities and the strategic proposals within the adopted Chelmsford Local Plan such as the proposed Chelmsford NE Bypass and new Garden Community (Strategic Growth Site 6) which make up some of the surrounding context.

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Information provided is not clear as per the applicant/proposer's intentions in relation to the cabling and its specifications. A critical question needs to be addressed:

Are the cables to be underground or overhead?  
This is not a credible position. Cabling is a crucial part of this engineering project and the applicant/proposer must have determined what cabling will be required.

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### **Alternatives analysis**

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This type of development is better suited to brownfield sites or low grade agricultural land and it is difficult to foresee how the challenges outlined in points 1 to 5 above will be met. We are not able to ascertain how such a fundamental change to key landscape characteristics with the loss of amenity, loss of good quality agricultural land and potential disruption to the ecosystem over such a large area can be outweighed by the benefit of the solar power which may be generated. This may become clearer with additional detail in future stages of the consultation process.

## **Chapter 2: Scheme description of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1].**

A sequential assessment regarding agricultural land quality has been undertaken and is presented in the **Planning Statement [EN010118/APP/7.2]**. In summary, the vast majority of land within the area of search is of similar ALC to the site. The Order limits comprise approximately: 60% Grade 3b, 22% Grade 3a, 12% Grade 2 and 6% non-agricultural or unknown.

All of the land within the area of search is either:

- Grade 2 (which is BMV and equal to the highest quality land within the site);
- Grade 3 (which may also be BMV and no lower than the majority of the site);
- Grade 4, but located within the Flood Plain of the River Chelmer, so unlikely to pass the flood risk sequential test; or

- Urban land with no sites of comparable land available.

There are no alternative sites available meeting the Applicant's search criteria that are clearly of a lower non-BMV ALC grade than the Order limits.

Further assessment of agricultural land is included in **Chapter 12 Socio-economics of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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The Council would be interested to know whether any consideration has been given to the addition of wind turbines on the site in addition to the solar arrays to maximise energy resilience through a mix of renewable sources of power.

The Applicant selected the site due to its suitability for generating solar energy. The Scheme has the potential to complement the use of offshore wind energy generation in meeting the country's energy needs by 'filling the gap' over the summer months when wind levels are lower. Further information is presented in paragraph 9.8.9 of the **Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]**.

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There are many more suitable sites for solar farms in Essex and the South East of England. It appears that no other sites are under consideration and evaluation. The rural location of the site is unsuitable for development of the type proposed.

The Applicant selected the Solar Farm Site following a process to identify land which is suitable from a technical, environmental and planning perspective. This is set out in **Chapter 3 Alternatives and Design of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. It references each of the matters identified by section 2.48 of Draft National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy (EN-3) (Draft NPS EN-3) [REF-6] as factors influencing solar farm site selection by the Applicant. Essex represents a good location within the UK to construct a solar farm. This is because it benefits from high levels of solar irradiance compared to other parts of the UK and is characterised by a generally low lying and flat topography, which increases the likelihood of being able to identify a suitable site that is capable of producing a large amount of electricity.

Essex is in the South East of England, in close proximity to London, which means it is near to high demand centres for electricity. The location of electricity generation infrastructure close to areas of high demand helps to minimise losses associated with the transfer of electricity over long distances. The Applicant therefore sought a suitable generation site and point of connection to the electricity network in this area. The Solar Farm Site is suitable for a solar farm development insofar as it is located within an area of high irradiance and is of suitable topography. Within the parameters of the search for suitable sites for the Scheme, several alternative sites were considered, which were of comparative size and location with close proximity to the National Grid. The Point of Connection of the Scheme was a key criterion, with a target 5km radius from existing National Grid infrastructure (beyond which the environmental effects could increase and the Scheme becomes less financially viable).

The 400kV overhead line that stretches from Braintree Substation to the north of the Order limits to Rayleigh Substation located to the east of Basildon, 19km to the south of the Order limits, was identified as having capacity to allow a connection from a potential solar farm, and a variety of constraints were mapped and used to exclude unsuitable areas and identify potential alternative sites.

Constraints included:

- Ecological constraints – SAC's, SPA's, SSSI's, Ramsar Sites, National Nature Reserves,
- Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and Ancient Woodland;

- Heritage constraints – Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments,
- Registered Parks and Gardens and Registered Battlefields;
- Landscape Designations – National Parks, AONB, Country Parks, Special Landscape Areas;
- Settlements;
- Land designated for other uses in the Chelmsford City Council [REF-20] and Braintree District Council Local Plan [REF-13], for example open space and employment land;
- Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3, although this is not necessarily a key constraint for solar PV;
- Green Belt; and,
- Grade 1 and Grade 2 ALC.

The search was used to identify contiguous potential developable areas of around or greater than 300ha with the ability to accommodate a large scale solar scheme.

Further to the high level constraints identified above, further search criteria were applied at a local level, including:

- Topography – the site needs to be flat or gently south facing slopes;
- Field Shape and Pattern – fields need to be large and of regular shape;
- Number of landowners – ideally a small number of landowners;
- Landscape and Visual – aiming to locate the site out of landscape designations, with a high degree of existing vegetation for natural screening, limited long distance views;

- Residential Amenity – checking for proximity to settlements;
- Heritage – proximity to Listed Buildings and other designations such as Scheduled Monuments, and presence of below ground archaeology;
- Ecology – avoid or minimise proximity to designated areas within or close to the site;
- Flood Risk – seek to locate the site in Flood Zone 1, and reduce intrusion into zones 2 and 3;
- Public Rights of Way – seek to either minimise effects upon receptors using PRow or seek opportunities to provide connectivity; and
- Access – ease of access for construction and decommissioning stages to be considered.

The Order limits are situated within the optimal 5km of the Bulls Lodge Substation and provide a developable area with the ability to accommodate a large scale solar scheme. It was deemed a suitable option to move forward with an application for the Scheme.

### Need

The new Chelmsford Garden Community is allocated in the Chelmsford Local Plan to the south west of the site which when complete will be in the region of 10,000 new homes and significant new employment. Consideration should be given for this scheme to also directly provide neighbourhood-scale power for the new garden community.

The Scheme will be an important part of the development of the UK's portfolio of renewable energy generation required to meet the national need for decarbonisation set out in the Energy National Policy Statements (EN-1) (EN-3) [REF-18] [REF-6]. It will therefore connect directly to the National Electricity Transmission system and it is not proposed that it will directly provide neighbourhood-scale power to the Chelmsford Garden Community.

### LVIA

Securing new tree planting is also an important matter across the District. Again, the Council would

The Scheme includes considerable new tree planting. **Figure 10-12**

request that detailed consideration is given to how this might be secured and further information provided upon this at an early stage in the proposals.

**Outline Landscape Masterplan of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.3]** sets out the landscape mitigation and green infrastructure plan. This planting is secured by Work No. 6 and 10 and the **OLEMP [EN010118/APP/7.13]**. This includes substantial areas of new woodland, measuring up to 25m wide.

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It is likely to take more than 5 years to develop a hedgerow system which will form an effective screen and even if this was accomplished the general effect would be to close in many footpaths which have previously enjoyed wider views over open fields.

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In **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the Applicant has included assessments of landscape and visual impacts of the Scheme during construction and after 1 and 15 years of operation. This recognises that screening may take time to become established. The construction and Year 1 assessment have been undertaken to demonstrate the worst-case scenario. The Year 15 assessment has been undertaken in summer to demonstrate the effect of proposed mitigation planting and consider the effect of seasons on landscape and visual amenity, in accordance with best practice guidance.

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The Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment, 2006 provides a comprehensive Borough/District-wide assessment of landscape character within the Study Area provides a useful reference in assessing the potential landscape and visual impacts of individual proposals. Consideration must be given to the landscape and visual impacts of ancillary development such as including power cables, fencing, access tracks and construction compound.

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This is considered in **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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A detailed landscape mitigation plan should identify measures to avoid, reduce or remedy impacts on the landscape. These may include landscape buffer areas and the use of natural features such as hedges and/or trees to screen the development.

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This is provided through the **OLEMP [EN010118/APP/7.13]**. This includes new woodland, scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site.

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The northern area is close to the village of Terling and its conservation area. This area is popular with walkers with many of the PROWs being maintained by the Parish of Terling under a P3

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As set out in **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the overall

agreement with Essex Highways. This northern area is more tranquil being furthest away from the A12 and the GEMLR railway line. ELAF would wish to see this northern area being removed from the site boundary and that the site south of Hookley Wood site is removed as a possible location for the solar & battery storage infrastructure / new sub-station compound. This compound is stated as having an approximate built footprint of up to 150m x 100m x up to 10m high (2.2.42).

layout has undergone extensive review and refinement to respond to the landscape character baseline. As noted in the consultation response, the northern part of the Order limits is identified as the most tranquil. Larger elements of the Scheme have been sited in the south of the Order limits.

The Ter River valley is identified as one of the most sensitive landscape features. Although within the Order limits, all development has been excluded from this area in order to protect and conserve the integrity of this area. The part of the Order limits in this area would be used for visual screening and ecological enhancement.

In addition, further planting has been added to higher slopes on the north western edge of the Scheme.

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The PROWs within, across and adjacent to the site boundary and the fields of solar panels will of course be negatively affected by the presence of solar panels and fencing. During a webinar it was stated that the PROWs will be enclosed within a 2 metre high thin wire mesh deer-type fence with a width of 2.5-3.0 metres being left for a PROW. This enclosure will have a particularly severe visual and enclosing effect on PROWs that currently run across open fields; there will also be the negative effect of walking between banks of solar panels up to 3.6metres high. However, there are relatively few crossfield PROWs within the site. There is the potential for mitigation / diversion / link schemes and request an involvement in the development of such schemes.

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As set out in **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the overall layout has undergone extensive review and refinement to respond to the landscape character baseline. This includes embedded mitigation of the type described. Following mitigation, people walking on the Essex Way to the west or south of Fuller Street (VP45 and VP46) would experience minor adverse effects, which are not considered to be significant. The level of effect is reduced from year 1 because existing and proposed vegetation would be in leaf, filtering views of the PV Arrays such that the Scheme would be unobtrusive. People walking on the Essex Way on the south western corner of Sandy Wood would experience close range views of the Scheme, however this would be for a very short duration of the route such

that the overall effect on people walking the Essex Way would remain minor adverse. People walking on PRoW 213\_19 and PRoW 113\_25 within the Order limits would experience major adverse effects because of close range views of the proposed PV Arrays in the immediate foreground. These effects are considered significant. People walking on the wider PRoW network beyond the Order limits boundary would not experience significant effects resulting from operation during year 15.

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This is a most aesthetically pleasing and un-spoilt piece of countryside. It has been traditionally farmed for hundreds of years. As the site stands, it does not require any enhancement.

The solar farm would blight the landscape and any adjustments made to the proposed scheme would not begin to mitigate the resultant environmental damage.

In order to give a meaningful answer to this question, results from the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) need to be known. It would be helpful to be notified as to whom -what body or institution - would be carrying out this exercise to confirm objectivity and impartiality.

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The **OLEMP [EN010118/APP/7.13]**, includes new woodland, scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site. In identifying the Solar Farm Site, the Applicant identified that it is remote from nearby villages and that the relatively flat landform and existing woodland and hedgerow limits views into the site. As such there are only a small number of residential properties where visual impacts would be likely to result from the Scheme. The Applicant has also taken account of the visual impact on residential receptors in the design of the Scheme, including by providing strategically located stand-offs from receptors to above ground solar farm infrastructure in order to limit visual impact. Further information can be found in the Applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, in Chapter 10 of the PEI Report and **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The assessment was undertaken and reported by a team of competent Chartered Landscape Architects with extensive experience in LVIA of solar farms and other large-scale infrastructure development.



## Cultural heritage

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The proposed development site covers a large area which has a diverse and rich historic environment. Within the Chelmsford boundary there are 10 grade II listed buildings and one grade I listed building within close proximity to the site and more within the wider area.

There are also a high number of listed building on the Braintree District Council side of the site. These buildings sit within a rural landscape, which forms part of their settings' and contributes to their significance. There are also a number of buildings/structures/lanes of local interest in close proximity to the site which should be considered as non-designated heritage assets. The landscape includes ancient lanes, woodland and field boundaries. The proposed scheme will undoubtedly have a considerable impact on the historic environment.

The proposals should be informed by baseline studies to clearly define and assess the historic environment, this should include:

- Built Heritage Assessment, including identification of all heritage assets within 1.5km of the site boundary, assessment of their settings' and measures to avoid or mitigate harmful impacts in accordance with Historic England GPA3 The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017).
- - Historic landscape assessment
- - Archaeological desk-based study
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment which should be in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3).

When these studies have been produced by the developer they should submitted to the council and a baseline evidence base agreed. This should then be used to inform the scheme design, avoiding or minimising harm to the historic environment and providing mitigation measures. Any proposals prior to an agreed evidence base is premature and ill-informed.

## Transport

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Cycle route provision is a corporate priority for Braintree District Council. The Applicant should consider whether a cycle route could be incorporated across or looping around the site, perhaps making use of some of the maintenance tracks for example.

This is reflected in the baseline contained in **Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

These elements are reflected in the baseline contained in **Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118.6.1]**. The Applicant provided a baseline evidence base for review through the PEIR.

A green corridor is proposed through the site. This will accommodate cycles as set out in **the PRow Management Plan provided as Appendix 13C of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]. Figure 10-12 Outline Landscape**

**Masterplan Sheet A and Figure 10-13 Outline Landscape Masterplan Sheet B**

**[EN010118/APP/6.3]** present the green corridor which is made up of the permissive path and the existing footpath network. The routing of this corridor has been developed through engagement with the host local authorities, including a meeting to discuss PROWs on 12 August 2021 as set out in **Table 3-14**.

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The route from junction 19 of the A12 will take traffic through Boreham village on Main Road and then up Waltham Road to the site. The report outlines the traffic anticipated for Longfield but fails to adequately consider the impact during the same period of the widening of the A12 and reconfiguration of the Boreham Interchange for the Chelmsford North East By Pass. These will almost certainly result in additional traffic through Boreham and onto Waltham Road with a high risk of congestion delays. There will be an accompanying increased risk to other road users.

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The Applicant has held pre-application and scoping discussions with the local highway authority, ECC, and National Highways to discuss the routing and transport strategy for the scheme. Cumulative impacts between the construction phase of the Scheme and other committed developments/highway improvements including the A12 widening scheme have been considered as part of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and **Transport Assessment (TA)** provided at **Appendix 13A of Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. The ES and TA include details of the mitigation that will be implemented to reduce the traffic impacts of the Scheme during the construction phase. Further information is set out in the **Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan** included as **Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

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The other route to the site from Essex Regiment Way via Wheelers Hill and Cranham Road is totally unsuitable for abnormal loads and HGVs. It is a country lane which is narrow in places. The report mentions a possibility of widening some country roads if required. This may be impractical. The EIA Scope document also fails to acknowledge the impact of construction of the Marriages flour mill on Cranham Road. It should also be noted that Essex Police have a facility in Waltham Road.

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The route from Essex Regiment Way via Wheeler's Hill and Cranham Road provides the most direct route from higher order roads and will minimise disruption in the nearby villages of Boreham and Hatfield Peverel. Where necessary, Cranham Road and Wheeler's Hill will be widened to allow vehicles to pass safely.

More information regarding access can be found in **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. Development on Land North of Cranham Road is considered as part of the cumulative impact assessment in **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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The total impact of all anticipated road use during the period between Q1 2024 to Q1 2026, with particular focus on 2024 as the likely peak year for construction activity, needs to be fully investigated and the associated risks assessed.

This is assessed in **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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BPC notes that during public presentations on Longfield it was indicated that road traffic would be minimised by constructing access roads within the site. However, the EIA Scope document contradicts this by proposing to use the network of minor roads around the site for some deliveries in order to reduce the need to construct internal access roads.

The Applicant can confirm the Solar Farm Site will be served by a single point of access on Waltham Road. This is the basis of the assessments in **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Approved developments in the Boreham area are already expected to greatly increase traffic levels on roads proposed for use by Longfield and at times of peak activity. This poses a potential risk of injury to road users and of project delays. There are no facilities for HGV parking in the area or for staging deliveries which may increase the risk of traffic congestion.

The Applicant assesses cumulative impacts on transport in section 13.11 of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The cumulative schemes for consideration have been agreed in consultation with ECC and National Highways.

As well as the A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening Scheme, CNEB Phase 2 and Outer Radial Distributor Road (RDR2), there are a number of committed developments (with planning permission) within the area which have been considered as cumulative schemes including the Chelmsford Garden Community and a development on land to the north of Cranham Road.

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Information needs to demonstrate impact on the local highway network and that site access is able to accommodate the type and number of vehicle movements during the construction and operation of the site. It is noted that the proposal suggests two access points/routes. It should be recognised that part of these proposed routes includes Protected Lanes. Reference should be made to the evidence base study for the Chelmsford Local

Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant confirmed that the Solar Farm Site will be served by a single point of access on Waltham Road. This is the basis of the assessments in **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The

Plan. More information regarding vehicle movements is expected in future consultations.

assessments included in Chapter 13 are informed by the evidence base for the Chelmsford Local Plan [REF-20].

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The proposal should also assess the cumulative traffic impacts having regard to planned development within the locality such as the future Chelmsford NE Bypass, Radial Distributor Road 2, which will extend through the Chelmsford Garden Community, planned works to the Boreham Interchange and a future scheme to widen the A12 (a further Development Consent Order proposal).

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These are included in the assessment of cumulative effects in **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

There is a concern about the impact upon traffic in the area particularly during the construction phase. Residents who live in the vicinity of Cranham Road have expressed concerns that following the grant of planning permission for Marriage's Mill there is already the prospect of a substantial number of heavy goods vehicles using that road and surrounding country roads and if the solar farm were to be located as proposed that would further increase not just traffic in the area but HGVs in particular and it should be noted that the roads in the area are not suitable for HGV traffic which will have a detrimental impact upon residents in that area of the Parish.

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Development on Land North of Cranham Road is considered as part of the cumulative impact assessment in **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. This has assessed traffic impacts during the construction period as acceptable. The Applicant has set out its approach to managing construction traffic in the **Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan included as Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

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It is noted that Waltham Road & Boreham Road... "are rural single carriageway roads... and, commensurate with their rural character, without pedestrian footway or street lighting provision." The roads have no central white line in places. Whilst the local roads may be quiet, they are narrow especially the east-west route of Birds Farm Lane / Noakes Lane / Noakes Farm Road. Although there are no public bridleways inside the site boundary, an East Anglian Farm Rides route south of Chopping's Wood connects to Boreham Road near Noakes Lane. Measures to increase the safety of walkers, cyclists and horse riders using these roads will be welcome.

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PROWs will be carefully managed during the construction phase and a separate PRow Management Plan has also been prepared as **Appendix 13C of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. The safety of the safety of walkers, cyclists and horse riders is also addressed through the Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan included as **Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

This includes measures to physically segregate existing PRow from proposed construction routes, as well as having controlled crossing points (with gates and banksmen) to safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. No PRow will be permanently closed or diverted as a result of the Scheme, and the minimum legal PRow

widths will continue to be met or bettered in all instances. Additional permissive routes will be provided for pedestrians and cyclists during the operational phase to facilitate connections across the Order limits, as well as with National Cycle Route 50 and Essex Way. Further information is provided in section 13.7 of **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Several PROWs terminate on Waltham Road - Boreham FPs 17, 20, 19, 18, 21 and 5 (Parish Code 213). Connections are made by walking along the carriageway of Waltham Road. ELAF request the development of and an involvement in off-road mitigation / diversion / link schemes.

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The Applicant has set out its approach to ensuring safety for walkers, cyclists and horse riders using these roads during construction in the Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan included as **Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. The Applicant consulted with ELAF during the statutory consultation as set out in Chapter 6 of this report.

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National Highways would like to work with you to understand and manage the interactions between the Solar Farm scheme and the A12 J19 to 25 Widening scheme as well as any impacts on the Strategic Road Network. You may be aware we have plans for widening of the A12 between J19 (Boreham) and J25 (Marks Tey). The Longfield Solar Farm project and the A12 widening projects are likely to be under construction at the same time, this will require careful planning (e.g. construction traffic for the Solar Farm during the A12 widening works) and there may be opportunities to work together to save abortive costs.

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The Applicant has engaged with National Highways to understand and manage interactions between the Scheme and the and the A12 J19 to 25 Widening scheme as set out in **Table 6-2** and **Table 8-1**.

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We will in due course expect to see a Transport Assessment (TA) setting out the impact of the proposal, not just in operation but also during construction and decommissioning at end of life. The TA should be carried out in accordance with policy laid out in Department of Transport Circular 02/2013, WebTAG and National Highways's protocol on dealing with planning applications. It is strongly advised that you speak to us before undertaking work as this has been shown to result in a smoother passage through the planning process. If transport mitigation on the strategic network is needed then this should be discussed

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**A Transport Assessment is provided as Appendix 13A of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. The Applicant has also engaged directly with National Highways to identify potential opportunities to minimise disruption during construction, as set out in **Table 3-14**.

with National Highways to avoid abortive work or collude strategies. We will also need to know how and where any connecting cables will cross our network, there may be ways of accommodating cable crossings with the A12 widening works, thereby saving disruption and costs for both parties and the travelling public.

The local roads which will be used for construction and ongoing maintenance are woefully inadequate for the purpose some being very narrow in places. Large vehicles trying to pass other traffic could cause serious degradation of the byways.

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**The Transport Assessment provided as Appendix 13A of the Environmental Statement**

**[EN010118/APP/6.2]** includes a highway impact assessment (including junction modelling) to demonstrate that the proposed site access for the Solar Farm Site on Waltham Road will be suitable for accommodating traffic during the construction phase. Where required, the Applicant is proposing road widening works on Wheelers Hill and Cranham Road to accommodate construction vehicles.

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**Socio-economics**

At this stage it is not clear exactly how many jobs the scheme would generate, what specialisms these would incorporate and whether there was the opportunity for defined local linkages via for example apprenticeships or similar. Further information is required in relation to this.

With regards employment during the construction phase, it is expected that an average of 380 jobs will be created during the construction period. During the operational phase, 8 full time staff would be employed on the site. The expected operational employment at the Scheme will be equivalent to the current amount of employment on the agricultural land at the Scheme, meaning there will be net no change in the amount of employment. This information is based on estimates informed by the Applicant's prior experience of similar schemes, and details provided by the current landowner.

In addition, a local Skills and Employment Plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction. This will set out measures that the Applicant will implement to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally.

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Whilst the consultation material states that the proposals are committed to helping secure local economic benefits from the scheme and engaging with education providers about the potential for Longfield Solar Farm to support local skills development initiatives, no detail is provided as to how this would be undertaken. Outlining the positive legacy for the community e.g. net gain in biodiversity, community solar energy project, and new jobs that would be created by this proposal should be provided.

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Opportunities for community benefit from the proposals should be explored, for example, providing jobs to local people both during construction and operation, consideration should be given to providing free or discounted energy to a local public building and establishing a local Environmental Trust.

The Applicant will also make a skills and education contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training. Further information is set out in section 12.8 of **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Further detail with regards these matters was provided as part of the statutory consultation in the Consultation Booklet included in **Appendix G-4** of this report and Chapter 12 of the PEIR.

A local Skills and Employment Plan is to be prepared prior to commencement of construction, which will set out measures that the Applicant will implement to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally.

The Applicant will also make a skills contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training.

Further information is set out in section 12.8 of **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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The Applicant has committed to providing a Community Benefit Fund (CBF). The CBF does not form part of the DCO application and this funding is not required to mitigate the impacts of the Scheme. Therefore, the SoS cannot, and must not, apply any positive weight to the CBF when balancing the positives and negatives of the Scheme. The CBF is therefore not taken into account in consideration of the planning balance within this Planning Statement.

A local Skills and Employment Plan is to be prepared prior to commencement of construction, which will set out measures that the Applicant will implement in order to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally.

The Applicant will also make a skills contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training.

Further information is set out in section 12.8 of **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Further information can be found in the **Planning Statement [EN010118/APP/7.2]**.

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The construction phase will no doubt be carried out by major national civil and electrical engineering contractors. They will import the skilled personnel required to carry out the work. There is insufficient skilled labour in Hatfield Peverel and Terling to contribute in any significant extent to the construction process which will in any event be temporary.

In operation, solar farms are not labour intensive. Maintenance of the major units such as switch gear etc. tends to comprise significant works carried out periodically and therefore suitably skilled labour will be imported from time-to-time to undertake it. The small number of people employed in this activity in Hatfield Peverel and Terling goes no way near to justify or outweigh the disadvantages of the scheme.

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The site is characterised by open views across the fields, interspersed with woodland and crossed in many places by public footpaths and other public rights of way. Waltham/Boreham Road currently passes through views of open fields or with sight of fields through or above existing hedgerows. Many of the footpaths and bridle paths within the designated site also pass through open fields.

It is not possible to ascertain the exact number of jobs that would be taken up by residents in any local authority or statistical area, given that take-up of jobs will be dependent on individual skill levels and suitability. Overall, the Scheme will support, on average, 380 total jobs per annum during the construction period. Of these, 171 jobs per annum are expected to be taken-up by residents within the study area.

In terms of the comment about skilled labour, the Applicant will also make a skills and education contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training.

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PROWs will be carefully managed during the construction phase and a separate PRow Management Plan has also been prepared as **Appendix 13C of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. Additional permissive routes will be provided



These footpaths and bridle paths are heavily used by locals and visitors and there will be significant loss of amenity during installation and potentially beyond. BPC would like additional details regarding how the developer proposes to maintain public access to these rights of way throughout the construction process and during operation.

for pedestrians and cyclists during the operational phase to facilitate connections across the Order limits, as well as with National Cycle Route 50 and Essex Way. Further information is provided in section 13.7 of **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The Applicant has assessed potential impacts on the landscape and visual amenity of users of the PROW network in **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. Once screening and planting included as mitigation in the Scheme has matured, people walking on the Essex Way to the west or south of Fuller Street (VP45 and VP46) would experience minor adverse effects, which are not considered to be significant. The level of effect is reduced from year 1 because existing and proposed vegetation would be in leaf, filtering views of the PV Arrays such that the Scheme would be unobtrusive. People walking on the Essex Way on the south western corner of Sandy Wood would experience close range views of the Scheme, however this would be for a very short duration of the route such that the overall effect on people walking the Essex Way would remain minor adverse. People walking on PRow 213\_19 and PRow 113\_25 within the Order limits would experience major adverse effects because of close range views of the proposed PV Arrays in the immediate foreground. These effects are considered significant. People walking on the wider PRow network beyond the Order limits boundary would not experience significant effects resulting from operation during year 15.

It is noted that the Essex Way crosses the site, to the south of Sandy Wood. The impact of the proposal upon this important public right of way and its setting should be given particularly careful consideration.

The Applicant has considered impacts on the Essex Way from the Scheme. In terms of the experience of people walking on the Essex Way, an assessment is set out in **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. Following mitigation, people walking on the Essex Way to the west or south of Fuller Street (VP45 and VP46) would experience minor adverse effects, which are not considered to be significant. The level of effect is reduced from year 1 because existing and proposed vegetation would be in leaf, filtering views of the PV Arrays such that the Scheme would be unobtrusive. People walking on the Essex Way on the south western corner of Sandy Wood would experience close range views of the Scheme, however this would be for a very short duration of the route such that the overall effect on people walking the Essex Way would remain minor adverse.

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The proposal should also ensure that the public rights of way in the vicinity of the site remain available and convenient for public use. Public rights of way through the development site should retain their character, amenity value and usability and be integrated with the development.

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It is proposed that PROWs in the vicinity of the Scheme remain available and convenient for public use. PROWs will be carefully managed during the construction phase and a separate PROW Management Plan has also been prepared as **Appendix 13C of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. Additional permissive routes will be provided for pedestrians and cyclists during the operational phase to facilitate connections across the Order limits, as well as with National Cycle Route 50 and Essex Way. Further information is provided in section 13.7 of **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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The EIA report (13.4.5) states that there will be temporary or permanent diversion or closure of

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Appropriate measures to mitigate temporary impacts on users of

PROWs. Paragraph 10.7.4 specifically states that... "PRoW which cross the site boundary will be temporarily closed and therefore recreational receptors along these routes will not be assessed for the construction phase". The closure of PROWs without the provision of suitable and convenient alternatives is NOT acceptable and is against ECC policies.

PRoW during the construction and decommissioning phases have been proposed. The temporary closures and, where appropriate, diversions will be supported by clear signs and where possible will be planned and programmed to minimise disruption to users. Further information on management of PRoWs is given in **Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Land quality varies from place to place and the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) provides a method for assessing the quality of agricultural land. The Best and Most Versatile Land is defined as Grade 1, 2 and 3a. It should be recognised that land of such quality is an important area for food production and by reducing the agricultural land available increases the reliance on the importation of food, with subsequent environmental impacts such as increased carbon emissions. A balance is to be made between the benefits of renewable energy, the loss of agricultural land and the impact of such development on biodiversity. Within the Chelmsford area, the proposed site includes predominately Grade 2 agricultural land (and some Grade 3 land within the site boundary covered by the EIA Scoping Report). The proposal should consider the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) and seek to minimise the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land and ensure there is no long-term impact on the land once the site is decommissioned. An assessment should demonstrate the impact of the proposal on the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural land and apply a sequential approach to the siting of the proposal taking into account soil quality of land.

This assessment is provided within **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. With regards decommissioning, very little agricultural land will be permanently lost. The vast majority of the Order limits will be available for return to agriculture after decommissioning, and the soil resource will have benefitted from a recovery of soil organic matter over the 40-year duration of the Scheme. An element of agriculture may also be retained over the life of the Solar Farm Site, with low density grazing an option being considered for the management of some of the habitats to be created on the Order limits.

The sheer scale of the proposed Solar Farm is a concern particularly as it will take a substantial amount of valuable tier 2 agricultural land out of food production which is a concern when it is understood that there is a need for the UK to increase its food production rather than reduce the same.

Best and most versatile agricultural land is classified as being within grade 1, 2 or 3a. National and local policy sets out that Applicants should take account of agricultural land classification and seek to locate their development on previously developed land, brownfield land, industrial land or lower grade agricultural land (classified as grade 3b, 4 or 5), where possible. The most up-to-date emerging national policy, adds

context to this, noting that land type should not be a predominating factor in determining the suitability of the site location for a large-scale solar farm.

The Applicant notes that almost all of the land in the vicinity of the 400 kV NETS power line between Braintree and Rayleigh is classified as either agricultural grade 2 or 3. This includes the Solar Farm Site, which is of a comparable quality to other land in the vicinity of the 400 kV NETS power line. The only non-agricultural land in the vicinity of the 400 kV NETS power line is within settlements where insufficient contiguous land is available for a large solar farm. Any grade 4 land in the vicinity of the 400 kV NETS power line is within the floodplain of the River Chelmer or the River Crouch, or is constrained by settlements and woodland. The Applicant considered that because there is no obvious available land that is classified below grade 3 and therefore known to be not 'best and most versatile', the inclusion of some best and most versatile agricultural land within the site would therefore be justified. The most recent emerging national policy is consistent in with the Applicant's position and process, explaining that solar farm developments are not prohibited on 'best and most versatile' agricultural land and that it is recognised that due to their scale it is likely that nationally significant solar farms may use some agricultural land.

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Further information required on the long term safeguarding of agricultural land would be achieved, both during the initial construction process and then in the operational and post operational phases.

Very little agricultural land will be permanently lost. The vast majority of the Order limits will be available for return to agriculture after decommissioning, and the soil resource will have benefitted from a recovery of soil organic matter over the 40-year duration of the

Scheme. An element of agriculture may also be retained over the life of the Solar Farm Site, with low density grazing an option being considered for the management of some of the habitats to be created on the Order limits. Further information is set out in **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1.]** An **Outline Soil Resource Management Plan** is provided as an **Appendix** to the **Outline CEMP [EN010118/APP/7.10]**. This sets out principles for how soils will be managed and protected during construction, operation and decommissioning of the Scheme. A detailed soil resource management plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction, prior to operation, and prior to decommissioning, as set out by the Requirements of the **Draft DCO [EN010118/APP/3.1]**.

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## Ecology

The site lies within the zone of influence of the Essex Coastal Natura 2000 sites which are of both European and International importance. The Council's Adopted Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) SPD is relevant, insofar as it identifies the importance of ensuring sufficient recreational space (including footpaths and other public rights of way) remain available in the southern part of the District, to help alleviate recreational pressure on these protected coastal sites.

In terms of ecology, there would be a need to secure a biodiversity net gain across the site. However, a basic net gain is a minimum target and there may well be scope to secure a much greater gain which would obviously weigh in the planning balance when assessing the proposal. The Council would be keen to see the biodiversity value of the site being maximised and further information being provided at an early stage as to how that might be done and what types of biodiversity schemes could be implemented and maintained.

This is considered within **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. There are no impacts to Natura 2000 (now "national site network") sites. Footpaths and other public rights of ways will remain available, but subject to temporary diversions during construction as set out in **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

A biodiversity net gain report has been produced and biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0. This is available as part of the DCO application as the **BNG Report [EN0118/6.5]**. An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.

The River Ter (SSSI) is also adjacent to the site. This flows to the Essex Coast, acting as a vector by which impacts upon the protected Natura 2000 Essex coastal sites may be channelled.

This is considered within **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. There are no impacts to Natura 2000 (now “national site network”) sites.

There are a high number of Local Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodlands and Designated Heritage Assets in the locality. The impact of the proposal upon these is of particular concern, especially as the site’s developable area effectively surrounds some of the above completely.

Potential impacts to Local Wildlife Sites are evaluated and included within **Chapter 8 Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. A minimum 15m buffer zone is embedded into Scheme as per standard guidance for ancient woodland. Any lighting used during construction will be minimal and directional to avoid light-spill onto adjacent habitats. No part of the Scheme would be continuously lit during operation. New planting will also strengthen habitat linkages between Local Wildlife Sites.

A 3m high perimeter fence around the operational areas of the site would have an adverse effect on access for wildlife, particularly deer which roam freely over this part of the proposed site. Depending on the design of these fences they may also restrict other species such as brown hares.

The Scheme will include a mammal gating system. This is shown in **Figure 2-12 of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.3]**.

More information is required to determine the impact of construction activity and of the solar farm itself on the birds and animals currently resident year round on the site and on seasonal visitors such as migrating geese and other waterfowl, cuckoos etc.

The Applicant presented further information on these topics as part of the statutory consultation in Chapter 8: Ecology of the PEIR. Updated information is presented in **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Further information required regarding biodiversity net gain.

A biodiversity net gain report has been produced and biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0. This is available as part of the DCO application as the **BNG Report [EN0118/6.5]**. An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.

Consideration should be given to security fencing and lighting that responds to the rural context. Where possible, the solar farm should minimise the use and height of fencing using natural features such as field hedges. More details should be included of all security and lighting features with

The visual impact of lighting has been assessed against Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Dark Skies mapping. The methodology followed is set out in **Appendix 10B: LVIA**

consideration given to mitigating impact on wildlife and ecology.

### **Methodology of the Environmental**

### **Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2].**

Landscape and visual mitigation has been described in Section 10.7 of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and is shown on **Figure 10-12 Outline Landscape Masterplan [EN010118/APP/6.3]**. The proposed lighting has been designed to avoid and minimise the potential for adverse landscape and visual effects.

An assessment of the proposed lighting, including any temporary lighting during construction, on ecology has been undertaken in

### **Chapter 8 Ecology of the Environmental Statement**

**[EN010118/APP/6.1]**. Throughout the Scheme, the use of motion detection security lighting to avoid permanent lighting will be utilised and the inward distribution of light will avoid light spill on to existing boundary features and impacts on ecology.

With regards fencing, the **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan**

**[EN010118/APP/7.13]** addresses this by limiting fencing to where essential to protect and secure the Scheme by utilising existing hedges/boundaries and by creating gaps in fencing suitable for mammals.

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More information about the impact and consequently the visual and ecological mitigation that is required is needed to fully understand the enhancements that could be made.

However, retaining existing site features such as existing hedgerows and ecological features is crucial to maintain landscape character and support biodiversity which should include a significant net gain.

Further information on these topics was presented at the statutory consultation in the PEIR. Whilst the embedded mitigation includes the retention and avoidance of the majority of hedgerows, there will be a loss of small sections of hedgerow (approximately 200m in total across the Order limits) during construction, to facilitate grid connection cable, new fence-lines and access routes. These habitats will be restored, post-construction, but there is likely to be a temporary

(short-term) adverse effect on this habitat type. Further information is set out in **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. A biodiversity net gain report has been produced and biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0. This is available as part of the DCO application as **the BNG Report [EN0118/6.5]**. An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.

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Trees and woodland also provide vital benefits to the environment, including filtering air pollution, reducing noise, and creating and connecting wildlife habitats. The proposal should consider providing additional tree and woodland planting in line with the City Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration and action plans to increase the woodland cover significantly in the Chelmsford District.

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Extensive new tree/woodland planting is provided as part of the embedded design. Further information is provided in section 8.8 of the **Outline Landscape Environmental Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.13]**.

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### **Glint and Glare**

The impact of glint and glare is given low priority in documents provided. Glint and glare may impact users of public rights of way, road users and may impact wildlife.

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A Glint and Glare Report is included with the DCO application as **Appendix 10G of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

The design of the solar panels will have implications on the impact of the proposal, clarity should be given for the alignment and/or movement of solar arrays and all assessments undertaken having regard to this type of installation. The potential impact of glint and glare from the solar panels on landscape/visual amenity, aircraft, rail and road safety must also be considered in developing proposals.

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A Glint and Glare Report is included with the DCO application as **Appendix 10G of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. The effects of glint and glare and their impact on local receptors has been analysed in detail and there is predicted to be low impacts at seven residential receptors, whilst the remaining ground-based receptors are expected to have no impacts once mitigation measures have been considered. Impacts upon aviation receptors are predicted to be none. Therefore, overall impacts are negligible.

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We will also need to see a glint and glare report to ensure that users of the A12 are protected from undue distraction.

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A Glint and Glare Report is included with the DCO application as **Appendix 10G of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. This



considers potential impacts on road users. The effects of glint and glare and their impact on local receptors has been analysed in detail and there is predicted to be low impacts at seven residential receptors, whilst the remaining ground-based receptors are expected to have no impacts once mitigation measures have been considered. Impacts upon aviation receptors are predicted to be none. Therefore, overall impacts are negligible.

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## Noise

The EIA Scope document accepts that there will be additional noise associated with the development. The location for siting key elements of infrastructure and whether battery storage is used overnight will determine the impact on those residences close to the site boundary.

Impacts from noise during construction are assessed in **Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. No significant residual adverse effects due to construction/decommissioning or operational phase noise and vibration have been identified.

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## Water resources

The site has a high water table and once the design of the site is known, the impact of any hard standings or site roadways on flood risk will need to be assessed.

**Appendix 9C: SuDS Strategy of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** has been included in the DCO and includes an outline drainage strategy detailing how runoff will be appropriately managed. Section 4 of that document sets out an Outline Drainage Strategy.

Based upon the information provided the proposed solar development does not appear to affect Anglian Water's existing infrastructure. However, we would wish to reserve the right to comment further as part of future consultations particularly where any changes are made to the location of the solar development.

This is noted and the Applicant consulted with Anglian Water during the statutory consultation.

Reference is made to construction compounds, access tracks and welfare facilities. At this stage it is unclear whether there is a requirement for a connection(s) to the water supply network and/or public sewerage network for the above site or as part of the construction phase. The Applicant should seek advice from Anglian Water if this is required.

There is no requirement for connection to the sewers for this development. Foul drainage will be collected in a cesspit. The cesspit will be managed, maintained, inspected and drained by a licensed courier who will then dispose of the waste offsite.

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## Construction

<p>More details regarding the construction compounds including details of their size, location and restoration of the land post construction and decommissioning is needed. Any proposed temporary construction compound should be carefully located in order to minimise environmental or amenity impact. Access tracks to the solar farm should also be kept to a minimum to better enable the site to be returned to its previous condition.</p>	<p>Further information on the management of construction is included in the <b>Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [EN010118.7.10]</b>.</p>
<p>There is no doubt that the construction will be disruptive. This is compounded by the fact that no real indication of how this upheaval and the effect of ongoing operations can be minimized by the final agreed location of the PVs, battery storage, substations and ancillary features.</p>	<p>Further information on the management of construction is included in the <b>Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [EN010118.7.10]</b>.</p>
<p><b>Decommissioning</b></p>	
<p>Further information required about proposals for the decommissioning of the Scheme, including the methods used for removing site infrastructure.</p>	<p>Further information regarding the decommissioning of the Scheme is presented in the <b>Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]</b> and <b>Chapter 2: Scheme Description of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b>.</p>
<p><b>Consultation</b></p>	
<p>The maps shown in the various documents prepared to present the Longfield Solar Farm proposal do not accurately portray recent changes to the location of footpaths east of Waltham Road in Boreham.</p>	<p>This was noted and updated information presented as part of the statutory consultation.</p>
<p>Future consultations should include more information about the community benefits and wider benefits of the electricity generation. It should also make clear the temporary features, how the site will be delivered and clarity on access points/routes, site design and impact on the wider local area. In addition, more details regarding the reasons for the scale, location of the proposal, potential traffic impacts, mitigation and decommissioning should be included.</p>	<p>Updated information on each of these topics was published during the statutory consultation in the PEIR and the Consultation Booklet <b>[Appendix G-4]</b>.</p>
<p>CCC welcomes the opportunity to engage further with this proposal and supports the need for further assessment to be undertaken prior to any submission of the DCO application. This includes reviewing the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC), Landscape and Visual Impact, Biodiversity and nature conservation, flood risk and drainage, impacts of noise, vibration, glint and glare, impact on land changes, traffic and transport studies, impact on the historic environment, cumulative</p>	<p>The Applicant engaged further with the consultee following the non-statutory consultation as set out in <b>Table 3-14, Table 6-2</b> and <b>Table 8-1</b>. The Applicant also presented further information on each of the topics listed as part of the PEIR. The Applicant consulted with CCC on the draft SoCC from 10 March</p>

impacts and socio-economic impacts and community gain. As a host authority CCC also welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) and the proposals for consulting local people, stakeholders and communities on future statutory consultations.

