Stonestreet Green Solar

Environmental Statement
Volume 2: Main Text
Chapter 8: Landscape and Views

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APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)
Planning Act 2008
The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

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8 Landscape and Views

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This Chapter of the ES was prepared by SLR Consulting Ltd and presents an assessment of the likely significant effects on Landscape and Views in relation to effects arising from the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of the Project. Mitigation measures are identified, where appropriate, to avoid, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects identified and/or enhance likely beneficial effects. The nature and significance of the likely residual effects are reported.

8.1.2 Detailed descriptions of the Site, the Project and the different phases of development are provided in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 2: Site and Context (Doc Ref. 5.2) and Chapter 3: Project Description (Doc Ref. 5.2).** A glossary of terms and list of abbreviations used in this Chapter is provided in the **Glossary (Doc Ref. 1.6).**

8.1.3 The Chapter is supported by the following appendices, included within **ES Volume 3 (Doc Ref. 5.4):**

- Appendix 8.1: Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance;
- Appendix 8.2: LVIA Methodology;
- Appendix 8.3: Viewpoint Correspondence;
- Appendix 8.4: Site Appraisal Photographs;
- Appendix 8.5: Representative Views - Winter;
- Appendix 8.6: Representative Views – Summer;
- Appendix 8.7: Night-time Photographs;
- Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table;
- Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table;
- Appendix 8.10: LVIA Visualisations (Winter and Summer);
- Appendix 8.11: Cumulative LVIA Visualisations; and
- Appendix 8.12: Cumulative Effects Table.

8.1.4 The Chapter is supported by the following Figures included within **ES Volume 3, Figures (Doc Ref. 5.3)**:

- Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility;
- Figure 8.2: Site Context Plan;
- Figure 8.3: Topography Plan;
- Figure 8.4: Topography Plan - Site Level;
- Figure 8.5: Landscape Character Plan - National Character and Kent Downs National Landscape;

- Figure 8.6: Landscape Character Plan - County and Local;
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- Figure 8.11.3: Cumulative Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Walsh Power Condenser Project; and
- Figure 8.11.4: Cumulative Zone of Theoretical Visibility – Pivot Power Battery Storage.

8.1.5 This assessment has been informed by data from other assessments as follows:

- **ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Biodiversity (Doc Ref. 5.2)**;
- **ES Volume 4, Appendix 9.3: Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Doc Ref. 5.4)**; and
- **ES Volume 4, Appendix 16.2: Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

8.2 Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance

8.2.1 Full details of relevant planning policy and guidance are set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.1: Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. A summary is provided below.

Legislation

8.2.2 The legislation of relevance to landscape and visual matters is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.1: Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance (Doc Ref. 5.4).**

National Planning Policy

8.2.3 The Project will be determined pursuant to section 104 of the Planning Act 2008. On 17 January 2024, the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy ('NPS EN-1')[1], the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure ('NPS EN-3')[2] and the National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure ('NPS EN-5')[3] came into force. These NPSs have effect in relation to the Application.

8.2.4 NPS EN-1 states in paragraph 4.1.12 that *"Other matters that the Secretary of State may consider both important and relevant to their decision-making may include Development Plan documents or other documents in the Local Development Framework".* However, paragraph 4.1.15 states that *"In the event of a conflict between these documents and an NPS, the NPS prevails for the purposes of*

Secretary of State decision making given the national significance of the infrastructure".

Local Planning Policy

8.2.5 As set out above, while the primary basis for making decisions on applications for development consent is the relevant NPSs, other matters which the SoS may consider to be important and relevant in decision making may include the development plan policies of the "Host" local authorities.

8.2.6 The Local Planning Authority is ABC. The county council is KCC. Development Plan Documents relevant to the Project include the following:

- Ashford Borough Council ('ABC') Local Plan 2030[4], (the 'ABC Local Plan').

8.2.7 In addition, the following local policies and plans may be considered important and relevant to the assessment:

- Ashford Borough Council Landscape Character SPD[5].

Guidance

8.2.8 The following guidance is relevant to the Project:

- Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026[6];
- Kent Downs AONB Setting Position Statement[7];
- Kent Downs AONB Renewable Energy Position Statement[8];
- Landscape Institute ('LI') Technical Guidance Note ('TGN') 02/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations[9];
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3)[10];
- LI TGN 02/2019 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment ('RVAA')[11];
- LI TGN 06/2019 Visual Representation of Development Proposals[12];
- LI GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13[13]; and
- LI Technical Information Note ('TIN') 01-21[14].

8.3 Stakeholder Engagement

8.3.1 This section of the Chapter summarises key stakeholder engagement undertaken to inform the assessment. It also summarises the key matters raised by consultees in relation to the EIA on the topic of Landscape and Views and explains how the ES has had regard to those comments or how they have been addressed in the ES.

EIA Scoping

8.3.2 **Table 8.1** provides a summary of the responses to the EIA Scoping Report of relevance to this assessment and how the assessment has responded to them.

Table 8.1: EIA Scoping Response Summary

Consultee and Comment	Response
Planning Inspectorate (PINS) (30 May 2022)	
Impacts on night sky character may be scoped out subject to the ES providing a detailed description of the lighting design and the measures taken to avoid or minimise lighting impacts, including any issues arising from directional security lighting.	A description of the proposed lighting is provided in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 3: Project Description (Doc Ref. 5.2)**. No part of the Project (with the exception of the Sellindge Substation Extension) will be continuously lit during operations, with lighting limited to emergency and overnight maintenance lighting only at Inverter Stations, Intermediate Substations, and the Project Substation. If required to be used, lighting will be directed within the Order limits away from sensitive receptors and will include features to reduce light spill beyond the areas required to be lit. Lighting in relation to the Sellindge Substation Extension is assumed to be consistent with the lighting approach for the existing Sellindge Substation infrastructure and would not result in a material change to the baseline position within Sellindge Substation and as such no significant effects are considered likely. A night-time assessment has been carried out in relation to the construction and decommissioning phases (refer to **Paragraphs 8.5.128 - 8.5.142, Paragraphs 8.5.159 – 8.5.164 and Paragraphs 8.7.9 – 8.7.19**). During the construction and decommissioning phases, temporary lighting will be required in areas where natural lighting is unable to reach and during working hours in winter months. All lighting will be deployed in accordance with principles defined in the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan ('Outline CEMP') (Doc Ref. 7.8)** and the **Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan ('Outline DEMP') (Doc Ref. 7.12)** to avoid significant