2021 to 9 April 2021 as set out in section 5.5 of this report.

Not enough detailed information was presented as part of the consultation to form a judgement on the following topics:

- Height and size of the solar panels which contributes to their visual impact
- Massing of the solar panels which also contributes to their visual impact
- Extent, height and visual impact of the battery storage installations
- Extent, height and visual impact of the switch gear housing and other ancillary equipment
- Extent, height and visual impact of security fencing. There is no indication which buildings and installations are to be surrounded by high metal industrial security fences and gates or where they will be located
- Quantity of industrial and security lighting, its visibility from roads and nearby settlements and light pollution generated
- Percentage of the site that might be under panels
- Quantity of noise generated.

The Applicant presented more detailed information as part of the statutory consultation, including further detail of the location of specific Scheme elements. The information presented by the Applicant at statutory consultation was necessarily preliminary and represented the Scheme at the time of consultation in order to provide an opportunity for feedback on the proposals to influence the Scheme as it was finalised for the Application. The Applicant believes the level of detail presented in the PEIR and other consultation documents was appropriate in this context.

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## Other

There is a risk of negative impact on adjacent residential and other properties (planning blight). This will be more severe for properties located in the proximity of battery storage and substation infrastructure.

The Applicant does not consider the Scheme to constitute planning blight. Based on experience, the Applicant has not found proximity to solar or battery storage to depress house prices.

For technical reasons the boundaries between the initial consultation document and EIA scoping report differ. For further clarity in assessing the implications of the scheme in future consultation, it is requested that more detail and clarification is

This was noted. The Applicant included a single site boundary in plans within the consultation materials for the statutory consultation.

given to the changes to the site boundary in future consultation material and where possible, multiple site boundaries are not published to avoid any confusion. Further information is also sought for the intended use of the land to the west of Waltham Road.

No consideration appears to have been given to the effect of changes in technology in a quickly evolving environment over the lifespan of the project. This could result in further large-scale rounds of disruption on the scale of the original construction as equipment is refurbished or replaced.

The Applicant has designed the Scheme to allow the latest technology to be utilised. Detailed design of the Scheme cannot be confirmed until the tendering process for the design and construction of the Scheme has been completed. For example, due to the rapid pace of technological development in the solar photovoltaic (PV) and energy storage industry, the Scheme could utilise technology which does not currently exist and sufficient flexibility needs to be incorporated into the DCO Application.

To address this, a 'Rochdale Envelope' approach is used, as described in the Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 9 [REF-19]. This involves assessing the maximum (and where relevant, the minimum) parameters for the Scheme where flexibility needs to be retained. The principles and justification for this approach are set out in section 5.2 of **Chapter 5: Environmental Impact Assessment Methodology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

The Application seeks consent for a Scheme, the design of which would be required to be in accordance with the Design Principles provided as an appendix of the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]** and a requirement to the draft DCO secures this, as well as requiring the approval of the detailed design for the Scheme by the relevant local planning authority.

The Scheme's scale, design, access for maintenance, landscape and visual impact, impact on

biodiversity, flood risk and drainage, safety, and amenity impacts such as noise have been outlined in detail in their respective chapters of the Environmental Statement.

### 3.7 Ongoing engagement

3.7.1 Throughout the development process, the Applicant has engaged with stakeholders outside of the non-statutory and statutory consultation periods. Early engagement undertaken ahead of the non-statutory consultation is set out in section 3.2. Details of ongoing engagement with key stakeholders undertaken following the non-statutory consultation and before the start of the statutory consultation, including the composition of each group, when the engagement took place, and a summary of the engagement is provided in **Table 3-14**. Where engagement referenced below is relevant to EIA, further detail is provided as appropriate in the relevant chapter of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

**Table 3-14: Summary of ongoing engagement**

Stakeholders met	Date	Topics discussed
RSPB	18 January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A call to discuss on-site bird surveys and mitigation proposals.</li> </ul>
Chelmsford City Council	28 January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A meeting to provide an update on the Scheme following the non-statutory consultation.</li> </ul>
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	4 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements for Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)</li> <li>• Format of SoCC</li> <li>• Consultation strategy</li> <li>• Timing</li> <li>• Consultation on the SoCC</li> <li>• Planning Performance Agreement</li> <li>• Next steps</li> </ul>
Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	18 March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A meeting to discuss the need for and scope of a potential Minerals Resource Assessment.</li> </ul>
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council	23 March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheme update</li> <li>• Agricultural Land Classification surveys</li> <li>• Design development</li> </ul>

Council, Essex County Council		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental impact assessment</li> <li>• Revised masterplan</li> <li>• Cumulative impacts</li> </ul>
Terling and Fairstead Parish Council	25 March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A meeting to provide an update on the Scheme following the non-statutory consultation and preparations for the statutory consultation.</li> </ul>
Boreham Parish Council	29 March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A meeting to provide an update on the Scheme following the non-statutory consultation and preparations for the statutory consultation.</li> </ul>
Hatfield Peverel Parish Council	1 April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A meeting to provide an update on the Scheme following the non-statutory consultation and preparations for the statutory consultation.</li> </ul>
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	15 April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Statement of Community Consultation</li> <li>• Planning Performance Agreement</li> </ul>
Museum of Power	28 April 2021	A meeting to discuss ways in which Longfield Solar Farm could support the Museum of Power in Maldon.
National Grid	21 May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A meeting to discuss the proposed grid connection at Bulls Lodge Substation.</li> </ul>
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	27 May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheme and programme update</li> <li>• Introduction to the Preliminary Environmental Information Report</li> <li>• Statutory consultation arrangements</li> <li>• Planning Performance Agreement</li> </ul>

## 4 EIA scoping

- 4.1.1 The Applicant notified the Secretary of State under Regulation 8(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2] that the Applicant proposed to provide an environmental statement in respect of the Scheme. The Scheme is therefore “EIA development” as defined by the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 [REF-2]. As a result, the Applicant proceeded to EIA scoping without requesting a screening opinion from the Secretary of State (to confirm whether the Scheme was EIA development). As such, the Applicant prepared a scoping report in support of its application to the Secretary of State for a scoping opinion as to the scope, and level of detail of the information to be provided in its environmental statement.
- 4.1.2 The EIA Scoping Report was developed following initial consultation with a number of statutory consultees and was informed by experience of working on a number of other solar farm projects. Meetings that took place as part of this process are set out in **Table 3-14**.
- 4.1.3 On 30 October 2020 the Applicant submitted its request for a scoping opinion under Regulation 10(1) of the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2] to the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State).
- 4.1.4 Following this, PINS contacted the Applicant to request that a plan included in the Scoping Report be updated to remove a draft watermark. The Applicant therefore resubmitted an updated version of the Scoping Report on 5 November 2020.
- 4.1.5 A scoping opinion was adopted by the Secretary of State on 16 December 2020. This included the formal responses received by the Planning Inspectorate from consultees.
- 4.1.6 Key issues raised in the Scoping Opinion are set out within each technical chapter of the Environmental Statement [**EN010118/APP/6.1**] and a response provided which identifies how and where any comments have been addressed within the ES. All issues have been considered during the EIA process. Following the adoption of the Scoping Opinion, consultation was undertaken with relevant statutory consultees in the preparation of the PEI Report, and have been considered in the preparation of this ES (including where required by the Scoping Opinion).
- 4.1.7 In addition, following receipt of the scoping opinion, the Applicant reviewed the list of consultees contacted by the Planning Inspectorate as part of its consultation on the scoping report. This was to ensure that all organisations contacted by the Planning Inspectorate were included in subsequent consultation activity. The Applicant was not notified of any additional consultation bodies under Regulation 11(1)(c) of the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2].
- 4.1.8 A copy of the letter and the acknowledgment are provided within **Appendix B-1**. A copy of the Scoping Report is available as **Appendix 1A** of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** and the Scoping Opinion as **Appendix 1B** of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

4.1.9 Compliance with the consultation requirements of Regulations 12 and 13 of the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2] is addressed in the following section of this report.



## 5 Development of Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)

### 5.1 Preparation of the SoCC

5.1.1 As prescribed by s47(1) of the PA 2008, the Applicant prepared a statement of community consultation (the SoCC) setting out how it proposed to consult people living in the vicinity of the land affected by the Scheme about its proposal. Before preparing the SoCC to reflect the requirements of s47 of the PA 2008, the Applicant consulted with each local authority that is within s43(1) of the PA 2008 on a draft of the SoCC, as required by s47(2) of the PA 2008. Prior to that formal consultation, the Applicant had also undertaken various discussions on the SoCC with the relevant local authorities as set out in **Table 5-1**. The Applicant then finalised the SoCC, having regard to the responses from local authorities, before publishing it in accordance with s47(6) of the PA 2008.

### 5.2 Identification of local authorities within s43(1) of the PA 2008

5.2.1 The Applicant identified Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council as local authorities within s43(1) of the PA 2008 for the purposes of consultation on the SoCC under section s47(2) of the PA 2008 (the host authorities).

### 5.3 Development of the SoCC

5.3.1 The Applicant's preparation of a draft SoCC considered best practice and guidance from the Planning Inspectorate, early engagement with host authorities, lessons learned from the non-statutory public consultation summarised in chapter 3, and desk research.

5.3.2 This included proactively seeking the views of the host authorities on the Applicant's proposed approach to community consultation during the preparation of the SoCC.

5.3.3 Initially, the Applicant held informal discussions with the host authorities in March 2021. At this time, the Applicant expected to consult in May 2021 and proposed a programme of consultation designed to allow people from across the community to respond, which was also compatible with different levels of social distancing requirements. The Applicant consulted the host authorities on the SoCC between 10 March 2021 and 9 April 2021.

5.3.4 These consultation techniques were developed to comply with the then-COVID 19 alert level set by the Government. At the time of final publication of the SoCC, this was Level 4 – the second highest level of alert.

5.3.5 The Applicant was aware of how important it was to make sure that anyone in the community who wanted to find out more or share their views on the proposals could do so, as well as to provide certainty about how we would consult. The Applicant developed a consultation programme designed to allow people from across the community to respond which was also compatible with different levels of social distancing requirements.

- 5.3.6 The Applicant wrote the SoCC to be flexible and deliverable despite COVID 19 restrictions. It was prepared to offer consultation in the face of uncertainty over the degree of social distancing.
- 5.3.7 The Applicant also informed the local authorities that in-person engagement at physical locations on a voluntary basis, over and above the requirements of this SoCC, would be considered. The nature and type of this activity would depend on the degree to which restrictions had been lifted. The SoCC explicated the means in which the Applicant would publicise the engagement should in person appointments at physical locations be arranged.

#### 5.4 Contents of the draft SoCC

- 5.4.1 The draft SoCC included the following information and proposals for consulting with the local community:
- An overview of the document;
  - A statement of the Applicant's intention to submit a DCO application and details of where to find out more about the planning process;
  - A summary of the Scheme;
  - A definition of consultees under s47 of the PA 2008, including three zones of consultation categorising consultees based on their vicinity to the Scheme;
  - Details of the scope of the consultation as being to seek views on the Scheme, the potential short- and long-term impacts of the Scheme during construction, operations, and decommissioning, and the PEIR;
  - A consultation period to start no earlier than 20 May 2021;
  - Details of the methods the Applicant proposed to engage with the local community, including:
    - Sending a consultation brochure providing a non-technical overview of the scheme, the EIA process, the consultation and planning process, how to take part in the consultation, and proposed next steps to all addresses in consultation zone 1;
    - Hosting a series of webinars, including a presentation regarding the Scheme and an opportunity to ask questions;
    - Launching a virtual exhibition and publishing consultation information on the consultation website;
    - Offering the opportunity to book individual appointments to discuss the Scheme by telephone;
    - Contacting community and voluntary organisations within consultation zone 1 to offer direct engagement and share a briefing pack including sections designed to support the promotion of the consultation through existing communication channels such as social media;
    - Accepting enquiries and responses online through the consultation website, by freephone, freepost or email;
    - Publicising the consultation online and through the local media;

- Compliance with the most up to date legal requirements in relation to public deposits;
  - Details of the Applicant's proposed approach to consultation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including how it would publicise any change in the consultation required due to changes in social distancing requirements; and,
  - Setting out how the Applicant would have regard to comments received and how it would move forward with a DCO application following the statutory consultation.

5.4.2 A copy of the draft SoCC issued to the host authorities for consultation is included in **Appendix C-1**.

## 5.5 Consultation on the draft SoCC

5.5.1 The Applicant wrote to Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council on 10 March 2021 enclosing a copy of the draft SoCC and requesting comments by 9 April 2021.

5.5.2 The local authorities identified as within s43(1) of the PA 2008 therefore received 30 days to respond to the draft SoCC, in accordance with s47(3) of the PA 2008.

5.5.3 A copy of the consultation letter sent as an email to each local authority being consulted at the same time is included in **Appendix C-2**.

## 5.6 Local authority responses to the draft SoCC

5.6.1 The Applicant received responses to the draft SoCC from Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council on 9 April 2021.

5.6.2 This was presented via comments in a covering letter, in the case of Braintree District Council and Essex County Council, and in a table of comments with an attached cover letter – in the case of Chelmsford City Council.

5.6.3 Copies of the respective responses are included in **Appendix C-3**.

## 5.7 Regard had to local authority responses to the draft SoCC

5.7.1 The Applicant has had regard to responses from host authorities consulted on the draft SoCC as required by s47(5) of the PA 2008. Details of the regard had to responses from the host authorities consulted on the SoCC are provided in full in **Appendix C-4**.

5.7.2 In short, the Applicant made the following changes to the SoCC having regard to comments from the host authorities it consulted:

- The Applicant made it clearer how it would cater for people with specific needs, such as where English is not their first language. This included adding a statement that materials in alternative formats, such as an alternative language, will be provided on request;
- The Applicant added section and paragraph numbers throughout the document;
- The Applicant enlarged maps within the document;
- The Applicant added infographics to the Consultation Booklet;

- The Applicant added text to clarify the planning process for NSIPs and the way it would have due regard to responses to the statutory consultation;
- The Applicant added further information about the way that its approach to consultation had been informed by the previous non-statutory consultation;
- The Applicant changed the consultation start date to no earlier than 20 May 2021 to allow more time following the local elections on 6 May 2021. The consultation ultimately took place from 1 June to 13 July 2021;
- The Applicant added text to make it clearer what people could influence through taking part in the consultation, including that people could comment on potential mitigation measures and the benefits of the Scheme through the consultation;
- The Applicant added the Ramblers and CPRE Essex to the list of 'additional organisations' included in the SoCC; and,
- The Applicant added further detail of the consultation materials.

5.7.3 The Applicant did not incorporate certain changes suggested in the host authorities' consultation responses. These instances, along with the Applicant's reasons for not making these changes, are summarised below:

- The Applicant did not include provision for a Community Liaison Group (CLG) in the SoCC. This is because it believes that the most appropriate time to establish a CLG would be during the construction phase for the project, as they are most effective for discussing ongoing construction and operational issues;
- The Applicant did not include details of which local authorities it had approached for member meetings within the SoCC. The Applicant believes this is more appropriate to include in the Consultation Report;
- The Applicant made consultation documents available in hard copy at the locations set out in 6.4.11 rather than providing them to parish councils, as it considered this would be more effective in making the documents available to the wider public; and,
- The Applicant did not include a statement of how it would treat petitions because the document already set out that responses should be individual.

## 5.8 Publication of the SoCC

- 5.8.1 As prescribed by s47(6) of the PA 2008, the Applicant made the SoCC available online at the consultation website, **Appendix L-1**, from 1 June 2021.
- 5.8.2 The Government provided guidance on SoCCs which confirmed that the requirement to make the SoCC available for public inspection could be met by making documents available for inspection online, with hard copies being made available on request in line with MHCLG guidance on procedural requirements for major infrastructure projects [REF-7], as specified in the SoCC.
- 5.8.3 The Applicant also publicised the SoCC's availability in newspapers circulated in the vicinity of the land, as prescribed by s47(6) of the PA 2008. Details of the publication of these notices are included in **Table 5-2**. Copies of the final SoCC notices as published (which clearly confirm the name of the publication and the date) are provided within **Appendix D-2**.

**Table 5-2 Publication of notice of availability of SoCC**

<b>Date published</b>	<b>Newspaper</b>
27 May 2021	Braintree and Witham Times
27 May 2021	Chelmsford and Mid Essex Times
27 May 2021	Essex Chronicle

## 6 Statutory consultation

### 6.1 Overview of statutory consultation

- 6.1.1 The Applicant conducted a period of statutory consultation on the Scheme from 1 June 2021 until 13 July 2021.
- 6.1.2 The purpose of the consultation was to seek the views of statutory consultees and the public on the Scheme; the potential short and long-term impacts of the Scheme during construction, operations, and decommissioning; the contribution the Scheme could make to the local community; and the PEIR.
- 6.1.3 The Applicant conducted consultation under s42, s47 and s48 of the PA 2008 and Regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2] in parallel. This meant that all materials made available for consultation under s47 and s48 of the PA 2008 were available to consultees under s42 of the PA 2008 and Regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2].
- 6.1.4 Initially, the consultation was preliminarily scheduled to take place in early May 2021. However, the start of the consultation period was delayed until after the local elections on 6 May 2021. The consultation then took place from 1 June 2021 until 13 July 2021.
- 6.1.5 The Applicant altered the dates of the consultation period at the request of local authorities (raised as part of ongoing engagement) that the proposed Longfield Solar Farm is located within.
- 6.1.6 Consultees were provided with 42 days to comment, which is greater than the 28 calendar days required to be provided for comments as prescribed by s45(2) of the PA 2008 and Regulation 4(3)(i) of the APFP Regulations [REF-1].
- 6.1.7 The Applicant consulted during a period when the COVID 19 pandemic meant there were restrictions on holding public meetings and events. While the Government had at that time announced a roadmap for ending the restrictions, the dates for this were not fixed. The timing of the end of restrictions depended on four tests set by the Government in its COVID-19 Response: Spring 2021 [REF-16].
- 6.1.8 The Applicant was aware of how important it was to make sure that anyone in the community who wanted to find out more or share their views on the proposals could do so, as well as to provide certainty about how it would consult. A flexible consultation programme was designed to allow people from across the community to respond, which was compatible with different levels of social distancing requirements.
- 6.1.9 In preparing the approach to consultation, consideration was given to Government guidance on COVID 19. The Applicant also considered advice from the local authorities where the proposed Longfield Solar Farm is located, the results of the non-statutory consultation, and best practice guidance such as the National Infrastructure Planning Association's paper Development Consent Orders and the Coronavirus Pandemic (21 April 2020) [REF-8].
- 6.1.10 During the preparation for the consultation period, the alert level changed to Level 1 or 2, which meant the Government considered the number of COVID 19 cases to be lower. The Applicant elected to hold in-person engagement at physical locations on a voluntary basis, over and above the requirements of the SoCC. Further details of this can be seen in section 6.8.

## 6.2 Consultation under s42 of the PA 2008

6.2.1 S42 of the PA 2008 requires the Applicant to consult with the prescribed consultees (s42(1)(a)), landowners, those with an interest in the land and those who would or might be entitled to make a relevant claim (s42(1)(d) and s44) and relevant local authorities (s42(1)(b)).

### *Identification of consultees under s42(1)(a)*

6.2.2 Prescribed consultees are defined in Schedule 1 of the APFP Regulations. This also makes provision through a ‘circumstances’ test for whether there is a requirement to consult a specific party. **Appendix E-1** sets out each consultee prescribed in Schedule 1 of the APFP Regulations [REF-1], whether they were included in the consultation, and justification for that inclusion. Regard was had to the Planning Inspectorate’s Advice Note Three: EIA Notification and Consultation [REF-9] in identifying the consultation bodies.

### *Identification of consultees under s42(1)(b)*

6.2.3 S42(1)(b) of the PA 2008 requires the Applicant to consult with the local authorities identified in s43 of the PA 2008, which sets out four categories of authority:

- A is a neighbouring local authority (s43(2)) that shares a boundary with a unitary council or lower-tier district ‘B’ council within whose area development is situated;
- B is either a unitary council or a lower-tier district council in which the development is situated – a host local authority;
- C is an upper-tier county council in which the development is situated – a host local authority; and,
- D is either a unitary council or an upper tier county council which shares a boundary with a host ‘C’ authority – a neighbouring local authority (s43(2A)).

6.2.4 Details of the identification of relevant local authorities, including whether they are an A, B, C or D authority, and the criteria for their identification, are included in **Table 6-1**. **Figure 6-1** displays the relationship between the A and B authorities and **Figure 6-2** displays the relationship between the C and D authorities.

**Table 6-1 Identification of consultees under s42(1)(b)**

Name	A, B, C or D authority	Criteria for identification
Babergh District Council	A	Babergh District Council is a lower tier district authority which shares a boundary with one B authority, Braintree District Council.
Basildon Borough Council	A	Basildon Borough Council is a lower tier authority which shares a boundary

with a B authority, Chelmsford City Council.

Braintree District Council	B	Braintree District Council is a lower tier district authority in which part of the Scheme is located.
Brentwood Borough Council	A	Brentwood Borough Council is a lower tier authority which shares a boundary with a B authority, Chelmsford City Council.
Cambridgeshire County Council	D	Cambridgeshire County Council is an upper tier county authority which shares a boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.
Chelmsford City Council	B	Chelmsford City Council is a lower tier district authority in which part of the Scheme is located.
Colchester Borough Council	A	Colchester Borough Council is a lower tier authority which shares a boundary with one B authority, Braintree District Council.
Epping Forest District Council	A	Epping Forest District Council is a lower tier district authority which shares a boundary with one B authority, Chelmsford City Council.
Greater London Authority	D	The Greater London Authority is a regional governance body which shares a boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.
Hertfordshire County Council	D	Hertfordshire County Council is an upper tier county authority which shares a boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.
London Borough of Enfield	D	London Borough of Enfield is a London Borough which shares a boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.
London Borough of Havering	D	London Borough of Havering is a London Borough which shares a boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.



London Borough of Redbridge	D	London Borough of Redbridge is a London Borough which shares a boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.
London Borough of Waltham Forest	D	London Borough of Waltham Forest is a London Borough which shares a boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.
Maldon District Council	A	Maldon District Council is a lower tier district authority which shares a boundary with two B authorities, Chelmsford City Council and Braintree District Council.
Medway Council	D	Medway Council is a unitary authority which shares a boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.
Essex County Council	C	Essex County Council is an upper tier county authority in which part of the Scheme is located.
Rochford District Council	A	Rochford District Council is a lower tier district authority which shares a boundary with one B authority, Chelmsford City Council.
South Cambridgeshire District Council	A	South Cambridgeshire District Council is a lower tier district authority which shares a boundary with one B authority, Braintree District Council.
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	D	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is a unitary authority which shares a boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.
Suffolk County Council	D	Suffolk County Council is an upper tier county authority which shares a boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.
Thurrock Council	D	Thurrock Council is a unitary authority which shares a boundary with a C authority, Rochford District Council.
Uttlesford District Council	A	Uttlesford District Council is a lower tier district authority which shares a

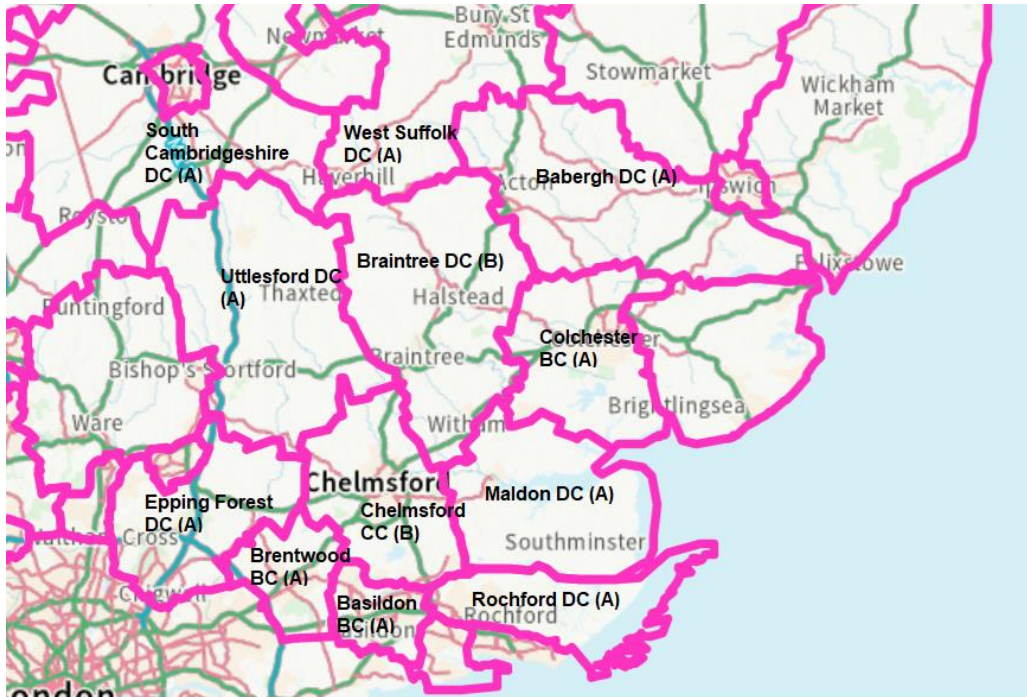
boundary with a C authority, Essex County Council.

West Suffolk Council

A

West Suffolk Council is a lower tier district authority which shares a boundary with one B authority, Basildon Borough Council.

**Figure 6-1 Relationships between A and B authorities under s43 of the PA 2008**



**Figure 6-2 Relationships between C and D authorities under s43 of the PA 2008**



### *Identification of consultees under s42(1)(d)*

- 6.2.5 S42(1)(d) of the PA 2008 requires the Applicant to consult each person who is within one or more of the categories set out in s44 of the PA 2008 with respect to the Order limits. This requires the developer to consult with landowners, lessees, tenants or occupiers (Category 1 persons, as per s44(1)); those with an interest in the land or certain powers with respect to the land (Category 2 persons, s44(2)); and those who the Applicant thinks would or might be entitled to make a relevant claim under s44(4) (Category 3 persons).
- 6.2.6 A list of land interests consulted (noting their interest in the land) during the statutory consultation phase is provided in **Appendix E-2**. Persons as identified within **Appendix E-2** and the **Book of Reference [EN010118/APP/4.3]** (at that time) were consulted.
- 6.2.7 The Category 1 persons were identified via a diligent inquiry process covering six research methods: title information, land interest questionnaire, environmental impact assessment information, host and Companies House searches, site investigations, and internet-based research. Category 2 were identified via: title information, requests for information, site visits, and collaboration with the wider project team to identify any interests not identified through the land referencing process. This process provided a landowners' **Book of Reference [EN010118/APP/4.3]**.
- 6.2.8 Category 3 persons were identified as persons: who may be able to make a claim pursuant to Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 (that is, people who live outside the Order limits but whose property may be sufficiently close to be depreciated in value due to noise, vibration, smells, fumes, smoke or light emissions or discharge onto land caused by the use of the authorised project once it is in operation); persons who may be able to make a claim for injurious affection under s10 of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 or s152(3) of the Planning Act 2008.
- 6.2.9 Through diligent inquiry, the Applicant considers that there are no persons who might be entitled to make a relevant claim as a Category 3 interest pursuant to Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973. Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 relates to people who live outside of the Order limits but whose property may be sufficiently close to be depreciated in value due to noise, vibration, smells, smoke or light emissions caused by the use of the Scheme once it is in operation.
- 6.2.10 The Applicant considers that there are no interests that have a relevant claim under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 197 in relation to each of the following factors:
- Noise – in light of the results of a noise assessment carried out as part of the Environmental Statement for the Application, there are no Category 3 land interests as part of the proposed Scheme. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 11 of the Environmental Statement: Noise and Vibration [EN010118/APP/6.1]**;
  - Vibration – in light of the results of an assessment of vibration carried out as part of the Environmental Statement for the Application, there are no Category 3 land interests as part of the proposed Scheme. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 11 of the Environmental Statement: Noise and Vibration [EN010118/APP/6.1]**;

- Fumes – in light of the results of an assessment of the proposed Scheme’s impact on air quality and the emission of fumes as a result of the proposed Scheme, there are no Category 3 land interests as part of the proposed Scheme. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 14 of the Environmental Statement: Air Quality [EN010118/APP/6.1]**;
- Smoke – in light of the results of an assessment of the proposed Scheme’s impact on air quality and the emission of smoke as a result of the proposed Scheme, there are no Category 3 land interests as part of the proposed Scheme. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 14 of the Environmental Statement: Air Quality [EN010118/APP/6.1]**; and,
- Light emissions – in light of the results of an assessment of the proposed Scheme’s impact on visual amenity, there are no Category 3 land interests as part of the proposed Scheme. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 10 of the Environmental Statement: Landscape and Visual Amenity [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

6.2.11 All relevant interests with the potential to make a claim under Section 10 (s10) of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 because they are in benefit of a restrictive right or covenant over land within the Order limits, have been included within the **Book of Reference [EN010106/APP/4.3]**.

6.2.12 All relevant interests with the potential to make a claim under Section 152(3) of the PA 2008 because they are in benefit of a restrictive right or covenant over land within the Order land, have been included within the **Book of Reference [EN010106/APP/4.3]**.

6.2.13 **Appendix E-2** includes three entities which were consulted as part of the statutory consultation but which are no longer in the Book of Reference **[EN010118/APP/4.3]**. This is because these entities no longer hold an interest in the Order limits. This is noted within the relevant entry in **Appendix E-2**.

6.2.14 In addition, **Appendix E-2** also contains two entities which have an interest in land that is within the Order limits but not within the Order land (shown white on the **Land Plans, sheet 7 [EN010118/APP/2.1]**). This is noted within the relevant entry in **Appendix E-2**, and these parties were consulted as required under section 42(1)(d).

6.2.15 **Appendix E-2** also identifies statutory and utility undertakers who were consulted under section 42(1)(d) as it was considered they had the potential to hold an interest in the Order land. Where the Applicant has subsequently confirmed those undertakers do not have an interest in the Order land, they no longer appear in the **Book of Reference (Part 6) [EN010118/APP/4.3]** and this has been noted in the relevant entry in **Appendix E-2**.

### *Consultation under s42 of the PA 2008*

- 6.2.16 The Applicant wrote formally to all consultees identified under s42 of the PA 2008 to notify them of the consultation.
- 6.2.17 The Applicant wrote by recorded delivery to consultees under s42(1)(a) and s42(1)(b) of the PA 2008 on 28 May 2021, setting out the background to the Scheme, the Applicant's intention to submit a DCO application, the fact that the Applicant had identified them as a consultee under s42(1)(a) or s42(1)(b) of the PA 2008, the documents being provided as part of the consultation, and how to respond to the consultation. A follow up email was also issued to all consultees ensuring they also had digital versions of the materials.
- 6.2.18 The Applicant enclosed with the letter a copy of a consultation booklet, which provided more information about the Scheme and included a plan showing the proposed Order limits of the Scheme and a copy of a consultation questionnaire. A notice of the proposed application which was publicised in accordance with s48 of the PA 2008 and the requirements set out in Regulation 4 of the APFP Regulations [REF-1] was also provided to consultation bodies as required by Regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2].
- 6.2.19 The letter also confirmed that these documents, alongside the PEIR and its non-technical summary, were available electronically on a website maintained by the Applicant [**Appendix L-1**], and the website address was provided. This information was provided in an electronic form to minimise the provision of paper or electronic documentation which would have been physically handled during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 6.2.20 The Applicant wrote by recorded delivery to consultees under s42(1)(d) of the PA 2008 on 28 May 2021 setting out the background to the Scheme, the Applicant's intention to submit a DCO application, the fact that the Applicant had identified them as a consultee under s42(1)(d) of the PA 2008, the documents being provided as part of the consultation, and how to respond to the consultation.
- 6.2.21 The Applicant enclosed with the letter a copy of a consultation booklet, which provided more information about the Scheme and included a plan showing the proposed red line boundary of the Scheme and a copy of a consultation questionnaire. The letter also confirmed that these documents, alongside the PEIR and its non-technical summary, were available electronically on a website maintained by the Applicant, and the website address was provided. This information was provided in an electronic form to minimise the provision of paper or electronic documentation which would have been physically handled during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 6.2.22 Delivery of consultation letters was tracked by the Applicant. On 29 May 2021, the Applicant was contacted by Essex Police to note that the consultation letter sent to it had been received at the Southend on Sea Borough Council offices but confirming receipt of the letter.
- 6.2.23 Copies of the letters sent to consultees under s42 of the PA 2008 are included in **Appendix F-1**. Consultation materials sent to consultees under s42 of the PA 2008 are available to view in **Appendices G-3** and **G-4**.

### *Further engagement with consultees under s42*

- 6.2.24 The Applicant also had further engagement with a number of consultees under s42 of the PA 2008 during the consultation period.

6.2.25 **Table 6-2** summarises further engagement with consultees under s42 of the PA 2008 during the consultation period.

**Table 6-2 Further engagement with consultees under s42 of the PA 2008 during the consultation period**

<b>Stakeholders engaged:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Summary of engagement:</b>
All Essex County councillors, all Braintree District councillors, all Chelmsford City councillors, and all parish councils in the area of the Scheme	1 June 2021	The Applicant shared a briefing pack via email detailing the consultation, how people can take part, the consultation booklet, SoCC summary poster, and feedback form with freepost return envelope. The correspondence invited further engagement with the consultation.
Chelmsford City Council	11 June 2021	A virtual briefing on the Scheme as presented at the statutory consultation for elected members.
National Highways	11 June 2021	A meeting to discuss potential cumulative impacts from the A12 widening scheme and Longfield Solar Farm.
National Grid	17 June 2021	A virtual meeting to discuss the proposed grid connection at Bulls Lodge Substation.
Braintree District Council, Essex County Council	18 June 2021	A technical meeting to discuss noise monitoring, noise generation and noise baseline.
Braintree District Council	18 June 2021	A virtual briefing on the Scheme as presented at the statutory consultation for elected members.
Essex County Council	23 June 2021	A virtual briefing on the Scheme as presented at the statutory consultation for elected members.
Environment Agency	23 June 2021	Consultee requested extension to consultation. The Environment Agency were informed their response date would be extended by one week, until 20 July 2021.
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	25 June 2021	A technical meeting to discuss baseline and built heritage assets and archaeology.
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford	29 June 2021	A technical meeting to disc. Summary of assessment undertaken, landscape character, visual assessment and summary of further work for EIA.

City Council, Essex  
County Council

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Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2021	A technical meeting to discuss flood risk and drainage.
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### 6.3 Section 46 (notifying the Planning Inspectorate)

- 6.3.1 Pursuant to s46 of the PA 2008, the Applicant must send the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) the s42 consultation documents on or before commencing the s42 consultation. The Applicant wrote to the Planning Inspectorate on 27 May 2021 to provide the documents listed in 6.2.13 – 6.2.20.
- 6.3.2 Alongside these documents, the Applicant provided a covering letter which set out the background to the Scheme, the Applicant's intention to submit a DCO application, details of the documents included and the fact they would be sent to consultees under s42 of the PA 2008, and a summary of the consultation process.
- 6.3.3 The Applicant received an acknowledgement of the receipt of its notification under s46 of the PA 2008 from the Planning Inspectorate on 2 June 2021.
- 6.3.4 A copy of the letter sent to the Planning Inspectorate is provided in **Appendix G-1** alongside the accompanying consultation materials.

### 6.4 Section 47 (local community consultation)

- 6.4.1 The Applicant consulted with the local community in accordance with the SoCC provided in **Appendix D-1**, as prescribed by s47(7) of the PA 2008.

#### *Definition of consultees*

- 6.4.2 For the purposes of community consultation, the Applicant defined three zones of consultation. These are described in **Table 6-3**.

**Table 6-3 Zones of consultation**

Zone	Parameters
Zone 1	<p>Any person or group likely to be directly impacted by the proposed Longfield Solar Farm by virtue of their living or working in proximity to the site.</p> <p>This zone is defined by the boundaries of the parishes of Boreham, Fairstead, Great and Little Leighs, Hatfield Peverel, Little Waltham and Terling as shown in <b>Figure 6-3</b> below.</p>
Zone 2	<p>People living and working in the host local authority areas of Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council outside of consultation zone 1.</p>
Zone 3	<p>Neighbouring districts within the administrative areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colchester Borough Council</li> </ul>



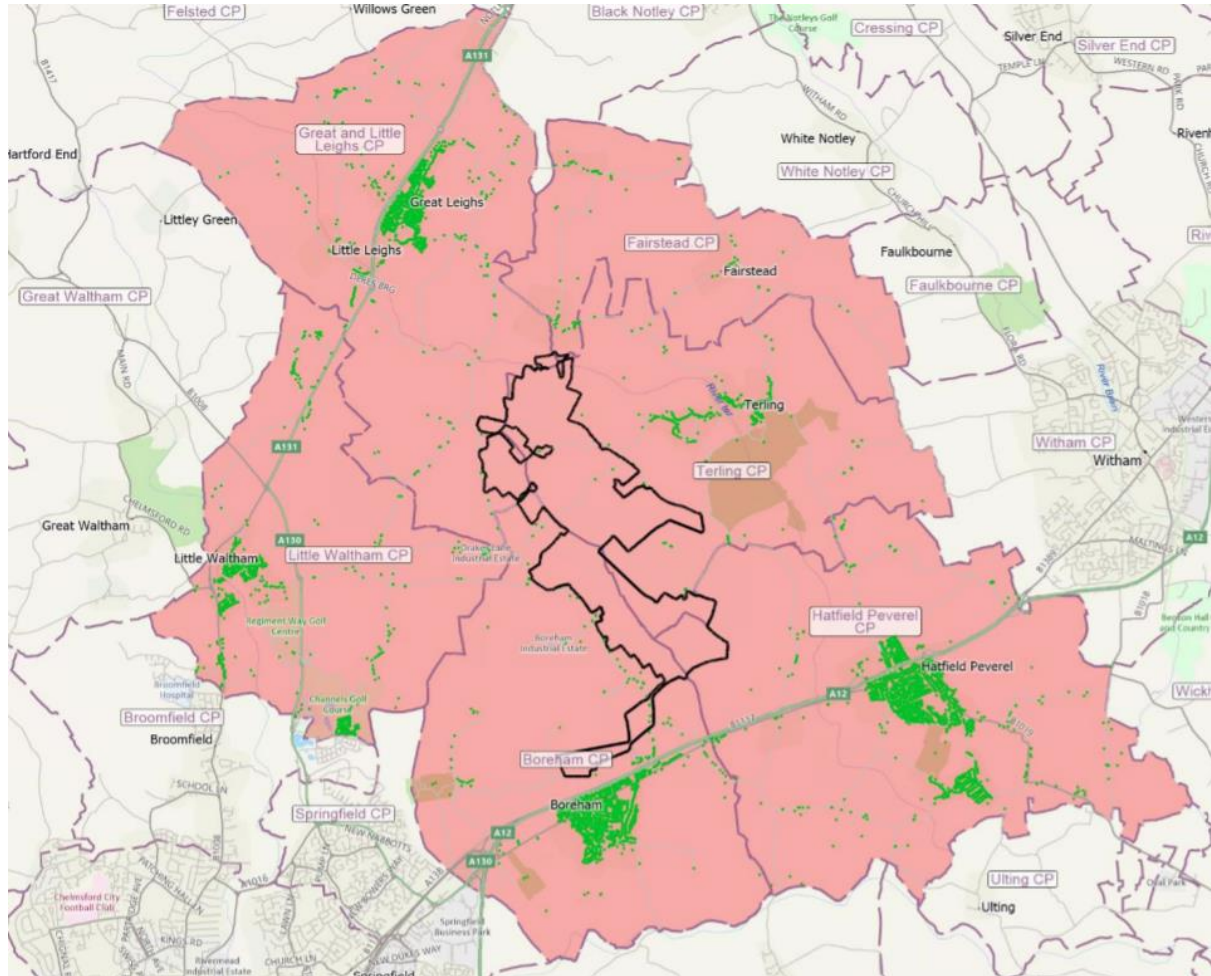
- Maldon District Council
- Rochford District Council
- Basildon Borough Council
- Babergh District Council
- Brentwood Borough Council
- Epping Forest District Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Uttlesford District Council
- West Suffolk Council

Neighbouring counties and unitary authorities within the administrative areas of:

- Suffolk County Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- London Borough of Enfield
- London Borough of Waltham Forest
- London Borough of Redbridge
- London Borough of Havering
- Medway Council
- Southend on Sea Borough Council
- Thurrock Council
- The Greater London Authority

6.4.3 In addition, the Applicant consulted a range of relevant community organisations and other relevant bodies in the vicinity of the Scheme. These were identified through a combination of desk research, engagement with local authorities and other stakeholders, and the non-statutory consultation. A list of these organisations is included in **Appendix H-1**.

**Figure 6-3 Area of consultation zone 1 shown in extract. The site boundary is shown in black.**



**Consultation activity**

6.4.4 The Applicant used a range of techniques to consult the community. These were designed to allow people with different needs across the community to take part in the consultation in a way that is convenient to them whilst complying with Government guidance on COVID-19. These are set out in **Table 6-4**.

**Table 6-4 Community consultation publicity and activity**

Zone	Consultation publicity	Consultation activity
1	<p><b><u>The Applicant:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wrote to all addresses within consultation zone 1 at the start of the consultation period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sent a copy of a consultation booklet providing a non-technical overview of the proposed Longfield Solar Farm, the EIA process, the consultation and planning process, how to take part in the consultation, and proposed next steps to all addresses in consultation zone 1,</li> </ul>

alongside a consultation questionnaire and pre-addressed Freepost envelope. This ensured that people living in the consultation zone had direct access to the core consultation information and could respond to the consultation.