Consultee and Comment	Response
	adverse effects on human and ecological receptors. The duration and continuity of night-time effects are expected to be limited and occur transiently across the Site as work progresses. It is also noted, as demonstrated by **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.10: Night-Time Appraisal Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)** and NPs 14, 16, 22, 27 and 34, the Project is located in an area that is strongly influenced by existing lighting, much of which is permanent, and in a region where the appreciation of the night sky is limited. On the basis of the above, no significant night-time effects have been identified as a result of the construction and decommissioning phases. The operational phase is not considered likely to result in a significant effect and has therefore been scoped out of the assessment.
In the absence of LVIA conclusions, the Inspectorate does not agree to scope out a RVAA at this time. The need for a RVAA should be justified based on the conclusions of the LVIA presented in the ES and agreed with consultation bodies, where possible.	The assessment of visual effects has identified adverse visual effects on residential receptors. However, these are typically views that are experienced from first floor windows, with views from gardens or 'principal rooms' (as defined by the Landscape Institute's Residential Visual Amenity Assessment ('RVAA') guidance (TGN 02/19[15])) typically screened by intervening hedgerows. Furthermore, the Project has a restricted height. As such, it is not judged to be overly intrusive, and the RVAA threshold is considered highly unlikely to be met. The approach to the assessment of residential receptors was discussed with ABC and their appointed landscape consultants on 3 April 2023 and it was agreed that the assessment of visual effects on residential receptors within the PEIR was adequate to identify the likely significant effects of the Project, and that an RVAA was not required.

Consultee and Comment	Response
The Scoping Report states that 'mitigation planting will be assumed to grow approximately 1m in height every 3 years'. It is not clear on what basis this assumption has been made, i.e. what plant species. Where assumptions have been made, the ES should explain why these are realistic based on relevant guidance where appropriate.	The basis of this and other assumptions is set out in **Paragraph 8.4.29** and **Paragraph 8.4.31** of this Chapter.
The ES should clearly evidence and justify the final extent of the ZTV used and ensure that any assessment of significance is based on the worst-case scenario.	The assessment of visual effects is based on the viewpoints and identified visual receptors rather than the Zone of Theoretical Visibility ('ZTV') which was prepared to inform field surveys. This is supported by the GLVIA3[10] as set out in **Paragraph 8.4.10** of this Chapter. The ZTV included at Figure 8: Visual Appraisal Plan in the EIA Scoping Report **(ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.1: EIA Scoping Report (Doc Ref. 5.4)** has been updated as part of the ES and is based on the maximum parameters of the Project.
NCAs are not identified in the Scoping Report landscape and visual baseline or as sensitive receptors. The ES should identify, locate and assess impacts to National Character Areas where significant effects are likely to occur.	National Character Areas ('NCA') have been identified and their key characteristics described in **Paragraphs 8.5.18 - 8.5.24**. However, due to the extensive scale of the NCAs containing the Site (NCA 120 and 121 – approximately 146,000ha and 182,000ha in area, respectively) in comparison to the Site (approximately 192ha), and the nature of the Project (including its temporary duration and reversibility, limited physical changes to fabric of the landscape, and restricted height), it is not considered that the Project will result in likely significant effects on these receptors. As a result, these have been scoped out of this assessment. This approach was agreed by ABC's appointed landscape consultants, Land Management Services ('LMS'), in their response to the consultation on the PEIR as part of the 2022 Statutory Consultation.

Consultee and Comment	Response
	No further comments were raised by ABC on this issue in their responses to the 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultations.
Effort should be made to consult on the proposed viewpoints to inform the assessment with the relevant consultation bodies. This includes Natural England, Local Authorities and the Kent Downs AONB board.	The initial proposed viewpoints were set out in Figure 8: Visual Appraisal Plan of the EIA Scoping Report **(ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.1: EIA Scoping Report (Doc Ref. 5.4))**. An additional viewpoint (on Tolsford Hill) was requested by Natural England as part of their response to the 2022 Statutory Consultation, and this was added to the ES as Viewpoint 38. The viewpoints have been agreed through consultation with the ABC, Natural England and the Kent Downs AONB Unit.
The maximum parameters of battery storage should be defined in the ES and used to inform the Zone of Theoretical Visibility for the Landscape and Views assessment. The ES should demonstrate how the location of battery storage infrastructure has been determined to avoid impacts on human and environmental receptors.	The battery storage ('BESS') units are distributed within the solar panel areas of the Site as part of the Inverter Stations rather than being located in a single area. The Inverter Stations (and BESS Units) have been located, where possible, away from the Order limits to minimise any impacts on human and environmental receptors. The maximum height of the BESS units is limited in the **Design Principles (Doc Ref. 7.5)** to 4.0m, in-line with the acoustic barrier height, and this is the height that has been used to inform the Zone of Theoretical Visibility.**ES Volume 2, Chapter 3: Project Description (Doc Ref. 5.2)** provides typical dimensions of BESS units being 3.7m (width) x 13.7m (length) x 2.9m (height) and therefore the Zone of Theoretical Visibility results in a worse case analysis**.**
Natural England (18 May 2022)	
Further information required to determine impacts in relation to designated sites	An assessment of the Project on views from the Kent Downs AONB (now known

Consultee and Comment	Response
and protected landscapes, including The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ('AONB').	as the Kent Downs National Landscape ('NL')) has been carried out and reported in **Section 8.7 'Assessment of Effects'** of this Chapter. This includes an assessment of the visual impact on receptors with views to and from the NL, as well as an assessment of the impact on the setting of the NL in landscape character terms. Impacts in relation to other receptors including Conservation Areas and a number of listed buildings within the study area, as well as Ancient Woodland directly abutting the Site (albeit approximately 240m from any proposed built infrastructure) have also been considered.
Kent Downs AONB Unit (18 May 2022)	
Inclusion of Policy ENV3b – sets out criterion for assessing all proposals within or affecting the setting of AONBs.	Policy ENV3b is included and referred to in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.1: Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance (Doc Ref. 5.4).**
Assessment of impact on views should also consider views towards the AONB, particularly from the south looking northwards towards the North Downs scarp.	The visual impact assessment includes consideration of the effect on views towards the Kent Downs NL, including from the south looking northwards towards the North Downs scarp (refer to **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)** for details).
Potential impacts on the landscape character of the setting of the AONB, should also be assessed, in particular in respect of the area east of Goldwell Lane.	The impact on views from the Kent Downs NL has been assessed in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4).** The impact on landscape character in terms of the setting of the Kent Downs NL, including in respect of the area east of Goldwell Lane, has been assessed in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

Consultee and Comment	Response
We would like to see the provision of visualisations of the proposal such as photomontages or wireframes within the EIA. These would aid in the assessment of the potential impacts of the scheme from viewpoints rather than just rely on panorama photographs which only show the baseline conditions.	Fully rendered visualisations have been included and have formed part of the assessment, and are presented in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.10: LVIA Visualisations (Doc Ref. 5.4)** and **ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.2: Heritage Statement (Doc Ref. 5.4).**
Relevant Kent Downs AONB publications which should be used to help inform the assessment include the AONB Unit's Position Statements on Setting and Renewable Energy, our Colour Guidance and Landscape Design Handbook and the recently adopted Management Plan, 2021 – 2026.	The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the Position Statements on Setting and Renewable Energy have been reviewed and are summarised where relevant in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.1: Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance (Doc Ref. 5.4).** The Kent Downs Landscape Design Handbook[16] has been reviewed and principally relates to design guidance for developments within the National Landscape, and does not include reference to solar developments. Therefore, in the context of other relevant guidance, this document has not been referenced in this chapter. The Kent Downs Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development[17] has informed the proposals for colours of various elements of the Project as set out in the **Design Principles (Doc Ref. 7.5).**
In addition, the AONB Unit has recently undertaken an Update to the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment. This is yet to be formally published.	The Project will not directly affect the landscape character of the Kent Downs NL. Indirect impacts on the setting of the Kent Downs NL have been assessed in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. The update to the Kent Downs Landscape character Assessment has been included in the baseline as set out in **Paragraphs 8.5.56 – 8.5.74**.

Canterbury City Council (23 May 2022)

Consultee and Comment	Response
The City Council requests that any Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment considers potential views of the development from the Canterbury district and assesses the likely landscape and visual effects on the district.	No views of the Project from Canterbury District have been identified.
Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council (undated)	
The Landscape character should be the subject of a detailed report that clearly portrays the context as the topography, far from screening, creates a highly sensitive location. Residents would like the opportunity to specify the points from which the visual impact assessment will be made. It should also be noted that the Eastern part of the proposed development site will be behind Allocated site S52 in the Ashford Local Plan. The Visual Impact assessment should take account of the impact of the future residents in these properties.	Landscape character has been considered and assessed as part of the assessment of landscape effects (as set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**). Viewpoints have been agreed with the competent authority (ABC) as per the GLVIA3. The impact on all residents on Goldwell Lane has been assessed in **Table 8.9.31** of **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)** including consideration of potential future occupants at the allocated site S52.
Folkestone and Hythe District Council (18 May 2022)	
Ensure that the forthcoming ES considers the impact of the Solar PV's from a visual perspective from within the District itself, identifying any harm or significant effects, including impact from glint and glare that may arise. This should be drawn out in a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA'). In addition, consideration as to whether the proposed underground works would have on any above ground landscaping and vegetation. Would it result in the removal of trees, hedgerows etc? This should be included within the section of the ES. The Landscape Assessment should consider	The identification of viewpoints has included consideration of views within the administrative area of FHDC, with four viewpoints included that lie therein (Viewpoints 22, 33, 34 and 38). The assessment of landscape and visual effects has included consideration of the potential impacts of solar reflections on views and visibility of the Project. This is based on professional judgement and is informed by a glint and glare assessment **(ES Volume 4, Appendix 16.2: Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

Consultee and Comment	Response
the development's effects in three stages: during construction, at completion and then after.	No above ground vegetation within the Folkestone & Hythe District will be impacted, due to changes to the Order limits, the Project is no longer within the FHDC administrative area. The ES assesses the likely significant landscape and visual effects of the Project during construction, at Years 1 and 15 of operation, and during decommissioning.
Kent County Council (18 May 2022)	
With regards to embedded mitigation, this must consider the impact of the proposed development on the PRoW network and necessary mitigation to limit the impact.	The Project includes buffers to PRoW as set out in **Paragraph 8.6.23** and the visual assessment includes the impact on users of the PRoW network.

Non-Statutory Consultation

8.3.3 **Table 8.2** provides a summary of non-statutory consultation that was undertaken of relevance to this assessment and how the assessment has responded to them.

Table 8.2: Non-Statutory Response Summary

Consultee and Comment	Response
ABC (28 January 2022)	
Following issue of initial proposed viewpoints to support the LVIA, three additional viewpoints on the North Downs were requested.	Three additional viewpoints were included at PEIR stage (Viewpoints 35 - 37) and are included in this assessment.
ABC, LMS and KCC (3 April 2023)	
Meeting to discuss PEIR consultation feedback including the following key themes: ▪ LVIA methodology/content including approach to assessment on residential	A number of changes were incorporated into the PEIR Addendum and subsequently the ES as a result, details of which are set out in **Table 8.3**.

receptors; ▪ Viewpoints; ▪ Photography and visualisations; ▪ Additional landscape material; and ▪ 2023 Consultation Scheme design and assessment updates. The emerging design of the Project and the approach to the assessment of effects on Landscape and Views were discussed.	

2022 Statutory Consultation

8.3.4 **Table 8.3** provides a summary of the responses to the PEIR of relevance to this assessment and how the assessment has responded to them.