- 
- Wrote to elected representatives, parish councils, and community groups within the zone with details of the consultation at the start of the consultation period. This included a consultation information pack designed to support stakeholders promoting consultation through their own existing communication channels such as social media feeds.
- 
- Hosted a virtual public exhibition, available at: the consultation website, **Appendix L-1**.
- 
- Advertised the consultation in the following newspapers circulating in the consultation zone: the Braintree and Witham Times (27 May 2021), Chelmsford and Mid Essex Times (27 May 2021), Essex Chronicle (27 May 2021).
- 
- Hosted a series of webinars offering an opportunity to ask questions about the Scheme. Further details of the webinars are included in **Table 6-5**.
- 
- Sent local broadcasters a press release for the scheme.
- 
- Invited residents of consultation zone 1 to book an individual appointment to discuss the proposals by telephone, providing an opportunity for those without access to the internet to ask questions. Details of how to book an appointment were included in the consultation booklet and consultation advertising.
- 
- Published details of the consultation online at the consultation website, **Appendix L-1**
- 
- Provided copies of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report for review, as well as copies of the consultation booklet and questionnaire, at deposit points in the local area (as permitted by Government guidance).

- Briefed elected members from Braintree District Council on 18 June 2021, elected members from Essex County Council on 23 June and elected members from Chelmsford City Council on 11 June 2021.

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- Briefed representatives from the parishes of Boreham, Fairstead, Great and Little Leighs, Hatfield Peverel, Little Waltham and Terling prior to the consultation commencing, and offered a follow-up briefing during the statutory consultation period.

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- Contacted community and voluntary organisations within consultation zone 1 to offer direct engagement and share details of the consultation. These organisations are listed in **Appendix H-1**.

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- Published all consultation materials online at the consultation website, **Appendix L-1**.

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- Invited enquiries and responses online through the consultation website, by freephone (0808 168 7925), freepost (Longfield Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUUJ-AGBY, c/o SEC Newgate UK Communications, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE) or email. These details were included in all consultation materials. This provided a variety of means for consultees to respond in a way convenient to them.

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## 2 **The Applicant:**

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- Wrote to all district and county councillors at Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council at the
- Hosted a virtual public exhibition, available at the consultation website, **Appendix L-1**.

start of the consultation period;

- 
- Wrote to all parish councils within the consultation zone at the start of the consultation period;
  - Hosted a series of webinars offering an opportunity to ask questions about the Scheme. Further details of the webinars are included in **Table 6-5**.
- 
- Shared a consultation information pack designed to support stakeholders promoting consultation through their own existing communication channels such as social media feeds with local authorities, parish councils, and community groups within the zone.
  - Briefed elected members from Braintree District Council on 18 June 2021, elected members from Essex County Council on 23 June and elected members from Chelmsford City Council on 11 June 2021.
- 
- Advertised the consultation in the following newspapers circulating in the consultation zone: the Braintree and Witham Times (27 May 2021), Chelmsford and Mid Essex Times (27 May 2021), Essex Chronicle (27 May 2021), The London Gazette (1 June 2021), the Guardian (1 June 2021).
  - Published all consultation materials online at the consultation website, **Appendix L-1**.
- 
- Sent a press release to regional and local broadcasters.
  - Invited enquiries and responses online through the consultation website, by freephone (0808 168 7925), freepost (Longfield Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUJJ-AGBY, c/o SEC Newgate UK Communications, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE) or email. These details were included in all consultation materials. This provided a variety of means for consultees to respond in a way convenient to them.
- 
- Advertised the consultation on social media through posts on the Braintree and Witham Times online website, the Chelmsford and Mid Essex Times online website, and the Essex Chronicle online website.
- 
- Published details of the consultation online at the consultation website, **Appendix L-1**.

<p>3</p>	<p><b><u>The Applicant:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wrote to the Leader and Chief Executive of local authorities within the zone at the start of the consultation period.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>The Applicant:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hosted a virtual public exhibition, available at the consultation website, <b>Appendix L-1.</b></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advertised the consultation in the following newspapers circulating in the consultation zone: the Braintree and Witham Times (27 May 2021), Chelmsford and Mid Essex Times (27 May 2021), Essex Chronicle (27 May 2021), The London Gazette (1 June 2021), the Guardian (1 June 2021).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hosted a series of webinars offering an opportunity to ask questions about the Scheme. Further details of the webinars are included in <b>Table 6-5.</b></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sent a press release to regional and local broadcasters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Published all consultation materials online at the consultation website, <b>Appendix L-1.</b></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advertised the consultation on social media through posts on the Braintree and Witham Times online website, the Chelmsford and Mid Essex Times online website, and the Essex Chronicle online website.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invited enquiries and responses online through the consultation website, by freephone (0808 168 7925), freepost (Longfield Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUJJ-AGBY, c/o SEC Newgate UK Communications, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE) or email. These details were included in all consultation materials. This provided a variety of means for consultees to respond in a way convenient to them.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Published details of the consultation online at the consultation website, <b>Appendix L-1.</b></li> </ul>	

6.4.5 **Table 6-5** sets out details of webinars held during the consultation period. A recording of a webinar on each topic was made available on the consultation website:

**Table 6-5 Webinars held as part of the consultation**

Time and date	Location of recording
14:00 on 5 June 2021	This recording can be provided on request.

19:00 on 10 June 2021

This recording can be provided on request.

- 6.4.6 The Applicant scheduled webinars at different times of the week and published recordings of the webinars online to account for different consultees' availabilities.
- 6.4.7 The webinars which took place on 5 June 2021 and 10 June 2021 were scheduled at the start of the consultation period. Details of these webinars were included in the SoCC, the consultation booklet, and on the website. Each of these webinars included a presentation by the Applicant and the Project Team covering a variety of topics, followed by a question-and-answer session.

#### *Consultation materials*

- 6.4.8 The Applicant made the following materials available as part of consultation with the local community:
- A consultation booklet providing a non-technical overview of the proposed Longfield Solar Farm, the EIA process, the consultation and planning process, and proposed next steps;
  - A virtual exhibition setting out information about the Scheme and how to take part in the consultation, available on the consultation website;
  - Presentations given as part of webinars;
  - A 3D model visualising the Scheme in relation to residential properties;
  - The PEIR, accompanied by a non-technical summary; and,
  - A consultation questionnaire designed to collect responses to the consultation.
- 6.4.9 Copies of the consultation booklet, alongside the consultation questionnaire and a pre-addressed Freepost envelope, were sent to all addresses within consultation zone 1. This was to ensure that people living in consultation zone 1 had direct access to the core consultation information and could respond in a convenient manner.
- 6.4.10 In line with the Government's confirmation that placing materials on a website maintained by or on behalf of the Applicant meets the requirement to place information on public deposit in the Infrastructure Planning (Publication and Notification of Applications etc.) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (the 2020 Regulations) [REF-10], all consultation materials were made available online at the consultation website [**Appendix L-1**] for the duration of the consultation period. The Applicant confirms that the website is maintained by or on behalf of the Applicant. This was reflected in the SoCC.
- 6.4.11 In addition, the Applicant identified opportunities to make hard copies of consultation materials available at deposit points during the consultation period. The PEIR was available to view at:
- Hatfield Peverel Library, The St, Hatfield Peverel, Chelmsford CM3 2DP;
  - Witham Library, 18 Newland St, Witham CM8 2AQ;

- Chelmsford Library, Chelmsford County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford CM1 1QH; and,
- St John's Church Little Leighs, Church Lane, Little Leighs, Chelmsford CM3 1PQ.

6.4.12 Copies of the consultation materials are available to view in **Appendices G-2 to G-6**.

#### *Collection of responses*

6.4.13 To capture participants' feedback, the Applicant produced a consultation questionnaire inviting comments on the different elements of the Scheme. The questionnaire was made available by direct mail to people living in consultation zone 1, online at the consultation website and on request.

6.4.14 The questionnaire asked the following questions:

- Do you have any comments on our proposals for the solar energy generation element of the scheme?
- Do you have any comments on our proposals for the battery storage element of the scheme?
- Do you have any comments on our proposals for connecting to the national electricity system, including laying cables underground and extending Bulls Lodge National Grid Substation?
- Do you have any comments about the potential environmental impacts and our proposals for enhancements and mitigation during:
  - the construction of Longfield Solar Farm?
  - the operation of Longfield Solar Farm?
  - the decommissioning of Longfield Solar Farm?
- Do you have any comments on the contribution that the scheme will make to the local community?
- Do you have any comments on the potential biodiversity enhancements set out on pages 28-29 of the Consultation Booklet?
- Do you have any further comments?

6.4.15 Consultees were able to respond by completing a questionnaire online at the consultation website or returning a completed questionnaire by email or to Longfield Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUJJ-AGBY, c/o SEC Newgate UK Communications, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE.

6.4.16 The Applicant also accepted written responses by email and by letter to Longfield Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUJJ-AGBY, c/o SEC Newgate UK Communications, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE.

#### *Compliance with the SoCC*

6.4.1 Details of the way in which the Applicant complied with commitments made in the SoCC are set out in **Appendix D-3**. In short, the Applicant believes it complied with all commitments made in the SoCC.



## 6.5 Section 48 (newspaper notices)

- 6.5.1 S48 of the PA 2008 imposes a duty on the Applicant to publish a notice of the proposed application in accordance with Regulation 4 of the APFP Regulations.
- 6.5.2 **Table 6-6** includes details of the newspapers used to publicise the proposed application, including national, local, and the London Gazette.
- 6.5.3 The notice published under s48 of the PA 2008 gave the deadline of 13 July 2021 for responses (more than 28 clear days from the date when the last notice was published).

**Table 6-6 Publication of newspaper notices under s48 of the PA 2008**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Week 1:</b>	<b>Week 2 (local only):</b>
<b>National Newspaper</b>		
The London Gazette	1 June 2021	N/A
The Guardian	1 June 2021	N/A
<b>Local Newspaper</b>		
The Braintree and Witham Times	27 May 2021	3 June 2021
Chelmsford and Mid Essex Times	27 May 2021 – 26 June 2021 (continuous insertion)	
Essex Chronicle	27 May 2021	3 June 2021

- 6.5.4 The Chelmsford and Mid Essex Times is an online-only publication. The Applicant included it alongside the Braintree and Witham Times and the Essex Chronicle, which both are both print publications circulating in the area of the Scheme, to provide additional coverage in the area of the Scheme. As such, the notice was inserted continuously in the Chelmsford and Mid Essex Times over the period of 27 May 2021 to 26 June 2021.
- 6.5.5 Copies of the newspaper notices as noted in **Table 6-6** are provided within **Appendix I-1**.
- 6.5.6 In accordance with Regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2], the Applicant issued a copy of the section 48 notice to EIA consultation bodies as defined in Regulation 3 of the EIA Regulations 2017 [REF-2] (being those bodies prescribed under s42(1)(a) of the PA 2008 and set out in Schedule 1 of the APFP Regulations [REF-1] and the authorities within s43 of the PA 2008). An example of the letter sent to these bodies is included in **Appendix F-1**. This took place at the same time as publishing notice of the proposed application under s48(1) of the PA 2008, and as the consultation under s42 of the PA 2008 as set out in 6.2. The s48 notice was sent to the prescribed consultees as part of the consultation materials as set out in paragraphs 6.2.10 to 6.2.17.

## 6.6 Supplementary consultation activity

- 6.6.1 In addition to the community consultation carried out in compliance with the SoCC as set out in **Table 6-4**, the Applicant carried out further consultation on a voluntary basis after the COVID 19 threat level was lowered to allow a maximum of 6 persons to meet indoors, and 30 outdoors.
- 6.6.2 The Applicant carried out the following additional engagement during the statutory consultation:
- Public consultation events on 8 June 2021, 9 June 2021, 12 June 2021, 15 June 2021, 17 June 2021, 29 June 2021 and 30 June 2021;
  - A meeting with Terling Church of England Primary School on 8 July 2021;
  - Site visits to residential properties in the vicinity of the Scheme between 1 June and 13 July 2021; and,
  - A meeting with local organisation Museum of Power on 9 June 2021.

- 6.6.3 Public consultation events were subsequently scheduled, after the consultation period had begun. Attendees were encouraged to book a slot on their day of choice on *Eventbrite*, an online booking system. Slots were available from 10:00 – 17:00. A maximum of 6 persons were permitted to attend each slot in order to meet COVID 19 guidelines.
- 6.6.4 Upon arrival, attendees were invited to sign in and provide their contact details, should they wish. They were then given a copy of the consultation booklet and questionnaire, before being permitted to enter the exhibition indoors. After viewing the exhibition, attendees were able to ask members of the Project Team any questions they had. Members of the Team were located outside the venue, under a marquee, to maintain social distancing and meet COVID 19 guidelines.
- 6.6.5 A 3D model was available to view at each consultation hub date. Shown on a monitor, it provided attendees the opportunity to visualise the scheme and viewpoints, particularly in relation to their property.
- 6.6.6 The consultation hub dates were fully COVID 19 compliant, with members of the Team wearing masks when necessary, hand sanitiser provided to all attendees and surfaces wiped regularly by members of the Project Team.
- 6.6.7 The public consultation events were held on 8 June 2021, 9 June 2021, 12 June 2021, 15 June 2021, 17 June 2021, 29 June 2021 and 30 June 2021.
- 6.6.8 Venues were selected on the basis of their proximity to the site, parish interest in the scheme and to ensure residents from various areas were able to attend. Several venues were approached including Boreham Village Hall, St John’s Church Little Leighs, St Mary the Virgin Church Great Leighs. However, these venues were not selected due to either lack of availability or failing to meet accessibility requirements.
- 6.6.9 The latter two consultation hub events, on 29 June 2021 at Terling Village Hall and on 30 June 2021 at Great Leighs Village Hall, were additionally scheduled by the Applicant to ensure those who were unaware of the previous consultation hub dates had an opportunity to attend.
- 6.6.10 The new consultation hub dates were advertised via 6 Facebook posts on community group pages, in the Little Waltham parish magazine and on the Hatfield Peverel parish website, as well as on the consultation website.
- 6.6.11 A letter informing residents of the new consultation hub dates was also distributed to the core consultation zone on 18 June 2021.

**Table 6-7 Consultation hub dates and venues**

Venue	Date
Terling Village Hall, The Dismals, Terling, CM3 2PS	8 June 2021
Hatfield Peverel Village Hall, Maldon Rd, Hatfield Peverel, Chelmsford CM3 2HW	9 June 2021

Terling Village Hall, The  
Dismals, Terling, CM3  
2PS

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Terling Village Hall, The  
Dismals, Terling, CM3  
2PS

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Terling Village Hall, The  
Dismals, Terling, CM3  
2PS

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Terling Village Hall, The  
Dismals, Terling, CM3  
2PS

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Great Leighs Village Hall,  
Boreham Rd, Great  
Leighs CM3 1NH

# 7 Responses to the consultation

## 7.1 Chapter overview

- 7.1.1 This chapter of the Consultation Report provides an overview of responses received from consultees under s42, s47 and s48 of the PA 2008, as well details of the regard had to them by the Applicant.
- 7.1.2 As recommended by the Planning Inspectorate's *Advice note fourteen: Compiling the Consultation Report* [REF-4], in preparing this section, the Applicant considered grouping the responses under the three strands of consultation – s42, s47 and s48 – and then further by their relation to the scheme – prescribed consultees/local authorities, members of the local community and landowners/ those with a land interest. None of the consultees who responded identified themselves as specifically responding to the s48 notice and so there is no separate grouping for s48 notice respondents. The Applicant notes that all consultees prescribed under s42(1)(a) and (b) were required to receive the s48 notice, and those responses are dealt with together in section 7.2. Responses from the local community, consulted under s47, are addressed in section 7.3. Responses from consultees under s42(1)(d) are addressed in section 7.4. The approach to s48 consultees is explained briefly at section 7.5.
- 7.1.3 Within each section, responses are sorted by theme, setting out the regard had to the responses by the Applicant, as well as whether they have led to a change in matters such as siting, route, design, form, or scale of the Scheme itself, or to mitigation or compensatory measures proposed, or have led to no change.

## 7.2 Section 42(1)(a) & (b) (s42) consultation: prescribed consultees & local authorities

- 7.2.1 The Applicant asked that consultees provide written responses to consultation under s42 of the PA 2008 by letter or email. Several consultees also submitted their feedback using the consultation questionnaires, available both in hard copy and online.
- 7.2.2 A total of 22 responses were received from consultees under s42(1)(a) and (b) of the PA 2008. Comments made by consultees under s42(1)(a) and the Applicant's response to them, are included within **Appendix J-1** of this document. Comments made by consultees under s42(1)(b) and the Applicant's response to them, are included within **Appendix J-2** of this document.
- 7.2.3 The responses received to the consultation under s42(1)(a) and (b) of the PA 2008 have been analysed and considered by the project team and are presented according to the following themes set out in this section:

- Alternatives assessment;
- Land Use;
- Need;
- Design (including all Scheme elements);
- Consultation Process;
- EIA Process;
- Construction;
- Operations;
- Decommissioning;
- Ecology;
- Landscape and Visual Amenity;
- Cultural heritage;
- Transport and Access;
- Water Resources;
- Human Health; and,
- Glint and Glare;

#### *Alternatives assessment*

7.2.4 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to the Scheme's assessment of alternatives included:

- Boreham Parish Council;
- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council; and,
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council.

7.2.5 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Proposals of this kind are usually located in sparsely populated environments and not close to villages;
- The PEIR does not provide a full analysis of alternative sites;
- The Applicant should provide further independent assessment as to the quality of the agricultural land within the Scheme;
- The extension of Bull's Lodge substation in relation to the strategic proposals within the Chelmsford Local Plan such as the new Chelmsford Garden Village; and,
- Concern at the long-term financial status of the Applicant.

7.2.6 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to alternatives assessment in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.5 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-1** below.

**Table 7-1 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to the alternatives assessed**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
Proposals of this kind are usually located in sparsely populated environments and not close to villages.	In identifying the Solar Farm Site, the Applicant identified that it is remote from nearby villages and that the relatively flat landform and existing woodland and hedgerow limits views into the site. As such there are only a small number of residential properties where visual impacts would be likely to result from the Scheme.
The PEIR does not provide a full analysis of alternative sites.	The Applicant selected the Solar Farm Site following a rigorous process to identify land which is suitable from a technical, environmental and planning perspective. Information regarding the selection of the site and design alternatives is described in <b>Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .
The Applicant should provide further independent assessment as to the quality of the agricultural land within the Scheme.	Information related to alternative sites is presented within <b>Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> . In summary, the vast majority of land within the area of search is of similar Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) to the Order limits. The Order limits comprises approximately: 60% Grade 3b, 22% Grade 3a, 12% Grade 2 and 6% non-agricultural or unknown.
The extension of Bull's Lodge substation in relation to the strategic proposals within the Chelmsford Local Plan such as the new Chelmsford Garden Village.	The Applicant has engaged with the developers of the Chelmsford Garden Community as set out in <b>Table 8-1</b> . Cumulative impacts with the new transport infrastructure to support the Chelmsford Garden Community, including the CNEB, are considered in section 13.11 of <b>Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the</b>

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**[EN010118/APP/6.1]**. In summary, no cumulative impacts upon the highway network are envisaged based on the assessment in the ES. The cumulative effects are therefore expected to remain negligible.

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Concern at the long-term financial status of the Applicant.

The Applicant is able to deliver its financial commitments. Further evidence is provided in the **Funding Statement [EN010118/APP/4.2]**

### Land use

7.2.7 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to the Scheme's land use included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council;
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council; and,
- Natural England.

7.2.8 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Concern over the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land during the operational 40-year lifespan of the proposed development;
- Further assessment need of agricultural land quality;
- Concern at the loss of agricultural producing land in the area;
- A question as to whether the impact upon agricultural production been factored into the cost benefit analysis of the Scheme;
- Technological advancements might make the Scheme an inefficient use of the land;
- The cumulative impact of developments in the area on land use;
- Concern at potential job losses as a result of the change in land use;
- The potential knock-on effects on the ability of landowners to deliver other landscape projects in the area; and,
- Further analysis of the effects of planning and fencing following the decommissioning of the solar farm should be provided.

7.2.9 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to land use in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.8 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-2** below.



**Table 7-2 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to land use**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
<p>Concern over the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land during the operational 40-year lifespan of the proposed development.</p>	<p>There are no alternative sites considered by the Applicant that are clearly of a lower non-BMV ALC grade than the Order limits (whilst also meeting other criteria of the Applicant, as set out in <b>Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b>) within a reasonable distance of Bulls Lodge Substation (for which the Applicant has obtained a grid connection agreement).</p> <p>The Draft NPS EN-3 [REF-15] states that although BMV land should be avoided where possible in the development of renewable energy infrastructure, land type should not be a predominating factor in determining the suitability of site location.</p> <p>Within this context, the Applicant has sought to minimise the amount of agricultural land used within the Scheme. This includes removing land from the draft Order limits to reduce the amount of high grade agricultural land within the boundary of the scheme and to avoid areas identified as having higher archaeological potential prior to the statutory consultation. Further information is presented in the <b>Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]</b>.</p> <p>There will be very little permanent loss of agricultural land. The soil will have undergone an expected 40 years of recovery through less intensive farming such as being left fallow, or sheep grazing and is therefore expected to be the same or better quality as it is currently. Section 12.8 of <b>Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement</b></p>

	<p><b>[EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> concludes this is not significant in EIA terms.</p>
<p>Further assessment need of agricultural land quality.</p>	<p>Information related to alternative sites is presented within <b>Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution of the ES [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b>. In summary, the vast majority of land within the area of search is of similar Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) to the Order limits. The Order limits comprises approximately: 60% Grade 3b, 22% Grade 3a, 12% Grade 2 and 6% non-agricultural or unknown.</p>
<p>Concern at the loss of agricultural producing land in the area.</p>	<p>The vast majority of the Order limits will be available for return to agriculture after decommissioning, and the soil resource will have benefitted from a recovery of soil organic matter over the 40-year duration of the Scheme. An element of agriculture may also be retained over the life of the solar farm, with low density grazing an option being considered for the management of some of the habitats to be created on the site.</p>
<p>Has the impact upon agricultural production been factored into the cost benefit analysis of the Scheme.</p>	<p>Section 12.8 of <b>Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> assessed the impacts of removing land from agricultural use both on a temporary and permanent basis. These impacts are assessed to be not significant in EIA terms.</p>
<p>Technological advancements might make the Scheme an inefficient use of the land.</p>	<p>The project is urgently needed in order to generate renewable energy to contribute to meeting the Government's legally binding commitment for the Country to reach net-zero by 2050, and to address the cause of climate change. Further information is set out in the <b>Statement of Need [EN01011/APP/7.1]</b>.</p>
<p>The cumulative impact of developments in the area on land use.</p>	<p>The Applicant has held pre-application and scoping discussions with the local authority, ECC Highways and National Highways to discuss the routing and transport strategy for the scheme.</p>

	Cumulative impacts between the construction phase of the Scheme and other committed developments / highway improvements including the A12 widening scheme have been considered.
Concern at potential job losses as a result of the change in land use.	The expected operational employment at the Scheme will be equivalent to the current amount of employment on the agricultural land at the Scheme, meaning there will be net no change in the amount of employment.
The potential knock-on effects on the ability of landowners to deliver other landscape projects in the area.	The Applicant has held pre-application and scoping discussions with the local authority, ECC Highways and National Highways to discuss relevant neighbouring schemes.
Further analysis of the effects of planning and fencing following the decommissioning of the solar farm should be provided.	Following decommissioning, the vast majority of the Scheme land would be able to be used for agriculture. A Decommissioning Strategy <b>[EN010118/APP/7.12]</b> has been produced.

### *Need*

7.2.10 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to the need for the Scheme included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council; and,
- Essex County Council.

7.2.11 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Support for more means of renewable energy generation;
- Consideration should be given for this scheme to also directly provide neighbourhood-scale power for the new garden community;
- More information about the wider benefits of the electricity generation should still be included;
- Essex Climate Action Commission sees a critical role for large scale solar production but “on available land without unduly compromising agricultural land; and,
- Essex County Council is preparing a Solar Farm Standards document which will make the position clear on its expectations for such schemes.

7.2.12 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to need in **Appendix J-1 and Appendix J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.11 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-3** below.

**Table 7-3 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to need**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
Support for more means of renewable energy generation.	The project is urgently needed to generate renewable energy to contribute to meeting the Government's legally binding commitment for the Country to reach net-zero by 2050, and to address the cause of climate change. Further information is set out in the <b>Statement of Need [EN01011/APP/7.1]</b> .
Consideration should be given for this scheme to also directly provide neighbourhood-scale power for the new garden community.	The Scheme aims to maximise the renewable energy generation onsite by making full use of the available grid capacity and contributing to a net zero economy. It will therefore make its contribution directly to the NETS. This responds to the urgent national need for new solar energy generation set out in the <b>Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]</b> .
More information about the wider benefits of the electricity generation should still be included.	The Applicant has set out the benefits of the form of electricity generation that will be delivered by the Scheme in the <b>Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]</b> . This also sets out in greater detail the benefits of delivering the Scheme at the scale and location proposed.
Essex Climate Action Commission sees critical role for large scale solar production but “on available land without unduly compromising agricultural land.	For Essex to produce the amount of power it expects to consume in 2040 from renewable energy, it will need to install c. 4 times the currently installed & currently proposed capacity. The Scheme is a significant proportion of currently installed and currently proposed capacity (22%) and will supply 20% of power anticipated from that capacity. The Scheme is therefore a very important project in the pathway

to Essex achieving its stated aim of producing enough renewable energy within the county to meet its own needs by 2040, delivering 5% of anticipated demand in 2040. Further detail is set out in the **Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]**.

Essex County Council is preparing a Solar Farm Standards document which will make the position clear on its expectations for such schemes.

This is noted. **Appendix D Local Planning Policy Accordance Table** in the **Planning Statement [EN010118/APP/7.2]** sets out accordance with local planning policy.

### *Design*

7.2.13 Comments relating to design have been analysed according to the different aspect of the Scheme to which they refer. This includes: the Scheme as a whole, the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), the cable route and the grid connection point at Bulls Lodge Substation.

#### The whole Scheme

7.2.14 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to the Scheme design as a whole included:

- Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils;
- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council;
- Essex Police;
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council; and,
- Natural England.

7.2.15 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- A request for a full explanation of how the non-statutory consultation exercise has informed the design of the Scheme;
- Fire safety features are of strong importance;
- Location of the scheme in relation to residential areas;
- Opportunities should be explored to design 'break' areas within the arrays
- Biodiversity net gains expected as a result of the design of the Scheme;
- Incorporate easements for existing local infrastructure; and,
- Ensuring that PROWs remain safe and attractive for users through design.

7.2.16 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to whole scheme design in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.15 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-4** below.

**Table 7-4 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to whole scheme design**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
<p>A request for a full explanation of how the non-statutory consultation exercise has informed the design of the Proposed Development.</p>	<p>Details of the regard had by the Applicant to comments raised in the non-statutory consultation is set out in <b>Table 3-13</b>.</p>
<p>Fire safety features are of strong importance.</p>	<p>The Applicant has undertaken a plume assessment demonstrates that under day to day operation there is a low risk of an incident, and in the event of an incident the credible hazards are understood and have been evaluated to demonstrate that the risk to the local population would be very low. The Plume Assessment has been submitted as part of the Application as <b>Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b>. The Applicant has prepared an <b>Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]</b> which details design measures and controls for the BESS to minimise the risk of a fire and includes a framework for responding to an incident. The design of the BESS and its impacts are controlled in several ways. Prior to commencement of construction of the BESS, a Battery Safety Management Plan (in accordance with the <b>Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]</b> submitted with the Application) is required to be submitted to the relevant local planning authority and approved, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency. The Applicant must operate the BESS in accordance with the approved plan.</p>
	<p>Further, pursuant to a requirement of the DCO, the detailed design of the</p>

BESS must be in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** (which includes safety requirements for the BESS design) and the Design Principles submitted as an Appendix to the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**.

The Applicant can confirm that if the BESS constructed is different to that assessed in the plume assessment, its impacts in the event of a fire would be no worse than those assessed in the plume assessment, and the risk to the local population would be very low.

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Location of the scheme in relation to residential areas.

In identifying the Solar Farm Site, the Applicant identified that it is remote from nearby villages and that the relatively flat landform and existing woodland and hedgerow limits views into the site. As such there are only a small number of residential properties where visual impacts would be likely to result from the Scheme.

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Opportunities should be explored to design 'break' areas within the arrays.

The overall layout has undergone extensive review and refinement to respond to the landscape character baseline. This includes embedded mitigation of the type described.

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Biodiversity net gains expected as a result of the design of the Scheme.

Biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 and is reported in the DCO application through the **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]**. An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.

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Incorporate easements for existing local infrastructure.

The Applicant has consulted with relevant statutory undertakers to identify any relevant easements.

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Ensuring that PROWs remain safe and attractive for users through design

As detailed in **Chapter 13: Access and Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the Scheme does not involve the permanent closure of any PROWs.

A new permissive route is incorporated into the Scheme for the duration of the operational phase; the landowner would have the right to remove this following decommissioning.

In line with the information provided in Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the PROWs and permissive paths will be a minimum 1.5m wide for footpaths and 3.0m for bridleways, with at least 5m either side of the centreline of PROWs or permissive path that will remain undeveloped outside of the solar PV fence line. This will ensure a 10m wide passageway will be maintained on all routes.

### The Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Longfield Substation

7.2.17 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) included:

- Boreham Parish Council;
- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council;
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council.
- Essex Police;
- Great and Little Leighs Parish Council; and,



7.2.18 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Impact on views of the BESS from PROW;
- Further information required on safeguarding measures in the case of a fire or other event;
- The visual and landscape impact of the BESS will need to be assessed;
- The BESS needs to be taken into context within the Chelmsford Local Plan;
- Safeguarding against theft and extensive risk assessment in relation to the BESS; and,
- Robustness of construction management plan in relation to the BESS.

7.2.19 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Longfield Substation in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.18 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-5** below.

**Table 7-5 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Longfield Substation**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
Impact on views of the BESS from PROW.	The BESS and Longfield Substation have been sited to benefit from good screening from existing mature vegetation. Toppinghoehall Wood to the north and south and Lost Wood to the east provide thick coverage.
Further information required on safeguarding measures in the case of a fire or other event.	A plume assessment has been undertaken with respect to the BESS to assess the likelihood of a fire occurring, and the level of impact on receptors in the unlikely event a fire occurs. The assessment demonstrates that under day-to-day operation there is a low risk of an incident, and in the event of an incident the credible hazards are understood and have been evaluated to demonstrate that the risk to the local population would be very low. The Plume Assessment has been submitted as part of the Application as <b>Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b> . The Applicant has prepared an <b>Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]</b> which

details design measures and controls for the BESS to minimise the risk of a fire and includes a framework for responding to an incident.

The design of the BESS and its impacts are controlled in several ways. Prior to commencement of construction of the BESS, a Battery Safety Management Plan (in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** submitted with the Application) is required to be submitted to the relevant local planning authority and approved, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency. The Applicant must operate the BESS in accordance with the approved plan.

Further, pursuant to a requirement of the DCO, the detailed design of the BESS must be in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** (which includes safety requirements for the BESS design) and the Design Principles submitted as an appendix to the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**. The Outline Design Principles contain controls over the BESS, which include: 1) that the chemistry of the BESS will be lithium ion, and 2) that an assessment will be undertaken, based on the detailed design for the BESS, to demonstrate that the risk of fire and impacts from such a fire will be no worse than as assessed in the plume assessment submitted with the Application as **Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

In this way, the Applicant can confirm that if the BESS constructed is different to that assessed in the plume assessment, its impacts in the event of a fire would be no worse than those

	assessed in the plume assessment, and therefore the risk to the local population would be very low.
The visual and landscape impact of the BESS will need to be assessed.	The design of the Scheme has been assessed, reviewed and amended where practicable to seek to avoid or mitigate potential significant adverse effects on residents.
The BESS needs to be taken into context within the Chelmsford Local Plan.	The Applicant has continued to engage with local authorities to provide further detail on developing Scheme design as set out in this Consultation Report.
Safeguarding against theft and extensive risk assessment in relation to the BESS.	The EDF Security Risk Management Threat Assessments will identify overall site Security Risk and specifically areas of potential criminal focus (i.e. attractive component parts attractive to metal crime).
Robustness of construction management plan in relation to the BESS.	An <b>Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]</b> has been prepared and this will form part of a Requirement under the draft DCO.

## The Cable Route

7.2.20 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to the cable route included:

- Chelmsford City Council.

7.2.21 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Consideration needs to be given where there will be cable trenching;
- Any site level changes should also be assessed; and,
- Changes made should not have a longer lasting impact when the site is returned following the decommissioning.

7.2.22 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to the cable route in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.21 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-6** below.

**Table 7-6 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to the cable route**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
Consideration needs to be given where there will be cable trenching.	The Applicant's preference would always be to reduce the amount of trenching and associated excavation required.

Any site level changes should also be assessed.

Where possible, any overburden will be spread across the site with due consideration given to visual impact and surface water flow. There are some permanent cut and fill activities required at the National Grid Bulls Lodge substation extension, where the development is permanent.

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Changes made should not have a longer lasting impact when the site is returned following the decommissioning.

The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning.

There will be very little permanent loss of agricultural land. The soil will have undergone an expected 40 years of recovery through less intensive farming such as being left fallow, or sheep grazing and is therefore expected to be the same or better quality as it is currently. Section 12.8 of **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** concludes this is not significant in EIA terms.

### The grid connection point at Bulls Lodge Substation

7.2.23 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to the grid connection point at Bulls Lodge Substation included:

- Boreham Parish Council;
- Braintree District Council;
- Essex County Council; and,
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council.

7.2.24 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Robustness of construction management for the extension, particularly on the new Radial Distributor Road (RDR);
- Further detail is needed on the visual impact of the proposals, including maximum height parameters;
- Impact of extension on Toppinghoehall Wood requires careful assessment;

- The cable route must be entirely underground to minimise visual impact;
- Further information relating to the location of the proposed substation extension and cabling to the substation should be provided; and.
- Damage to the old orchard and biodiversity needs to be avoided.

7.2.25 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to the grid connection point at Bulls Lodge Substation in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.24 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-7** below.

**Table 7-7 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to the grid connection point at Bulls Lodge Substation**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
Robustness of construction management for the extension, particularly on the new Radial Distributor Road (RDR).	<p>As part of the consultation process, principles were agreed with ECC Highways including the proposed site access location, visibility splays, crossing points on Noakes Lane and the approach for surveys and supporting assessment work. In addition, it was agreed that the routing of HGVs should take place to / from the west via the RDR, A130 Essex Regiment Way, Wheelers Hill, Cranham Road and Waltham Road.</p> <p><b>A Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been prepared as Appendix 13B of Chapter 13: Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2] with measures to manage construction vehicle activity safely during the construction phase of the Scheme.</b></p>
Further detail is needed on the visual impact of the proposals, including maximum height parameters.	<p>At the statutory consultation stage, the Applicant shared and sought feedback on the preliminary results of its EIA through the PEIR. In the report the Applicant analysed extensively the visual impact of the Scheme. This has been updated and further detail is provided in <b>Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b>.</p>

Impact of extension on Toppinghoe Hall Wood requires careful assessment.

Two areas of sensitivity in regard to the setting of Toppinghoe Hall and Ringer's Farmhouse have been removed from the Order Limits. It is worth noting that Bulls Lodge Substation is located to the west of Waltham Road and not near to Toppinghoe Hall Wood.

The cable route must be entirely underground to minimise visual impact.

The cable route has been finalised prior to the application submission. Electrical cables within the solar PV array fields will be secured to the PV Mounting Structures, the BESS, or will be underground. No new overhead lines will be constructed.

Further information relating to the location of the proposed substation extension and cabling to the substation should be provided.

The Works Plans **[EN010118/APP/2.2]** define the locations in which each of the works packages defined by Schedule 1 of the DCO will be able to be located within the Order limits. The DCO (if granted) will not permit the location of any work item outside of the land in which it is shown to be located by the Works Plans **[EN010118/APP/2.2]**.

Damage to the old orchard and biodiversity needs to be avoided.

Since the statutory consultation, the cable corridor has been selected and narrowed and will not pass through the orchard or boundary hedges to the west of Toppinghoe Hall Wood. Although the small leafed lime pollard falls within the development area, it is sufficiently far away from the cable corridor as to be unaffected.

### *Consultation process*

7.2.26 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to the consultation process included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council;
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council;
- Terling and Fairstead Parish Council;
- Medway Council;
- Thurrock Borough Council;
- Canal and Rivers Trust;
- Colchester Borough Council;
- The Coal Authority

- NATS;
- SGN.
- ESP Utilities Group; and,

7.2.27 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Overall, the approach to consultation was appropriate, but in some areas considerable evidence of engagement is required;
- The technical engagement before the start of statutory consultation was limited;
- A full explanation of how the non-technical consultation exercise has informed the design of the Proposed Development is needed;
- The consultee had no comments on the Scheme;
- The Scheme does not fall in the consultee's area of responsibility; and,
- The PEIR lacked detail in certain areas such as generating capacity and contained maps that are ambiguous and require amending.

7.2.28 As set out in Chapter 6 of this Consultation Report, the Applicant consulted in line with the details set out in the SoCC. The SoCC was developed in consultation with the host authorities.

7.2.29 The PEIR was published at the start of the statutory consultation and included details of a number of aspects of the Scheme. The PEIR was a snapshot of the Applicant's assessment activity at that time. The consultation methodology evolved throughout the consultation process as a result of Government changes to COVID 19 legislation.

7.2.30 The Report was also formed from ongoing engagement with local authorities during and following the consultation period.

7.2.31 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to the consultation process in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.27 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-8** below.

**Table 7-8 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to the consultation process**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
Overall, the approach to consultation was appropriate, but in some areas considerable evidence of engagement is required.	Engagement undertaken throughout the consultation period has been outlined in this report, the Consultation Report.
The technical engagement before the start of statutory consultation was limited.	The information presented by the Applicant at this stage was necessarily preliminary and represented the Scheme at this particular stage of the proposals. The Applicant has had significant engagement with technical consultees both before the statutory consultation, as set out in <b>Table 3-14</b> ,

	and after the statutory consultation as set out in <b>Table 8-1</b> .
A full explanation of how the non-technical consultation exercise has informed the design of the Proposed Development is needed.	The design of the Scheme has been reviewed and amended to avoid or mitigate potential significant adverse effects on residents, as set out in this Consultation Report.
The consultee had no comments on the Scheme.	This is noted.
The Scheme does not fall in the consultee's area of responsibility.	This is noted.
The PEIR lacked detail in certain areas such as generating capacity and contained maps that are ambiguous and require amending.	The Applicant believes the level of detail presented in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report and other consultation documents was appropriate and accurate in this context.

### *EIA process*

7.2.32 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to EIA included:

- Chelmsford City Council;
- Environment Agency;
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council;
- Natural England; and,
- NHS Mid and South Essex.

7.2.33 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Further information will need to be provided to assess the Scheme's impacts;
- A review of the environmental cost and benefits of solar against the comparison of other forms of renewable energy should be provided;
- There needs to be additional information provided as to how site workers will impact local healthcare provision;
- The impacts of the decommissioning phase should be assessed and mitigated;
- Further information should be provided as to the Scheme's carbon intake;
- There should be an independent assessment of the environmental impacts;
- Support for the approach taken to assessing cumulative impacts;
- Additional data on flood risk activities and whether an environmental permit is needed should be produced; and,
- Results from the EIA need to be published and the body undertaken it impartial.



7.2.34 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to the EIA process in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.33 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-9** below.

**Table 7-9 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to the EIA process**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
Further information will need to be provided to assess the Scheme's impacts	During the statutory consultation stage, information was available in the PEIR. These assessments were preparatory at that point, as the Scheme was consulted on at a point in time to allow feedback to be able to influence the ongoing EIA and design of the scheme. Updated information is presented through the <b>Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .
A review of the environmental cost and benefits of solar against the comparison of other forms of renewable energy should be provided.	The <b>Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]</b> explains without the development of additional solar projects, other measures will be required to fill the gap which solar will fill, effectively making it much harder for the UK to achieve Net Zero.
There needs to be additional information provided as to how site workers will impact local healthcare provision.	It is anticipated that approximately 45% of the workforce will be sourced from a catchment area of up to a 60-minute travel time from the Order limits, in which case it is anticipated that these workers will already be registered with relevant primary healthcare providers, and thus would not represent additional demand for primary healthcare locally. Further information is presented in <b>Chapter 12 Socio-economics and Land Use</b> of the <b>Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .
The impacts of the decommissioning phase should be assessed and mitigated.	Following decommissioning, the vast majority of the Scheme land would be able to be used for agriculture. Further information is set out in the Decommissioning Strategy <b>[EN010118/APP/7.12]</b>
Further information should be provided as to the Scheme's carbon intake.	The Scheme is a substantial infrastructure asset, capable of delivering large amounts of low-carbon

electricity. The Scheme, along with other solar schemes, is of critical importance on the path to Net Zero. This is set out in the **Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]**. The Applicant has assessed the Scheme's impact on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in **Chapter 6 Climate Change of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. This concludes that the residual effect for greenhouse gas emissions is that the Scheme will have a major positive benefit.

There should be an independent assessment of the environmental impacts.	A full independent assessment of environmental impacts of the Scheme has been undertaken – the <b>Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .
Support for the approach taken to cumulative impacts.	This is noted.
Additional data on flood risk activities and whether an environmental permit is needed should be produced.	Noted, and requirements for an environmental permit are outlined within the Environmental Statement in <b>Chapter 9: Water Environment [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> and the <b>Consents and Agreements Position Statement [EN010118/APP/3.3]</b>
Results from the EIA need to be published and the body undertaken it impartial.	A full independent assessment of environmental impacts of the Scheme has been undertaken – the <b>Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .

### Construction

7.2.35 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to construction included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council;
- Essex Police;
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council; and,
- National Highways.

7.2.36 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Mitigation will be required for the noise generated during construction, particularly given the use of piling as a construction method;
- Concerns around a single point of access to the site;

- The construction of the cable route will need to take account of existing infrastructure;
- Care will need to be taken for the crossing of pipelines during construction;
- Due consideration must be given to the management of construction traffic;
- Diversions will need to be applied to PROW;
- Opportunities should be explored to upskill the construction workforce, including within education settings, to support emerging renewable technologies;
- Impact of construction workers on local infrastructure needs to be assessed;
- Concern at the impact of construction on local wildlife;
- A soil strategy should be produced to assess impact of the construction phase on soils and watercourse habitats;
- Additional clarification is needed on the timeline for construction;
- Concern at the impact of dust during construction and wider effects on air quality;
- Concern at the stress caused to local residents during the construction phase;
- The Applicant should consider crime in the construction phase;
- Consideration needs to be given to waste management during construction;
- Sustainable urban drainage system is required during the construction phase;
- An explanation on why construction assessments are predicted for winter, and not also for summer, is needed;
- More information would be welcomed on the technology to be used regarding the net reduction in carbon emissions overall during the construction process;
- Should technology evolve, an updated construction process will be required to manage the refurbishment or replacement of equipment;
- Consideration needs to be given where there will be soil stripping, storage and excavation for site compounds, access roads, cable trenching etc; and,
- Excavation should be minimised, and solar arrays and associated infrastructure installed via an easily removable method.

7.2.37 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to construction in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.36 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-10** below.

**Table 7-10 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to construction**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
Mitigation will be required for the noise generated during construction, particularly given the use of piling as a construction method.	Impacts from noise during construction are assessed in <b>Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> . No significant residual adverse effects due to construction/decommissioning or operational phase noise and vibration have been identified.
Concerns around a single point of access to the site.	The single access point for the Solar Farm site and routing strategy has been advised (and therefore agreed) with Essex County Council Highways and has been identified as a way to limit the usage of Protected Lanes (i.e. Boreham Road) and local roads through Boreham and Hatfield Peverel to the south (i.e. Waltham Road to the South and Main Road).
The construction of the cable route will need to take account of existing infrastructure.	Where possible, array cables will be laid within the PV array support structure and so will also require no excavation. Where this is not practicable, such as for HV cables, we would select cable routes based on directness and serviceability. Our preference would always be to reduce the amount of trenching and associated excavation required.
Care will need to be taken for the crossing of pipelines during construction.	This has been noted and crossing agreements will be sought where appropriate.
Due consideration must be given to the management of construction traffic.	A robust construction management plan will be implemented, with due consideration to be given to the management of construction traffic both in terms of the impact of vehicle movements upon the highway network but also in terms of the potential for noise and air pollution impact. The

Applicant has set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** and **Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** included at **Appendix 13B of the ES [EN010118/APP/6.2]** included in the DCO application.

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Diversions will need to be applied to PROWs.

No PRoW will be permanently closed or diverted as a result of the Scheme. A separate **PRoW Management Plan (Appendix 13C of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2])** has been prepared to illustrate the proposed strategy which supports the **Construction Traffic Management Plan (Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2])**. See also **Figure 13-4 Public Rights of Way Management Plan in the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.3]**.

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Opportunities should be explored to upskill the construction workforce, including within education settings, to support emerging renewable technologies.

On a district level, a local Skills and Employment Plan is to be prepared prior to the commencement of construction which will set out measures that the Applicant will implement in order to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally. The Applicant will also make a skills contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training.

Further information is set out in section 12.8 of **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Impact of construction workers on local infrastructure needs to be assessed.

It is anticipated that approximately 45% of the workforce will be sourced from a catchment area of up to a 60-minute travel time from the Order limits, in which case it is anticipated that these workers will already be registered with relevant primary healthcare providers,

and thus would not represent additional demand for primary healthcare locally.

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Concern at the impact of construction on local wildlife.

The DCO application also includes an **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**. This sets out how we will protect and manage landscape and ecology and inform more detailed plans in the future.

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A soil strategy should be produced to assess impact of the construction phase on soils and watercourse habitats.

An **Outline Soil Resource Management Plan** is provided as an **Appendix** to the **Outline CEMP [EN010118/APP/7.10]**. This sets out principles for how soils will be managed and protected during construction, operation and decommissioning of the Scheme. A detailed soil resource management plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction, prior to operation, and prior to decommissioning, as set out by the Requirements of the **Draft DCO [EN010118/APP/3.1]**.

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Additional clarification is needed on the timeline for construction.

Further detailed on the programme for construction is provided in **Chapter 2: The Scheme of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Concern at the impact of dust during construction and wider effects on air quality.

Air quality impacts have been assessed in full and have been detailed in **Chapter 14 of the Environmental Statement - Air Quality [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The potential impact of the Scheme on local air quality has been assessed as not significant at sensitive (human and ecological) receptors identified in the vicinity of the Order limits. This comprises sensitive receptors within 350m of the Order limits, within 50m of roads expected to be affected by the construction phase traffic, and up to 500m from the site access points.

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Concern at the stress caused to local residents during the construction phase.

A robust construction management plan will be implemented, with due consideration to be given to the management of construction traffic, noise, dust and air quality. The

Applicant has set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.10]**.

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The Applicant should consider crime in the construction phase

The **Outline Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** sets out the Applicant's approach to security in the construction phase. Site security during construction will be managed by the contractor. The site security fencing will remain in place throughout the duration of the construction period. Any storage of materials will be kept secure to prevent theft of vandalism. A safe system for accessing the materials storage areas would be implemented by the contractor.

There will be designated security staff during construction who will manage the Order limits and patrol the perimeter.

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Consideration needs to be given to waste management during construction.

A Construction Resource Management Plan (CRMP) will be prepared by the contractors, which will specify the waste streams which would be monitored and targets set with regards to the waste produced, including any re-use and recycling of materials. The CRMP will be finalised with specific measures to be implemented prior to the start of construction.

All waste to be removed from the Order limits will be undertaken by fully licensed waste carriers and taken to licensed waste facilities.

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Sustainable urban drainage system is required during the construction phase.

An outline drainage strategy is provided within the **Appendix 9C SuDS Strategy in Chapter 9: Water Environment of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/6.2]**. It details the approach to managing drainage during both the construction and operational phases of the Scheme.

An explanation on why construction assessments are predicted for winter, and not also for summer, is needed.

As set out in **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the construction and Year 1 assessment have been undertaken to demonstrate the worst-case scenario. The Year 15 assessment has been undertaken in summer to demonstrate the effect of proposed mitigation planting and consider the effect of seasons on landscape and visual amenity, in accordance with best practice guidance.

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More information would be welcomed regarding technology to be used regarding the net reduction in carbon emissions overall during the construction process.

The detailed design of the Scheme cannot be confirmed until the tendering process for the design and construction of the Scheme has been completed. For example, due to the rapid pace of technological development in the solar photovoltaic (PV) and energy storage industry, the Scheme could utilise technology which does not currently exist and sufficient flexibility therefore needs to be incorporated into the DCO Application. The Applicant has assessed the Scheme's impact on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in **Chapter 6 Climate Change of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. This concludes that the residual effect for greenhouse gas emissions is that the Scheme will have a major positive benefit.

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Should technology evolve, an updated construction process will be required to manage the refurbishment or replacement of equipment.

The detailed design of the Scheme cannot be confirmed until the tendering process for the design and construction of the Scheme has been completed. For example, due to the rapid pace of technological development in the solar photovoltaic (PV) and energy storage industry, the Scheme could utilise technology which does not currently exist and sufficient flexibility needs to be incorporated into the DCO Application.

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Consideration needs to be given where there will be soil stripping, storage and

Soil stripping and/or storage activities are limited to the construction of



excavation for site compounds, access roads, cable trenching etc.

hardstand areas around the inverter/transformer stations and the hardstands around the BESS & substation. Where possible, any overburden will be spread across the site with due consideration given to visual impact and surface water flow. There are some permanent cut and fill activities required at the National Grid Bulls Lodge substation extension, where the development is permanent.

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Excavation should be minimised, and solar arrays and associated infrastructure installed via an easily removable method.

Our preferred method of installation for the PV array would be the use of 'micro' piles. These require no excavation and can be easily removed using a tractor and/or hydraulic rig designed for this purpose.

Where possible, array cables will be laid within the PV array support structure and so will also require no excavation. Where this is not practicable, such as for HV cables, we would select cable routes based on directness and serviceability. Our preference would always be to reduce the amount of trenching and associated excavation required.

## Operations

7.2.38 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to operations included:

- Braintree District Council;                      Hatfield Peverel Parish Council.
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council;  
and,

7.2.39 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Opportunities should be explored to upskill the construction workforce;
- Clarity is needed on the operation of the site following the decommissioning process;
- Potential operating impacts on wildlife;
- There is a need for an operational noise assessment;
- The Scheme is unlikely to cause a significant impact on traffic when operational;

- More information is needed regarding the net reduction in carbon emissions through the operation of the project;
- The BESS and substation infrastructure could cause noise disturbance locally; and,
- Not enough staff are being proposed to monitor and maintain the sites during their operational life.

7.2.40 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to operations in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.39 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-11** below.

**Table 7-11 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to operations**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
Opportunities should be explored to upskill the construction workforce.	In addition to the construction employment associated with the Scheme, the Applicant will support local people to be trained in the sustainable development sector. The Applicant will make a skills and education contribution to assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training. Further information is set out in <b>Chapter 12 Socio-economics of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .
Clarity is needed on the operation of the site following the decommissioning process.	Following decommissioning, the vast majority of the Scheme land would be able to be used for agriculture. Moreover, the land within the Solar Farm Site would be returned to the landowner. Management of permissive paths and ecology habitat areas would therefore be at the discretion of the landowner. Further information is set out in the <b>Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]</b> .
Potential operating impacts on wildlife.	<b>Chapter 8 Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> sets out the design measures to avoid impacts upon this Local Wildlife Site. Landscape plans incorporate appropriate mitigation to address fragmentation.

There is a need for an operational noise assessment.

The Applicant has set out an assessment of potential noise impacts in **Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The assessment considers the location of operational plant.

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The Scheme is unlikely to cause a significant impact on traffic when operational.

The Applicant intends to restrict HGV movements to certain routes (i.e. via the A130, Wheelers Hill and Cranham Road to the west) to prevent construction vehicles from using the B1137 Main Road and passing through Hatfield Peverel and/or Boreham. As part of the consultation process, principles were agreed with ECC Highways including the proposed site access location, visibility splays, crossing points on Noakes Lane and the approach for surveys and supporting assessment work. In addition, it was agreed that the routing of HGVs should take place to/from the west via the RDR, A130 Essex Regiment Way, Wheelers Hill, Cranham Road and Waltham Road to prevent these larger vehicles from passing through the villages of Hatfield Peverel and Boreham (e.g. along the B1137 Main Road).

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More information is needed regarding the net reduction in carbon emissions through the operation of the project.

The Applicant has assessed the Scheme's impact on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in **Chapter 6 Climate Change of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. This concludes that the residual effect for greenhouse gas emissions is that the Scheme will have a major positive benefit.

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The BESS and substation infrastructure could cause noise disturbance locally.

The design of the Scheme has incorporated measures such as distancing of inverters away from sensitive receptors, and locating the BESS compound in an area away from large concentrations of receptors as well as towards the A12 where existing ambient noise levels are higher (such

that noise emissions from the BESS are less impactful).

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Not enough staff are being proposed to monitor and maintain the sites during their operational life.

The permanent jobs created to support the Scheme are a reflection of the requirements to maintain the infrastructure.

### *Decommissioning*

7.2.41 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to the decommissioning of the Scheme included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council;
- Great and Little Leighs Parish Council; and,
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council.

7.2.42 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Further analysis of the effects of planting and fencing following the decommissioning of the farm should be provided;
- PROW must be reinstated after decommissioning;
- Further consideration needs to be given as to how decommissioning will impact upon wildlife and habitats;
- Responsibility for the decommissioning process must be specified;
- More information on the technology used for decommissioning the scheme should be provided;
- Further information needs to be provided on the Applicant's proposals for decommissioning including a vision for the sites, post-decommissioning;
- The sites must be returned to arable land post-decommissioning.
- The impacts of decommissioning staff on local infrastructure must be assessed and mitigated against;
- Associated infrastructure for the scheme must be removed upon decommissioning; and,
- The decommissioning phase may have an adverse impact on the quality of local soils.

7.2.43 The Applicant has prepared a **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** as part of its DCO application. This document responds to the above matters by providing additional information as to the processes and assessments in place for the decommissioning of the Scheme at the end of its operating life.

7.2.44 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to decommissioning in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.42 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-12** below.

**Table 7-12 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to decommissioning**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
Further analysis of the effects of planting and fencing following the decommissioning of the farm should be provided.	<b>Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> assesses landscape and visual impacts relating to decommissioning. The activities resulting in impacts on landscape and visual amenity during decommissioning of the Scheme would be similar those identified for construction. However, the effects on the perceptual qualities of the landscape would be reduced by the proposed vegetation which would have reached maturity.
PROWs must be reinstated after decommissioning.	Whilst PROW will remain in place after decommissioning, it is assumed that any permissive paths created by the Scheme during the operational phase would ultimately be removed, as the potential retention of these routes would be outside the control of the Applicant and subject to third party landowner agreement. Measures (e.g. signage or temporary access restrictions) will be implemented to prevent the permissive paths from becoming PROW during the operational phase, so that these can subsequently be removed if the landowner chooses. It should be noted that the connectivity of the Order limits post-decommissioning would be no worse than the existing situation.

Further consideration needs to be given as to how decommissioning will impact upon wildlife and habitats.

The Scheme is not proposed to negatively affect any wildlife or their habitats within the vicinity of the Scheme.

Responsibility for the decommissioning process must be specified.

The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning.

More information on the technology used for decommissioning the scheme should be provided.

Due to the rapid pace of technological development in the solar photovoltaic (PV) and energy storage industry, the Scheme could utilise technology which does not currently exist and sufficient flexibility needs to be incorporated into the DCO Application.

Further information needs to be provided on the Applicant's proposals for decommissioning including a vision for the sites, post-decommissioning.

Solar farms are temporary and typically have an operational lifespan of 40 years. Once Longfield Solar Farm reaches the end of its lifespan, infrastructure on the Solar Farm Site will be removed and the Solar Farm Site returned to the landowner. Post-decommissioning, it is expected that the landowner would return the Solar Farm Site to arable use, although it is assumed that established habitats such as hedgerows and woodland would be retained. The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning

Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented.

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The sites must be returned to arable land post-decommissioning.

There will be very little permanent loss of agricultural land. The soil will have undergone an expected 40 years of recovery through less intensive farming such as being left fallow, or sheep grazing and is expected to be the same or better quality as it is currently. Section 12.8 of **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** concludes this is not significant in EIA terms.

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The impacts of decommissioning staff on local infrastructure must be assessed and mitigated against.

This is considered through **Chapter 12 Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The decommissioning of the Scheme may result in temporary effects on residents, businesses and users of community facilities where these lie in close proximity to the Scheme as a result of environmental effects occurring in-combination that may impact their amenity (i.e. quality of life for residents or levels of trade or patronage for businesses and community facilities). There are no effects arising from the Scheme on local amenities which results in a negligible effect, which is not considered significant.

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Associated infrastructure for the scheme must be removed upon decommissioning.

The Solar PV Array Works Area and related components, Ancillary Infrastructure, Longfield Substation and the BESS will be removed and recycled or disposed of in accordance with good practice and market conditions at that time.

The underground cable within the Grid Connection Route would be removed to a depth of 1m, otherwise would remain in situ.

The Bulls Lodge Substation Extension would remain operational, as would the section of existing OHL which will be undergrounded prior to operation, and

would remain in-situ upon decommissioning.

Further information is presented in **Chapter 2 The Scheme of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

The decommissioning phase may have an adverse impact on the quality of local soils.

There will be very little permanent loss of agricultural land. The soil will have undergone an expected 40 years of recovery through less intensive farming such as being left fallow, or sheep grazing and is therefore expected to be the same or better quality as it is currently. Section 12.8 of **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** concludes this is not significant in EIA terms.

## Ecology

7.2.45 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to ecology included:

- Natural England;
- Boreham Parish Council;
- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Environment Agency; and,
- Essex County Council.

7.2.46 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Support for buffers from ancient woodland;
- Buffer zones should be appropriate distance from tree's canopy if area is larger than 15 times the tree's diameter;
- A draft Biodiversity Net Gain Report would be useful to accompany the initial design plan;
- The Biodiversity Net Gain report should use the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric 2.0 or any successor;
- The Biodiversity Net Gain Report should include the following:
  - Baseline data collection and assessment of current conditions on site;
  - A commitment to measures in line with the Mitigate Hierarchy and evidence of how BNG will be applied;
  - Principles have been applied to maximise benefits to biodiversity;
  - Provision of the full BNG calculations, with detailed justifications for the choice of habitat;
  - Types, distinctiveness, condition and ecological functionality;
  - Outlined details of the implementation measures and management of proposals; and,



- Outlined details of the monitoring and auditing measures.
- It is considered highly unlikely that species-rich neutral grasslands can be achieved under the solar panels;
- Further information on decommissioning should be provided;
- Adequate ecological surveys and assessments for legally protected and Priority species need to be provided;
- A bespoke mitigation strategy for ground nesting birds will need to be delivered, as it is not considered possible that the development can compensate for impacts within the site boundary;
- Further information is required on the likely impacts on Lapwing and Golden Plover, with consideration on whether adverse effects on site integrity will be caused from the relevant European and International Designated Sites;
- Further information needs to be provided on the impact of ecology habitat areas and established species after decommissioning;
- The development proposal is likely to deliver significant enhancements for biodiversity in accordance with local and national policies;
- Approach to biodiversity net gain generally supported – especially the inclusion of high conservation value ponds;
- There should be a biodiversity net gain percentage set now, which should go beyond the 10% to be mandated in the Environment Bill, once passed;
- Concerns in respect of lighting do not appear to have been overcome, in respect to the rural context;
- Species rich grassland – this must consider underlying site soils and other biotic factors such as hydrology when selecting the most appropriate mix;
- Turf and soil stripping should be re-used and established as new grassland habitats;
- A soil strategy to improve and rest soils on the site from agricultural use and ensure restoration of structure and texture should be formulated;
- Enhanced waterscape – early discussion with Natural England should occur to aid the landscape wide waterscape improvements that would benefit the River Ter SSSI;
- Consideration should be given to the Great Crested Newt district level licencing scheme as to whether there is an opportunity to provide net new ponds that could be used in the scheme; and,
- On-going ecological monitoring to research and assess whether the proposed benefits have worked and what ecological value has been delivered should be undertaken.

7.2.47 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to ecology in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.46 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-13** below.

**Table 7-13 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to ecology**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
Support for buffers from ancient woodland.	Boundary habitats will be retained and enhanced with buffer zones between the hedges/woodland and scheme. As part of the mitigation strategy, a suitable area of grassland/set-aside managed for ground nesting birds including skylark will be included within the Scheme boundary. Hedges will be infilled and widened with areas of scrub. Additional planting include bird seed mixes and nesting boxes will be provided.
Buffer zones should be appropriate distance from tree's canopy if area is larger than 15 times the tree's diameter;	This is noted and the buffer zones proposed are consistent with this advice.
A draft Biodiversity Net Gain Report would be useful to accompany the initial design plan.	Biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 and is reported in the DCO application through the <b>BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]</b> . An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.
The Biodiversity Net Gain report should use the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric 2.0 or any successor.	Biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 and is reported in the DCO application through the <b>BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]</b> .
<p>The Biodiversity Net Gain Report should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline data collection and assessment of current conditions on site;</li> <li>A commitment to measures in line with the Mitigate Hierarchy and evidence of how BNG will be applied;</li> <li>Principles have been applied to maximise benefits to biodiversity;</li> </ul>	Biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 and is reported in the DCO application through the BNG Report <b>[EN010118/APP/6.5]</b> . An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.

Provision of the full BNG calculations, with detailed justifications for the choice of habitat;

Types, distinctiveness, condition and ecological functionality;

Outlined details of the implementation measures and management of proposals;

Outlined details of the monitoring and auditing measures.

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It is considered highly unlikely that species-rich neutral grasslands can be achieved under the solar panels.

Our ambition for the Scheme is that it becomes a haven for biodiversity. Reptiles will benefit from the new biodiverse grassland around the arrays, meadow and floodplain grassland and the rewilding scrub. New hibernacula for reptiles to ensure overwintering habitat is suitable to ensure reptiles can thrive once they colonise the site. In addition, new and restored hedgerows will also contribute to the overall value of the site. All deadwood will be retained onsite in log piles, predominantly in hedgerows or woodland edges.

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Further information on decommissioning should be provided.

The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning.

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Adequate ecological surveys and assessments for legally protected and Priority species need to be provided.

This is provided through **Chapter 8 Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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A bespoke mitigation strategy for ground nesting birds will need to be delivered, as it is not considered possible that the development can compensate for impacts within the site boundary.

As set out in **Chapter 8 Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the Scheme will retain key areas for breeding birds across the Order limits both within existing areas, but also by ensuring the majority of boundary features (hedgerows, trees and woodland) are

retained and protected during construction/

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Further information is required on the likely impacts on Lapwing and Golden Plover, with consideration on whether adverse effects on site integrity will be caused from the relevant European and International Designated Sites.

This information is provided in the **Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.7]** which concludes that the Scheme would not result in any adverse effects on a European site as the wintering bird population using the site is low and the site is distant from the designated sites. This was discussed and agreed with the Councils at a meeting on 23 July 2021.

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Further information needs to be provided on the impact of ecology habitat areas and established species after decommissioning.

The DCO will also require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning, including for impacts on ecology.

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The development proposal is likely to deliver significant enhancements for biodiversity in accordance with local and national policies.

Biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 and is reported in the DCO application through the **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]**. An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.

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Approach to biodiversity net gain generally supported – especially the inclusion of high conservation value ponds.

This is noted. Biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 and is reported in the DCO application through the **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]**. An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.

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There should be a biodiversity net gain percentage set now, which should go beyond the 10% to be mandated in the Environment Bill, once passed.

Biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 and is reported in the DCO application through the **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]**. An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.

Concerns in respect of lighting do not appear to have been overcome, in respect to the rural context.

The visual impact of lighting has been assessed against Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Dark Skies mapping. The methodology followed is set out in **Appendix 10B: LVIA Methodology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. Landscape and visual mitigation have been described in Section 10.7 of the ES and is shown on **Figure 10-12 Outline Landscape Masterplan [EN010118/APP/6.3]**. The proposed lighting has been designed to avoid and minimise the potential for adverse landscape and visual effects.

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Species rich grassland – this must consider underlying site soils and other biotic factors such as hydrology when selecting the most appropriate mix.

The **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**, includes new woodland, scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site. The Applicant agrees that soil conditions (i.e. texture, moisture, pH) are fundamental to establishing a functional grassland that meets our ambition for biodiversity at the Scheme. Seed mixtures appropriate for the site will be included. However, these are indicative as they are dependent on seed supplier. To mitigate this potential issue, the Applicant has included responsible sourcing of plants and seeds as a design principle.

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Turf and soil stripping should be re-used and established as new grassland habitats.

The Applicant agrees that soil conditions (i.e. texture, moisture, pH) are fundamental to establishing a functional grassland that meets our ambition for biodiversity at the Scheme. Seed mixtures appropriate for the site will be included. However, these are indicative as they are dependent on seed supplier. To mitigate this potential issue, the Applicant has included responsible sourcing of plants and seeds as a design principle. Further information is set out in **Chapter 8 Ecology of the**

## Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1].

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A soil strategy to improve and rest soils on the site from agricultural use and ensure restoration of structure and texture should be formulated.

The **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]** includes details of how soils will be managed during the construction and operation of the Scheme.

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Enhanced waterscape – early discussion with Natural England should occur to aid the landscape wide waterscape improvements that would benefit the River Ter SSSI.

This is noted. The **Biodiversity Net Gain Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]** sets out potential mitigation measures regarding habitats in the River Ter including:

- a. Widening the natural riparian zone by planting riparian vegetation within the managed ground cover;
  - b. Increasing the diversity of the vegetation structure on the bank face;
  - c. Increasing the bank face natural bank profile and material richness;
  - d. Increasing the macrophyte abundance and diversity within the channel;
  - e. Improving channel bed siltation;
  - f. Enhancements to flow types by altering the flow structure using deflectors;
  - g. Improving the channel bed material richness; and
  - h. Enhancement of sections of the watercourse in line with the recommendations of the Water Framework Directive Assessment report to ensure 'no deterioration'.
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Consideration should be given to the Great Crested Newt district level licencing scheme as to whether there is an opportunity to provide net new ponds that could be used in the scheme.

This is noted. The Applicant will consider the potential for a district level licensing scheme for Great Crested Newt.

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On-going ecological monitoring to research and assess whether the proposed benefits have worked and what ecological value has been delivered should be undertaken.

Ecological monitoring will be implemented across the site. This will include as a minimum fixed-point quadrats for plant species and a measure of soil health/carbon. This has been secured in the **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**

## *Landscape and visual amenity*

7.2.48 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to landscape and visual amenity included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council;
- Essex Police;
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council; and,
- Natural England.

7.2.49 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- The host authorities have identified three additional viewpoints, that once assessed, will require the mitigation proposals to be reviewed again;
- It is strongly recommended that mitigation measures are required higher on slopes to screen from long views from Fuller Street:
- Scarlett's Farm and Noakes Farm both Grade II listed will be left as islands in landscape character terms;
- The PV panels on land parcels to the west of the site will have an impact on properties on Boreham Road;
- It was strongly recommended that the fields down to Noakes Farm are omitted. This will help preserve the relationship between the farmsteads at Noakes and Scarlett's Farm.
- Regarding the Ter Valley, there is concern that in the northern sector of the site, the sense of tranquillity and southern lowland character of a swathe of countryside will be lost;
- The views to the proposed battery storage have generally been well considered;
- Views from receptors using the public footpath the north-west have not been fully assessed. It is suggested an additional viewpoint is needed and that more mitigation may be required;
- Consideration should be given to the setting for ancient woods, they are a heritage feature as well as buildings;
- Opportunities should be explored to design 'break' areas within the arrays that allow for a visual and perceived rest for users of PROW from the considerable extent of built form;
- There are currently no photomontages illustrating the predicted visual effects of the development. Verified view winter visualisations should be provided;
- In the case of farmsteads which were intrinsically connected to the surrounding land, screening could have a greater impact than the panels themselves;
- Further analysis of the impact of introducing formal fencing into the landscape would be beneficial;

- More detail on the substation is required to assess the impact on landscape;
- The landscape value assessment should be carried out using the new technical guidance note - the Landscape Institute's 'Assessing Landscape Value Outside of National Designations' (LI Technical Guidance Note 02/21) [REF-11];
- Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVVA LI Technical Guidance Note 02/2019) [REF-12] has not been carried out. This should be carried out for multiple residences along the western boundary of the site and individual farmsteads;
- Any associated infrastructure and buildings required to support the solar equipment must be designed and constructed to minimise their landscape and visual impact;
- More detail should be included of all lighting features and the impact this would have to local biodiversity;
- It is unclear to what extent adjacent habitats, both existing and those created, would be affected by the works and how the landscape would be restored;
- Early discussion with Natural England should occur to aid the landscape wide waterscape improvements that would benefit the River Ter SSSI;
- Appropriate mitigation measures for the adverse effects of the scheme should be detailed in the ES;
- The scheme should seek to contribute significant landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements to priority areas;
- The proposals would have an industrialising effect on the landscape;
- High security fencing and industrial lighting would impact the landscape's visual amenity;
- Any assessment should consider potential impacts on access land, public open land and rights of way in the vicinity of the development; and,
- Any works planned in flood risk areas (Flood Zones 1 and 2) will be water compatible (such as landscape buffers/environmental enhancement).

7.2.50 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to landscape and visual amenity in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.49 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-14** below.

**Table 7-14 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to landscape and visual amenity**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
The host authorities have identified three additional viewpoints, that once	Prior to the PEIR assessment being undertaken, the viewpoints were



assessed, will require the mitigation proposals to be reviewed again.

considered to be generally acceptable by CCC. BDC and ECC were invited to comment but no response was received.

Viewpoints were discussed again at the landscape and visual meeting of 29/06/21 set out in **Table 6-2** of the Consultation Report and it was agreed that the viewpoints used at PEIR were comprehensive. The councils suggested three additional viewpoints. Of the three additional viewpoints requested, 'B' located east of Stocks Farm, and 'C' located on PRow 213\_18 have been incorporated into the assessment. Further discussion was had regarding the location of viewpoint A since it was not on a public right of way. It was agreed at a meeting and subsequently by email on 24/08/21 that the additional viewpoint 'A' on PRow 221\_30 will be included.

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It is strongly recommended that mitigation measures are required higher on slopes to screen from long views from Fuller Street:

Scarlett's Farm and Noakes Farm both Grade II listed will be left as islands in landscape character terms;

The PV panels on land parcels to the west of the site will have an impact on properties on Boreham Road;

It was strongly recommended that the fields down to Noakes Farm are omitted. This will help preserve the relationship between the farmsteads at Noakes and Scarlett's Farm.

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As set out in **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement**

**[EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the overall layout has undergone extensive review and refinement to respond to the landscape character baseline. The northern part of the Order limits is identified as the most tranquil. Larger elements of the Scheme have therefore been sited in the south of the Order limits.

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Regarding the Ter Valley, there is concern that in the northern sector of the site, the sense of tranquillity and southern lowland character of a swathe of countryside will be lost.

The Ter River valley is identified as one of the most sensitive landscape features. Although within the Order limits, all development has been excluded from this area in order to protect and conserve the integrity of this area. The part of the Order limits in this area would be used for visual screening and ecological

enhancement.

In addition, further planting has been added to higher slopes on the north western edge of the Scheme.

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The views to the proposed battery storage have generally been well considered.

The BESS and Longfield Substation have been sited to benefit from good screening from existing mature vegetation. Toppinghoehall Wood to the north and south and Lost Wood to the east provide thick coverage. Additional planting will be implemented to screen the BESS to the south west and will be allowed to mature to a substantial height.

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Views from receptors using the public footpath the north-west have not been fully assessed. It is suggested an additional viewpoint is needed and that more mitigation may be required.

Prior to the PEIR assessment being undertaken, the viewpoints were considered to be generally acceptable by CCC. BDC and ECC were invited to comment but no response was received.

Viewpoints were discussed again at the landscape and visual meeting of 29/06/21 set out in **Table 6-2** of the Consultation Report and it was agreed that the viewpoints used at PEIR were comprehensive. The Councils suggested three additional viewpoints. Of the three additional viewpoints requested, 'B' located east of Stocks Farm, and 'C' located on PRow 213\_18 have been incorporated into the assessment. Further discussion was had regarding the location of viewpoint A since it was not on a public right of way. It was agreed at a meeting and subsequently by email on 24/08/21 that the additional viewpoint 'A' on PRow 221\_30 will be included.

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Consideration should be given to the setting for ancient woods, they are a heritage feature as well as buildings.

It is proposed that the Scheme will retain existing field boundaries and hedgerows and it is not proposed to alter any aspects of Ancient Woodland. The ability to view and understand these historic landscapes will not be altered by the construction or presence of the Scheme.

Opportunities should be explored to design 'break' areas within the arrays that allow for a visual and perceived rest for users of PROW from the considerable extent of built form.

The overall layout has undergone extensive review and refinement to respond to the landscape character baseline. This includes embedded mitigation of the type described.

There are currently no photomontages illustrating the predicted visual effects of the development. Verified view winter visualisations should be provided.

As set out in **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, all viewpoints are supported by Type 1 Photo sheets which are included as **Figure 10-11 (10-11-1A – 10-11-57A)** in the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.3]**. Ten viewpoints are supported by Type 3 Visualisations which are included as **Figure 10-13** of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118APP/6.3]**. The location of the viewpoints and photomontages was agreed with the Councils at a meeting on 29 June 2021 and through subsequent discussion and agreement on 24 August 2021.

In the case of farmsteads which were intrinsically connected to the surrounding land, screening could have a greater impact than the panels themselves.

It is acknowledged within the PEIR (at 7.7.4) that screening may itself constitute an impact. For this reason, it is also noted that screening will be appropriate and sensitive in nature and will take into consideration the surrounding landscape character. Planting as mitigation to screen views is limited to avoid the creation of new impacts; however, it has been used to enhance existing screening and/ or futureproof against the loss of existing planting as appropriate.

Further analysis of the impact of introducing formal fencing into the landscape would be beneficial.

Proposed fencing has been designed to minimise its visual prominence. The fence will be a deer fence or other wire mesh security fencing on timber poles approximately 2.5m in height. Fencing will be set back or screened from sensitive receptors. Further information on the landscape impacts of fencing is presented in **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

More detail on the substation is required to assess the impact on landscape.

During the statutory consultation, the Applicant presented information on extending Bulls Lodge Substation and building the Longfield Substation based on design parameters. Since the statutory consultation, the Applicant has developed its design for the Bulls Lodge Substation Extension and Longfield Substation in more detail and assessed potential environmental impacts through the **Environmental Statement [EN]010118/APP/6.1**. This includes impacts on cultural heritage, assessed in Chapter 7, ecology, assessed in Chapter 8, flood risk and drainage, assessed in Chapter 9, landscape and visual amenity, assessed in Chapter 10, and noise and vibration, assessed in Chapter 11.

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The landscape value assessment should be carried out using the new technical guidance note - the Landscape Institute's 'Assessing Landscape Value Outside of National Designations' (LI Technical Guidance Note 02/21) [REF-11].

The Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 02/21 'Assessing Landscape Value Outside of National Designations' [REF-11] has informed the methodology set out in **Appendix 10B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** and has therefore informed assessment of value.

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Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVVA LI Technical Guidance Note 02/2019) [REF-12] has not been carried out. This should be carried out for multiple residences along the western boundary of the site and individual farmsteads.

The design of the Scheme has been reviewed and amended to avoid or mitigate potential significant adverse effects on residents. As such a RVAA is not required. This was agreed via email dated 15 October 2021 from the local authorities' adviser on this matter. Further information is presented in **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Any associated infrastructure and buildings required to support the solar equipment must be designed and constructed to minimise their landscape and visual impact.

The Applicant has taken account of the visual impact on residential receptors in the design of the Scheme, including by providing strategically located stand-offs from receptors to above ground solar farm infrastructure in order to limit visual impact. Further information can be found in the Applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, in Chapter 10 of the PEIR and **Chapter 10 of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

More detail should be included of all lighting features and the impact this would have to local biodiversity.

The visual impact of lighting has been assessed against Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Dark Skies mapping. The methodology followed is set out in **Appendix 10B: LVIA Methodology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

It is unclear to what extent adjacent habitats, both existing and those created, would be affected by the works and how the landscape would be restored.

The Applicant has prepared environmental management plans setting out how impacts from the Scheme on the environment will be managed and mitigated during the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Scheme.

The Applicant has set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** and **Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) included at Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** included in the DCO application.

The **Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.11]** outlines how maintenance of the site and panels will be undertaken.

The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan

(DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning.

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Early discussion with Natural England should occur to aid the landscape wide waterscape improvements that would benefit the River Ter SSSI.

The **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]** sets out potential mitigation measures regarding habitats in the River Ter including:

- a. Widening the natural riparian zone by planting riparian vegetation within the managed ground cover;
  - b. Increasing the diversity of the vegetation structure on the bank face;
  - c. Increasing the bank face natural bank profile and material richness;
  - d. Increasing the macrophyte abundance and diversity within the channel;
  - e. Improving channel bed siltation;
  - f. Enhancements to flow types by altering the flow structure using deflectors;
  - g. Improving the channel bed material richness; and,
  - h. Enhancement of sections of the watercourse in line with the recommendations of the Water Framework Directive Assessment report to ensure 'no deterioration'. This is included as **Appendix 9B** of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.
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Appropriate mitigation measures for the adverse effects of the scheme should be detailed in the ES.

The Applicant has taken account of the visual impact on residential receptors in the design of the Scheme, including by providing strategically located stand-offs from receptors to above ground solar farm infrastructure in order to limit visual impact. Further information can be found in the Applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, in Chapter 10 of the PEI Report and **Chapter 10 of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

The scheme should seek to contribute significant landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements to priority areas.

The **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** demonstrates the contribution of the Scheme to NPS requirements. The **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]** includes new woodland, scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site. Please refer to **Chapter 8 – Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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The proposals would have an industrialising effect on the landscape.

The **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**, includes new woodland, scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site.

In identifying the Solar Farm Site, the Applicant identified that it is remote from nearby villages and that the relatively flat landform and existing woodland and hedgerow limits views into the site.

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High security fencing and industrial lighting would impact the landscape's visual amenity.

In identifying the Solar Farm Site, the Applicant identified that it is remote from nearby villages and that the relatively flat landform and existing woodland and hedgerow limits views into the site. As such there are only a small number of residential properties where visual impacts would be likely to result from the Scheme. The Applicant has also taken account of the visual impact on residential receptors in the design of the Scheme, including by providing strategically located stand-offs from receptors to above ground solar farm infrastructure in order to limit visual impact.

Further information regarding the selection of the site and design alternatives is described in **Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution in the ES [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Any assessment should consider potential impacts on access land, public

As detailed in **Chapter 13: Transport and Access** of the **Environmental**

open land and rights of way in the vicinity of the development.

**Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the Scheme does not involve the permanent closure of any Public Rights of Way (PRoW).

Two new permissive paths are incorporated into the Scheme for the duration of the operational phase; the landowner would have the right to remove this following decommissioning. The assessment of effects on sensitive receptors is detailed in Section 12.7.2 in **Chapter 12 - Socio-Economics and Land Use in the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Further information on management of PRoWs is given in **Chapter 13: Transport and Access** in the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, as stated.

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Any works planned in flood risk areas (Flood Zones 1 and 2) will be water compatible (such as landscape buffers/environmental enhancement).

This has been noted.

### *Cultural heritage*

7.2.51 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to heritage assets included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;  
and,
- Essex County Council;  
and,
- Historic England.



#### 7.2.52 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- The PEIR lacked detail in relation to the review and incorporation of findings of the heritage statement into the boundary of the site and proposed mitigation measures;
- Consideration should be given to the setting for ancient woods, they are a heritage feature as well as buildings;
- The limited archival research and reproduction of maps conducted at this stage is acceptable in the light of the Covid-19 related restrictions, however this shortfall in information should be addressed in any further reports relating to the proposals;
- Mitigation put in place for Scarletts Farm, Toppinghoe Hall and Ringers Farm is cursory and further mitigation is recommended;
- Request that the findings of the heritage statement are used more constructively to inform the site boundary. This does not appear to have had a clear impact upon the nature of the scheme or its boundary;
- There is concern regarding how the change in setting will affect those heritage assets which have already had their significance compromised, such as the Barn at Noake's Farm;
- In the case of farmsteads which were intrinsically connected to the surrounding land, screening could have a greater impact than the panels themselves, concealing heritage assets;
- The visual effect of the building works and introduction of concrete hardstanding, solar stations, and cabling upon the setting of built heritage assets has not been fully assessed;
- The location of any plant, beyond the installation of the panels (switchgear, inverters etc) should be informed by their proximity and visual prominence from heritage assets;
- Protected lanes are not captured within the assessment. These should also be included and considered as non-designated heritage assets. Notably, Birds Farm Lane, Noakes Lane and part of Boreham Road are protected lanes;
- There are several sites where the level of significance and/or the magnitude of impacts should be reassessed;
- There are groups of heritage assets, for instance at Stocks Farm and Noakes Lane, where cumulative heritage impacts should be considered;
- Mitigation measures should be provided for all impacts above negligible. These should be set out;
- There needs to be a closer link between the cultural heritage and landscape/visual assessment chapters, together with a clear assessment asset by asset;
- Visualisations of the solar farm scheme are proposed for key viewpoints; but it is unclear how the representative viewpoints have been selected.

There should be justification in support of the selection of viewpoints to assess the impact on the significance of heritage assets; and,

- The proposed development has the potential to directly impact the historic environment, either through truncation, compaction or changes to the groundwater levels and potentially the preservation conditions of an archaeological site.

7.2.53 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to heritage assets in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.52 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-15** below.

**Table 7-15 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to heritage assets**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
The PEIR lacked detail in relation to the review and incorporation of findings of the heritage statement into the boundary of the site and proposed mitigation measures.	It is noted that ECC considered that the consultation meets the statutory requirements of the Planning Act 2008. The information presented by the Applicant at statutory consultation was necessarily preliminary and represented the Scheme at the time of consultation in order to provide an opportunity for feedback on the proposals to influence the Scheme as it was finalised for the Application. The Applicant believes the level of detail presented in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report and other consultation documents was appropriate in this context.
Consideration should be given to the setting for ancient woods, they are a heritage feature as well as buildings.	The DCO Application includes an <b>Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP)[EN010118/APP/7.13]</b> This sets out how we will protect and manage landscape and ecology and inform more detailed plans in the future. It is proposed that the Scheme will retain existing field boundaries and hedgerows and it is not proposed to alter any aspects of Ancient Woodland. The ability to view and understand these historic landscapes will not be altered by the construction or presence of the Scheme.
The limited archival research and reproduction of maps conducted at this stage is acceptable in the light of the	This is noted. The archival research and mapping is revisited in <b>Chapter 7 Cultural Heritage of the</b>

Covid-19 related restrictions, however this shortfall in information should be addressed in any further reports relating to the proposals.

## **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1].**

Mitigation put in place for Scarletts Farm, Toppinghoe Hall and Ringers Farm is cursory and further mitigation is recommended.