Table 8.3: 2022 Statutory Consultation Response Summary

Consultee and Comment	Response
ABC (Landscape and Views) S42 Response	
The LVIA ES Chapter should include both summer and winter views for each Context View.	The ES is accompanied by winter and summer photography for each view.
The PEIR largely follows the anticipated layout to a full LVIA and includes preliminary analysis of landscape and visual receptors, based on desk top and site assessments and anticipated impacts and effects.	Noted.
Details of the evolution of the scheme as informed by this process are not included in the PEIR.	The ES includes further information on the evolution of the Project as informed by the LVIA process in line with the principles of GLVIA3. Information relating to the evolution of design is set out holistically in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2)** and the **Design Approach Document (Doc Ref. 7.4).**

Consultee and Comment	Response
The approach to mitigation using soft landscape elements is not of a proportionate scale.	An Illustrative Landscape Strategy and Illustrative Landscape Sections have been prepared to assist in communicating the extent and vision of the embedded landscape strategy. Furthermore, the design of the landscape mitigation strategy has been reviewed as part of an iterative design process and enhanced in response to comments received. The **Illustrative Landscape Drawings – Not for Approval (Doc Ref. 2.6)** show the landscape strategy, including the drawings listed above. This includes substantial increases in the planting of trees and hedgerows.
There is a lack of woodland block planting. Use of orchard planting will not provide the necessary scale, and the use of this landscape type in this location does not form part of the local landscape character.	The Project at PEIR stage included substantial quantities of proposed new planting, including 3.8km of new hedgerows. Screening planting has been included where possible, however tall woodland block planting may be incompatible with solar development due to overshading and is not always characteristic in the receiving landscape. As such, the mitigation strategy has focused on the improvement of the hedgerow network both through reinforcement of existing hedgerows and the introduction of new hedgerows, where this is in accordance with landscape character guidance. Furthermore, woodland planting has been increased as part of the updated design, where compatible with the prevailing landscape character and the need to optimise the generation of renewable energy. Orchard planting, whilst not part of the current local character, is historically locally characteristic, with orchards shown on historic mapping to the west of Goldwell Lane dating from 1940. Fruit farming is noted as a characteristic of NCA 120: Wealden Greensand. Notwithstanding the above, the proposed landscape mitigation strategy has been reviewed with increased native planting along the eastern edge of Field 20.

Consultee and Comment	Response
Security fencing, particularly when located next a PRoW, could be better screened.	Screening of security fencing from PRoW that run through the Site is not considered to be an appropriate strategy given the existing character of the landscape. The Aldington Ridge Landscape Character Area ('LCA') is noted as generally open farmland with dramatic views, where loss of historic field pattern is a stated issue. Guidance contained within published landscape character assessments (see **Paragraphs 8.5.25 – 8.5.55**) includes conserving open views, conserving the open nature of the field system and restoring historic boundary hedgerows. The Upper Stour Valley/East Stour Valley LCA is noted as "flat, open landscape" with guidance including conservation of existing hedgerows including gapping up, restoring agricultural field pattern and encouraging marginal grasses along field ditches. Also of note is that proposed security fencing will comprise timber post and wire deer fencing, of a type typically used for forestry schemes. This type of fencing is highly visually permeable and not incongruous in a rural environment. The proposed PV panels are set back at least 3.2m from proposed fencing, such that the space between forms part of the visual buffer for users of PRoW. Furthermore, in the majority of circumstances, PRoW within the Site will run alongside existing or proposed new hedgerows, such that views of proposed PV panels are likely to be screened or heavily filtered on one side of views experienced by PRoW users.
More consideration needs to be given to the impact on residential properties and that there is a lack of mitigation proposed to residential properties.	The impact on residential receptors was fully considered in the PEIR. The landscape mitigation strategy has been reviewed and amended, including more extensive buffers and more robust proposed planting to assist in mitigating visual impact from adjacent residential properties, including Evegate Mill House, Elmsvale, Becketts Green, Handen

Consultee and Comment	Response
	Farm, Handen Farm Cottage, Spring Cottage and Bow Cottage.
The LVIA must directly consider the potential cumulative effects associated with the East Stour Solar Farm.	Cumulative effects between the Project and the East Stour Solar Farm were assessed in Chapter 7: Landscape and Views of the PEIR. An updated schedule of cumulative schemes is provided in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 6.1: List of Cumulative Schemes (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. These schemes have been considered and where appropriate assessed in **Section 8.12** of this Chapter in line with GLVIA3. Cumulative visualisations have been provided to support the assessment, illustrating the visual impact of the Project in combination with cumulative schemes and are included in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.11: Cumulative LVIA Visualisations (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.
Kent Downs AONB Unit	
The consultee agrees with the general conclusion that the impact on the North Downs escarpment element of the AONB would be minimal.	Noted.
Requested that mitigation be strengthened on the southern boundary of Parcel E to further screen the proposed development in views from Viewpoint 27.	The soft landscape treatment on the southern boundary of Parcel E (Fields 20-22) has been altered to provide enhanced screening for views from this location..
Expect undertakings to ensure appropriate management and reinstatement of the Site in the long term.	An **Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan ('Outline LEMP') (Doc Ref. 7.10)** has been provided as part of the Application setting out the management measures required for the long-term successful establishment of proposed landscape and ecological features, as well as the maintenance of existing retained features. The **Outline LEMP (Doc Ref. 7.10)** has been prepared to allow flexibility for subsequent discussion with key stakeholders/management bodies and is

Consultee and Comment	Response
	secured by DCO Requirement. Following the operational lifetime of the Project, all built infrastructure will be removed from the Site (with the exception of elements of Work No. 4 that are within Sellindge Substation), any repairs, upgrades or replacements of/to the existing bridge / riparian drain crossings, PRoW footbridges and highway improvements) and the land will be returned to the control of the landowners.
Requests that the special qualities of the AONB, including setting and views in and out or the AONB, be considered.	The LVIA includes consideration of both views in and out of the LVIA from the Kent Downs NL. The PEIR included five viewpoints from within the NL: four from the North Downs ridge and one from the part of the NL that wraps around from the south. The impact on long distance views from the North Downs ridge has been demonstrated to be minimal, which the Kent Downs AONB (NL) Unit have agreed in their S.42 response. The view from the south has been demonstrated by verified montages to be minimally affected by the Project with additional screening to be added in response to a consultation comment from the Kent Downs AONB (NL) Unit. Views towards the North Downs from within the Site (a distance typically in excess of 5km) have also been considered, including where views to the North Downs may be interrupted. However, as set out in the AONB Management Plan: *"Proposals which would affect the setting of the AONB are not subject to the same level of constraint as those which would affect the AONB itself*". Notwithstanding the above, likely effects on the character of the NL have been assessed including consideration of the special qualities, setting and views. Furthermore, users of the PRoW network within the Site have been split into two receptors groups for the purposes of the assessment where there are notable views towards the Kent Downs NL, in order to provide a finer grain of detail in the assessment of visual effects.

Consultee and Comment	Response
The LVIA methodology is incorrect as it classes the value of views from the AONB as High instead of Very High.	The overall sensitivity of visual receptors on the North Downs Way within the NL was identified as Very High in the PEIR, accounting for the level of susceptibility of receptors in this location. Notwithstanding the above, the value of views has been reclassified as Very High in response to this comment. However, the reclassification does not change the overall sensitivity of the receptor, which remains Very High. Further commentary on the impact of the Project on the setting of the Kent Downs NL as a whole is provided in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.
Notes intention [for the Applicant] to defer to the Kent Downs AONB unit for their comments on the viewpoint selection in principle, and endorse the additional viewpoints recommended by ABC.	Noted. The Kent Downs AONB Unit have not provided any further recommendations for additional viewpoints, which were agreed with ABC in accordance with the recommendations of GLVIA3.
Notes that there are discrepancies in the numbering of viewpoints identified along the North Downs Way between Figures 7.1 and 7.6, which makes the LVIA unclear.	The discrepancies between viewpoint numbering of PEIR Figures 7.1 and 7.6 were intentional, with the preliminary viewpoint numbering included to provide a clear record of discussions with ABC and subsequent adjustments to the quantity and numbering. The viewpoint numbering shown on **ES Volume 4, Figure 8.8: Visual Appraisal Plan (Doc Ref. 5.4)** supersedes previous versions.
Suggests that the closest distance between the Site and the North Downs Way on the scarp ridge of the AONB which provides the clearest view be chosen for the verified view. It is not clear from the LVIA to which viewpoint SCP 34 relates.	Viewpoint 34 was selected for the preparation of a photomontage from the North Downs Way as it has the clearest view of the Site from North Downs ridge. The distance to the Site is approximately 5.4km, which is the second closest to the Site of all the identified viewpoints on the North Downs Way (after Viewpoint 35 which is approximately 4.6km from the Site). The ES is accompanied by visualisations for

Consultee and Comment	Response
	Viewpoints 34, 35, 36 and 38, all within the Kent Downs NL (**ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.10: LVIA Visualisations (Doc Ref. 5.4)).**
Requests additional viewpoint and visualisation on Tolsford Hill.	This location was originally considered and discounted due to distance from the Site (approximately 7.2km from the Site and over 10km from the part of the Project that would be theoretically visible from this location). Whist shown within the ZTV, the Site is not readily perceptible from this location. Nonetheless, an additional viewpoint has been included from this location (Viewpoint 38) in response to this consultee comment. A visualisation from Viewpoint 38 has also been provided and is provided in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.10: LVIA Visualisations (Doc Ref. 5.4).**
Requests that the cumulative assessment includes Otterpool Park.	The Otterpool Park development to the east of the Site has recently been granted outline planning permission by FHDC and has been included in the cumulative assessment. Cumulative visualisations have also been provided in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.10: LVIA Visualisations (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	
The Project would not have a significant visual impact on the FHDC area, on the basis that most of the works within FHDC will be underground.	Noted. However, due to changes to the Order limits since the PEIR Addendum was prepared, the Order limits no longer include any area within the administrative area of FHDC. Therefore, no direct impact on the FHDC area will occur.
Requests visualisations to illustrate the level of impact on the FHDC area, including from the Otterpool Park development.	A visualisation was provided in the PEIR from Viewpoint 34 within FHDC (located on Hampton Hill – approximately 5.4km north-east of the Project). Additional visualisations have been provided from Viewpoint 33, located to the west of Stone Hill on PRoW HE307 (approximately 760m north-east of the Project), and Viewpoint 38, located on Tolsford Hill approximately 7.2km east of the Site. Viewpoints that were included in the

Consultee and Comment	Response
	Otterpool Park ES LVIA (and agreed with FHDC) have been reviewed and do not have views of the Project. Cumulative visualisations have been provided to support the assessment – see **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.10: LVIA Visualisations (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.
Requests that operational lighting be included in the landscape assessment.	Effects of lighting during the operational phase have been scoped out of the assessment as set out at the EIA scoping stage. No part of the Project (with the exception of the Sellindge Substation Extension) will be continuously lit during operations, with lighting limited to emergency and overnight maintenance lighting only at Inverter Stations, Intermediate Substations, and the Project Substation. If required to be used, lighting will be directed within the Site away from sensitive receptors and will include features to reduce light spill beyond the areas required to be lit. On the basis of the above it is considered highly unlikely that significant night-time landscape and visual effects will result from the operational phase of the Project.
Requests effects be considered during construction, at completion and then after.	The ES assesses the likely landscape and visual effects of the Project during construction, at Years 1 and 15 of operation, and during decommissioning.
Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council S42 Response	
The proposals contained in the PEIR will have a major impact on the visual approach to the village, changing the seasonal agricultural view to an industrial one and long views are downplayed. Long views are of high importance due to the site location on Aldington Ridge. Residents should be able to recommend Visual Impact Assessment sites.	The visual effects of the Project have been assessed in accordance with the GLVIA3 and LVIA Methodology (**ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: LVIA Methodology (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. The viewpoints have been agreed with the competent authority (ABC) and were provided for consultation with the consultation bodies at EIA scoping stage.

Consultee and Comment	Response
	The assessment undertaken is robust and takes account of the magnitude of change and the sensitivity of receptors in order to establish the significance of effects in accordance with best practice and GLVIA3.
Disagrees with the conclusions reached in Table 7.4 (Receptor Summary – Visual Appraisal) of the PEIR relating to the scale of impact on users of PRoW.	Table 7.4 of the PEIR related to value, susceptibility and sensitivity of receptors and was not related to scale of impact, which was set out separately in PEIR Appendix 7.4 Landscape Effects Tables. The value of receptors has been judged in accordance with the LVIA Methodology and the guidance set out in GLVIA3. An updated assessment of landscape effects is included in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.
The mitigation in terms of planting and landscaping is not sufficient to address impacts.	**Illustrative Landscape Drawings - Not for Approval (Doc Ref. 2.7)** have been prepared to assist in communicating the extent and vision of the proposed landscape mitigation strategy. This has been reviewed and enhanced as part of an iterative design process, with substantial increases in the scale of planting proposed across the Site, where appropriate to the character of the receiving landscape.
Requests that a Landscape Management Plan be prepared and agreed as part of the final proposals.	An **Outline LEMP (Doc Ref. 7.10)** has been prepared and submitted alongside the Application. Detailed LEMP(s) are included as a DCO Requirement **(Doc Ref. 3.1)** and will be subject to approval by ABC.