As set out in **Chapter 7 Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, two areas of sensitivity in regard to the setting of Toppinghoe Hall and Ringer's Farmhouse have been removed from the Order Limits. Two areas of sensitivity in regard to the setting of Scarletts Farm and Noakes Barn have been removed from the developable area of the Scheme

The findings of the heritage statement are used more constructively to inform the site boundary. This does not appear to have had a clear impact upon the nature of the scheme or its boundary.

As set out in **Chapter 7 Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, it is anticipated that physical effects on heritage assets would be on highly localised features, wholly within the Scheme, upon which there would be no cumulative effects from other developments.

For impact on Cultural Heritage both the Scheme's Design Principles and Concept Design Parameters have been consulted on to arrive at a robust assessment of likely significant effects. The Concept Design has been used to visualise the effects of the Scheme on above ground heritage assets (as it is not possible to build the Scheme based on maximum footprints for all components), however, the maximum Design Principles have then been considered to see if any of those maximum parameters would result in any new or worse effects than would result from the Concept Design. For underground heritage, the Design Principles have been assessed. The Design Principles are set out in **Appendix A to the Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**

There is concern regarding how the change in setting will affect those heritage assets which have already had

No cumulative impacts upon the cultural heritage resource (either archaeological or built heritage) are envisaged.

their significance compromised, such as the Barn at Noake's Farm.

The Applicant has included mitigation of the specific impacts referred to in the comment. Two areas of sensitivity in regard to the setting of Scarletts Farm and Noakes Barn have been removed from the developable area of the Scheme.

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In the case of farmsteads which were intrinsically connected to the surrounding land, screening could have a greater impact than the panels themselves, concealing heritage assets.

It is acknowledged within the PEIR that screening may itself constitute an impact. For this reason, it is also noted that screening will be appropriate and sensitive in nature and will take into consideration the surrounding landscape character. Planting as mitigation to screen views is limited to avoid the creation of new impacts; however, it has been used to enhance existing screening and/ or futureproof against the loss of existing planting as appropriate.

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The visual effect of the building works and introduction of concrete hardstanding, solar stations, and cabling upon the setting of built heritage assets has not been fully assessed.

In developing the design, care has been taken to avoid, reduce and mitigate impacts on the setting of heritage assets. The assessment set out in **Chapter 7 Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** includes the visual effects of construction, the introduction of concrete hardstanding, solar stations and cabling on the setting of built heritage assets. The outcomes of this assessment have informed the design of the Scheme as well as the Applicant's approach to construction.

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The location of any plant, beyond the installation of the panels (switchgear, inverters etc) should be informed by their proximity and visual prominence from heritage assets.

In developing the design, care has been taken to avoid, reduce and mitigate impacts on the setting of heritage assets. The assessment set out in **Chapter 7 Cultural Heritage [EN010118/APP/6.1]** of the Environmental Statement includes the visual effects of construction, the introduction of concrete hardstanding, solar stations and cabling on the setting of built heritage assets. The outcomes of this assessment have informed the design of the Scheme as well as the Applicant's approach to construction.

Protected lanes are not captured within the assessment. These should also be included and considered as non-designated heritage assets. Notably, Birds Farm Lane, Noakes Lane and part of Boreham Road are protected lanes.

Protected lanes have been further assessed in **Chapter 7 Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and are treated as non-designated assets as per the ECC recommendations on Protected Lanes and in line with BDC's New Local Plan (adopted 2021) Policy LPP 38 [REF-13] and BDC's Protected Lanes Assessments (2013) [REF-14].

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There are several sites where the level of significance and/or the magnitude of impacts should be reassessed.

In developing the design, care has been taken to avoid, reduce and mitigate impacts on the setting of heritage assets. The assessment set out in **Chapter 7 Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** includes the visual effects of construction, the introduction of concrete hardstanding, solar stations and cabling on the setting of build heritage assets. The outcomes of this assessment have informed the design of the Scheme as well as the Applicant's approach to construction.

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There are groups of heritage assets, for instance at Stocks Farm and Noakes Lane, where cumulative heritage impacts should be considered.

As set out in **Chapter 7 Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the Applicant has assessed cumulative impacts on heritage assets. The cumulative schemes have been agreed in consultation with Essex County Council. It is anticipated that physical effects on heritage assets would be on highly localised features, wholly within the Scheme, upon which there would be no cumulative effects from other developments. Given the intervening distance and nature of the schemes identified in the ES, it is expected that there would be no additional cumulative effects on the setting of the archaeological remains, historic buildings or historic landscapes within the Order limits' zone of influence additional to those already identified for the Scheme in isolation. In conclusion, therefore, no cumulative impacts upon the cultural heritage resource (either

archaeological or built heritage) are envisaged.

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Mitigation measures should be provided for all impacts above negligible. These should be set out.

The Scheme includes embedded design mitigation, as set out in Section 7.7 of **Chapter 7 of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, and additional mitigation as set out in Section 7.9 of the same document.

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There needs to be a closer link between the cultural heritage and landscape/visual assessment chapters, together with a clear assessment asset by asset.

Close contact was maintained between the cultural heritage and LVIA teams throughout the assessment process. This close liaison ensured joined-up discussions on potential impacts to heritage assets and resulted in changes to the scheme design with greater setbacks in the vicinity of several assets including the Grade I Ringers Farmhouse, Grade II Little Russells, Sparrows Farmhouse, Complex of Buildings East of Sparrows Farmhouse, Barn Approximately 30 Metres East of Sparrows Farmhouse, Barn of Noake's Farm and several non-designated built heritage assets. This approach is reflected in **Chapter 7 Cultural Heritage** and **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Visualisations of the solar farm scheme are proposed for key viewpoints; but it is unclear how the representative viewpoints have been selected. There should be justification in support of the selection of viewpoints to assess the impact on the significance of heritage assets.

An assessment of the setting of high value designated assets beyond the 1km study area was carried out to assess potential impacts and it was determined that the scheduled monuments of Great Loyes, Gubbion's Hall, and Hatfield Priory would not be subject to any impacts as a result of the Scheme.

Viewpoints are shown within the LVIA Chapter towards Great Loyes (Viewpoint 20, 21, 22; Figure 10-10-1), towards Gubbion's Hall (Viewpoint 49; Figure 10-10-1) and towards Hatfield Priory (Viewpoint and Photomontage 50; Figure 10-10-2).

The ZTV in the **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, Figure 10-9

incorporates both Great Loyes and Gubbion's Hall as well as the west half of Hatfield Peverel. It demonstrates no theoretical intervisibility with Gubbion's Hall or Hatfield Peverel and only minor potential intervisibility with Great Loyes.

These were not further assessed in the ES.

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The proposed development has the potential to directly impact the historic environment, either through truncation, compaction or changes to the groundwater levels and potentially the preservation conditions of an archaeological site.

No impacts to the archaeological resource as a result of groundwater changes are anticipated as a result of the Scheme. Potential changes to the water table are addressed within **Chapter 9 Water Environment of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

### *Transport and access*

7.2.54 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to transport and access included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council;
- National Highways;
- Little Waltham Parish Council; and,
- Royal Mail.

7.2.55 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- None of the plans show the new Radial Distributor Road (RDR) through Beaulieu and Channels;
- There has been no direct early engagement with the PROW team at ECC over the significant impact that this development will have on the large number of PROW within and close to the site;
- Further information is required on the future of PROW after the site is decommissioned;
- Unless clearly signed and registered as being permissive the landowner could face claims through usage, which could lead to a network of PROW not maintainable at public expense;
- Regarding the amenity of the existing and proposed PROW, an analysis needs to be undertaken as to the possible effects of glint and glare from the solar panels on walkers on paths which have not been screened, or when the panels are visible from elevated PROW;
- Chelmsford North East bypass is not shown on the plans, nor have the consultation documents clearly detailed how the proposals connect to the wider movement strategy in the Beaulieu area;

- There are a number of questions about the design of the PROW and cycle paths on the green routes and how these will safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, as well as the way vehicles will interact with PROW;
- It is requested that greater certainty and consistency is shown with the proposed cycleway routes;
- The Applicant must consider the impact of the new Chelmsford Garden Community, allocated in the Chelmsford Local Plan and located to the south west of the site;
- A Transport Assessment must be prepared;
- Access to the substation is identified as a potential access route to the earthworks to the north of J19;
- There is an overlap in construction period with the A12, but mitigation measures are welcomed;
- Further information is required on access routes to the Bulls Lodge substation for maintenance purposes;
- The BESS, substation and other site infrastructure should have a tree berm around the entire installation leaving a concealed access;
- It is noted that there will be one singular point of access to the site, and this will lead to traffic being displaced elsewhere;
- Any ecological assessments should consider potential impacts on access land;
- Access routes should be designed with safe connections to the wider highways network; and,
- Further information is required as to the impact of construction traffic on road safety.

7.2.56 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to transport and access in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.55 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-16** below.

**Table 7-16 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to transport and access**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
None of the plans show the new Radial Distributor Road (RDR) through Beaulieu and Channels.	These highway improvements/ changes have been considered as part of the future baseline conditions within <b>Chapter 13 Transport &amp; Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .
There has been no direct early engagement with the PROW team at ECC over the significant impact that this development will have on the large	The Applicant has since conducted a dedicated meeting with the PROW team. This took place on 12 August 2021 detailed in <b>Table 8-1</b> and has



number of PROWs within and close to the site.

informed the approach taken to assessing impacts on PROWs set out in **Chapter 13 Transport & Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Further information is required on the future of PROW after the site is decommissioned.

Whilst PROW will remain in place after decommissioning, it is envisaged that any permissive paths created by the Scheme during the operational phase would ultimately be removed, as the potential retention of these routes would be outside the control of Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd and subject to third party landowner agreement. Measures (e.g. signage or temporary access restrictions) will be implemented to prevent the permissive paths from becoming PROW during the operational phase, so that these can subsequently be removed if the landowner chooses. It should be noted that the connectivity of the Order limits post-decommissioning would be no worse than the existing situation.

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Unless clearly signed and registered as being permissive the landowner could face claims through usage, which could lead to a network of PROW not maintainable at public expense.

Whilst PROW will remain in place after decommissioning, it is envisaged that any permissive paths created by the Scheme during the operational phase would ultimately be removed, as the potential retention of these routes would be outside the control of Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd and subject to third party landowner agreement. Measures (e.g. signage or temporary access restrictions) will be implemented to prevent the permissive paths from becoming PROW during the operational phase, so that these can subsequently be removed if the landowner chooses. It should be noted that the connectivity of the Order limits post-decommissioning would be no worse than the existing situation. Further information is set out in **Chapter 13 Transport & Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Regarding the amenity of the existing and proposed PROW, an analysis needs to be undertaken as to the possible

The Applicant has now conducted a Glint and Glare Assessment, which is included as **Appendix 10G of the**

effects of glint and glare from the solar panels on walkers on paths which have not been screened, or when the panels are visible from elevated PROW.

### **Environmental Statement**

**[EN010118/APP/6.2]**. This assessment considers the potential impacts on ground-based receptors such as roads, rail and residential dwellings as well as aviation assets. It does not consider users of PROWs because any impacts will be fleeting.

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Chelmsford North East bypass is not shown on the plans, nor have the consultation documents clearly detailed how the proposals connect to the wider movement strategy in the Beaulieu area.

The future highway improvements/ changes (including the RDR which will become the A131) and changes to pedestrian and cycle links are considered as part of the future baseline conditions in **Chapter 13 Transport & Access of the Environmental Statement (ES)**

**[EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The RDR forms part of the routing strategy for construction vehicles, given that this will provide access between the Boreham Interchange and the A130 Essex Regiment Way. Further details of other improvements including the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening and the Chelmsford North East Bypass are provided within the **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and **Transport Assessment** which is included as **Appendix 13A of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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There are a number of questions about the design of the PROW and cycle paths on the green routes and how these will safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, as well as the way vehicles will interact with PROW.

Several meetings have been held with ECC Highways (including PROW officers) to review, revise, and agree the proposed strategy for managing PROW during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Scheme as set out in **Table 3-14, Table 6-2 and Table 8-1 of the Consultation Report**. This includes measures to physically segregate existing PROW from proposed construction routes, as well as having controlled crossing points (with gates and banksmen) to safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. No PROW will be permanently closed or diverted as a result of the Scheme, and the minimum legal PROW widths will continue to be

met or bettered in all instances. A separate **PRoW Management Plan Appendix 13C of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** has been prepared to illustrate the proposed strategy which supports the **Construction Traffic Management Plan Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

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It is requested that greater certainty and consistency is shown with the proposed cycleway routes.

A green corridor is proposed through the site which will accommodate cycles. **Figure 10-12 Outline Landscape Masterplan [EN010118/APP/6.3]** presents the green corridor which is made up of the permissive path and the existing footpath network.

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The Applicant must consider the impact of the new Chelmsford Garden Community, allocated in the Chelmsford Local Plan and located to the south west of the site.

The Applicant has engaged with the developers of the Chelmsford Garden Community as set out in **Table 8-1**. Cumulative impacts with the new transport infrastructure to support the Chelmsford Garden Community, including the CNEB, are considered in section 13.11 of **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. In summary, no cumulative impacts upon the highway network are envisaged based on the assessment in the ES. The cumulative effects are therefore expected to remain negligible.

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A Transport Assessment must be prepared.

A full **Transport Assessment** has been submitted as part of the DCO application, as **Appendix 13A of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. The chapter considers the potential effects of the Scheme on traffic and transport during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases.

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Access to the substation is identified as a potential access route to the earthworks to the north of J19.

The Applicant has held pre-application and scoping discussions with the local authority, ECC Highways and National Highways to discuss the routing and transport strategy for the scheme. Cumulative impacts between the

construction phase of the Scheme and other committed developments / highway improvements including the A12 widening scheme have been considered as part of **Chapter 13: Transport and Access** of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and the **Transport Assessment** provided as **Appendix 13A of the Environmental Statement (ES) [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

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There is an overlap in construction period with the A12, but mitigation measures are welcomed.

A **Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** has been prepared as **Appendix 13B of Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** with measures to manage construction vehicle activity safely during the construction phase of the Scheme. It is acknowledged that the construction A12 widening team sees no objection to the plans presented by the Applicant. **Chapter 13 Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** sets out that no cumulative impacts upon the highway network are envisaged.

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Further information is required on access routes to the Bull's Lodge substation for maintenance purposes.

As part of the consultation process, principles were agreed with Essex County Council Highways including the proposed site access location, visibility splays, crossing points on Noakes Lane and the approach for surveys and supporting assessment work.

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The BESS, substation and other site infrastructure should have a treed berm around the entire installation leaving a concealed access.

The BESS and Longfield Substation have been sited to benefit from good screening from existing mature vegetation, which is to be further enhanced.

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It is noted that there will be one singular point of access to the site, and this will lead to traffic being displaced elsewhere.

The Solar Farm Site will have a single point of access with traffic being routed through the site to different areas during the phases of construction.

The single access point and routing strategy has been advised (and agreed) with ECC Highways and has been identified as a way to limit the usage of Protected Lanes (i.e.

Boreham Road) and local roads through Boreham and Hatfield Peverel to the south (i.e. Waltham Road to the South and Main Road).

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Any ecological assessments should consider potential impacts on access land.

As detailed in **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, the Scheme does not involve the permanent closure of any Public Rights of Way (PRoW). Two new permissive paths are incorporated into the Scheme for the duration of the operational phase; the landowner would have the right to remove this following decommissioning. The assessment of effects on sensitive receptors is detailed in **Chapter 12: Socio-Economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Access routes should be designed with safe connections to the wider highways network

Several meetings have been held with ECC Highways (including PRoW officers) to review, revise, and agree the proposed strategy for managing PRoW during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Scheme as set out in **Tables 3-14, 6-2 and 8-1**. This includes measures to physically segregate existing PRoW from proposed construction routes, as well as having controlled crossing points (with gates and banksmen) to safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.

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Further information is required as to the impact of construction traffic on road safety

Several meetings have been held with ECC Highways (including PRoW officers) to review, revise, and agree the proposed strategy for managing PRoW during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Scheme as set out in **Tables 3-14, 6-2 and 8-1** of the Consultation Report. This includes measures to physically segregate existing PRoW from proposed construction routes, as well as having controlled crossing points (with gates and banksmen) to safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.

## Water resources

7.2.57 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to water resources included:

- Natural England;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Environment Agency; and,
- Essex County Council.

7.2.58 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- Further detail is required in relation to flood risk and safety;
- General agreement with the assessment of flood risk;
- A sustainable urban drainage system (SuDS) should be used to manage surface water runoff from the site to avoid impacts;
- A Drainage Strategy and Land Management Strategy should be produced;
- Appropriate buffer zones around existing ponds and watercourses are required;
- Enhanced waterscape – early discussion with Natural England should occur to aid the landscape wide waterscape improvements that would benefit the River Ter SSSI;
- For the ordinary watercourse upstream of the main River Boreham Brook, the extent of the floodplain should be modelled to identify if any of the proposed PV installations would be located in the flood plain;
- Any works planned in flood risk areas (Flood Zones 1 and 2) should be water compatible (such as landscape buffers/environmental enhancement);
- A soil strategy to prevent loss of fine sediment into the watercourses should be produced; and,
- Further reassurance is required as to the hydrological impact on wildlife sites.

7.2.59 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to water resources in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.58 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-17** below.

**Table 7-17 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to water resources**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
Further detail is required in relation to flood risk and safety.	The Scheme's flood risk and drainage, safety, and amenity impacts such as noise have been outlined in detail in their respective chapters of the

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## Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1].

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General agreement with the assessment of flood risk.

The Flood Risk Assessment can be found in **Appendix 9A: Flood Risk Assessment in Chapter 9: Water Environment of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

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A sustainable urban drainage system (SuDS) should be used to manage surface water runoff from the site to avoid impacts.

An outline drainage strategy is provided within the **Environmental Statement as Appendix 9C SuDS Strategy [EN010118/APP/6.2]** and in **Appendix 9D Bulls Lodge Substation Extension: Drainage Strategy [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. Both appendices detail the approach to managing drainage during both the construction and operational phases of the Scheme.

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A Drainage Strategy and Land Management Strategy should be produced.

An outline drainage strategy is provided within the ES as **Appendix 9C SuDS Strategy [EN010118/APP/6.2]** and in **Appendix 9D Bulls Lodge Substation Extension: Drainage Strategy [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. Both appendices detail the approach to managing drainage during both the construction and operational phases of the Scheme.

An **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**, is presented in **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Appropriate buffer zones around existing ponds and watercourses are required.

There will be a minimum buffer of 8m around watercourses (measured from the water/channel edge under normal flows) within which there will be no built development. However, for main rivers a 10m buffer measured from the centre line of the watercourse as marked on Ordnance Survey mapping has been allowed for. A minimum buffer of 5m around all ponds is proposed, and 8m around watercourses. This is secured within the Design Principles for the DCO. The Design Principles are outlined in **Appendix A of the Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**

Enhanced waterscape – early discussion with Natural England should occur to aid the landscape wide waterscape improvements that would benefit the River Ter.

The **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]** sets out potential mitigation measures regarding habitats in the River Ter including:

- a. Widening the natural riparian zone by planting riparian vegetation within the managed ground cover;
- b. Increasing the diversity of the vegetation structure on the bank face;
- c. Increasing the bank face natural bank profile and material richness;
- d. Increasing the macrophyte abundance and diversity within the channel;
- e. Improving channel bed siltation;
- f. Enhancements to flow types by altering the flow structure using deflectors;
- g. Improving the channel bed material richness; and
- h. Enhancement of sections of the watercourse in line with the recommendations of the Water Framework Directive Assessment report to ensure ‘no deterioration’. This is included as **Appendix 9B** of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

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For the ordinary watercourse upstream of the main River Boreham Brook, the extent of the floodplain should be modelled to identify if any of the proposed PV installations would be located in the flood plain.

The Flood Risk Assessment provided at **Appendix 9A of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** states that fluvial modelling is not required as it is reasonable to assume fluvial flood levels would not reflect an increase in flood level. Additionally, both the SFRAs indicate Flood Zone 2 as a proxy for the 65% climate change extent, with the revised climate change allowances now only requiring 38% for design purposes; the fluvial design extent level would be less, providing a greater depth difference to the PV Panels.

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Any works planned in flood risk areas (Flood Zones 1 and 2) should be water compatible (such as landscape buffers/environmental enhancement).

This has been noted.



A soil strategy to prevent loss of fine sediment into the watercourses should be produced.

Measures for protecting the water environment from pollution (including runoff of fine sediment during construction) are outlined in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]**.

Further reassurance is required as to the hydrological impact on wildlife sites.

We have assessed potential impacts on the sites in question in **Chapter 9: Water Environment of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and in **Chapter 8: Ecology [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. Blake's Wood & Lingwood SSSI are approximately 4km south of the order limits. Woodham Walter Common SSSI is approximately 4.6km to the south of the Order limits. These statutory designated sites (primary designation being woodland habitats) are all over 3km from the Order limits and there are no ecological or hydrological connections between these designated sites and the Scheme.

### *Human health*

7.2.60 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to human health included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council;
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council;
- Health and Safety Executive; and,
- Essex Police.

7.2.61 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- General concern at the potential of a fire caused by the BESS;
- An Outline Battery Fire Safety Management Plan needs to be submitted with the DCO application;
- The BESS element should be located away from residential areas;
- The Applicant should consider the potential for fear of crime for users of PROWs; and,
- The Applicant should develop an emergency response plan in consultation with the local fire services.

7.2.62 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to human health in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.61 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-18** below.

**Table 7-18 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to human health**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
<p>General concern at the potential of a fire caused by the BESS.</p> <hr/> <p>An Outline Battery Fire Safety Management Plan needs to be submitted with the DCO application.</p>	<p>A plume assessment has been undertaken with respect to the BESS to assess the likelihood of a fire occurring, and the level of impact on receptors in the unlikely event a fire occurs. The assessment demonstrates that under day-to-day operation there is a low risk of an incident, and in the event of an incident the credible hazards are understood and have been evaluated to demonstrate that the risk to the local population would be very low. The Plume Assessment has been submitted as part of the Application as <b>Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b>. The Applicant has prepared an <b>Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]</b> which details design measures and controls for the BESS to minimise the risk of a fire and includes a framework for responding to an incident.</p> <p>The design of the BESS and its impacts are controlled in several ways. Prior to commencement of construction of the BESS, a Battery Safety Management Plan (in accordance with the <b>Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]</b> submitted with the Application) is required to be submitted to the relevant local planning authority and approved, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency. The Applicant must operate the BESS in accordance with the approved plan.</p> <p>Further, pursuant to a requirement of the DCO, the detailed design of the</p>

BESS must be in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** (which includes safety requirements for the BESS design) and the Design Principles submitted as an appendix to the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**. The Outline Design Principles contain controls over the BESS, which include: 1) that the chemistry of the BESS will be lithium ion, and 2) that an assessment will be undertaken, based on the detailed design for the BESS, to demonstrate that the risk of fire and impacts from such a fire will be no worse than as assessed in the plume assessment submitted with the Application as **Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

In this way, the Applicant can confirm that if the BESS constructed is different to that assessed in the plume assessment, its impacts in the event of a fire would be no worse than those assessed in the plume assessment, and therefore the risk to the local population would be very low.

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The BESS element should be located away from residential areas.

The BESS and Longfield Substation have been sited to benefit from good screening from existing mature vegetation. Toppinghoehall Wood to the north and south and Lost Wood to the east provide thick coverage. Additional planting will be implemented to screen the BESS to the south west and will be allowed to mature to a substantial height.

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The Applicant should consider the fear of crime for users of PROWS.

The Applicant has assessed the potential for fear and intimidation on users of the PROW network in **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The Scheme is not expected to result in any significant impacts with respect to fear and intimidation, with temporary minor adverse effects for PRoW 213\_4 and otherwise temporary negligible effects

for the remaining receptors. Specifically, following the statutory consultation, the width of PRow and permissive paths has been set as a minimum 1.5m wide for footpaths and 3.0m for bridleways, with at least 5m either side of the centreline of the PRow or permissive path that will remain undeveloped outside of the solar PV fence line. This will ensure a 10m wide passageway will be maintained on all routes.

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The Applicant should develop an emergency response plan in consultation with the local fire services.

The Applicant has engaged with Essex Fire and Rescue as set out in **Table 8-1**.

The design of the BESS and its impacts are controlled in several ways. Prior to commencement of construction of the BESS, a Battery Safety Management Plan (in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** submitted with the Application) is required to be submitted to the relevant local planning authority and approved, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency.

### *Glint and glare*

7.2.63 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to glint and glare included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Essex County Council; and,
- Great and Little Leighs Parish Council.

7.2.64 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- General concern at the potential impact of glint and glare;
- The PEIR lacked detail in relation to a glint and glare assessment;
- Concern at the impact on walkers on PRow from glint and glare; and,
- It has not been demonstrated that appropriate mitigation measures will be taken.

7.2.65 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to glint and glare in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.64 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-19** below.

**Table 7-19 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to glint and glare**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
<p>General concern at the potential impact of glint and glare.</p> <hr/> <p>The PEIR lacked detail in relation to a glint and glare assessment.</p>	<p>The Applicant has now conducted a Glint and Glare Assessment, which is included as <b>Appendix 10G of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b>. While this identifies potential high impacts from glint and glare at 10 residential receptors and 7 road receptors without mitigation, these are reduced to negligible overall once mitigation measures such as hedgerows to be grown, infilled, gapped up and maintained to a height of at least 3m in affected areas. Until those hedgerows are grown sufficiently, a temporary 3m temporary wooden solid hoarding will be implemented and then removed once the hedgerows are of a sufficient height.</p>
<p>Concern at the impact on walkers on PROW.</p>	<p>The Applicant has now conducted a Glint and Glare Assessment, which is included as <b>Appendix 10G of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b>. This assessment considers the potential impacts on ground-based receptors such as roads, rail and residential dwellings as well as aviation assets. It does not consider users of PROWs because any impacts will be fleeting.</p>
<p>It has not been demonstrated that appropriate mitigation measures will be taken.</p>	<p>The Applicant has now conducted a Glint and Glare Assessment, which is included as <b>Appendix 10G of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b>. While this identifies potential high impacts from glint and glare at 10 residential receptors and 7 road receptors without mitigation, these are reduced to negligible impacts once mitigation</p>

measures as such hedgerows to be grown, infilled, gapped up and maintained to a height of at least 3m in affected areas.

Until those hedgerows are grown sufficiently, a temporary 3m temporary wooden solid hoarding will be implemented and then removed once the hedgerows are of a sufficient height. Further information is presented in **Appendix 10G: Glint and Glare Assessment of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. These measures will be secured through the **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**. Further information regarding hedgerows growth can be found in **Chapter 16: Other Environmental Topics of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

### *Climate change*

7.2.66 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to climate change included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Environment Agency; and,
- Essex County Council.

7.2.67 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- It is recognised the scheme would help deliver the national need for renewable energy and contribute to the Government's national 2050 target;
- Solar energy in principle is supported;
- The Essex Climate Action Commission has made a number of recommendations which would see large scale solar production play a critical role;
- Consideration should be given to directly provide neighbourhood-scale power for the new garden community;

- The lifetime carbon emissions of the Scheme (manufacturing, construction, operations and decommissioning) need to be considered in further detail;
- Details of the benefits of the scheme in comparison to alternative models of renewable energy would be helpful;
- Given the scale of the new climate change allowances it is appropriate to request the applicant model the River Ter and the Boreham Brook to incorporate the new climate change allowances; and,
- It remains to be seen whether the battery storage component is classified as green energy.

7.2.68 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to climate change in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.67 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in Table 7-20 below.

**Table 7-20 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to climate change**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
It is recognised the scheme would help deliver the national need for renewable energy and contribute to the Government’s national 2050 target.	Chapter 11 of the <b>Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]</b> provides an analysis of the economic viability of large-scale solar generation as a future contributor to a low-carbon Great Britain electricity supply system in comparison to alternate technologies; and an analysis of why the Scheme will be most beneficial to the achievement of Government’s aims if it is consented to the scale proposed.
Solar energy in principle is supported.	Section 8.4 in the <b>Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]</b> explains without the development of additional solar projects, other measures will be required to fill the gap which solar will fill, effectively making it much harder for the UK to achieve Net Zero.
The Essex Climate Action Commission has made a number of recommendations which would see large scale solar production play a critical role.	For Essex to produce the amount of power it expects to consume in 2040 from RES, it will need to install around four times the currently installed & currently proposed solar generation capacity. The Scheme would be a significant proportion of currently installed and currently proposed capacity (22%) and will supply 20% of power anticipated from that capacity. Longfield is a very important project in

the pathway to Essex achieving its stated aim of producing enough renewable energy within the county to meet its own needs by 2040, delivering 5% of anticipated demand in 2040. Further detail is set out in the

**Statement of Need**  
**[EN010118/APP/7.1]**

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Consideration should be given to directly provide neighbourhood-scale power for the new garden community.

It will not be possible to for the Scheme to provide electricity directly to the new garden community as it will connect to the National Electricity Transmission System.

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The lifetime carbon emissions of the Scheme (manufacturing, construction, operations and decommissioning) need to be considered in further detail.

The Applicant has assessed the Scheme's impact on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in **Chapter 6 Climate Change** of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. This concludes that the residual effect for greenhouse gas emissions is that the Scheme will have a major positive benefit.

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Details of the benefits of the scheme in comparison to alternative models of renewable energy would be helpful.

Without the development of additional solar projects, other measures will be required to fill the gap which solar will fill, effectively making it much harder for the UK to achieve Net Zero.

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Given the scale of the new climate change allowances it is appropriate to request the applicant model the River Ter and the Boreham Brook to incorporate the new climate change allowances.

The **Flood Risk Assessment Appendix 9A of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** states that fluvial modelling is not required as it is reasonable to assume fluvial flood levels would not reflect an increase in flood level. Additionally, both the SFRAs indicate Flood Zone 2 as a proxy for the 65% climate change extent, with the revised climate change allowances now only requiring 38% for design purposes; the fluvial design extent level would be less, providing a greater depth difference to the PV Panels.

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It remains to be seen whether the battery storage component is classified as green energy.

The proposal to include BESS as part of the Scheme is in accordance with emerging Government policy on the need for integration measures on the electricity system to support the transition to a fully low-carbon grid. The



grant of a consent for BESS as part of the Scheme, would therefore allow the project to fulfil its ambitions in providing full support to UK action plans to deliver decarbonisation. Further information is set out in the **Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]**.

### Socio-economics

7.2.69 Consultees that provided substantive comments relating to the economic impact of the Scheme included:

- Braintree District Council;
- Essex County Council.;
- and,
- NHS Mid and South Essex CCG.

7.2.70 The matters raised by the above consultees included:

- As the operational phase of the project will only support 8 permanent roles, opportunities should be explored to upskill the construction workforce;
- Concern at the potential loss of farming jobs;
- Further information is required regarding calculations made in relation to job assessments and economic impacts;
- Job creation figures are calculated using national estimates rather than actual outputs;
- The cumulative economic effects of the Scheme in conjunction with the Chelmsford Garden Village needs to be considered;
- The Applicant should consider impacts on healthcare facilities during construction; and,
- The Applicant should provide further details as to how additional job and training opportunities could be provided through the Scheme.

7.2.71 The Applicant has had regard to all comments relating to the economy in **Appendices J-1 and J-2**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.2.70 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-21** below.

**Table 7-21 Regard had to comments received from Section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultation relating to socio-economics**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
As the operational phase of the project will only support 8 permanent roles, opportunities should be explored to upskill the construction workforce.	With regards employment during the construction phase, it is expected that an average of 380 jobs will be created during the construction period. During the operational phase, 8 full time staff would be employed on the site. The expected operational employment at the Scheme will be equivalent to the

current amount of employment on the agricultural land at the Scheme, meaning there will be net no change in the amount of employment. This information is based on estimates informed by the Applicant's prior experience of similar schemes, and details provided by the current landowner.

In addition, a local Skills and Employment Plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction. This will set out measures that the Applicant will implement in order to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally.

The Applicant will also make a skills and education contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training. Further information is set out in section 12.8 of **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Concern at the potential loss of farming jobs.

The expected operational employment at the Scheme will be equivalent to the current amount of employment on the agricultural land at the Scheme, meaning there will be net no change in the amount of employment. This information is based on estimates informed by the Applicant's prior experience of similar schemes, and details provided by the current landowner.

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Further information is required regarding calculations made in relation to job assessments and economic impacts.

The expected operational employment at the Scheme will be equivalent to the current amount of employment on the agricultural land at the Scheme, meaning there will be net no change in the amount of employment. This information is based on estimates informed by the Applicant's prior experience of similar schemes, and details provided by the current landowner.

Job creation figures are calculated using national estimates rather than actual outputs.

The expected operational employment at the Scheme will be equivalent to the current amount of employment on the agricultural land at the Scheme, meaning there will be net no change in the amount of employment. This information is based on estimates informed by the Applicant's prior experience of similar schemes, and details provided by the current landowner.

The cumulative economic effects of the Scheme in conjunction with the Chelmsford Garden Village needs to be considered.

The Applicant has engaged with the developers of the Chelmsford Garden Community as set out in **Table 8-1**. Cumulative impacts with the new transport infrastructure to support the Chelmsford Garden Community, including the CNEB, are considered in section 13.11 of **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. In summary, no cumulative impacts upon the highway network are envisaged based on the assessment in the Environmental Statement. The cumulative effects are therefore expected to remain negligible.

The Applicant should consider impacts on healthcare facilities during construction

It is anticipated that approximately 45% of the workforce will be sourced from a catchment area of up to a 60-minute travel time from the Order limits, in which case it is anticipated that these workers will already be registered with relevant primary healthcare providers, and thus would not represent additional demand for primary healthcare locally.

In addition, as detailed in **Chapter 12: Socio-Economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, in a worst-case scenario that the remaining workforce requires accommodation during the construction and decommissioning phases, it is anticipated that accommodation will be sought across the catchment area of a 60-minute drive time in which case the demand for primary healthcare services is

unlikely to be concentrated in a single area.

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The Applicant should provide further details as to how additional job and training opportunities could be provided through the Scheme.

On a district level, a local Skills and Employment Plan is to be prepared prior to the commencement of construction which will set out measures that the Applicant will implement in order to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally.

In procurement of the contractor to complete the construction works, strong consideration will be given to their strategy for engaging the local supply chain and using local materials where possible and practical. The Applicant has previously hosted career fairs for similar schemes that may be held for this Scheme. The permanent jobs created to support the Scheme are a reflection of the requirements to maintain the infrastructure.

The Applicant will also make a skills and education contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training.

Further information on the assessment of employment demand in the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases are given in Section 12.8 in **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

### 7.3 Section 47 (s47) consultation

#### *Overview*

- 7.3.1 This section sets out responses received to section 47 consultation, that is, from local people living in the vicinity of the Scheme. It includes an analysis of responses received (7.3.11 – 7.3.23) as well as details of issues raised by theme and the regard had to them by the Applicant (7.3.24 – 7.3.74).
- 7.3.2 The Applicant solicited responses to consultation under s47 of the PA 2008 primarily through the consultation questionnaire and also accepted written responses submitted as letters and emails.

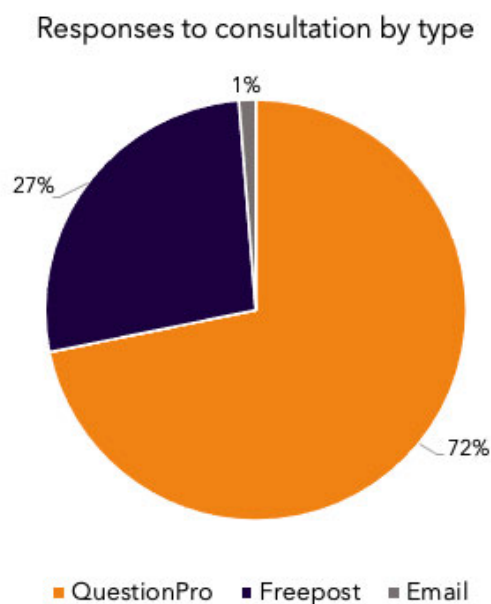
#### *Response collection*

- 7.3.3 Responses were collected primarily via online and hard copy consultation feedback questionnaires. Written responses and emails received to the Applicant's communication channels were also collected.
- 7.3.4 Hard copy consultation questionnaires were collected via a Freepost address. Electronic questionnaires were received via QuestionPro which was accessible by a link on the consultation website.
- 7.3.5 Through the consultation questionnaire, the Applicant asked for comments on a range of topics, regarding the location of the grid connection and solar panelling, as well as the environmental impact across different stages of the Scheme's proposed lifetime and potential contributions to the local community. The consultation questionnaire also included tick-box demographic monitoring questions and provision to supply contact details. The full list of questions asked in the consultation questionnaire are set out in **Table 7-24**.
- 7.3.6 All eight questions asked in the consultation questionnaire were open-ended and provided free-form spaces for consultees to provide detailed responses to the questions. All individual feedback responses received and how the Applicant has had regard to these responses has been stated in this chapter.
- 7.3.7 In total, 254 community responses were received to the s47 consultation between 01 June 2021 and 13 July 2021. A summary of the results is presented below. For each question, the Applicant has coded responses into frequency tables shown in **Tables 7-25 to 7-31** below.

#### *Source of responses*

- 7.3.8 During the Section 47 consultation period, the Applicant received:
- 171 completed feedback forms virtually;
  - 63 completed feedback forms by post; and
  - 20 pieces of feedback via email or as letters.
- 7.3.9 The majority of responses were sent via the online and hard copy feedback questionnaires, accounting for 234 of the total responses. **Figure 7-1** shows the questionnaires by mode received.

**Figure 7-1 Section 47 community consultation responses by mode received**



7.3.10 In summary:

- 11% of respondents who provided their address lived within the CM3 postal area code;
- Of the respondents who provided their age range on the feedback form, 42% of these were over the age of 60 and 41% of the total respondents were aged 40-59; and,
- Overall, only 91 responders completed the feedback form in its entirety.

**Table 7-22 Community consultation responses received by address provided**

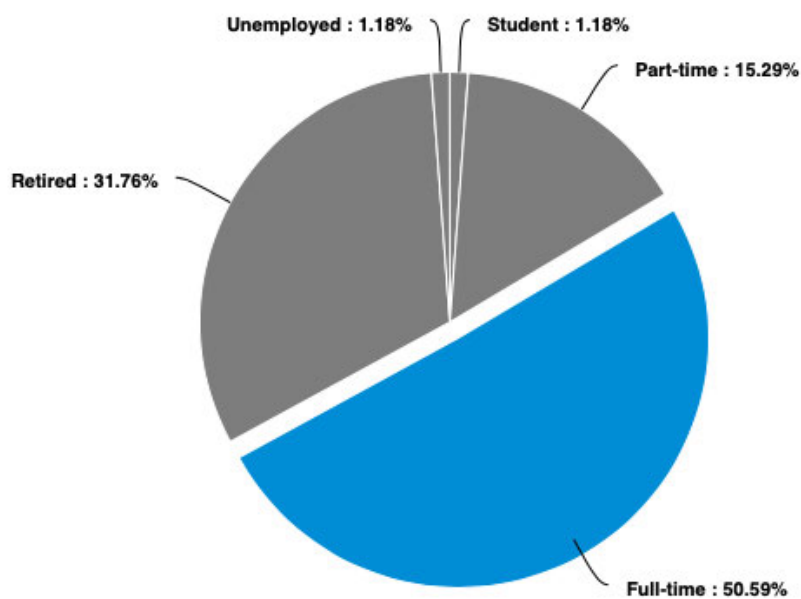
Area	Number of responses
Boreham	24
Terling	13
Hatfield Peverel	10
Little Waltham	9
Fairstead	7
Chelmsford	4
Great Leighs	2

Little Leighs	2
Braintree	2
Clacton-on-Sea	2
Burnham	1
Springfield	1
West Horndon	1
Wickford	1
Wickham Bishops	1
Witham	1

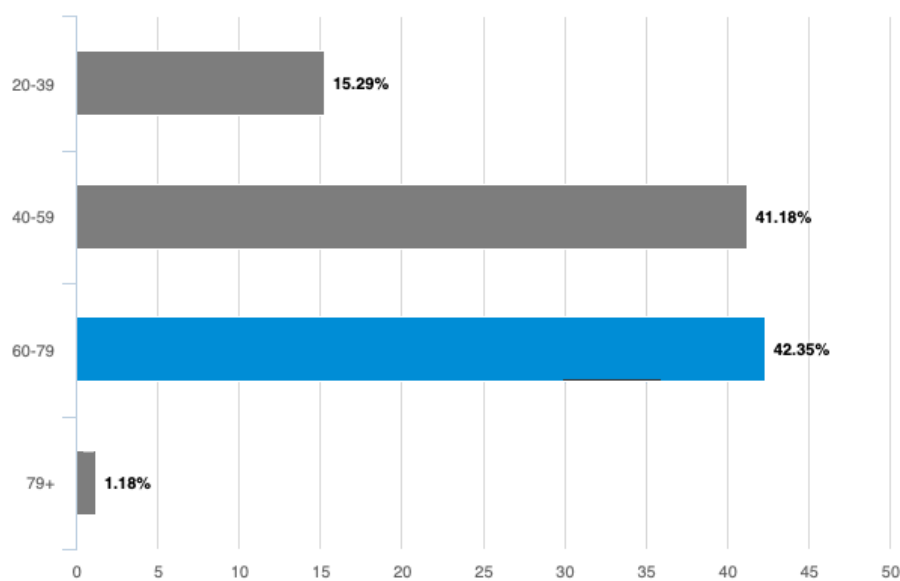
**Figure 7-2 Community responses received by postcode provided**



**Figure 7-3 Community feedback by occupation of respondent**



**Figure 7-4 Community feedback by age of respondent**



**Table 7-23 Community feedback by age of respondent**

Age	Number of responses
0-19	2
20-39	15
40-59	37



60-79 39

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79+ 3

### *Analysis of responses*

7.3.11 Respondents could answer any number of questions included in the feedback form.

7.3.12 Out of the 234 feedback questionnaires received, **Table 7-24** outlines how many responses were received for each question.

7.3.13 Many respondents used the questionnaire to provide general comments on the Scheme overall, either using the first or last questions to give their responses.

**Table 7-24 Number of responses received to questions within the feedback questionnaire**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>
Question 1. Do you have any comments on our proposals for the solar energy generation element of the scheme?	192
Question 2. Do you have any comments on our proposals for the battery storage element of the scheme?	149
Question 3. Do you have any comments on our proposals for connecting to the national electricity system, including laying cables underground and extending Bulls Lodge National Grid Substation?	125
Question 4. Do you have any comments on the potential environmental impacts and our proposals for enhancements and mitigation during: a) the construction of Longfield Solar Farm?	155
Question 4b). The operation of Longfield Solar Farm?	112
Question 4c). The decommissioning of Longfield Solar Farm?	124
Question 5. Do you have any comments on the contribution that the scheme will make to the local community?	156
Question 6. Do you have any comments on the potential biodiversity enhancements set out on pages 28-29 of the Consultation Booklet?	133

## Question 7. Do you have any further comments? 204

7.3.14 This section offers a breakdown of the responses received to each questionnaire by the frequency with which each theme was raised. A more detailed, qualitative, analysis of issues raised, and the regard had to them by the Applicant is provided below.

### Question 1) Do you have any comments on our proposals for the solar energy generation element of the scheme?

7.3.15 This was the second-most answered question through the feedback form, with 82% of respondents providing an answer to this question. Generally, most answers referred to the Scheme as a whole, and the two most common points raised were that the Scheme was too large and concern that there would be a loss of viable agricultural land.

**Table 7-25 Summary of responses to question 1**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>No comment</i>	23
The scheme is too large	36
It will damage prime agricultural land	36
There are alternative sites available (e.g. brownfield land)	27
Concerned about biodiversity impacts	18
I support this scheme	18
It will have a significant visual impact on the landscape	11
I support renewable energy in principle, but the scheme is in the wrong location	7
Generally oppose	4
I support renewable energy in principle, but the scheme is too large	3
It will impact local property market	3
Site safety concerns	3
Question viability / whether the UK's climate is appropriate for solar farms	3

### Question 2) Do you have any comments on our proposals for the battery storage element of the scheme?

7.3.16 The lower response rate to this question (64%) can be attributed to the fact that some respondents addressed the topic of battery storage in their answer to the first question on the questionnaire – particularly in relation to safety concerns and biodiversity impacts.

**Table 7-26 Summary of responses to question 2**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No comment	27
Is it safe?	32
Concerned about the fire risk	27
Generally oppose	12
It is a necessary element of the scheme	7
Concern about impact of manufacturing batteries on environment	7

Noise concerns	6
The battery storage is too big	6
More information is needed	5
Concerned about impact from the BESS on local wildlife	5
The information provided does not provide details of the size, height, and visual impact of the battery units.	4
It is not necessary	3
Damage to health of local residents	2
Supportive of location	2
How big is the battery storage?	2
Have other forms of energy storage been considered?	2

**Question 3) Do you have any comments on our proposals for connecting to the national electricity system, including laying cables underground and extending Bulls Lodge National Grid Substation?**

7.3.17 This question was answered by 53% of respondents, with most respondents choosing to comment on the cable route and perceived disruption during construction, or to generally express their support or opposition to the proposals.

**Table 7-27 Summary of responses to question 3**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No comment	34
As long as the cabling is subsurface	23
Supportive / no concerns	12
Generally oppose the scheme	12
Environmental impact	11
Construction works	10
More details required	5
Long term impacts	4
Scale of cabling	4
Safety risks	4
Close to my property	4
Impact on local property market	2
Health risks for local residents	1

**Question 4a) Do you have any comments on the potential environmental impacts and our proposals for enhancements and mitigation during the construction of Longfield Solar Farm?**

7.3.18 Of the three questions asking about environmental impacts at different stages of the Scheme's lifetime, community consultees were most concerned with the construction stage, with 66% of respondents providing an answer to this question.

**Table 7-28 Summary of responses to question 4a**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No comment	21
I do not support the scheme	23

The proposed construction will be extremely disruptive	18
Potential damage to agricultural land	18
The number of construction vehicles needs to be managed	15
The roads are very narrow and unsuitable for HGVs	14
Lack of construction management plan	13
Phased construction traffic important	7
Impact for pedestrians	7
Supportive of measures proposed	6
Concerns over use of Boreham Road	5
The scheme is too large	4
Concerned about the noise level	2
Concerned Leighs Road and others will be used for cut throughs	2

**Question 4b) Do you have any comments on the potential environmental impacts and our proposals for enhancements and mitigation during the operation of Longfield Solar Farm?**

7.3.19 48% of respondents provided an answer to this question. The most common answer was concern regarding potential damage to agricultural land. Respondents also stressed the need for a site maintenance plan and expressed misgivings regarding the number of local employment opportunities that would be created.

**Table 7-29 Summary of responses to question 4b**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>No comment</i>	31
I do not support the scheme	28
General concern about environmental impacts	25
A site maintenance plan is needed	8
I do not think the scheme will provide employment for the local population	4
Noise will be disruptive	4
The scheme will have a negative impact on biodiversity	3
Security risks - e.g. terrorist attacks - need to be considered	3
Impact for pedestrians and walkers	2
Lack of benefits for the local community	2
No objections to measures proposed	2

**Question 4c) Do you have any comments on the potential environmental impacts and our proposals for enhancements and mitigation during the decommissioning of Longfield Solar Farm?**

7.3.20 53% of respondents provided an answer to this question, with the most common answer relating to concerns the land would be returned to brownfield after the project's cycle. Most responses to this question also referenced the environmental impact of disposing the panels, the perceived damage to agricultural land and a request for more detail on the decommissioning process.

**Table 7-30 Summary of responses to question 4c**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No comment	29
Generally opposed to the scheme itself	14
Fear the land will be designated brownfield afterward	14
More detail needed	14
Environmental impact of disposing panels	13
Damage to agricultural land	12
Lack of guarantee that timeframe is only 40 years	9
Hope to see ecological benefits	6
Why decommission it if the scheme is viable?	6
Decommissioning impacts	5
Technology will develop faster than the 40-year timeframe	2

**Question 5) Do you have any comments on the contribution that the scheme will make to the local community?**

7.3.21 67% of respondents answered this question. Concern that the scheme would not create jobs for the local community, and only short-term, was the most prevalent concern. Respondents also requested more detail is provided on the nature of the community fund and wider local employment opportunities.

**Table 7-31 Summary of responses to question 5**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No comment	23
Negative impact on local community	37
Jobs created will only be short-term/not for locals	13
More detail needed on community fund/job opportunities	12
Generally oppose	11
Insufficient contribution for scale of scheme	8
Reduction in energy bills request	7
Support new cycling and walking routes	7
Support payments to local infrastructure to offset development	6
Will there be local employment opportunities?	6
Agricultural jobs displacement fears	6
Request to enhance the environment	5
Majority of community fund should be given to Terling	4
Request for solar panels on buildings in Terling Village	3
Supportive of scheme	3
It will impact local property prices	3
What would happen to remaining funds should the £64,000 not be fully spent in any given year?	1
Appeal for financial compensation during construction	1

**Question 6) Do you have any comments on the potential biodiversity enhancements set out on pages 28-29 of the Consultation Booklet?**

7.3.22 Of the 57% of respondents who answered this question, the majority (49%) stated any environmental enhancements would be offset by the negative environmental impacts of the scheme. Respondents also requested the measures go further in scope and guarantees were put in place to ensure they were implemented.

**Table 7-32 Summary of responses to question 6**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No comment	32
Any enhancements are substantially offset by other considerations	28
Supportive of measures	23
Need to go further in scope	13
Guarantees needed that the measures will be implemented	10
More detail needed/ further clarity on measures	10
Disagree – only negative environmental impacts	6
Would take several years to see benefits	6
Maintenance concerns	4
Natural flood management (NFM) may be suitable here in consultation with the Environment Agency	1

**Question 7) Do you have any further comments?**

7.3.23 Respondents generally used this question to restate points made throughout the questionnaire or provide a full response to the Scheme as a whole. 87% of respondents provided a response to this question. The most common answers were consistent with the rest of the questionnaire, with the perceived lack of justification for site selection and the scale of the Scheme being too large being the two most common themes raised. Many in this section also stated their support for renewable energy schemes. Comments on the Applicant and community impacts were also recorded frequently in response to this question.

**Table 7-33 Summary of responses to question 7**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>No comment</i>	25
Lack of justification for site selection	23
The scheme is too large	23
The scheme will destroy prime agricultural land	21
Construction process concerns	20
Generally oppose the scheme	12
Noise concerns	11
Biodiversity impact concerns	10
Visual impact concerns	9
Unhappy with consultation process	8
Battery safety worries	8
Developer is focused on profit	7
More cycle routes and footpaths needed	6

Lack of mitigation measures	6
More details about the scheme are needed	5
Clarity needed on flood mitigation measures	5
The scheme is too close to my property	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waltham Road</li> <li>• Russell Green</li> <li>• Boreham Road</li> <li>• Noakes Lane</li> </ul>	
Supportive of scheme overall	4
The scheme is too close to Terling Village	3
Concerned about manufacturing process of batteries - environmental, cheap labour	3
Request to host school trips	2
Who will maintain the site?	2

**Table 7-34 Breakdown of most common responses from feedback not following questionnaire format**

Theme	Frequency
Concern regarding ecological impacts	11
Concern about visual impacts on specific properties	10
Comments regarding provision of paths	8
The scheme will destroy prime agricultural land	8
Concern about construction impacts	6
Further information required regarding decommissioning	5
View that consultation has not been effective	4
Concern about employment impacts	4
Alternatives to the scheme such as placing solar on rooftops should be considered	3
Concern about safety of BESS	3
Concern about noise from BESS	3
The scheme is too close to my property	3
The scheme is too large	3
Noise concerns	2
Requests for compensation	2

## Concern about flooding

2

### *Summary of issues raised, and regard had to them by the Applicant*

7.3.24 This section provides a further analysis of the themes raised across the feedback forms, as well as incorporating the written responses received that did not follow the format of the questionnaires.

7.3.25 This section will discuss the feedback received based around high-level themes which were most raised in responses:

- Alternatives assessment;
- Socio-economics and land use;
- Need;
- BESS and the Longfield Substation;
- Grid connection;
- EIA Process;
- Construction;
- Operations;
- Decommissioning;
- Ecology;
- Landscape and Visual Amenity;
- Cultural heritage;
- Transport and Access;
- Water Resources;
- Human Health;
- Renewable Energy;
- Climate Change; and,
- Other

### *Alternatives assessment*

7.3.26 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The Scheme is too close to villages;
- The Scheme is too close to residential properties;
- The BESS is too close to residential areas;
- The location of the Scheme is inappropriate as it is on greenfield and agricultural land;
- The Applicant has not considered alternative sites more suited to solar generation such as non-populated areas and brownfield sites;
- The Scheme is too close to specific residential properties;



- There should be consideration of alternative scales of solar development, such as on rooftops;
- The Applicant needs to provide evidence of the site selection process;
- The Scheme will change the nature of the area from rural to industrial; and,
- Property prices in the area will fall as a direct impact of the Scheme.

### Applicant's Response

7.3.27 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to the location of the Scheme raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.26, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-35** below.

**Table 7-35 Regard had to comments relating to the assessment of alternatives received from S47 consultation.**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
The Scheme is too close to villages.	<p>In identifying the Solar Farm Site, the Applicant identified that it is remote from nearby villages and that the relatively flat landform and existing woodland and hedgerow limits views into the site. As such there are only a small number of residential properties where visual impacts would be likely to result from the Scheme. The Applicant has also taken account of the visual impact on residential receptors in the design of the Scheme, including by providing strategically located stand-offs from receptors to above ground solar farm infrastructure in order to limit visual impact.</p> <p>Further detail of the Applicant's assessment of landscape and visual impact is in Chapter 10 of the PEIR and <b>Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b>.</p>
The Scheme is too close to residential properties.	<p>In identifying the Solar Farm Site, the Applicant identified that it is remote from nearby villages and that the relatively flat landform and existing woodland and hedgerow limits views into the site. As such there are only a small number of residential properties where visual impacts would be likely to result from the Scheme. The Applicant has also taken account of the visual impact on residential receptors in the design of the Scheme, including by providing strategically located stand-offs from receptors to above ground solar farm infrastructure in order to limit visual impact.</p> <p>Further detail of the Applicant's assessment of landscape and visual impact is in Chapter 10 of the</p>

## PEIR and **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1].**

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The BESS is too close to residential areas.

The site selected for the Longfield Substation and BESS was chosen due to the natural screening provided by Toppinghoehall Wood and Lost Wood. The mature trees therein provide excellent visual screening to the north, south and east. Additional planting will be implemented to screen the BESS and Longfield substation to the south west and will be allowed to mature to a substantial height.

Phase 2 of the BESS is intended to be undertaken five years after the Scheme becomes operational, to allow sufficient time for screening implanted to the south east of the BESS to mature and provide sufficient screening – this will provide a “bridge” between Toppinghoehall and Lost Woods until planting has had sufficient time to mature to a point that it provides sufficient screening. Further information is presented in **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1].**

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The location of the Scheme is inappropriate as it is on greenfield and agricultural land.

The use of agricultural land for the Scheme is justified. The project is urgently needed in order to generate renewable energy to contribute to meeting the Government's legally binding commitment for the country to reach net-zero by 2050, and to address the cause of climate change.

Best and most versatile agricultural land is classified as being within grade 1, grade 2 or grade 3a. National and local policy sets out that Applicants should take account of agricultural land classification and seek to locate their development on previously developed land, brownfield land, industrial land or lower grade agricultural land (classified as grade 3b, 4 or 5), where possible. The most up-to-date emerging national policy, however, adds context to this, noting that land type should not be a predominating factor in determining the suitability of the site location for a large scale solar farm.

The Applicant took account of this when identifying the Solar Farm Site, noting that almost all of the land in the vicinity of the 400 kV NETS power line between Braintree and Rayleigh is classified as either agricultural grade 3 or grade 2. This includes the Solar Farm Site, which is of a comparable quality to other land in the vicinity of the 400 kV

NETS power line. The only non-agricultural land in the vicinity of the 400 kV NETS power line is within settlements where insufficient contiguous land is available for a large solar farm. Any grade 4 land in the vicinity of the 400 kV NETS power line is within the floodplain of the River Chelmer or the River Crouch, or is constrained by settlements and woodland. The Applicant considered that because there is no obvious available land that is classified below grade 3 and therefore known to be not 'best and most versatile', the inclusion of some best and most versatile agricultural land within the site would therefore be justified. The most recent emerging national policy is consistent in with the Applicant's position and process, explaining that solar farm developments are not prohibited on 'best and most versatile' agricultural land and that it is recognised that due to their scale it is likely that nationally significant solar farms may use some agricultural land. Applicants are required to explain their choice of site, noting the preference for development to be on brownfield and non-agricultural land. Further information regarding the selection of the site and design alternatives is described in **Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution of the Environmental Statement (ES)** [EN010118/APP/6.1].

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The Applicant has not considered alternative sites more suited to solar generation such as non-populated areas and brownfield sites.

The Applicant selected the Solar Farm Site following a process to identify land which is suitable from a technical, environmental and planning perspective. This is set out in **Chapter 3 Alternatives and Design of the Environmental Statement** [EN010118/APP/6.1]. It references each of the matters identified by section 2.48 of Draft National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy (EN-3) (Draft NPS EN-3) [REF-15] as factors influencing solar farm site selection by the Applicant. Essex represents a good location within the UK to construct a solar farm. This is because it benefits from high levels of solar irradiance compared to other parts of the UK and is characterised by a generally low lying and flat topography, which increases the likelihood of being able to identify a suitable site that is capable of producing a large amount of electricity. Essex is in the South East of England, in close proximity to London, which means it is near to high demand centres for electricity. The location of electricity generation infrastructure close to areas of high demand helps to minimise losses associated with the transfer of electricity over long distances.

The Applicant therefore sought a suitable generation site and point of connection to the electricity network in this area.

The Solar Farm Site is suitable for a solar farm development insofar as it is located within an area of high irradiance and is of suitable topography. Within the parameters of the search for suitable sites for the Scheme, several alternative sites were considered, which were of comparative size and location with close proximity to the National Grid. The Point of Connection of the Scheme was a key criterion, with a target 5km radius from existing National Grid infrastructure (beyond which the environmental effects could increase and the Scheme becomes less financially viable).

The 400kV overhead line that stretches from Braintree Substation to the north of the Order limits to Rayleigh Substation located to the east of Basildon, 19km to the south of the Order limits, was identified as having capacity to allow a connection from a potential solar farm, and a variety of constraints were mapped and used to exclude unsuitable areas and identify potential alternative sites. Constraints included:

- Ecological constraints – SACs, SPAs, SSSIs, Ramsar Sites, National Nature Reserves,
- Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and Ancient Woodland;
- Heritage constraints – Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments,
- Registered Parks and Gardens and Registered Battlefields;
- Landscape Designations – National Parks, AONB, Country Parks, Special Landscape Areas;
- Settlements;
- Land designated for other uses in the Chelmsford City Council Local Plan [REF-20] and Braintree District Council Local Plan [REF-13], for example open space and employment land;
- Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3, although this is not necessarily a key constraint for solar PV;
- Green Belt; and,
- Grade 1 and Grade 2 ALC.

The search was used to identify contiguous potential developable areas of around or greater than 300ha with the ability to accommodate a large scale solar scheme.

Further to the high level constraints identified above, further search criteria were applied at a local level, including:

- Topography – the site needs to be flat or gently south facing slopes;
- Field Shape and Pattern – fields need to be large and of regular shape;
- Number of landowners – ideally a small number of landowners;
- Landscape and Visual – aiming to locate the site out of landscape designations, with a high degree of existing vegetation for natural screening, limited long distance views;
- Residential Amenity – checking for proximity to settlements;
- Heritage – proximity to Listed Buildings and other designations such as Scheduled Monuments, and presence of below ground archaeology;
- Ecology – avoid or minimise proximity to designated areas within or close to the site;
- Flood Risk – seek to locate the site in Flood Zone 1, and reduce intrusion into zones 2 and 3;
- Public Rights of Way – seek to either minimise effects upon receptors using PRoW or seek opportunities to provide connectivity; and
- Access – ease of access for construction and decommissioning stages to be considered.

The Order limits are situated within the optimal 5km of the Bulls Lodge Substation and provides a developable area with the ability to accommodate a large scale solar scheme. It was deemed a suitable option to move forwards with an application for the Scheme.

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The Scheme is too close to specific residential properties.

The Applicant has continued to refine the Scheme design since July 2021 to reduce impacts on specific residential properties. Further detail with regard specific residential properties is set out in **Appendix J-4** of this report and **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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There should be consideration of alternative scales of solar development, such as on rooftops.

EDF Renewables, which is the majority shareholder of the Applicant, is currently working with a supermarket chain to place solar panels on the rooves of its stores. Longfield Solar Farm remains necessary alongside development of this type to meet the Country's energy needs. For further

details, please see the **Statement of Need** submitted as part of the DCO application **[EN010118/APP/7.1]**.

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The Applicant needs to provide evidence of the site selection process.

Evidence of the site selection process is provided in **Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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The Scheme will change the nature of the area from rural to industrial.

The effect of the Scheme on landscape character and visual amenity has been reported in the **Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The LVIA considers the duration of the effects, and their 'reversibility'. The Scheme has been designed to avoid and minimise adverse effects on the local environment through the sensitive siting of the proposed elements. Extensive areas of new woodland, species rich grassland, areas for natural regeneration and scrub are proposed as part of the scheme, resulting in a biodiversity net gain. The LVIA concludes that, while there will be some moderate adverse impacts on Local Landscape Character Areas when assessed at 1 year of operation, these are reduced to no significant effects after 15 years of operation.

### *Socio-economics and land use*

7.3.28 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- Concern at the loss of productive agricultural land in the area;
- The increasing importance of food security means development on agricultural land is inappropriate;
- Food production is central to the local economy and jobs will be affected;
- Concern that the land used for the Scheme will be designated as brownfield following decommissioning; and,
- Employment generation will be limited, particularly following construction.

### Applicant's Response

7.3.29 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to socio-economics and land use raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.28, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-36** below.

**Table 7-36 Regard had to comments relating to socio-economics and land use received from S47 consultation.**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
<p>Concern at the loss of productive agricultural land in the area</p>	<p>The use of agricultural land for the Scheme is justified by the urgent need for renewable energy generation. The Scheme is urgently needed to generate renewable energy to contribute to meeting the Government's legally binding commitment for the country to reach net-zero by 2050, and to address the cause of climate change. This is set out further in the <b>Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]</b>. Whilst the Scheme will result in best and most versatile agricultural land not being available for agricultural use over its lifetime, the non-intrusive and reversible nature of solar development means that, very little, agricultural land will be permanently lost. The vast majority of the Order limits will be available for return to agriculture after decommissioning, and the soil resource will have benefitted from a recovery of soil organic matter over the approximately 40-year duration of the Scheme. An element of agriculture may also be retained over the life of the Scheme, with low density grazing an option being considered for the management of some of the habitats to be created on the Solar Farm Site. For further information, please see <b>Chapter 12 of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1] - Socio-economics and Land Use</b>.</p>
<p>The increasing importance of food security means development on agricultural land is inappropriate</p>	<p>The use of agricultural land for the Scheme is justified by the urgent need for renewable energy generation. The Scheme is urgently needed in order to generate renewable energy to contribute to meeting the Government's legally binding commitment for the country to reach net-zero by 2050, and to address the cause of climate change. This is set out further in the <b>Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]</b>. Whilst the Scheme will result in best and most versatile agricultural land not being available for agricultural use over its lifetime, the non-intrusive and reversible nature of solar development means that there will be very little permanent loss of agricultural land. The soil will have undergone an expected 40 years of recovery through less intensive farming such as being left fallow, or sheep grazing and is expected to be the same or better quality as it is currently. Section 12.8 of <b>Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use</b></p>

## of the Environmental Statement

**[EN010118/APP/6.1]** concludes this is not significant in EIA terms.

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Food production is central to the local economy and jobs will be affected

An assessment of the number of jobs created during the construction phase is provided in **Chapter: 12: Socio-Economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/6.1]**. It is expected that an average of 380 jobs will be created during the construction period. During the operational phase, 8 full time staff would be employed on the site.

The expected operational employment at the Scheme will be equivalent to the current amount of employment on the agricultural land at the Scheme, meaning there will be net no change in the amount of employment. This information is based on estimates informed by the Applicant's prior experience of similar schemes, and details provided by the current landowner.

In addition, a local Skills and Employment Plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction. This will set out measures that the Applicant will implement in order to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally.

The Applicant will also make a skills and education contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training.

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Concern that the land used for the Scheme will be designated as brownfield following decommissioning

Solar farms are temporary and typically have an operational lifespan of 40 years. Once Longfield Solar Farm reaches the end of its lifespan, infrastructure on the Solar Farm Site will be removed and the Solar Farm Site returned to the landowner. Post-decommissioning, it is expected that the landowner would return the Solar Farm Site to arable use, although it is assumed that established habitats such as hedgerows and woodland would be retained. The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented.



There will be very little permanent loss of agricultural land. The soil will have undergone an expected 40 years of recovery through less intensive farming such as being left fallow, or sheep grazing and is therefore expected to be the same or better quality as it is currently. Section 12.8 of **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** concludes this is not significant in EIA terms.

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Employment generation will be limited, particularly following construction

An assessment of the number of jobs created during the construction phase is provided in **Chapter: 12: Socio-Economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/6.1]**. It is expected that an average of 380 jobs will be created during the construction period. During the operational phase, 8 full time staff would be employed on the site.

The expected operational employment at the Scheme will be equivalent to the current amount of employment on the agricultural land at the Scheme, meaning there will be net no change in the amount of employment. This information is based on estimates informed by the Applicant's prior experience of similar schemes, and details provided by the current landowner.

In addition, a local skills and employment plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction. This will set out measures that the Applicant will implement to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally.

The Applicant will also make a skills and education contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training.

### *Need*

7.3.30 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- There is a need for more renewable energy generation in the UK;
- The scale of the Scheme is unnecessary and should be reduced;
- More justification for the size of the site is needed as it is significantly larger than other solar farms in the UK;
- Biodiversity improvements would not be required should the Scheme not have a negative impact;
- Solar energy generation is better suited to sunnier parts of the UK; and,
- The development of the Scheme is motivated by profit.

## Applicant's response

7.3.31 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to need for the Scheme raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.30, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-37** below.

**Table 7-37 Regard had to comments relating to the need for the Scheme received from S47 consultation**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
There is a need for more renewable energy generation in the UK	<p>The Applicant agrees and has set out the benefits of the form of electricity generation that will be delivered at Longfield Solar Farm in the <b>Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]</b>. The Scheme is a substantial infrastructure asset, capable of delivering large amounts of low-carbon electricity. The Scheme, along with other solar schemes, is of critical importance on the path to Net Zero, especially given the context of the Climate Change Committee's recent identification of the need for urgent action to increase the pace of decarbonisation in the electricity sector in Great Britain, and government's adoption of their recommendations for the Sixth Carbon Budget (2033 – 2037) [REF-17].</p>
The scale of the Scheme is unnecessary and should be reduced	<p>The Applicant has set out the benefits of the form of electricity generation that will be delivered at Longfield Solar Farm in the <b>Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]</b>. This also sets out in greater detail the benefits of delivering the Scheme at the scale and location proposed.</p> <p>In short, the Scheme is a substantial infrastructure asset, capable of delivering large amounts of low-carbon electricity. The Scheme, along with other solar schemes, is of critical importance on the path to Net Zero, especially given the context of the Climate Change Committee's recent identification of the need for urgent action to increase the pace of decarbonisation in the electricity sector in Great Britain, and government's adoption of their recommendations for the Sixth Carbon Budget (2033 – 2037) [REF-17].</p> <p>Maximising the capacity of generation in the proposed Essex area, is to the benefit of all British consumers, and the solar industry generally. The Scheme will deliver large amounts of low-carbon power before many other large-scale solar projects (which are behind the Scheme in the development process, but which are also needed). The Scheme</p>

will also deliver power ahead of other potential technologies (which may have longer construction timeframes or have potentially not yet been proven at scale) which will support decarbonisation only in future years and only if they are brought forward.

The meaningful and timely contributions offered by the Scheme to UK decarbonisation and security of supply, while helping lower bills for consumers throughout its operational life, will be critical on the path to Net Zero. Without the Scheme, a significant and vital opportunity to develop a large-scale low-carbon generation scheme will have been passed over, increasing materially the risk that future Carbon Budgets and Net Zero 2050 will not be achieved.

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More justification for the size of the site is needed as it is significantly larger than other solar farms in the UK

Chapter 11 of the **Statement of Need**

**[EN010118/APP/7.1]** provides an analysis of the economic viability of large-scale solar generation as a future contributor to a low-carbon Great Britain electricity supply system in comparison to alternate technologies and an analysis of why the Scheme will be most beneficial to the achievement of Government's aims if it is consented to the scale proposed.

Solar power reduces the market price of electricity by displacing more expensive forms of generation from the cost stack. This delivers benefits for electricity consumers. Due to technological advances, power generated by solar plants is already at or below grid parity cost in Great Britain. Solar power is economically attractive in Great Britain against many other forms of conventional and renewable generation.

Size remains important and maximising the generating capacity of schemes improves their economic efficiency, so bringing power to market at the lowest cost possible. Larger solar schemes deliver more quickly and at a lower unit cost than multiple independent schemes which make up the same total capacity, bringing forward carbon reduction and economic benefits in line with government policy. The Scheme proposes a substantial infrastructure asset, which if consented will deliver large amounts of cheap, low-carbon electricity both during and beyond the critical 2020s timeframe. Maximising the capacity of generation in the resource-rich, accessible and technically deliverable proposed location, represents a

significant and economically rational step forwards in the fight against the global climate emergency.

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Biodiversity improvements would not be required should the Scheme not have a negative impact

The Applicant will put in place measures that will lead to a net gain in biodiversity across the site as demonstrated in the **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]**. The DCO Application also includes an **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**. This sets out how we will protect and manage landscape and ecology and inform more detailed plans in the future. There are some potential temporary impacts during construction that we will need to mitigate, such as those from site clearance. An **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** has been included in the DCO application to explain how these will be managed.

An **Outline Soil Resource Management Plan** is provided as an **Appendix** to the **Outline CEMP [EN010118/APP/7.10]**. This sets out principles for how soils will be managed and protected during construction, operation and decommissioning of the Scheme. A detailed soil resource management plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction, prior to operation, and prior to decommissioning, as set out by the Requirements of the **Draft DCO [EN010118/APP/3.1]**.

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Solar energy generation is better suited to sunnier parts of the UK

Essex represents a good location within the UK to construct a solar farm. This is because it benefits from high levels of solar irradiance compared to other parts of the UK and is characterised by a generally low lying and flat topography, which increases the likelihood of being able to identify a suitable site that is capable of producing a large amount of electricity. Essex is in the South East of England, in close proximity to London, which means it is near to high demand centres for electricity. The location of electricity generation infrastructure close to areas of high demand helps to minimise losses associated with the transfer of electricity over long distances. The Applicant therefore sought a suitable generation site and point of connection to the electricity network in this area.

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The development of the Scheme is motivated by profit

The Applicant is bringing forward Longfield Solar Farm to meet an urgent national need for new, renewable, sources of electricity. Further information on this is provided within the **Statement of Need**

[EN010118/APP/7.1] submitted as part of the DCO application.

### *BESS and the Longfield Substation*

7.3.32 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- Concern about a risk of fire from the BESS;
- The BESS should be located away from homes;
- There should be an independent risk assessment of the BESS;
- The BESS should be located close to the Bulls Lodge Substation rather than the Longfield Substation;
- Questions about why the BESS should be collocated with solar energy generation;
- The BESS should be screened appropriately;
- Concern about noise and light pollution from the BESS; and,
- Questions about whether the Longfield Substation would be permanent.

### Applicant's response

7.3.33 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to the Battery Energy Storage System and the Longfield Substation raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.32, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-38** below.

**Table 7-38 Regard had to comments relating to the BESS and the Longfield Substation**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
Concern about a risk of fire from the BESS	A plume assessment has been undertaken with respect to the BESS to assess the likelihood of a fire occurring, and the level of impact on receptors in the unlikely event a fire occurs. The assessment demonstrates that under day-to-day operation there is a low risk of an incident, and in the event of an incident the credible hazards are understood and have been evaluated to demonstrate that the risk to the local population would be very low. The Plume Assessment has been submitted as part of the Application as <b>Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b> . The Applicant has prepared an <b>Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]</b> which details design measures and controls for the BESS to minimise the risk of a fire and includes a framework for responding to an incident.

The design of the BESS and its impacts are controlled in several ways. Prior to commencement of construction of the BESS, a Battery Safety Management Plan (in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** submitted with the Application) is required to be submitted to the relevant local planning authority and approved, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency. The Applicant must operate the BESS in accordance with the approved plan.

Further, pursuant to a requirement of the DCO, the detailed design of the BESS must be in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** (which includes safety requirements for the BESS design) and the **Outline Design Principles** submitted as an appendix to the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**. The Outline Design Principles contain controls over the BESS, which include: 1) that the chemistry of the BESS will be lithium ion, and 2) that an assessment will be undertaken, based on the detailed design for the BESS, to demonstrate that the risk of fire and impacts from such a fire will be no worse than as assessed in the plume assessment submitted with the Application as **Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

In this way, the Applicant can confirm that if the BESS constructed is different to that assessed in the plume assessment, its impacts in the event of a fire would be no worse than those assessed in the plume assessment, and therefore the risk to the local population would be very low.

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The BESS should be located away from homes

Within the Order limits the selection of the location of the BESS has been based on a number of factors. The most pertinent factor being the selected site has tried to minimise the proximity to receptors of any nuisance with the distance to properties maximised where possible. This has the benefit of reducing the visual and noise impact but also minimises any potential impacts on the local population should an event occur. The location of the proposed BESS is around 500m from any properties.

There should be an independent risk assessment of the BESS

A plume assessment has been undertaken with respect to the BESS to assess the likelihood of a fire occurring, and the level of impact on receptors in the unlikely event a fire occurs. The assessment demonstrates that under day-to-day operation there is a low risk of an incident, and in the event of an incident the credible hazards are understood and have been evaluated to demonstrate that the risk to the local population would be very low. The Plume Assessment has been submitted as part of the Application as **Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. The Applicant has prepared an **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** which details design measures and controls for the BESS to minimise the risk of a fire and includes a framework for responding to an incident.

The design of the BESS and its impacts are controlled in several ways. Prior to commencement of construction of the BESS, a Battery Safety Management Plan (in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** submitted with the Application) is required to be submitted to the relevant local planning authority and approved, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency. The Applicant must operate the BESS in accordance with the approved plan.

Further, pursuant to a requirement of the DCO, the detailed design of the BESS must be in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** (which includes safety requirements for the BESS design) and the **Outline Design Principles** submitted as an appendix to the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**. The Outline Design Principles contain controls over the BESS, which include: 1) that the chemistry of the BESS will be lithium ion, and 2) that an assessment will be undertaken, based on the detailed design for the BESS, to demonstrate that the risk of fire and impacts from such a fire will be no worse than as assessed in the plume assessment submitted with the Application as **Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

In this way, the Applicant can confirm that if the BESS constructed is different to that assessed in the plume assessment, its impacts in the event of a fire would be no worse than those assessed in the plume assessment, and the risk to the local population would be very low.

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The BESS should be located close to the Bulls Lodge Substation rather than the Longfield Substation

Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant confirmed the proposed location of the BESS at the site close to Toppinghoehall Wood. This considered the potential to minimise and mitigate impacts from the BESS. The BESS and Longfield Substation have been sited to benefit from good screening from existing mature vegetation. The Applicant has also assessed impacts on landscape and visual impact, heritage and ecology from the BESS in the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Questions about why the BESS should be collocated with solar energy generation

The BESS included with the Scheme is important to maximising its benefits. There is a clear, direct relationship between the solar generation station and the electricity storage which means that there are substantial benefits to their collocation which will result in an improved contribution to low carbon UK electricity supplies when compared to either coming forward independent of the other. The collocation of those assets enables additional operational capabilities to be accessed for system benefit, supporting the view of the Applicant that electricity storage is associated development as per the guidance on associated development applications for major infrastructure projects. Collocation is especially beneficial for National Grid where connections are to the transmission, rather than to the distribution network, because the combined asset is required to meet certain planning, notification and service obligations. Further information of the benefits of collocating the BESS with solar generation is set out in section 12.5 of the **Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]**.

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The BESS should be screened appropriately

The site selected for the Longfield Substation and BESS was chosen due to the natural screening provided by Toppinghoehall Wood and Lost Wood. The mature trees therein provide excellent visual screening to the north, south and east. Additional planting will be implemented to screen the BESS and Longfield substation to the south west and will be allowed to mature to a substantial height.



Phase 2 of the BESS is intended to be undertaken five years after the Scheme becomes operational, to allow sufficient time for screening implanted to the south east of the BESS to mature and provide sufficient screening – this will provide a “bridge” between Toppinghoehall and Lost Woods until planting has had sufficient time to mature to a point that it provides sufficient screening. Further information is presented in **Chapter 10 of the Environmental Statement (ES) [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Concern about noise and light pollution from the BESS

The Applicant has set out our assessment of potential noise impacts in **Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The assessment considers the location of operational plant. The design of the Scheme has incorporated measures such as distancing of inverters away from sensitive receptors, and locating the BESS compound in an area away from large concentrations of receptors as well as towards the A12 where existing ambient noise levels are higher (such that noise emissions from the BESS are less impactful). As set out in the Outline **Design Principles** included as an appendix of the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**, inverters within 250m of residential dwellings will be treated with acoustic barriers which achieve a minimum 10dB(A) sound reduction, or an inverter selected with sound power levels at least 10dB lower than 96dB, which has been applied to inverters in the EIA. Landscape and visual mitigation has been described in Section 10.7 of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and is shown in **Figure 10-12 Outline Landscape Masterplan [EN010118/APP/6.3]**. The proposed lighting has been designed to avoid and minimise the potential for adverse landscape and visual effects. An assessment of the proposed lighting, including any temporary lighting during construction, on ecology has been undertaken in **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. Throughout the Scheme, the use of motion detection security lighting to avoid permanent lighting will be utilised and the inward distribution of light will avoid light spill on to existing boundary features and impacts on ecology.

Questions about whether the Longfield Substation would be permanent

Solar farms typically have an operational lifespan of 40 years. Once Longfield Solar Farm reaches the end of its lifespan, its solar infrastructure, including the Longfield Substation, will be dismantled, and the site returned to its previous condition. The extension to the Bulls Lodge Substation will not be decommissioned and will continue to be operated by National Grid.

### Grid connection

7.3.34 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The extension of Bulls Lodge substation is logical;
- Underground cabling is preferred as the visual impact is reduced;
- Underground cabling will cause more disruption than overground cabling;
- Concern about the visual impact of extending Bulls Lodge substation;
- Justification should be provided for connecting at Bulls Lodge substation rather than directly into the 400kV lines within the site;
- The cable route lying close to residential properties creates safety risks;
- The cable route will impact wildlife corridors; and,
- More detail on the cable route is required.

### Applicant's response

7.3.35 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to the grid connection raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.34, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-39** below.

**Table 7-39** Regard had to comments relating to the grid connection

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
The extension of Bulls Lodge substation is logical	The Scheme includes the extension of the existing substation (Bulls Lodge Substation Extension), Work No. 5A, to provide the electrical connection point to the National Grid to facilitate the import and export of electricity to and from the Solar Farm Site. Work No. 5B comprises temporary overhead line alterations, including two temporary pylons, and realignment of the existing 400kV overhead line.
Underground cabling is preferred as the visual impact is reduced	No new overhead lines will be constructed.

Underground cabling will cause more disruption than overground cabling

The corridor for the cable route has been finalised prior to the application submission. No new overhead lines will be constructed. The Grid Connection Route will comprise of one underground 400 kV cable circuit. For more information, please refer to the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**.

Concern about the visual impact of extending Bulls Lodge substation

During the statutory consultation, the Applicant presented information on extending Bulls Lodge Substation and building the Longfield Substation based on design parameters. Since the statutory consultation, the Applicant has developed its design for the Bulls Lodge Substation Extension and Longfield Substation in more detail and assessed potential environmental impacts through the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. This includes impacts on cultural heritage, assessed in Chapter 7, ecology; Chapter 8, flood risk and drainage; Chapter 9, landscape and visual amenity; Chapter 10, and noise and vibration; Chapter 11.

Justification should be provided for connecting at Bulls Lodge substation rather than directly into the 400kV lines within the site

The Applicant considered building a new substation connecting directly into the 400kV lines within the site, but this was discounted at the optioneering stage due to significant environmental impacts. Further information is presented in **Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

The cable route lying close to residential properties creates safety risks

The Applicant has assessed potential impacts on human health and wellbeing in **Chapter 15: Human Health of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and identified no significant negative impacts. The 132kV cables and 400kV grid connection cables are proposed to be underground. Therefore, the potential sources of EMF that might act in-combination with other sources are removed. It is also confirmed in the **EIA Scoping Report** provided as **Appendix 1A** of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** that overhead power lines at voltages up to and including 132 kV, underground cables at voltages up to and including 132 kV and substations at and beyond the publicly accessible perimeter are not capable of exceeding International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection exposure guidelines and therefore no assessment is required for these. Please see **Chapter 16: Other Environmental Topics in the Environmental Statement for further information [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

The cable route will impact wildlife corridors	The Applicant has assessed potential impacts on wildlife as part of <b>Chapter 8:Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> . This does not identify any significant adverse impacts on wildlife from the grid connection.
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More detail on the cable route is required	The corridor for the cable route has been finalised prior to the application submission. No new overhead lines will be constructed. The Grid Connection Route will comprise of one underground 400 kV cable circuit. For more information, please refer to the <b>Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]</b> .
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*EIA process*

7.3.36 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The proposed mitigation set out in the EIA is inadequate;
- The proposed mitigation measures are robust;
- Concern that the EIA process has been carried out appropriately; and,
- The assessment methodology used should be available to the public.

Applicant’s response

7.3.37 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to the EIA process raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.36, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-40** below.

**Table 7-40 Regard had to comments relating to the EIA process**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
The proposed mitigation set out in the EIA is inadequate	During the statutory consultation stage, information was available in the PEIR. These assessments were preparatory at that point, as the Scheme was consulted on at a point in time to allow feedback to be able to influence the ongoing EIA and design of the scheme.
The proposed mitigation measures are robust	The Applicant has prepared environmental management plans setting out how impacts from the Scheme on the environment will be managed and mitigated during the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Scheme. These include the <b>Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]</b> , <b>Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)</b> included at <b>Appendix 13B of the ES [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b> , <b>Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP)</b>

**[EN010118/APP/7.11], Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13], Outline Battery Safety Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.6] and Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/7.12].** Where appropriate, delivery of these plans is secured by the **Draft DCO [EN010118/APP/3.1]**.

Concern that the EIA process has been carried out appropriately	A full independent assessment of environmental impacts of the Scheme has been undertaken by suitably qualified technical consultants using the methods set out in <b>Chapter 5: EIA Methodology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .
The assessment methodology used should be available to the public	This is set out in <b>Chapter 5: EIA Methodology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .

### Construction

7.3.38 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The proposed working hours are too long and should not include weekend work;
- The construction traffic will disrupt the local community;
- The noise of construction will be harmful to the local community;
- The construction phase will impact local biodiversity and soil structure;
- Local roads are narrow and unsuitable for HGVs, namely Boreham Road;
- There will be dust and pollution created during the construction phase;
- Large-scale construction is inappropriate in a small, rural community;
- Jobs created during the construction phase will not benefit the local community; and,
- A detailed construction management plan needs to be provided.