2023 Statutory Consultation

8.3.5 **Table 8.4** provides a summary of the responses to the PIER Addendum of relevance to this assessment and how the assessment has responded to them.

Table 8.4: 2023 Statutory Consultation Response Summary

Consultee and Comment	Response
Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council	
The ridge landscape character was not adequately considered and the major visual impact upon residents entering the village via Station Road is not addressed. The consultation material does not consider the landscape character that is defined by the Aldington Ridge, nor the importance of long views.	The LVIA assesses the visual impact on visual receptors on Station Road, Bank Road and also includes an assessment of the effects on fixed residential receptors in accordance with GLVIA3. Viewpoints were selected and agreed with ABC to include long views across the East Stour Valley, and from the North Downs ridgeline. The effects on the Aldington Ridge LCA have also been assessed. Receptors using the PRoW network within the Site have also been split to provide a finer grain of detail and account for long views to the North Downs.
Justification of the viewpoints as agreed by Ashford Borough Council and Folkestone and Hythe District Council does not address community concerns.	The LVIA viewpoints were consulted upon and agreed with the ABC in accordance with the GLVIA3. Viewpoints are considered to be representative of the range and type of visual effects likely to be experienced by visual receptors.
The proposed biodiversity mitigation will change the landscape character of the area. Increased height to hedgerows would change the landscape character of the area.	Lanes bounded by hedgerows are a characteristic feature of the receiving landscape, e.g. Roman Road, therefore the provision of further hedgerows is not deemed to be incongruous. Screening planting is an accepted and established method of mitigating visual impacts. The planting proposals for the northern boundary of the Site (including Fields 10, 11, 16 and 19) have been enhanced with further tree planting to assist in assimilating the Project within the landscape in views from Mersham.
The proposed ‘acoustic fencing’ would be an additional visual impact.	Acoustic barriers are proposed at the Project Substation and Inverter Stations and are anticipated to be to a maximum height of 4m, which is only marginally higher than the maximum height of 3.5m for PV panels. Inverter Stations, which

Consultee and Comment	Response
	comprise the majority of acoustic barrier locations, are typically located in the centre of field areas, away from visual receptors. Therefore, there is likely to be limited additional visual impact as a result of the acoustic barriers. The visual impact of the acoustic barriers has been taken into account in the assessment.
Ashford Borough Council S42 Response	
It is suggested the new, re-routed and retained PRoW should be annotated on a greater number of plans such as the Landscape Strategy Plans.	The **Illustrative Landscape Drawings - Not for Approval (Doc Ref. 2.6)** show the proposed PRoW diversions and existing PRoW routes that are not proposed to be diverted. Existing PRoW that cross the Site are shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 3.1: Existing Access Network (Doc Ref. 5.3)** of **ES Volume 2, Chapter 3: Project Description (Doc Ref. 5.2)**. Proposed PRoW diversions, extinguishments and new PRoW are indicated on **ES Volume 3, Figure 3.2: Proposed Access Network (Doc Ref. 5.3)** which also illustrates the access network in the context of the Project and wider strategic routes within the surrounding area.
There is little evidence showing how the landscape and visual assessment has informed the starting point and evolution of the scheme layout and extents as part of 'good design' to accommodate renewable energy infrastructure at a significant scale in accordance with the draft NPS EN-3 para 3.10.50.	The NPS EN-3 (at paragraph 2.10.59) sets out that applicants should consider the criteria for good design set out in NPS EN-1 (Section 4.7) at an early stage when developing projects. In accordance with this, the Applicant has taken into account the criteria for good design from an early stage of the Project's evolution. Initial landscape and visual appraisals of the Site were carried out in early 2022 as set out in the PEIR, which led to the identification of opportunities and constraints that informed the emerging layout of the Project, which evolved considerably through the initial stages of

Consultee and Comment	Response
	the project. Chapter 7: Landscape and Views of the PEIR included a seventeen-bullet point list (an updated fourteen-bullet point list is set out in **Paragraph 8.6.23**) of landscape mitigation principles that were identified in close collaboration with the heritage and ecology consultants as well as the wider project team. These mitigation principles were informed by a comprehensive review of landscape related planning policy, landscape recommendations within published landscape guidance, and appraisals of the Site's physical and perceptual character and its relationship with the wider landscape in visual terms. On the basis of these principles, illustrative Landscape Strategy Plans were prepared for the PEIR that included nearly 30,000 new hedgerow plants, over 10,000 woodland/scrub plants and over 100ha of new native grassland managed for landscape and habitat benefit. The PEIR Addendum also introduced considerable enhancements to the design of the Project, with increased offsets to sensitive receptors and substantial increases in numbers of trees and plants. Following feedback to the 2022 Statutory Consultation, additional illustrative material was also prepared to demonstrate how the design of the Project responds to the context of the Site in landscape and visual terms. The materials provided at the 2023 Statutory Consultation (including Chapter 4: Alternatives and Design Evolution of the PEIR Addendum) have been further developed in the preparation of the application documentation. This includes **ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2),** and the **Illustrative Landscape Drawings - Not for Approval (Doc Ref.**

Consultee and Comment	Response
	2.7) and the **Design Approach Document (Doc Ref. 7.4).** These documents provide further evidence of the approach taken throughout the design process and the rationale for decisions made, especially in terms of landscape and visual assessment and robustly present the design approach against the relevant policies and the requirement to incorporate 'good design'.
The design approach is not in accordance with the draft NPS EN-3 which states 'direct considerable effort towards minimising the landscape and visual impact of solar PV arrays'. 'Considerable effort' clearly applies to analysis informing the design and the thought processes then applied to the design of the scheme as a whole.	Considerable effort has been directed toward minimising landscape and visual impact, including through the following included in the design of the Project: 1. Comprehensive reinforcement of existing hedgerows; 2. Over 5km of new hedgerows including on the most visually sensitive parts of the site (the Aldington Ridge); 3. Diversion of PRoW along field boundaries and provision of open landscape corridors; 4. Creation of new PRoW to enable better connectivity across the Site; 5. Buffers to residential properties; 6. Woodland belts along Calleywell Lane and Station Road; 7. Extensive planting of characteristic trees and woodland along the East Stour River; 8. Reinforcement of proposed planting on the southern edge of Field 20 to further limit short distance views from the NL (as requested by the Kent Downs AONB Unit); 9. Provision of an open area on the Aldington Ridge with seating to provide opportunities for views towards the North Downs to be enjoyed; and