### Applicant's response

7.3.39 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to construction raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.38, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-41** below.

**Table 7-41 Regard had to comments relating to construction**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
The proposed working hours are too long and should not include weekend work	The <b>Outline Construction Environment Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.10]</b> and <b>Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)</b> prepared as <b>Appendix 13B of</b>

### **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**

restrict the hours of construction work which may be potentially disruptive. This includes restricting the hours of HGV deliveries:

- Avoiding arrivals or departures on a weekday between 08:00-09:00 and 17:00-18:00;
- No arrivals or departures on a Saturday before 08:00 or after 13:00; and,
- No arrivals or departures on Sundays or public holidays.

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The construction traffic will disrupt the local community

The **Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** which is included as **Appendix 13B of Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** details the mitigation measures required to reduce the impacts of increased traffic flows including HGVs on the roads and severance and intimidation associated with increased traffic and abnormal loads. The final CTMP will be produced prior to construction based on the Outline CTMP. Measures to be implemented include:

- Implementation of a Travel Plan to reduce the volume of construction staff and employee trips to the Order limits;
- Construction vehicles will be required to use only approved access routes to the Order limits;
- Deliveries to the Order limits will be recorded. The source of the delivery, vehicle weight, registration number, date and time will be stored on the operator's system;
- HGV arrivals, including deliveries, will be managed as far as reasonably practicable such that they are spread evenly over the day. HGV deliveries will be scheduled to avoid peak hours as far as practical;
- The HGV routing plan would be distributed to all drivers during their induction;
- Signage will be used at the main junctions to ensure that all HGV traffic relating to the Scheme travel in the appropriate directions;
- Revising the vehicle routing strategy to make use of the Radial Distributor Road (RDR1) once complete to bypass parts of the A130 including White Hart Lane;

- Maintaining access to PRowS during the construction phase, or otherwise providing temporary diversion routes if required; and
- Avoiding the usage of Protected Lanes, unless required for emergency access.

The noise of construction will be harmful to the local community

A robust construction management plan will be implemented, with due consideration to be given to the management of construction traffic both in terms of the impact of vehicle movements upon the highway network but also in terms of the potential for noise and air pollution impact. The Applicant has set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** and **Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) included at Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

The construction phase will impact local biodiversity and soil structure

A robust construction management plan will be implemented, with due consideration to be given to the management of construction traffic both in terms of the impact of vehicle movements upon the highway network but also in terms of impacts on ecology. The Applicant has set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** and **Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) included in Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Local roads are narrow and unsuitable for HGVs, namely Boreham Road

The Applicant is not expecting to use Boreham Road for access to the site. The Solar Farm Site is expected to have a single point of access with traffic being routed through the site to different areas during the phases of construction. The route from Essex Regiment Way via Wheeler's Hill and Cranham Road provides the most direct route from higher order roads and will minimise disruption in the nearby villages of Boreham and Hatfield Peverel. Where necessary, Cranham Road and Wheeler's Hill will be widened to allow vehicles to pass safely. More information regarding access can be found in **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

There will be dust and pollution created during the construction phase

A robust construction management plan will be implemented, with due consideration to be given to the management of construction traffic both in terms of the impact of vehicle movements upon the highway network but also in terms of the potential for noise and air pollution impact. The Applicant has

set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.1]** and Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) included at **Appendix 13B of the ES [EN010118/APP/6.2]** included in the DCO application.

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Large-scale construction is inappropriate in a small, rural community

A robust construction management plan will be implemented, with due consideration to be given to the management of construction traffic both in terms of the impact of vehicle movements upon the highway network but also in terms of the potential for noise and air pollution impact. The Applicant has set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** and **Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** included at **Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Jobs created during the construction phase will not benefit the local community

A local Skills and Employment Plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction. This will set out measures that the Applicant will implement to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally. The Applicant will also make a skills and education contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training. Further information is set out in **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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A detailed construction management plan needs to be provided.

A robust construction management plan will be implemented, with due consideration to be given to the management of construction traffic both in terms of the impact of vehicle movements upon the highway network but also in terms of the potential for noise and air pollution impact. The Applicant has set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** and **Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** included in **Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

## Operations

7.3.40 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The operational lifetime is too short due to the scale of the proposal and should be lengthened;



- The operational lifetime is too long;
- The solar panels will need to be replaced during the lifetime of the Scheme, risking disruption;
- The operation of the Scheme will not provide local employment;
- The operation of the Scheme will have a negative impact on biodiversity;
- The operation of the Scheme will impact pedestrians and walkers;
- There is a lack of benefits for the local community;
- Security risks (e.g. terrorist attacks) need to be considered;
- There will be operational noise from equipment; and,
- More information on how the site will be maintained is needed.

### Applicant's response

7.3.41 During the operational phase, there will be minimal activity on the Scheme which would be principally vegetation management, equipment/infrastructure maintenance, and monitoring to ensure the effective operation of the Scheme.

7.3.42 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to operations raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.40, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-42** below.

**Table 7-42 Regard had to comments relating to operations**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
The operational lifetime is too short due to the scale of the proposal and should be lengthened	Solar farms are temporary and typically have an operational lifespan of 40 years. Once Longfield Solar Farm reaches the end of its lifespan, infrastructure on the Solar Farm Site will be removed and the Solar Farm Site returned to the landowner. Post-decommissioning, it is expected that the landowner would return the Solar Farm Site to arable use, although it is assumed that established habitats such as hedgerows and woodland would be retained. The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A <b>Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]</b> has been prepared as part of the DCO Application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented.
The operational lifetime is too long	Solar farms are temporary and typically have an operational lifespan of 40 years. Once Longfield Solar Farm reaches the end of its lifespan, infrastructure on the Solar Farm Site will be

removed and the Solar Farm Site returned to the landowner. Post-decommissioning, it is expected that the landowner would return the Solar Farm Site to arable use, although it is assumed that established habitats such as hedgerows and woodland would be retained. The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO Application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented.

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The solar panels will need to be replaced during the lifetime of the Scheme, risking disruption

The infrastructure such as PV panels and battery storage units will be recycled as far as practical and in accordance with legislation and guidance applicable at the time, or if more suitable at the time, sold for refurbishment and reuse. It is expected that a Decommissioning Resource Management Plan (DRMP) will be needed and is committed to in the DCO to manage the disposal of waste from the Order limits, but the approach to and content of this will be driven by the relevant legislative and policy requirements at the time of decommissioning.

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The operation of the Scheme will not provide local employment

The expected operational employment at the Scheme will be equivalent to the current amount of employment on the agricultural land at the Scheme, meaning there will be net no change in the amount of employment. This information is based on estimates informed by the Applicant's prior experience of similar schemes, and details provided by the current landowner. A local skills and employment plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction. This will set out measures that the Applicant will implement to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally.

The Applicant will also make a skills and education contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training. Further information is set out in **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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The operation of the Scheme will have a

The **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**, includes new woodland,

negative impact on  
biodiversity

scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site. Please also refer to **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Furthermore, the Scheme's biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 and is reported in the DCO Application through the **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]**. An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.

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The operation of the  
Scheme will impact  
pedestrians and walkers

Several permissive paths (for pedestrians and cyclists) are proposed during the operational phase of the Scheme and are shown by supporting drawings in Section 13.7 of the **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

No PRow will be permanently closed or diverted as a result of the Scheme, and the minimum legal PRow widths will continue to be met or bettered in all instances. A separate **PRow Management Plan** has been prepared to illustrate the proposed strategy and is included as **Appendix 13C** of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6/2]**.

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There is a lack of benefits  
for the local community

The Applicant has committed to providing a Community Benefit Fund (CBF). The CBF does not form part of the DCO Application and this funding is not required to mitigate the impacts of the Scheme. Therefore, the SoS cannot, and must not, apply any positive weight to the CBF when balancing the positives and negatives of the Scheme. The CBF is therefore not taken into account in consideration of the planning balance within the **Planning Statement [EN010118/APP/7.2]**.

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Security risks, e.g. terrorist  
attacks, need to be  
considered

The Applicant will ensure there is appropriate security mitigation measures to counter any assessed security risk. The **Outline Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** sets out the Applicant's approach to security in the construction phase. Site security during construction will be managed by the contractor. The site security fencing will remain in place throughout the duration of the construction period. Any storage of materials will be kept secure to prevent theft of vandalism. A safe system for accessing the materials storage areas would be implemented by the contractor.

There will be designated security staff during construction who will manage the Order limits and patrol the perimeter. During the operational phase,

the Applicant's security approach to any assessed enhanced security risk will be proactive, harnessing up to date security threat intelligence, recognised methodologies such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), and ensuring effective liaison with Essex Police to achieve a Security Risk As Low Risk As Possible (ALARP) setting.

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There will be operational noise from equipment

The Applicant has set out our assessment of potential noise impacts in **Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The assessment considers the location of operational plant. The design of the Scheme has incorporated measures such as distancing of inverters away from sensitive receptors, and locating the BESS compound in an area away from large concentrations of receptors as well as towards the A12 where existing ambient noise levels are higher (such that noise emissions from the BESS are less impactful). As set out in the **Outline Design Principles** included as an appendix of the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**, inverters within 250m of residential dwellings will be treated with acoustic barriers which achieve a minimum 10dB(A) sound reduction, or an inverter selected with sound power levels at least 10dB lower than 96dB, which has been applied to inverters in the EIA.

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More information on how the site will be maintained is needed

The Applicant will establish a community liaison group (CLG) that will enable local community representatives to have a formal channel for monitoring and influencing developments at the site. In addition, the **Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.11]** outlines how maintenance of the site and panels will be undertaken.

### *Decommissioning*

7.3.43 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The Applicant has not guaranteed that materials used in the Scheme will be recycled;
- The environmental impact of disposing the panels has not been considered;
- The Scheme will not be decommissioned properly at the end of its operating life;
- The land will not be suitable to be returned to farmland;

- The land will be labelled as brownfield and will become vulnerable to future developments;
- The design of the scheme should allow it to be easily dismantled after the project's lifespan;
- Confusion over the need to decommission the Scheme if it is viable;
- Lack of guarantee that the Scheme's timeframe is only 40 years;
- Concern over construction impacts during decommissioning;
- The scheme will not last 40 years due to the development of technology; and,
- An extensive decommissioning plan needs to be provided.

### Applicant's response

7.3.44 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to the decommissioning of the Scheme raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.43, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-43** below.

**Table 7-43 Regard had to comments relating to decommissioning**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
<p>The Applicant has not guaranteed that materials used in the Scheme will be recycled</p>	<p>The <b>Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.11]</b> outlines how maintenance of the site and panels will be undertaken. This includes increasing recyclability by segregating waste to be re-used and recycled where reasonably practicable and operating the Scheme in such a way as to minimise the creation of waste and maximise the use of alternative materials with lower embodied carbon such as locally sourced products and materials with a higher recycled content.</p> <p>The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A <b>Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]</b> has been prepared as part of the DCO Application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented. The Decommissioning Strategy sets out that decommissioning will involve the removal of all solar PV array infrastructure including modules, mounting structures, cabling inverters and transformers, for recycling or disposal</p>

in accordance with good practice and market conditions at that time.

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The environmental impact of disposing the panels has not been considered

The infrastructure such as PV panels and battery storage units will be recycled as far as practical and in accordance with legislation and guidance applicable at the time, or if more suitable at the time, sold for refurbishment and reuse. It is expected that a Decommissioning Resource Management Plan (DRMP) will be needed and is committed to in the DCO to manage the disposal of waste from the Order limits, but the approach to and content of this will be driven by the relevant legislative and policy requirements at the time of decommissioning.

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The Scheme will not be decommissioned properly at the end of its operating life

The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO Application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented.

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The land will not be suitable to be returned to farmland

There will be very little permanent loss of agricultural land. The soil will have undergone an expected 40 years of recovery through less intensive farming such as being left fallow, or sheep grazing and is expected to be the same or better quality as it is currently. Section 12.8 of **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** concludes this is not significant in EIA terms.

With regards soil, an **Outline Soil Resource Management Plan** is provided as an **Appendix** to the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.10]**. This sets out principles for how soils will be managed and protected during construction, operation and decommissioning of the Scheme. A detailed soil resource management plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction, prior to operation, and prior to decommissioning, as set out by the Requirements of the **Draft DCO [EN010118/APP/3.1]**.

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The land will be labelled as brownfield and will become vulnerable to future developments

Solar farms are temporary and typically have an operational lifespan of 40 years. Once Longfield Solar Farm reaches the end of its lifespan, infrastructure on the Solar Farm Site will be

removed and the Solar Farm Site returned to the landowner. Post-decommissioning, it is expected that the landowner would return the Solar Farm Site to arable use, although it is assumed that established habitats such as hedgerows and woodland would be retained. The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented.

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The design of the scheme should allow it to be easily dismantled after the project's lifespan

Solar farms are temporary and typically have an operational lifespan of 40 years. Once Longfield Solar Farm reaches the end of its lifespan, infrastructure on the Solar Farm Site will be removed and the Solar Farm Site returned to the landowner. Post-decommissioning, it is expected that the landowner would return the Solar Farm Site to arable use, although it is assumed that established habitats such as hedgerows and woodland would be retained. The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented.

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Confusion over the need to decommission the Scheme if it is viable

Solar farms are temporary and typically have an operational lifespan of 40 years. Once Longfield Solar Farm reaches the end of its lifespan, infrastructure on the Solar Farm Site will be removed and the Solar Farm Site returned to the landowner. Post-decommissioning, it is expected that the landowner would return the Solar Farm Site to arable use, although it is assumed that established habitats such as hedgerows and woodland would be retained. The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]** has been prepared

	<p>as part of the DCO Application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented.</p>
<p>Lack of guarantee that the Scheme's timeframe is only 40 years</p>	<p>The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A <b>Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]</b> has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented.</p>
<p>Concern over construction impacts during decommissioning</p>	<p>The nature of the decommissioning activities and potential for likely significant effects would be similar to construction. The Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) and Decommissioning Traffic Management Plan (DTMP) will include similar measures to those included in the Outline and the following detailed Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs), as well as the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) <b>Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b> submitted with the Application, covering issues such as transportation methods, pollution prevention, and noise management. The Outline CEMP is included in the application as <b>[EN010118/APP/7.10]</b>.</p>
<p>The scheme will not last 40 years due to the development of technology</p>	<p>The Scheme is expected to operate for a period of 40 years at which point it would be decommissioned and both the planning and practical use of the land would no longer be considered as solar use.</p>
<p>An extensive decommissioning plan needs to be provided</p>	<p>The DCO will require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A <b>Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/APP/7.12]</b> has been prepared as part of the DCO application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy, and for the approved DEMP to be implemented.</p>

## Ecology



### 7.3.45 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- There needs to be a genuine effort to promote natural diversity on the land devoted to the solar farm;
- Any proposed mitigation measures are only proposed as optional;
- The Scheme will have negative impacts on skylarks;
- The area already has excellent biodiversity and this cannot be improved upon;
- Scepticism that the Scheme will deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain;
- The Scheme does not take into account the way animals currently use the fields;
- The Applicant should ensure the countryside can return when the Scheme is decommissioned;
- It is important that deer continue to be able to move around the local area;
- Ecological surveys were not complete at the time of the consultation;
- The Scheme will be detrimental to wildlife; and,
- The Scheme should be further from the nearest SSSI.

#### Applicant's response

7.3.46 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to ecology raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.45, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-44** below.

**Table 7-44 Regard had to comments relating to ecology**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
There needs to be a genuine effort to promote natural diversity on the land devoted to the solar farm.	The Applicant will deliver an overall net gain of 79% habitat units for biodiversity and 20% of hedgerow habitats as set out in the <b>BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]</b> . The <b>Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]</b> , includes new woodland, scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site. The OLEMP also includes the provision for monitoring to assess how successful the biodiversity planting and management has been.
Any proposed mitigation measures are only proposed as optional	The Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) <b>[EN010118/APP/7.13]</b> will be secured through the DCO and includes new woodland, scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site. Please refer to the <b>OLEMP [EN010118/APP/7.13]</b> for further detail.

Furthermore, the Scheme's biodiversity net gain has been calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 and is reported in the DCO application through the **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]**. An overall gain of approximately 79% of habitat units and 20% of hedgerow habitats is predicted.

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The Scheme will have negative impacts on skylarks

There are sufficient areas of open grassland (fields without infrastructure >80 hectares) as well as other boundary habitats within the Order Limits that will aim to mitigate the loss and enhance habitats for ground nesting birds, including skylark. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. In the **Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)** timing methods of work and ecological site supervision will be followed to ensure no disturbance to nesting birds. An **Outline CEMP** is provided as part of the Application **[EN010118/APP/7.10]**.

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The area already has excellent biodiversity and this cannot be improved upon

The Applicant will deliver an overall net gain of 79% habitat units for biodiversity and 20% of hedgerow habitats as set out in the **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]**. The **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**, includes new woodland, scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site. The OLEMP also includes the provision for monitoring to assess how successful the biodiversity planting and management has been.

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Scepticism that the Scheme will deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain

The Applicant will deliver an overall net gain of 79% habitat units for biodiversity and 20% of hedgerow habitats as set out in the **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]**. The **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**, includes new woodland, scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site. The OLEMP also includes the provision for monitoring to assess how successful the biodiversity planting and management has been.

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The Scheme does not take into account the way animals currently use the fields

The site is largely arable farmland with small areas of cattle grazed improved grassland to the north. The plans allow movement of deer and other mammals across the site along public rights of way, habitat buffer strips and through fenced fields via sufficient gaps for smaller animals under boundary fencing. There may be conservation grazing by sheep in future and they will be securely fenced in where grazing is undertaken.

The Applicant should ensure the countryside can return when the Scheme is decommissioned

The Scheme has been designed so that once it has reached the end of its lifespan it can be dismantled. The land will not be classified as brownfield and any subsequent development would need planning permission. The DCO will also require the decommissioning of the Scheme in accordance with a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). A **Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO Application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the DEMP substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy and for the approved DEMP to be implemented. That requirement is also enforceable via the Planning Act 2008. In light of this, the Applicant does not consider there is a need for any additional measures to be put in place.

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It is important that deer continue to be able to move around the local area

Local deer will be allowed to flourish under the Scheme. Badger gates will be used in the fence design to allow passage of badger and other mammals such as small deer, rabbits and hare. Large species of deer will be able to move through the Order limits along verges, hedges and tracks. See Section 8.8 of **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and refer to the **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.13]** for further detail.

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Ecological surveys were not complete at the time of the consultation

Ecological studies were completed in 2020 and 2021 and the results are provided in **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The Scheme will in fact result in an overall net gain of 79% habitat units for biodiversity and 20% of hedgerow habitats. The results of the Biodiversity Net Gain assessment are summarised in the **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.13]**. This sets out the key measures required to avoid, mitigate and compensate for impacts and effects to terrestrial biodiversity and landscape from the construction and operation of the Scheme. An **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.10]** has been included in the DCO Application to explain how construction effects will be managed.

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The Scheme will be detrimental to wildlife

The Applicant is committed to operating the Scheme in the long-term and would take responsibility for aspects of management such as this. Long-term habitat management treatment has been embedded

in the Scheme design and further within the **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan OLEMP [EN010118/APP/7.13]**. The OLEMP sets out the key measures required to avoid, mitigate and compensate for impacts and effects to terrestrial biodiversity and landscape from the construction and operation of the Scheme. The Applicant will deliver an overall net gain of 79% habitat units for biodiversity and 20% of hedgerow habitats as set out in the **BNG Report [EN010118/APP/6.5]**.

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The Scheme should be further from the nearest SSSI

The River Ter SSSI is adjacent to the Order limits and a short undesignated section of the River Ter bisects the north of the Order limits. The SSSI is designated for geological importance, but the river itself does support aquatic macroinvertebrates, notable/protected fish and Otter. A full assessment has been undertaken of the impact on any designated sites, including SSSIs within the 5km of the Scheme. The impact assessment, detailed in **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, has been undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance for Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA), issued by the CIEEM (the CIEEM guidelines) entitled 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine' [REF-21]. This assessment identified potential impacts, but with the implementation of embedded mitigation measures during construction, operation and decommissioning concluded no potential for significant effects.

### *Landscape and visual amenity*

7.3.47 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The Scheme will have a negative or industrialising impact on the local landscape;
- More landscaping is needed to mitigate the visual impact;
- The visual impacts cannot be mitigated;
- The visual impact of the Scheme will ruin PROWs and permissive routes;
- Mature planting should be used to screen the views from PROWs;
- Efforts have been made to set back the Scheme in response to comments made during the non-statutory consultation;
- Woodland and waterscape enhancements are encouraged;
- The screening proposed is inadequate and will not mitigate the impact; and,

- The screening proposed will take too long to mature and will not screen the Scheme effectively for 15 years of the proposed lifetime of the Scheme.

### Applicant's response

7.3.48 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to landscape and visual amenity raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.47, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-45** below.

**Table 7-45 Regard had to comments relating to landscape and visual amenity**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
The Scheme will have a negative or industrialising impact on the local landscape	Substantial design changes have been incorporated since Statutory Consultation, with a particular focus on mitigating the potential effects on landscape and visual amenity. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in <b>Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118APP/6.1]</b> establishes that no significant visual effects are expected once mitigation planting has established. Proposed planting is shown on <b>Figure 10-12: Outline Landscape Masterplan [EN010118/APP/6.3]</b> .
More landscaping is needed to mitigate the visual impact	A thorough review of views from residential properties was undertaken since the PEIR stage. The review resulted in substantial changes to the Scheme design, including the removal of panels from part of fields and an extensive landscape planting strategy was developed. Please see the <b>Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.13]</b> for more information and the <b>Outline Landscape Masterplan Figure 10-12 in the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.3]</b> .
The visual impacts cannot be mitigated	The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in <b>Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118APP/6.1]</b> establishes that, with the exception of major adverse effects experienced by people walking on PRoW 213_19 and PRoW 113_25 within the Order limits because of close range views of the proposed PV Arrays in the immediate foreground, no significant visual effects are expected once mitigation planting has established. Proposed planting is shown on

**Figure 10-12: Outline Landscape Masterplan  
[EN010118/APP/6.3].**

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The visual impact of the Scheme will ruin PROWs and permissive routes

The Applicant has assessed potential impacts on the landscape and visual amenity of users of the PROW network in **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. Once screening and planting included as mitigation in the Scheme has matured, people walking on the Essex Way to the west or south of Fuller Street (VP45 and VP46) would experience minor adverse effects, which are not considered to be significant. The level of effect is reduced from year 1 because existing and proposed vegetation would be in leaf, filtering views of the PV Arrays such that the Scheme would be unobtrusive. People walking on the Essex Way on the south western corner of Sandy Wood would experience close range views of the Scheme, however this would be for a very short duration of the route such that the overall effect on people walking the Essex Way would remain minor adverse.

People walking on PRoW 213\_19 and PRoW 113\_25 within the Order limits would experience major adverse effects because of close range views of the proposed PV Arrays in the immediate foreground. These effects are considered significant. People walking on the wider PRoW network beyond the Order limits boundary would not experience significant effects resulting from operation during year 15.

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Mature planting should be used to screen views from PROWs

It is assumed that planting will grow at 33cm per year (as set out in **Section 10.3 of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**) and therefore until those hedgerows are grown sufficiently, a temporary 3m temporary wooden solid hoarding will be implemented and then removed once the hedgerows are of a sufficient height. These measures will be secured through the **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.13]**. Further information regarding hedgerow growth can be found in **Chapter 16: Other Environmental Topics of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Efforts have been made to set back the Scheme in response to comments made during the non-statutory consultation

A buffer of at least 15m has been applied to all existing woodlands and ancient woodlands. This buffer has been integrated into the Scheme's Outline Landscape Masterplan to protect trees located on, and adjacent to, the Order limits. Please see **Figure 10-12: Outline Landscape Masterplan [EN010118/APP/6.3]** and Section 10.7 in the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Woodland and waterscape enhancements are encouraged

The **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.13]** includes new woodland, scrub, grassland and hedge habitats to buffer and enhance connectivity across the site. Please also refer to **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

The screening proposed is inadequate and will not mitigate the impact

We are proposing considerable new areas of tree planting and hedgerows to reduce long-distance views into the site. This will reduce impacts on the setting of heritage features. We have carefully considered what type of screening is most appropriate in each part of the site – in open parts of the site, we have avoided tall screening to allow views to remain open. The approach we have taken to the landscape will help us improve the environment and ways of getting around the area. Corridors for wildlife and new permissive paths are embedded into the design. This includes a new north-south green route and east-west green links via new permissive paths. More information can be found in **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity in the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

The screening proposed will take too long to mature and will not screen the Scheme effectively for 15 years of the proposed lifetime of the Scheme.

The Applicant recognises the need to provide time for screening to mature. Phase 2 of the BESS is intended to be undertaken five years after the Scheme becomes operational, to allow sufficient time for screening implanted to the south east of the BESS to mature and provide sufficient screening – this will provide a “bridge” between Toppinghoehall and Lost Woods until planting has had sufficient time to mature to a point that it provides sufficient screening.

## Cultural heritage

7.3.49 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The impact of the Scheme on cultural heritage is underrepresented;
- Greater buffers are required around listed properties and ancient woodlands;

- A wide variety of archaeological sites and deposits are likely to be present;
- The rural landscape is historic in character, and this will be impacted by the Scheme;
- The Scheme should preserve historic field boundaries; and,
- The Applicant has undertaken insufficient due diligence in terms of impacts on cultural heritage.

### Applicant's response

7.3.50 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to heritage assets raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.49, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-46** below.

**Table 7-46 Regard had to comments relating to cultural heritage**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
The impact of the Scheme on cultural heritage is underrepresented.	<p>The Applicant has comprehensively examined designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the site, including scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, and conservation areas.</p> <p>Non-designated heritage assets, including archaeological remains, historic buildings, and the historic landscape, have also been considered.</p> <p><b>Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/6.1]</b> details the requirements of key legislative and policy requirements and describes how the Scheme will consider them; explains how information on the existing and future environment has been collected (through desk-based studies, survey work and stakeholder consultation); describes the understanding of the existing and future baseline environment, based on the baseline information; explains any further information to be obtained through further consultation, desk-based studies, or surveys; describes the potential effects of the Scheme on cultural heritage; and describes potential mitigation measures, if required.</p>
Greater buffers are required around listed properties and ancient woodlands	<p>We have carefully assessed properties in the vicinity of the Scheme and identified any moderate or major significant residual effects on heritage assets. These effects are assessed in <b>Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/6.1]</b>.</p> <p>It is proposed that the Scheme will retain existing field boundaries and hedgerows and it is not proposed to alter any aspects of Ancient Woodland.</p>



The ability to view and understand these historic landscapes will therefore not be altered by the construction or presence of the Scheme. The historic landscape, considered of high value, will be subjected to a very low magnitude of impact, resulting in a minor adverse effect. This is not considered significant in EIA terms.

Furthermore, additional mitigation has been reviewed and incorporated in the Environmental Statement and significant effects to cultural heritage assets have been reduced where possible. This includes, but is not limited to, further set-backs, height reduction, and preservation in situ.

The Applicant has also removed from the developable area of the Scheme two areas of sensitivity - Scarletts Farm and Noakes Barn - in response to stakeholder feedback.

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A wide variety of archaeological sites and deposits are likely to be present

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The Applicant has comprehensively examined designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the Order limits, including scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, and conservation areas.

Non-designated heritage assets, including archaeological remains, historic buildings, and the historic landscape, have also been considered.

**Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** details the requirements of key legislative and policy requirements and describes how the Scheme will consider them; explains how information on the existing and future environment has been collected (through desk-based studies, survey work and stakeholder consultation); describes the understanding of the existing and future baseline environment, based on the baseline information; explains any further information to be obtained through further consultation, desk-based studies, or surveys; describes the potential effects of the Scheme on cultural heritage; and describes potential mitigation measures, if required. Both non-intrusive (aerial photograph and LiDAR data assessment as well extensive magnetometry) and intrusive (archaeological trial trenching) have been carried out to support the Environmental Statement. As expected, these have identified areas of significant archaeological remains, including assets dating to the prehistoric, Roman, and modern periods, which will be further recorded through a programme of mitigation prior to construction. Further evaluations and mitigation prior to or during construction are presented in

## **Chapter 7 of the Environmental Statement**

**[EN010118/APP/6.1]** which will be secured by an agreed Written Scheme of Investigation agreed to with the relevant stakeholders. The overarching WSI will be submitted in line with the scope set out within the OCEMP [EN010118/APP/7.10]. Both Historic England the ECC Place Services will be consulted and the WSI approved. All efforts will be made to avoid or minimise impact to the archaeological potential.

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The rural landscape is historic in character, and this will be impacted by the Scheme

The Applicant has comprehensively examined designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the Order limits, including scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, and conservation areas.

Non-designated heritage assets, including archaeological remains, historic buildings, and the historic landscape, have also been considered.

**Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** details the requirements of key legislative and policy requirements and describes how the Scheme will consider them; explains how information on the existing and future environment has been collected (through desk-based studies, survey work and stakeholder consultation); describes the understanding of the existing and future baseline environment, based on the baseline information; explains any further information to be obtained through further consultation, desk-based studies, or surveys; describes the potential effects of the Scheme on cultural heritage; and describes potential mitigation measures, if required.

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The Scheme should preserve historic field boundaries

An assessment of the historical and archaeological background of the site can be found in **Appendix 7A: Heritage Desk Based Assessment of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/6.2]**. This includes consideration of the well-recorded and relatively recent enclosure of the landscape within the Order Limits as presented by the Essex County Council Historic Landscape Characterisation. Great efforts have been made to retain historic landscape features such as field boundaries, trackways, and relationships between cultural heritage assets in order to preserve our ability to view and understand the historic landscape.

The Applicant has undertaken insufficient due diligence in terms of impacts on cultural heritage

Given the intervening distance and nature of the schemes identified at the time of writing the Environmental Statement, it is expected that there would be no additional cumulative effects on the setting of the archaeological remains, historic buildings or historic landscapes within the Order limits' zone of influence additional to those already identified for the Scheme in isolation.

The effects on historic buildings, both designated and non-designated, as well as effects to local Protected Lanes and the wider Historic Landscape resulting from the construction and operation have been fully considered in **Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. Where significant effects were identified in the PEIR, all efforts were made to reduce these effects through set-backs, screening, other design measures or mitigation.

### *Transport and access*

7.3.78 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The traffic from the Scheme will degenerate the condition of roads;
- The road infrastructure cannot cope with additional vehicles;
- Opposition to increased traffic and congestion due to additional vehicle movements;
- The proposed access points for construction traffic to the Scheme are inappropriate;
- There are too many planned HGV movements during the construction and decommissioning phases;
- There are likely to be accidents as a result of increased traffic;
- Local roads are too narrow and not suitable for HGVs;
- The local area has already been disrupted from recent development works;
- Public walking amenity on roads will be reduced due to the introduction of heavy traffic;
- Existing public rights of way (PROW) should not be closed during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Scheme;
- New cycle routes are accessed at hazardous points and link to poor existing connections;
- Opportunities to upgrade existing PROWs and create new PROWs should be incorporated;
- Concern over noise from construction traffic; and,
- Further detail is needed explaining how traffic will be managed and phased.

## Applicant's response

7.3.51 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to transport and access raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.50, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-47** below.

**Table 7-47 Regard had to comments relating to transport and access**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
The traffic from the Scheme will degenerate the condition of roads	The Applicant has agreed with Essex County Council as the local highways authority that the routing of HGVs should take place to/from the west via the RDR, A130 Essex Regiment Way, Wheelers Hill, Cranham Road and Waltham Road in order to prevent these larger vehicles from passing through the villages of Hatfield Peverel and Boreham (e.g. along the B1137 Main Road). The <b>Transport Assessment</b> submitted as <b>Appendix 13A of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b> . shows that the traffic expected to be generated by the Scheme is within the capacity of the local road network.
The road infrastructure cannot cope with additional vehicles	As part of the consultation process, a number of principles have been agreed with ECC Highways including the proposed site access location, visibility splays, crossing points on Noakes Lane and the approach for surveys and supporting assessment work. In addition, it has been agreed that the routing of HGVs should take place to / from the west via the RDR, A130 Essex Regiment Way, Wheelers Hill, Cranham Road and Waltham Road to prevent these larger vehicles from passing through the villages of Hatfield Peverel and Boreham (e.g. along the B1137 Main Road). Further details, including drawings showing the locations of access points, visibility splays and swept paths are held within <b>Appendix 13A: Transport Assessment of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b>
Opposition to increased traffic and congestion due to additional vehicle movements	The peak construction year is anticipated to be 2025; this assumes commencement of construction in Q1 2024 and that the Scheme is built out over a 24-month period. This is a likely worst case from a traffic generation point of view because it compresses the trip numbers into a shorter duration and represents the greatest impact on the highway network. A lengthened construction phase would be expected to result in lower traffic impacts; therefore, the likely worst-case scenario has been assessed within <b>Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .

Moreover, as part of the consultation process, a number of principles have been agreed with ECC Highways including the proposed site access location, visibility splays, crossing points on Noakes Lane and the approach for surveys and supporting assessment work. In addition, it has been agreed that the routing of HGVs should take place to / from the west via the RDR, A130 Essex Regiment Way, Wheelers Hill, Cranham Road and Waltham Road to prevent these larger vehicles from passing through the villages of Hatfield Peverel and Boreham (e.g. along the B1137 Main Road). Further details, including drawings showing the locations of access points, visibility splays and swept paths are held within **Appendix 13A: Transport Assessment of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

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The proposed access points for construction traffic to the Scheme are inappropriate

An appropriate routing and access strategy has been identified which seeks to limit the usage of Protected Lanes and local roads through Boreham and Hatfield Peverel to the south. HGVs will be routed to/from the west via the A130, Wheelers Hill, and Cranham Road, with supporting highway improvements (carriageway widening) where necessary. There will be the potential to utilise the RDR following its completion prior to the construction phase. For further information, please see Sections 13.5 and 13.9 in **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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There are too many planned HGV movements during the construction and decommissioning phases

An appropriate routing and access strategy has been identified which seeks to limit the usage of Protected Lanes and local roads through Boreham and Hatfield Peverel to the south. HGVs will be routed to/from the west via the A130, Wheelers Hill, and Cranham Road, with supporting highway improvements (carriageway widening) where necessary. There will be the potential to utilise the RDR following its completion prior to the construction phase. For further information, please see Sections 13.5 and 13.9 in **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

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There are likely to be accidents as a result of increased traffic

A review of the existing highway collision record has been carried out as part of the **Transport Assessment** which is included as **Appendix 13A** of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** which reviews data over a 3 to 5-year period within the study area. This review reveals that the Scheme is not expected to

exacerbate the existing collision record of the highway network.

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Local roads are too narrow and not suitable for HGVs

Due to the nature of the Scheme, consideration has been given to a number of locations within the surrounding highway network which could potentially be impacted. The Applicant intends to restrict HGV movements to certain routes (i.e. via the A130, Wheelers Hill and Cranham Road to the west) to prevent construction vehicles from using the B1137 Main Road and passing through Hatfield Peverel and / or Boreham.

Where necessary, Cranham Road and Wheeler's Hill will be widened to allow vehicles to pass safely. More information regarding access can be found in **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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The local area has already been disrupted from recent development works

The Applicant has held pre-application and scoping discussions with the local authority, ECC Highways and National Highways to discuss the routing and transport strategy for the Scheme. Cumulative impacts between the construction phase of the Scheme and other committed developments / highway improvements including the A12 widening scheme have been considered as part of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and **Transport Assessment** which is included as **Appendix 13A [EN010118/APP/6.2]**). The Environmental Statement and Transport Assessment include details of the mitigation that will be implemented to reduce the traffic impacts of the Scheme during the construction phase. It is acknowledged that the construction A12 widening team sees no objection to the plans presented by the Applicant. In accordance with the NPPF, **Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** demonstrates that the Scheme would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety and that the residual cumulative impacts of the development on the road network would not be severe. It is anticipated that any cumulative effects arising from other developments would be focussed around the SRN, including the A12(T), Boreham Interchange and the A130. Given the proposed construction phase of the Scheme is expected to result in limited increases in traffic on these parts of the network (see **Table 13-8** in **Chapter 13: Transport and Access**, as above), it is expected that there would be no additional cumulative effects on these parts of the highway network additional to those already identified for the Scheme in isolation.

<p>Public walking amenity on roads will be reduced due to the introduction of heavy traffic</p>	<p>Several meetings have been held with ECC Highways (including PRow officers) to review, revise, and agree the proposed strategy for managing PRow during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Scheme as set out in <b>Tables 3-14, 6-2 and 8-1</b>. This includes measures to physically segregate existing PRow from proposed construction routes, as well as having controlled crossing points (with gates and banksmen) to safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. No PRow will be permanently closed or diverted as a result of the Scheme, and the minimum legal PRow widths will continue to be met or bettered in all instances. A separate <b>PRow Management Plan (Appendix 13C of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/6.2])</b> has been prepared to illustrate the proposed strategy which supports the <b>Construction Traffic Management Plan (Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/6.2])</b>.</p>
<p>Existing public rights of way (PRow) should not be closed during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Scheme</p>	<p>No PRow will be permanently closed or diverted as a result of the Scheme. A separate <b>PRow Management Plan (Appendix 13C of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2])</b> has been prepared to illustrate the proposed strategy which supports the <b>Construction Traffic Management Plan (Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2])</b>. See also <b>Figure 13-4 Public Rights of Way Management Plan (Construction Phase) in the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.3]</b>.</p>
<p>New cycle routes are accessed at hazardous points and link to poor existing connections</p>	<p>The Scheme seeks to improve routes and connectivity for non-motorised users by providing a Green Corridor and two new permissive paths within the Solar Farm Site during the operational phase, to enhance connectivity with existing PRow, Essex Way and National Cycle Route 50. The proposed Green Corridor will intersect with various east-west routes (both existing PRow and proposed permissive paths) to maximise connectivity within the Solar Farm Site. The scheme also allows for the potential to provide a future pedestrian/cycle connection between the site and the Chelmsford Garden Community when this comes forwards. Further information on PROWS and routes can be found in <b>Chapter 13: Transport and Access of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b>.</p>
<p>Opportunities to upgrade existing PROWS and create</p>	<p>The Scheme seeks to improve routes and connectivity for non-motorised users by providing a Green Corridor and several permissive paths within</p>

new PROWs should be incorporated

the Solar Farm Site during the operational phase, to enhance connectivity with existing PRoW, Essex Way and National Cycle Route 50. The proposed Green Corridor will intersect with various east-west routes (both existing PRoW and proposed permissive paths) to maximise connectivity within the Solar Farm Site. The scheme also allows for the potential to provide a future pedestrian/ cycle connection between the site and the Chelmsford Garden Community when this comes forwards. Further information on PROWs and routes can be found in **Chapter 13: Access and Transport of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Concern over noise from construction traffic

Impacts from noise during construction are assessed in **Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and measures to manage construction noise set out in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.10]**. Construction noise limits have been identified for nearby noise sensitive receptors during evening and night-time periods, as well as Sunday daytime. Sensitive receptors have been identified and noise monitoring locations have been determined through desktop study during the scoping process and confirmed during site visits.

Further detail is needed explaining how traffic will be managed and phased

The Applicant has set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction traffic in the **Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** included at **Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** included in the DCO application. Requirements to the DCO will secure the implementation of the CTMP.

### *Water resources*

7.3.52 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The area is unsuitable for solar development as it is liable to flood;
- Natural flood management (NFM) options may be suitable;
- The use of open SuDS features to route runoff is acceptable; and,
- Clarity needed on flood mitigation measures.

### Applicant's Response

7.3.53 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to water resources raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.52, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-48** below.



**Table 7-48 Regard had to comments relating to water resources**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
The area is unsuitable for solar development as it is liable to flood	<p>Pre-scheme, according to the <b>Flood Risk Assessment (Appendix 9A of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2])</b> there was largely a low or very low risk of flooding in the vicinity of the Order limits. The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) assesses the flood risk from all sources (e.g. fluvial, surface water, groundwater or from artificial sources). This indicates that flood risk is not increased on or off-site, and therefore no ecological and heritage receptors will be impacted by flooding relating to the Scheme.</p> <p>The Chelmsford Surface Water Management Plan [REF-22] confirms the site does not fall within a Critical Drainage Area (CDA).</p>
Natural flood management (NFM) options may be suitable	<p>An outline drainage strategy is provided within the <b>Appendix 9C SuDS Strategy of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b> detailing the approach to managing firewater runoff. Consultation with the ECC Fire and Rescue department has been undertaken during development of the strategy.</p>
The use of open SuDS features to route runoff is acceptable	<p>An outline drainage strategy is provided within the <b>Appendix 9C SuDS Strategy of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b> detailing the approach to managing firewater runoff. Consultation with the ECC Fire and Rescue department has been undertaken during development of the strategy.</p>
Clarity needed on flood mitigation measures	<p>An outline drainage strategy is provided within the <b>Appendix 9C SuDS Strategy of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]</b> detailing the approach to managing firewater runoff. Consultation with the ECC Fire and Rescue department has been undertaken during development of the strategy.</p>

*Human health*

7.3.109 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- Closure of PRowS will affect residents' mental health and physical well-being;
- The proposals have caused stress and poor mental health for residents;
- The technology poses a fire risk for the local community;

- Construction noise will affect residents' mental and physical health;
- The technology has not been tested on the scale proposed and may have unanticipated health impacts;
- It is possible that the Scheme may be a target for terrorism; and,
- The electrical emissions from the Scheme will be harmful to human health.

### Applicant's response

7.3.54 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to human health raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.109, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-49** below.

**Table 7-49 Regard had to comments relating to human health**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
Closure of PROWs will affect residents' mental health and physical well-being	No PRoW will be permanently closed or diverted as a result of the Scheme. A separate <b>PRoW Management Plan (Appendix 13C of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2])</b> has been prepared to illustrate the proposed strategy which supports the <b>Construction Traffic Management Plan (Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2])</b> . See also <b>Figure 13-4 Public Rights of Way Management Plan (Construction Phase) in the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.3]</b> .
The proposals have caused stress and poor mental health for residents	Primary mitigation measures are embedded within the Scheme, as set out in the respective chapters, to reduce other operational effects (such as noise, air quality and landscape) which in turn will mitigate the effects on the local community and existing facilities from a human health perspective.  The health and well-being assessment is presented in Table 15-4 to Table 15-8 in <b>Chapter 15: Human Health in the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> . The assessment comprises an assessment of impacts during construction, operation and decommissioning on access to work and training, active travel, and social cohesion. Consideration is given to the potential for impacts on mental health through assessing an overall outcome in respect of each of these.
The technology poses a fire risk for the local community	The Applicant is engaged in ongoing discussions with Essex Fire & Rescue services and have adopted their advice on the firefighting strategy and provision and location of firefighting equipment on site. These will continue to be developed and

updated through the project development and in conversation with Essex Fire & Rescue. This has informed an **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** submitted with the DCO application.

A plume assessment has been undertaken with respect to the battery storage (BESS, Work No. 2) to assess the likelihood of a fire occurring, and the level of impact on receptors in the unlikely event a fire occurs. The assessment demonstrates that under day-to-day operation there is a low risk of an incident, and in the event of an incident the credible hazards are understood and have been evaluated to demonstrate that the risk to the local population would be very low. The Plume Assessment has been submitted as part of the Application as **Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**.

<p>Construction noise will affect residents' mental and physical health</p>	<p>Impacts from noise during construction are assessed in <b>Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Assessment [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> and measures to manage construction noise are set out in the <b>Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [EN010118/7.10]</b>. Sensitive receptors have been identified and noise monitoring locations have been determined through desktop study during the scoping process and confirmed during site visits. Construction noise limits have been identified for nearby noise sensitive receptors during evening and night-time periods, as well as Sunday daytime.</p>
<p>The technology has not been tested on the scale proposed and may have unanticipated health impacts</p>	<p>The Applicant has assessed potential impacts on human health and wellbeing in <b>Chapter 15: Human Health of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> and identified no significant negative impacts.</p>
<p>It is possible that the Scheme may be a target for terrorism</p>	<p>The Applicant will ensure there is appropriate security mitigation measures to counter any assessed security risk. The <b>Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]</b> sets out the Applicant's approach to security in the construction phase. Site security during construction will be managed by the contractor. The site security fencing will remain in place throughout the duration of the construction period. Any storage of materials will be kept secure to prevent theft of vandalism. A safe system for accessing the materials storage areas would be implemented by the contractor. There will be designated security staff during construction who will manage the Order limits and</p>

patrol the perimeter. During the operational phase, the Applicant's security approach to any assessed enhanced security risk will be proactive, harnessing up to date security threat intelligence, recognised methodologies such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), and ensuring effective liaison with Essex Police to achieve a Security Risk ALARP setting.

The electrical emissions from the Scheme will be harmful to human health

The Applicant has assessed potential impacts on human health and wellbeing in **Chapter 15: Human Health of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** and identified no significant negative impacts.

### Renewable energy

7.3.55 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The Government's White Paper does not reference solar energy;
- Solar energy is not the most efficient form of renewable electricity generation;
- Solar energy is preferable to other technologies, such as nuclear energy;
- Solar energy is not suitable for this area of the UK;
- Alternative clean energy technologies are preferable to solar energy, such as wind power or nuclear power; and,
- The Scheme will not support UK manufacturing as the UK lacks capacity to produce solar energy infrastructure.

### Applicant's response

7.3.56 The Scheme responds to the nation's need to increase renewable electricity generation and will contribute to the national policy aim of decarbonisation. The proposed Scheme can deliver a large amount of low-carbon electricity.

7.3.57 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to renewable energy raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.55, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-50** below.

**Table 7-50 Regard had to comments relating to renewable energy**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
The Government's White Paper does not reference solar energy	As part of the Energy NPS review process, the Government published a suite of Draft Energy NPSs for consultation on 6 September 2021. These include Draft National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy (EN-3) (Draft NPS EN-3) [REF-15], which includes specific policies for solar photovoltaic generation NSIPs. The enactment of Draft NPS EN-3 will bring solar NSIP developments into the coverage of the Energy NPSs.

Solar energy is not the most efficient form of renewable electricity generation

Chapter 11 of the **Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]** provides an analysis of the economic viability of large-scale solar generation as a future contributor to a low-carbon Great Britain electricity supply system in comparison to alternate technologies; and an analysis of why the Scheme will be most beneficial to the achievement of government's aims if it is consented to the scale proposed. Solar power reduces the market price of electricity by displacing more expensive forms of generation from the cost stack.

Solar energy is preferable to other technologies, such as nuclear energy

Chapter 11 of the **Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]** provides an analysis of the economic viability of large-scale solar generation as a future contributor to a low-carbon Great Britain electricity supply system in comparison to alternate technologies; and an analysis of why the Scheme will be most beneficial to the achievement of government's aims if it is consented to the scale proposed. Solar power reduces the market price of electricity by displacing more expensive forms of generation from the cost stack.

Solar energy is not suitable for this area of the UK

Essex represents a good location within the UK to construct a solar farm. This is because it benefits from high levels of solar irradiance compared to other parts of the UK and is characterised by a generally low lying and flat topography, which increases the likelihood of being able to identify a suitable site that is capable of producing a large amount of electricity. Essex is in the South East of England, in close proximity to London, which means it is near to high demand centres for electricity. The location of electricity generation infrastructure close to areas of high demand helps to minimise losses associated with the transfer of electricity over long distances. The Applicant therefore sought a suitable generation site and point of connection to the electricity network in this area.

Alternative clean energy technologies are preferable to solar energy, such as wind power or nuclear power

The **Statement of Need [EN010118/APP/7.1]** explains that solar complements offshore wind deployment. Bringing forward of solar energy generation such as this Scheme will help ensure the required trajectory in reducing carbon intensity can be achieved or bettered.

The Scheme will not support UK manufacturing as the UK lacks capacity to produce solar energy infrastructure.

A local Skills and Employment Plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction. This will set out measures that the Applicant will implement in order to advertise and promote employment opportunities associated with the Scheme in construction and operation locally.

The Applicant will also make a skills and education contribution. This will assist and encourage local people to access apprenticeships and training. Further information is set out in **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

### *Climate change*

7.3.58 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- More information is needed about the carbon footprint of the Scheme;
- The carbon footprint analysis should take into account decommissioning; and,
- The UK's carbon footprint will increase due to the loss of local food production.

### Applicant's response

7.3.59 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to climate change raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.58, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-51** below.

**Table 7-51 Regard had to comments relating to climate change**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
More information is needed about the carbon footprint of the Scheme	The application documents provide estimates of the proposed development's carbon impacts across all phases from land use change, embodied carbon in materials, transport of materials, operations and decommissioning. The carbon assessment was carried out on the basis of the best available information in terms of activity data from the proposed development, and the most reliable emissions factors for different materials and activities. Some emissions factors are more robust than others, but this is acknowledged in the application. It is anticipated that emissions data relating to the supply of electrical components will improve in quality over time, and that these emissions will fall as the carbon efficiency of the supply chain improves. For further information, please see <b>Chapter 6: Climate Change of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> .

The carbon footprint analysis should take into account decommissioning

The application documents provide estimates of the proposed development's carbon impacts across all phases from land use change, embodied carbon in materials, transport of materials, operations and decommissioning.

The UK's carbon footprint will increase due to the loss of local food production

The Applicant has also assessed impacts on climate change through **Chapter 6: Climate Change of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. This sets out that the Scheme will lead to a saving of 4.4 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e over the Scheme lifetime compared to a gas fired CCGT generating facility.

### Consultation process

7.3.60 Key themes that were raised by community consultees included:

- The consultation process has been inadequate;
- The local community is unaware that the consultation took place;
- The consultation should have been delayed due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The Applicant has addressed comments made during the non-statutory consultation;
- The Applicant will not have regard to responses received during the consultation; and,
- The consultation booklet did not contain enough information for residents to be informed about the Scheme.

### Applicant's response

7.3.61 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to the consultation raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards the matters summarised in 7.3.60, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-52** below.

**Table 7-52 Regard had to comments relating to the consultation**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
The consultation process has been inadequate	The Applicant has complied with all requirements for consultation as set out in this Consultation Report.
The local community is unaware that the consultation took place	<p>The Applicant publicised the consultation widely, as set out in Chapter 6 of this report. In summary, publicity measures included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing to all addresses within consultation zone 1 at the start of the consultation period.</li> <li>• Writing to elected representatives, parish councils, and community groups with details of the consultation at the start of the consultation period.</li> <li>• Advertising the consultation in the following newspapers circulating in the consultation</li> </ul>

zone: the Braintree and Witham Times, Chelmsford and Mid Essex Times, Essex Chronicle.

- Sending local broadcasters a press release for the scheme.
- Publishing details of the consultation online at the consultation website.
- Advertising the consultation online.

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The consultation should have been delayed due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

The Applicant consulted during a period when the COVID 19 pandemic meant there were restrictions on holding public meetings and events. While the Government had at that time announced a roadmap for ending the restrictions, the dates for this were not fixed. The timing of the end of restrictions depended on four tests set by the Government in its COVID-19 Response: Spring 2021 (Roadmap) [REF-16].

The Applicant was aware of how important it was to make sure that anyone in the community who wanted to find out more or share their views on the proposals could do so, as well as to provide certainty about how it would consult. A flexible consultation programme was designed to allow people from across the community to respond, which was compatible with different levels of social distancing requirements.

In preparing the approach to consultation, consideration was given to Government guidance on COVID 19. The Applicant also considered advice from the local authorities where the proposed Scheme is located, the results of the non-statutory consultation, and best practice guidance such as the National Infrastructure Planning Association's paper Development Consent Orders and the Coronavirus Pandemic (21 April 2020) [REF-8].

During the preparation for the consultation period, the alert level changed to Level 1 or 2, which meant the Government considered the number of COVID 19 cases to be lower. The Applicant therefore elected to hold in-person engagement at physical locations on a voluntary basis, over and above the requirements of the SoCC. Further details of this can be seen in section 6.8.

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The Applicant has addressed comments made during the non-statutory consultation

This is demonstrated in chapter 3 of this report.

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The Applicant will not have regard to responses

The Applicant has had due regard to consultation responses as set out in this chapter and **Appendices J-1 to J-5.**



received during the  
consultation

The consultation booklet did not contain enough information for residents to be informed about the Scheme.	The Consultation Booklet included in <b>Appendix G-4</b> included information appropriate to the stage of Scheme development during the statutory consultation, including a non-technical overview of the proposed Longfield Solar Farm, the EIA process, the consultation and planning process, how to take part in the consultation, and proposed next steps.
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*Other*

7.3.62 There were a number of comments made which did not fall into the categories above. These included:

- The Applicant plans to sell the project upon achieving consent;
- There are no community benefits from the Scheme;
- School trips should be hosted on-site;
- The solar panels will create glint and glare which will affect road users as well as air traffic; and,
- Materials used in the Scheme’s infrastructure will not be ethically sourced.

Applicant’s response

7.3.63 The Applicant has had regard to comments relating to other matters raised by community consultees in **Appendix J-4**. With regards to the matters summarised in 7.3.62, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-53** below.

**Table 7-53 Regard had to comments relating to other issues**

<b>Matter raised</b>	<b>Regard had to comment by the Applicant</b>
The Applicant plans to sell the project upon achieving consent	The Applicant is committed to the Scheme long-term.
There are no community benefits from the Scheme	The Applicant has also committed to providing a Community Benefit Fund (CBF). The CBF does not form part of the DCO Application and this funding is not required to mitigate the impacts of the Scheme. Therefore, the SoS cannot, and must not, apply any positive weight to the CBF when balancing the positives and negatives of the Scheme. The CBF is therefore not taken into account in consideration of the planning balance within the <b>Planning Statement [EN010118/APP/7.2]</b> .
School trips should be hosted on-site	The Applicant is open to hosting school trips once the Scheme is operational.
The solar panels will create glint and glare which will	The Applicant has completed a Glint and Glare Assessment, which is included as <b>Appendix 10G of</b>

affect road users as well as air traffic

### **the Environmental Statement**

**[EN010118/APP/6.2]**. While this identifies potential high impacts from glint and glare at 10 residential receptors and 7 road receptors without mitigation, these are reduced to no impacts once mitigation measures such as hedgerows to be grown, infilled, gapped up and maintained to a height of at least 3m in affected areas. Until those hedgerows are grown sufficiently, a temporary 3m temporary wooden solid hoarding will be implemented and then removed once the hedgerows are of a sufficient height

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Materials used in the Scheme's infrastructure will not be ethically sourced.

The Applicant does not believe the project to be in conflict with human rights.

## **7.4 Section 42(1)(d) consultation: persons with an interest in land**

7.4.1 In response to the consultation carried out under s42(1)(d) and s44 of the PA 2008, a total of three consultees responded.

7.4.2 Of these responses, one was in a letter format and two used the consultation questionnaire provided.

7.4.3 The matters raised by the consultees included the following:

- Concerns over soil stripping and soil replacement;
- Concern about impacts from security fencing and lighting on landscape character;
- Potential impacts of noise and vibrations associated with the operations of the solar farm;
- Concerns around the construction and decommissioning phases of development and the potential impacts upon traffic, pollution and noise, highway safety and the amenity of local residents;
- A robust construction management plan would need to be implemented, particularly given the identification of piling as a construction method;
- In terms of the historic environment (landscape and heritage assets), and in view of the scale of development proposed there is likely to be some harm to the historic environment as a result of the development proposed;
- The scale of the solar farm proposed is likely to have a negative effect upon biodiversity and nature conservation in the area;
- The vast scale of the solar farm proposed is likely to have a negative visual impact upon the landscape and upon landscape character types in this area of Chelmsford;
- Government guidance is that applicants should prioritise previously developed land for renewable technology developments;
- Concerns about limited community benefits; and,
- Concern about proximity of BESS to property in safety terms.

7.4.4 The Applicant has had regard to all comments received from Section 42(1)(d) and 44 consultation in **Appendix J-3**. With regard to the matters raised in 7.4.3 above, the Applicant has set out its approach in **Table 7-54** below.

**Table 7-54 Regard had to comments made by consultees under s42(1)(d)**

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
Concerns over soil stripping and soil replacement	An <b>Outline Soil Resource Management Plan</b> is provided as an <b>Appendix</b> to the <b>Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [EN010118/APP/7.10]</b> . This sets out principles for how soils will be managed and protected during construction, operation and decommissioning of the Scheme. A detailed soil resource management plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction, prior to operation, and prior to decommissioning, as set out by the Requirements of the <b>Draft DCO [EN010118/APP/3.1]</b> .
Concern about impacts from security fencing and lighting on landscape character	The effect of the Scheme on landscape character and visual amenity has been reported in the <b>Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> . The LVIA considers the duration of the effects, and their ‘reversibility’. The Scheme has been designed to avoid and minimise adverse effects on the local environment through the sensitive siting of the proposed elements. Any lighting used during construction will be minimal and directional to avoid light-spill onto adjacent habitats. No part of the Scheme would be continuously lit during operation. Extensive areas of new woodland, species rich grassland, areas for natural regeneration and scrub are proposed as part of the scheme, resulting in a biodiversity net gain. The LVIA concludes that, while there will be some moderate adverse impacts on Local Landscape Character Areas when assessed at 1 year of operation, these are reduced to no significant effects after 15 years of operation.
Potential impacts of noise , and vibration associated with the operations of the solar farm	Impacts from noise during construction are assessed in <b>Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> . No significant residual adverse effects due to construction/ decommissioning or operational phase noise and vibration have been identified. Residual effects are listed in Table 11-17 (Scheme construction and decommissioning) and Table 11-18 (Scheme operation) in the Chapter. As also concluded in <b>Chapter 15: Human Health of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]</b> there will be no

significant health impacts due to the interaction of noise, land quality, transport, and landscape and visual amenity.

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Concerns around the construction and decommissioning phases of development and the potential impacts upon traffic, pollution and noise, highway safety and the amenity of local residents

A robust construction management plan will be implemented, with due consideration to be given to the management of construction traffic both in terms of the impact of vehicle movements upon the highway network but also in terms of the potential for noise and air pollution impact. The Applicant has set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** and the **Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** included at **Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** in the DCO application. Requirements to the DCO will secure the implementation of both management plans.

**A Decommissioning Strategy [EN010118APP/7.12]** has been prepared as part of the DCO Application. This provides the outline mitigation measures to be adhered to during decommissioning. The DCO includes a requirement to prepare and approve of the Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) substantially in accordance with the Decommissioning Strategy and for the approved DEMP to be implemented. That requirement is also enforceable via the Planning Act 2008. In light of this, the Applicant does not consider there is a need for any additional measures to be put in place.

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A robust construction management plan would need to be implemented, particularly given the identification of piling as a construction method, covering traffic, noise and impacts on air quality

The Applicant has set out details of its approach to managing impacts from construction in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010118/APP/7.10]** and the **Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** included at **Appendix 13B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]** included in the DCO Application. Impacts from noise during construction are assessed in **Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

Impacts from noise during construction are assessed in **Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. No significant residual adverse effects due to construction/ decommissioning or operational phase noise and vibration have been identified. Residual effects are listed in Table 11-17 (Scheme construction and decommissioning) and Table 11-18 (Scheme

operation) in the Chapter. As also concluded in **Chapter 15: Human Health of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**, there will be no significant health impacts due to the interaction of noise, land quality, transport, and landscape and visual amenity.

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In terms of the historic environment (landscape and heritage assets), and in view of the scale of development proposed there is likely to be some harm to the historic environment as a result of the development proposed

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The Applicant has comprehensively examined designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the site, including scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, and conservation areas.

Non-designated heritage assets, including archaeological remains, historic buildings, and the historic landscape, have also been considered. **Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** details the requirements of key legislative and policy requirements and describes how the Scheme will consider them; explains how information on the existing and future environment has been collected (through desk-based studies, survey work and stakeholder consultation); describes the understanding of the existing and future baseline environment, based on the baseline information; explains any further information to be obtained through further consultation, desk-based studies, or surveys; describes the potential effects of the Scheme on cultural heritage; and describes potential mitigation measures, if required.

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The scale of the solar farm proposed is likely to have a negative effect upon biodiversity and nature conservation in the area

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Potential impact pathways identified in **Chapter 8: Ecology of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]** from the BESS are related to potential noise and lighting disturbance. The only habitat loss will be of arable fields and there will be no displacement of bat species and nesting birds such as hobby, red kite and buzzard that may use the adjacent woodland (e.g. Lost Wood and Toppinghoehall Wood LoWS). Further information regarding biodiversity can be found in **Chapter 8: Ecology in the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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The vast scale of the solar farm proposed is likely to have a negative visual impact upon the landscape and upon landscape character types in this area of Chelmsford.

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In identifying the Solar Farm Site, the Applicant identified that it is remote from nearby villages and that the relatively flat landform and existing woodland and hedgerow limits views into the site. As such there are only a small number of residential properties where visual impacts would be likely to result from the Scheme. The Applicant has also taken account of the visual impact on residential receptors in the design of the Scheme, including by

providing strategically located stand-offs from receptors to above ground solar farm infrastructure in order to limit visual impact. Further information can be found in the Applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, in Chapter 10 of the PEI Report and **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**. The assessment was undertaken and reported by a team of competent Chartered Landscape Architects with extensive experience in LVIA of solar farms and other large-scale infrastructure development.

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Government guidance is that applicants should prioritise previously developed land for renewable technology developments

A sequential assessment regarding agricultural land quality has been undertaken and is presented in the **Planning Statement [EN010118/APP/7.2]**. In summary, the vast majority of land within the area of search is of similar ALC to the site. The Order limits comprises approximately: 60% Grade 3b, 22% Grade 3a, 12% Grade 2 and 6% non-agricultural or unknown.

All of the land within the area of search is either:

- Grade 2 (which is BMV and equal to the highest quality land within the site),
- Grade 3 (which may also be BMV and no lower than the majority of the site),
- Grade 4, but located within the Flood Plain of the River Chelmer, so unlikely to pass the flood risk sequential test, or
- Urban land with no sites of comparable land available.

There are no alternative sites available meeting the Applicant's search criteria that are clearly of a lower non-BMV ALC grade than the Order limits.

Further assessment of agricultural land is included in **Chapter 12: Socio-economics and Land Use of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

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Concerns about limited community benefits

The Applicant has also committed to providing a Community Benefit Fund (CBF). The CBF does not form part of the DCO Application and this funding is not required to mitigate the impacts of the Scheme. Therefore, the SoS cannot, and must not, apply any positive weight to the CBF when balancing the positives and negatives of the Scheme. The CBF is therefore not taken into account in consideration of the planning balance within the **Planning Statement [EN010118/APP/7.2]**.

Concern about proximity of BESS to property in safety terms

The Applicant has undertaken a plume assessment demonstrates that under day to day operation there is a low risk of an incident, and in the event of an incident the credible hazards are understood and have been evaluated to demonstrate that the risk to the local population would be very low. The Plume Assessment has been submitted as part of the Application as **Appendix 16B of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.2]**. The Applicant has prepared an **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** which details design measures and controls for the BESS to minimise the risk of a fire and includes a framework for responding to an incident.

The design of the BESS and its impacts are controlled in several ways. Prior to commencement of construction of the BESS, a Battery Safety Management Plan (in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** submitted with the Application) is required to be submitted to the relevant local planning authority and approved, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency. The Applicant must operate the BESS in accordance with the approved plan.

Further, pursuant to a requirement of the DCO, the detailed design of the BESS must be in accordance with the **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) [EN010118/APP/7.6]** (which includes safety requirements for the BESS design) and the Outline Design Principles submitted as an appendix to the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**.

The Applicant can therefore confirm that if the BESS constructed is different to that assessed in the plume assessment, its impacts in the event of a fire would be no worse than those assessed in the plume assessment, and therefore the risk to the local population would be very low.

## 7.5 Consultation under s48

7.5.1 As set out in 7.1.2, the Applicant solicited responses from consultees under s48 of the PA 2008.

7.5.2 None of the respondents to the consultation identified themselves as responding specifically under s48 of the PA 2008 and therefore responses under section 48 are considered to have been covered in the above sections.

## 8 Further engagement

### 8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 Following the consultation, the Applicant continued to engage with stakeholders and the community as it prepared its DCO application.
- 8.1.2 This included direct engagement with a number of stakeholders to discuss their responses to the statutory consultation and develop agreement on key issues. This is summarised in section 8.2.
- 8.1.3 The Applicant also made a number of changes to the Order limits which required targeted consultation with relevant consultees under s.42(1)(a), (b) and (d) of the Planning Act 2008. This is summarised in section 8.3.

### 8.2 Engagement following statutory consultation

- 8.2.1 Throughout the development process, the Applicant has engaged with stakeholders outside of the non-statutory and statutory consultation periods. Details of ongoing engagement with key stakeholders undertaken following the statutory consultation and before the submission of the DCO application, including the composition of each group, when the engagement took place, and a summary of the engagement is provided in **Table 8-1**. Where engagement referenced below is relevant to EIA, further detail is provided as appropriate in the relevant chapter of the **Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

**Table 8-1: Summary of ongoing engagement**

Stakeholders met	Date	Topics discussed
Essex County Council	14 July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project update</li> <li>• Essex County Council's pre-application response on transport matters</li> <li>• Site access and routing strategy</li> <li>• Grid connection and cable route</li> <li>• Highways schemes and committed developments</li> <li>• Scenarios and study area</li> <li>• Assessment of impacts</li> <li>• Next steps</li> </ul>
Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	23 July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of Scheme</li> <li>• Summary of ecological assessment undertaken</li> <li>• Summary of Preliminary Environmental Information Report</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of further work for Environmental Information Assessment</li> <li>• Biodiversity enhancements</li> </ul>
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	26 July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme update</li> <li>• Consultation update</li> <li>• Future meetings</li> </ul>
Essex County Council	5 August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viability of Park and Ride during the construction of the Scheme</li> </ul>
Essex County Council	12 August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public rights of way</li> <li>• Crossings and separation of construction traffic</li> <li>• Chelmsford Garden Community</li> <li>• Decommissioning</li> <li>• Desire Line between Wallace's Lane and Terling Hall Road</li> <li>• Amenity</li> <li>• Next steps</li> </ul>
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	16 August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design changes</li> <li>• Alternatives</li> <li>• Consultation</li> <li>• Statements of Common Ground</li> </ul>
Essex Fire and Rescue Service	24 August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure mechanisms</li> <li>• Usage of water</li> <li>• Water hoses</li> <li>• The BESS</li> </ul>
Resident site visits	1 September – 3 September 2021	The Applicant met with 12 residents whose properties are in close vicinity of the Scheme to discuss the regard had to their consultation responses.
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	15 September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential Amenity Assessments</li> <li>• River Ter Valley Local Landscape Character Area</li> <li>• Protected Lanes</li> </ul>

Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	20 September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme</li> <li>• Provision of information</li> <li>• Design update</li> <li>• Need case</li> </ul>
Countryside Zest	29 September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential synergies between the Scheme and the Chelmsford Garden Community</li> </ul>
Resident meeting	8 October 2021	The Applicant met with a resident virtually to follow up on comments made in a meeting in September 2021.
Resident meeting	3 November 2021	The Applicant met with a resident virtually to follow up on comments made in a meeting in September 2021.
Resident meeting	12 November 2021	The Applicant met with a resident to follow up on comments made in a meeting in September 2021.
Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council	29 November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement requirements prior to submission of DCO application</li> </ul>
Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council and Braintree District Council	14 December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on regard had to technical comments received during statutory consultation</li> <li>• LVIA</li> <li>• Flood risk</li> <li>• Minerals</li> <li>• Transport</li> </ul>
Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council and Braintree District Council	7 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of actions prior to submission of DCO application</li> <li>• Provision of information prior to submission of DCO application</li> <li>• Consultation compliance</li> <li>• PPA</li> </ul>
National Highways	11 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A12 widening scheme</li> <li>• Construction traffic management</li> <li>• Statement of Common Ground</li> </ul>

Essex County Council	12 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minerals impact assessment</li> </ul>
Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council and Braintree District Council	18 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of latest proposals</li> <li>• Landscape overview</li> <li>• Heritage Overview</li> <li>• Ecology Overview</li> </ul>
Essex County Council	20 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highways impacts relating to grid connection route, Bulls Lodge Substation and PRow management</li> <li>• CNEB (Phase 1)</li> <li>• Cranham Road/ Drakes Lane overbridge</li> </ul>
Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council and Braintree District Council	21 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-economics</li> <li>• Community benefits</li> </ul>
Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council and Braintree District Council	4 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of actions prior to submission of DCO application</li> </ul>

### 8.3 Targeted statutory consultation

8.3.1 Following the statutory consultation set out in section 6.2, the Applicant made a number of minor changes to the Order limits having regard to feedback from the consultation, and in light of further work on the Scheme's design and environmental impacts.

8.3.2 These changes, broadly speaking, added land required for parts of the proposal, which the Applicant had previously planned to bring forward under local planning mechanisms, into the Order limits and to reflect minor amendments to the Grid Connection Route. During design development work, it was established that this land should be included within the Order limits so that the necessary consent or powers could be included in the Scheme's application. This would ensure the Applicant obtains the appropriate powers for access and to make highway improvements. In addition, as a result of further design and environmental work, the Applicant confirmed the routing for the grid connection cables which resulted in some new land being included (and removed) from the Order limits.

8.3.3 Principally, the changes were at:

- **Wheelers Hill and Cranham Road:** In statutory consultation materials, the Applicant set out that the Scheme would be likely to require off-site highway improvements at Cranham Road. These could involve small scale road widening to accommodate construction traffic, within the existing highway boundary. Following the consultation and further engagement with Essex County Council, the Applicant clarified its understanding of road widening requirements at this location. It also agreed with Essex County Council to include this work within the Scheme boundary so that consent for the work is obtained as part of the Development Consent Order, rather than relying on additional consents under other regimes. This approach helps minimise delays to the delivery of the Scheme, reflecting its national importance and the urgent national need for renewable energy.
- **Access to Bulls Lodge substation extension:** During the statutory consultation, the Applicant set out in consultation materials that access to the Bulls Lodge substation extension would be via Generals Lane and then a private road known as the Bulls Lodge Access Road. This access route was included within the Scheme boundary to ensure that the Applicant had the necessary rights to use the road during construction and operation of the Scheme.
- **Grid connection route:** At the statutory consultation the Applicant showed an area within which it proposed to locate the grid connection to allow the Scheme to connect into the Bulls Lodge substation. Following the consultation and further design and environmental work, the Applicant determined that the best option for routing the grid connection cables would be south of the future quarry works and planned restoration lake. This is because it is more suitable than the other available options. In some places, the grid connection route the Applicant had selected was outside of the Scheme boundary that it had previously consulted upon during the statutory consultation, and so that additional land was included within the Scheme boundary and some land was removed.

- 8.3.4 These changes did not affect the outcome of the environmental impact assessment, as set out in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report published during the statutory consultation.
- 8.3.5 In addition, through further diligent enquiry, the Applicant identified a number of interests under s42(1)(d) of PA 2008 who were not consulted through the statutory public consultation set out in Chapter 6. The Applicant therefore consulted with them in the same timeframe as the targeted consultation set out in this chapter.

#### *Identification of consultees*

- 8.3.6 The Applicant undertook targeted consultation with affected s42(1)(d) consultees as required by the PA 2008 in light of the changes to the Order limits. Land interests were identified through a process of diligent inquiry undertaken by the Applicant. This process was repeated with this change to the Order limits to ensure that any additional identified interests were consulted.
- 8.3.7 The Category 1 persons were identified via a diligent inquiry process covering six research methods: title information, land interest questionnaire, environmental impact assessment information, host and Companies House searches, site investigations, and internet-based research. Category 2 were identified via: title information, requests for information, site visits, and collaboration with the wider project team to identify any interests not identified through the land referencing process. This process provided a landowners' **Book of Reference [EN010118/APP/4.3]**.
- 8.3.8 Category 3 persons were identified as persons: who may be able to make a claim pursuant to Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 (that is, people who live outside the Order limits but whose property may be sufficiently close to be depreciated in value due to noise, vibration, smells, fumes, smoke or light emissions or discharge onto land caused by the use of the authorised project once it is in operation); persons who may be able to make a claim for injurious affection under s10 of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 or s152(3) of the Planning Act 2008.
- 8.3.9 Through diligent inquiry, the Applicant considers that there are no persons who might be entitled to make a relevant claim as a Category 3 interest pursuant to Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973. Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 relates to people who live outside of the Order limits but whose property may be sufficiently close to be depreciated in value due to noise, vibration, smells, smoke or light emissions caused by the use of the Scheme once it is in operation.
- 8.3.10 The Applicant considers that there are no interests that have a relevant claim under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1997 in relation to each of the following factors:
- Noise – in light of the results of a noise assessment carried out as part of the Environmental Statement for the Application, there are no Category 3 land interests as part of the proposed Scheme. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**;
  - Vibration – in light of the results of an assessment of vibration carried out as part of the Environmental Statement for the Application, there are

no Category 3 land interests as part of the proposed Scheme. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**;

- Fumes – in light of the results of an assessment of the proposed Scheme’s impact on air quality and the emission of fumes as a result of the proposed Scheme, there are no Category 3 land interests as part of the proposed Scheme. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 14: Air Quality of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**;
- Smoke – in light of the results of an assessment of the proposed Scheme’s impact on air quality and the emission of smoke as a result of the proposed Scheme, there are no Category 3 land interests as part of the proposed Scheme. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 14: Air Quality of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**; and,
- Light emissions – in light of the results of an assessment of the proposed Scheme’s impact on visual amenity, there are no Category 3 land interests as part of the proposed Scheme. Further information on this is provided in **Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity of the Environmental Statement [EN010118/APP/6.1]**.

- 8.3.11 All relevant interests with the potential to make a claim under Section 10 (s10) of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 because they are in benefit of a restrictive right or covenant over land within the Order limits, have been included within the Book of Reference **[EN010106/APP/4.3]**.
- 8.3.12 All relevant interests with the potential to make a claim under Section 152(3) of the PA 2008 because they are in benefit of a restrictive right or covenant over land within the Order limits, have been included within the **Book of Reference [EN010106/APP/4.3]**. Statutory undertakers were also contacted to query whether they had any infrastructure on or over the new land being included the Order limits.
- 8.3.13 Where land interests could not be identified, site notices were erected requesting information about the ownership of the land and signposting contact details for the project team. Notices were placed on the land for a minimum of six weeks unless the land interest was confirmed prior to this.
- 8.3.14 The Applicant also consulted with relevant prescribed consultees under s42(1)(a) and (b) on precautionary basis. These were identified as the host local authorities, Chelmsford City Council, Braintree District Council and Essex County Council, and parish councils which would be consulted under s42(1)(a) given their representative functions locally. In addition, the Applicant identified National Highways, Natural England and the Environment Agency as having a potential interest in the impacts of the changes proposed and included them in the consultation.
- 8.3.15 A list of consultees is included in **Appendix K-2**. Where consultees were identified under s42(1)(d) of PA 2008, they are also listed separately as part of **Appendix E-2**.
- 8.3.16 Consultees under s42(1)(d) of PA 2008 identified through further diligent enquiry which were consulted in this period are also listed in **Appendix E-2**.

### *Consultation*

- 8.3.17 The Applicant wrote by recorded delivery to affected consultees under Section 42(1)(a), (b) and (d) of the Planning Act 2008 to notify them of the changes and invite comment for a 28 day period between 26 October 2021 and 23 November 2021. The Applicant enclosed a leaflet summarising the changes with an updated Scheme boundary plan with the letter.
- 8.3.18 Following this period, the Applicant became aware of a formatting error in the Scheme boundary plan issued as part of the targeted consultation. It therefore wrote again to the same consultees, enclosing a corrected Scheme boundary plan, by recorded delivery and provided a further 28 day period for responses between 11 January and 8 February 2022.
- 8.3.19 During this targeted consultation, the Applicant continued to make all the consultation materials available to consultees through the Scheme website, including the PEIR. The Applicant also published a leaflet setting out details of the changes on the consultation website – this can be seen in **Appendix K-1**.
- 8.3.20 Examples of letters sent to consultees are also included in **Appendix K-1**.
- 8.3.21 All s42(1)(d) consultees were given a minimum of 28 days to respond to the targeted consultation. The Applicant wrote to each consultee by recorded delivery or, in cases where it was unable to confirm receipt through postal records, hand delivered correspondence.

8.3.22 Given that this consultation activity was targeted to a small number of consultees, the Applicant did not collect responses through an online questionnaire. Instead, the Applicant invited consultees to respond in writing by Freepost or to the project email address.

### *Results*

8.3.23 The Applicant has had due regard to responses from both the initial period of targeted consultation described in 8.3.17 and the further period of targeted consultation described in 8.3.18.

8.3.24 The following consultees under section 42(1)(a) and (b) provided responses:

- Essex County Council;
- Chelmsford City Council;
- Braintree District Council;
- Terling and Fairstead Parish Council;
- Boreham Parish Council; and,
- Natural England.

8.3.25 In addition, six consultees under s42(1)(d) responded to the consultation.

8.3.26 Issues raised through the consultation included:

- Concern that only limited information was provided as part of the consultation and this has limited consultees' ability to comment;
- Questions regarding the assumption that the conclusions in the PEIR used to support the previous statutory consultation remain unchanged;
- Requests for more clarity on changes to the Order limits at Wheelers Hill/Cranham Road;
- Concern about lack of coordination with A12 upgrade and Chelmsford North East Bypass projects;
- A view that wider consultation should have taken place on the changes to the Order limits;
- A view that proposed boundary changes to include Cranham Road and Wheelers Hill confirm the local road network is inadequate to support the Scheme;
- An objection to the inclusion of Cranham Road and/or Wheelers Hill within the Order limits;
- An objection to the grid connection route as it will bring additional land into the Order limits;
- A view that the Scheme should negotiate access via the Bulls Lodge access road rather than including it in the Order limits;
- A request that the existing Bulls Lodge Access Road between Roundabout 5 and Generals Lane is removed from the Order limits;
- Objection to the proposed width of the Grid Connection route across land held by a consultee under s42(1)(d); and,
- Requests to be kept informed about detail of road widening.



8.3.27 Responses are provided in full alongside details of the regard had to them by the Applicant in **Appendix J-5**.

## 9 Conclusion

- 9.1.1 The Applicant has undertaken a consultation process which complies with the MHCLG guidance on the pre-application process (March 2015) [REF-3], as well as relevant advice from the Planning Inspectorate [REF-4].
- 9.1.2 The consultation took place in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic, including periods when social mixing was restricted by the Government. The Applicant adopted an approach across all stages of consultation designed to ensure that all consultees could learn about the Scheme and respond to it. This included using a mixture of digital techniques and other engagement methods designed to ensure that those without access to the internet could take part in the consultation.
- 9.1.3 Consultation has been an integral part of the way that the Applicant has developed its Scheme design. At each stage of Scheme development, the Applicant has proactively sought to involve and engage stakeholders and the community.
- 9.1.4 Following the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant made changes to the Scheme having regard to feedback from consultees including:
- reducing the site area considerably, including removing development north of the River Ter;
  - confirming the location of the grid connection at Bulls Lodge substation;
  - removing the HGV access to the site from Boreham Road and Waltham Road proposed at the non-statutory consultation from the scheme;
  - refining its proposals to minimise the use of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land;
  - moving development away from specific views.
- 9.1.5 Following the statutory consultation which took place from 1 June to 13 July 2021, the Applicant made changes to the Scheme having regard to feedback from consultees including:
- dividing areas with different panel heights into separate PDAs following responses with concern for impacts on landscapes from visibility;
  - changes to secondary track turning heads for more efficient space usage;
  - changes to PDA 11 secondary track to mitigate the impact on an existing visibility splay;
  - widening of the spine road to 6m to enable access for abnormal loads required during construction phase;
  - undergrounding of existing overhead line in PDA 28;
  - adding detail to the Bulls Lodge Substation Extension following confirmation of location and cabling;
  - an increase in the buffer distance for Scheme infrastructure from existing grid pylons to 15 m;

- amendments to proposed landscaping across the site following a review of PEIR impacts with local councils;
- removing PDAs 24 and 25;
- adding a 50m landscape buffer to Stocks Cottage, and applying greater buffers around other residential properties including at Noakes Barn, Leylands, Little Weathers, White House Farm, White Oaks, Buftons, and Ringers Farm;
- refining cable route options to achieve preferable stakeholder and environmental results;
- adding a 12m buffer to the Grid Connection Route and BESS;
- agreeing areas of Advanced Mitigation Planting with the landowners to be installed prior to the grant of consent;
- refining the Order limits to include the Bulls Lodge Substation Extension and associated access requirements, temporary construction compounds, and parking areas;
- amending the SuDS design; and,
- including road verges and highways land for minor road widening.

9.1.6 Further information on the evolution of the design of the Scheme is included in the **Design Statement [EN010118/APP/7.3]**.

9.1.7 The Applicant considers that it has complied with MHCLG guidance on the pre-application process (March 2015) [REF-3] and the Planning Inspectorate's Advice note fourteen: Compiling the Consultation Report [REF-4]. Detailed information on compliance with this guidance is included in **Appendices M-1 and M-2**.

9.1.8 The Applicant considers that it has met the statutory requirements of the pre-application process. As set out in section 2.3, the Applicant has undertaken a programme of non-statutory and statutory consultation.

9.1.9 At each stage, the Applicant has considered and complied with relevant advice and guidance. The information included in **Appendices M-1 and M-2** supports this through direct reference to MHCLG's and the Planning Inspectorate's guidance and advice on the pre-application process.

9.1.10 As well as preparing this report, the Applicant has set out how it has complied with guidance and advice on consultation in the **s55 checklist [EN010118/APP/1.4]** that is also part of the DCO application documents.

## 10 References

Reference	Document
REF-1	Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (APFP Regulations)
REF-2	Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (EIA Regulations 2017))
REF-3	MHCLG guidance on the pre-application process (March 2015)
REF-4	Planning Inspectorate's Advice note fourteen: Compiling the Consultation Report
REF-5	ONS (2020); Parish population estimates for mid-2001 to mid-2019 based on best-fitting of output areas to parishes
REF-6	Department of Energy and Climate Change, (2011); National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3). London: The Stationery Office.
REF-7	MHCLG Guidance on procedural requirements for major infrastructure projects, 22 July 2020
REF-8	National Infrastructure Planning Association's paper Development Consent Orders and the Coronavirus Pandemic (21 April 2020)
REF-9	Planning Inspectorate's Advice Note Three: EIA Notification and Consultation
REF-10	Infrastructure Planning (Publication and Notification of Applications etc.) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (the 2020 Regulations)
REF-11	Landscape Institute's 'Assessing Landscape Value Outside of National Designations'
REF-12	Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVVA LI Technical Guidance Note 02/2019)
REF-13	BDC's New Local Plan (adopted 2021) Policy LPP 38
REF-14	BDC's Protected Lanes Assessments (2013)
REF-15	Draft National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy (EN-3) (Draft NPS EN-3)

REF-16	HMG (2021); COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021 (Roadmap)
REF-17	Climate Change Committee (2020); Sixth Carbon Budget
REF-18	Department of Energy and Climate Change, (2011); National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-1). London: The Stationery Office.
REF-19	Planning Inspectorate's Advice Note Nine: Rochdale Envelope
REF-20	Chelmsford City Council Local Plan 2013-36 (May 2020)
REF-21	CIEEM (2018): Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine'
REF-22	Chelmsford City Council (2014); Chelmsford Surface Water Management Plan