Consultee and Comment	Response
	10. Creation of substantial areas of enhanced habitat including scrub/woodland edge planting, native wildflower grassland, ponds and scrapes and mitigation areas for skylark, brown hare, yellow hammer and ground nesting birds.
The application site is crossed by a large number of PRoWs and substantial parts of the site have an open character allowing appreciation of medium to long range views of a much wider landscape beyond the site including heritage assets (the careful analysis of which in terms of significance and setting is required pursuant to 2023 draft EN1 paras 5.9.12 & 5.9.13). The Council notes with interest that the applicant identifies that the site was determined as being suitable because 'a good portion of the site sits within a 'bowl' in the landscape' (Page 9 'You said, we did' Summer 2023 document) because a substantial element of the scheme does not and involves higher ground. The locally changing topography within the landscape reinforces the Council's concern that insufficient attention has been given to a properly informed analysis and appreciation of that landscape informing scheme design (layout and extents) from the outset.	The Site predominantly lies within a bowl, but this does not imply that the Site is entirely flat. Rather, a bowl shape implies a flat and low-lying centre, with a raised perimeter. The landform of the Site is described in **Paragraph 8.5.10** which acknowledges that the Site: 'sits predominantly within the bowl-like landscape of the East Stour River valley, for the most part occupying low lying land adjacent to the river itself. The Site also extends to a degree up the northern flank of the Aldington Ridge in the south and outwards to the more gently undulating landscape further west'. It was also acknowledged that the part of the Site extending up the flank of the Aldington Ridge was of higher visual sensitivity and the design approach included additional mitigation in response to this. In reviewing published landscape character guidance and SLR field surveys, it was considered appropriate to seek to re-establish historic field boundary hedgerows in this area (this guidance is contained within both Ashford character assessments). This mitigation, in addition to re-establishing the historical position providing cultural heritage benefits, was incorporated to break up the extent of panels seen in medium-long views from the north, and allowed for PRoW to be diverted in a logical way to run within field boundary corridors as set out above, and thus maintaining a degree of openness in views from the PRoW network. Furthermore, in the updated Project design, PRoW AE370 has been

Consultee and Comment	Response
	diverted to run through an open area (approximately 0.86ha) where seating will be provided. Views towards the North Downs will be experienced in this location, with proposed PV panels approximately 90m distant to the north, with new and enhanced hedgerows to provide an element of screening. Large scale woodland screening has been consistently proposed by ABC but due to the openness of this landscape this was not considered appropriate. This was noted to ABC during the pre-application phase of the Project but remains a point of disagreement. It is noted that were large scale woodland to be incorporated as proposed by ABC this would not fully screen the Project from the limited views to the north to the extent that a reduction in residual effects could be achieved within the timeframe of the assessment and that discussions with ABC's appointed landscape consultants, LMS, suggested there was technical agreement on this point. However, such planting would reduce the generating capacity of the Site. It is also noted Kent Downs AONB Unit concluded in their response to the 2022 Statutory Consultation that the impact on the North Downs escarpment element of the NL would be minimal. The design of the Project has been informed by proper analysis and appreciation of the landscape, as outlined with **Section 8.6** of this Chapter, in full accordance with the requirements of NPS EN-1 and NPS EN-3.
Natural England	
The application site falls within the immediate setting of the Kent Downs AONB.	Agreed. The impact on the setting of the NL has been assessed and found to be not significant.

Consultee and Comment	Response
We are pleased to note the following responses to our landscape advice in the PEIR Addendum: ▪ The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will include the AONB as a specific receptor; ▪ Recommend the ES reflects the potential impacts to the AONB and include point 6 of section 3.5, 'Sustainable Development – aims' of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan; ▪ A significant effect on a special quality of the AONB is likely to equate to a significant effect on how the designated area delivers its statutory purpose, irrespective of the perceived geographical location of that effect; ▪ SCP 34 was selected for the preparation of a photomontage from the North Downs; ▪ The ES will include reference to views from Tolsford Hill along with a photograph to clearly demonstrate that the site is not visible from this location; ▪ The updated list of schemes to be considered as part of the cumulative assessment of the Project; and ▪ Otterpool Park may be delivering its own solar scheme outside of the current red line boundary and this may also need to be considered as part of the cumulative assessment.	Comment noted. All of the comments raised have been addressed in the assessment. The impact of the Project on the NL has been assessed by means of including LCAs within the NL in the landscape character assessment. The assessment includes consideration of the aims and special qualities set out in the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan. A viewpoint has been included from Tolsford Hill (Viewpoint 38). A visualisation has also been prepared from this viewpoint. An updated list of cumulative schemes has been included in the assessment, which has been approved by KCC and ABC in March 2024 (**see ES Volume 2, Chapter 6: EIA Methodology, Section 6.9** for further details).
Kent County Council	
The proposed "maturation of planting" has been previously discussed and a timescale of 15 years for planting to mature is not considered to be appropriate and planting proposals are	The 15 year timescale for the assessment is an LVIA convention, rather than being related to the maturation of planting. The proposed hedgerow planting is expected to reach the full height within approximately 5 years. Proposed woodland is likely to

Consultee and Comment	Response
requested to have more of an immediate effect.	reach a height of 3.5m within a similar timeframe, and proposed seeding is likely to be fully established within 2-3 years of planting. The planting proposals will then continue to grow and mature throughout the lifetime of the Project. Where possible, advanced landscape planting will be carried out in advance of the construction phase to maximise the screening potential of proposed planting in the early phases of the Project. The proposed planting has also been amended to include a greater proportion of larger stock, which would also help address this point.
Kent Downs AONB Unit	
Amendments that were made in response to 2022 Statutory Consultation feedback are welcome. The additional planting along the southern boundary of the site addresses our concerns regarding the visibility of Parcel E.	Comment noted.
The incorporation of 'advanced planting' which includes locations that will assist in providing earlier mitigation for potential impacts from closer up views from the AONB to the south east is also welcome.	Comment noted.
Mersham Parish Council	
The Project will be highly visible from various vantage points within the villages of Mersham and Aldington. This will have an adverse impact on the aesthetics and scenic beauty of the rural landscape, significantly diminishing the quality of life for our residents and visitors.	Views from Mersham and Aldington have been assessed in accordance with GLVIA3 and are not considered to be significantly affected. The planting proposals for the northern boundary of the Site (Fields 10, 11, 16 and 19) have been enhanced with further tree planting to assist in assimilating the Project within the landscape in views from Mersham.

Consultee and Comment	Response

2023 Targeted Statutory Consultation

8.3.6 **Table 8.5** provides a summary of the responses to the 2024 Targeted Consultation of relevance to this assessment and how the assessment has responded to them.

Table 8.5: 2023 Targeted Statutory Consultation Response Summary

Consultee and Comment	Response
Ashford Borough Council	
The Council would be concerned if the changes include removal of any existing trees and hedgerows which contribute to existing biodiversity and visual character of Aldington.	The Applicant does not propose the removal of the hedgerow or use of the verge for any other reasons (parking of vehicles etc) other than the potential provision of temporary warning and directional signage.

2024 Targeted Statutory Consultation

8.3.7 Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council stated in their response that “the change is minor as shown in the diagram it provides an additional 6.6 square metres, however, it is adjacent to the Public Rights of Way AE474 and AE475 which are important historic Public Rights of Way in the Parish which connect St Martin's Church to the main village and were forged by people walking from their homes to church or places of work over hundreds of years. Any installation in this area will have an adverse impact on the views of the Grade I listed Church enjoyed over the centuries. The Parish Council remains opposed to the application and feels that every minor change adds to the significant and demonstrable harm that this development is proposing”.

8.3.8 The change in the Order Limits has been introduced to ensure access is provided within the Order Limits between PRoW AE474 and the diverted PRoW AE454. No physical infrastructure is proposed in this location and no changes have been made in this area to the landscape proposals. The change is to facilitate pedestrian connectivity across the Site, and is not expected to lead to any additional landscape or visual effects. The visual effects on receptors travelling along PRoW AE474 are set out in Table 8.9.3 and Table 8.9.36 of **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

8.4 Assessment Methodology

Assessment Scope

8.4.1 The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with GLVIA3. A summary of the assessment methodology is outlined below, with the full methodology included in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: LVIA Methodology (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

8.4.2 The assessment methodology also has regard to the following guidance:

- Landscape Institute ('LI') Technical Guidance Note ('TGN') 02/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations[9];
- LI TGN 02/2019 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)[11];
- LI TGN 06/2019 Visual Representation of Development Proposals[12];
- LI GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13[13]; and
- LI Technical Information Note ('TIN') 01-21[14].

8.4.3 In accordance with the GLVIA3, this assessment addresses landscape and visual effects as separate issues. Landscape effects relate to both the effect on the physical features of the Site, and on the landscape character of the Site and surrounding area. Visual effects relate to the experience of views of the Project by visual receptors from publicly accessible vantage points in the study area. Where appropriate, the effects of the Project on residential receptors have also been assessed.

8.4.4 The LVIA Methodology was reviewed and approved by ABC's appointed landscape consultants, LMS, as part of the 2022 Consultation. In their response LMS confirmed that the *'LVIA Methodology (PEIR Appendix 7.2) is consistent with guidance set out in 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (3rd Edition) (GLVIA3) prepared by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, and also additional guidance on landscape and visual matters set out in Technical Guidance Notes prepared by the Landscape Institute. Methodologies for the preparation of LVIAs will vary between Consultancies, but it is our view that the proposed Methodology provides an approach which should inform a comprehensive and reasonable assessment of the anticipated impacts and effects of the scheme on landscape character and visual amenity.'*

Matters scoped in

8.4.5 This Chapter includes an assessment of the following potential landscape and visual effects of the Project:

- Likely significant landscape and visual effects during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases;
- Likely significant cumulative landscape and visual effects with other emerging projects; and
- An assessment of the Project's construction/decommissioning phase artificial light sources on the existing character of the night sky.

Matters scoped out

- An assessment of the Project's operational phase artificial light sources on the existing character of the night sky;
- The assessment of landscape effects on NCAs;
- Visual receptors considered not to have the potential to experience significant visual effects; and
- RVAA.

Study Area

8.4.6 A Preliminary ZTV was prepared at the outset of the Project and included on Figure 7.1 of the PEIR (the Preliminary ZTV was also presented in the context of the refined study area on Figure 8 of the EIA Scoping Report - refer to **ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.1 (Doc Ref. 5.4)**). A desktop study was carried out based on an initial study area that extended to approximately 8km from the Order limits as it was at the time of preparation.

8.4.7 The Preliminary ZTV was based on a broad assumption of the extent and height of the Project infrastructure and the Order limits at the time of preparation and was used to inform field surveys.

8.4.8 An updated ZTV has been prepared and submitted as part of the Application to take account of the final Project parameters in order to provide a more accurate indication of the areas from which the Project, and its different components, may potentially be visible as shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Doc Ref. 5.3)**. As with the Preliminary ZTV prepared at the outset of the Project, **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Doc Ref. 5.3)** extends to a wider area of search than the study area established for the assessment.

8.4.9 The methodology for the preparation of the ZTV is set out on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Doc Ref. 5.3)**.

8.4.10 The ZTV does not form the basis of the assessment of visual effects, as these are determined on the basis of field surveys and photography which show actual visibility of the Site, as well as the identification of viewpoints and visual receptors. This approach is supported by the GLVIA3, which states at paragraph 6.10:

'The ZTV mapping is the desk study component of the visibility analysis. In reality many factors other than terrain will influence actual visibility. Other landscape components that may affect visibility, for example buildings, walls, fences, trees, hedgerows, woodland and banks, can in theory be added to digital models that are based on terrain but this is difficult to achieve accurately, especially for a large study area. Their effects are best judged by field surveys that can examine and record their location, size and extent, and their effect in screening visibility at key points. Landmarks in the vicinity of the site can be useful as reference points when looking towards the site to identify its location in the view, and public viewpoints that may have views of the site and proposed development can be identified and the extent

of the views checked. Site surveys are therefore essential to provide an accurate baseline assessment of visibility'.

8.4.11 The study area for the assessment of landscape and visual effects has been refined based on the updated ZTV and field surveys, and broadly equates to the drawing extents shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.2: Site Context Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**. It is considered highly unlikely that significant effects will occur on landscape and visual receptors beyond the extents shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.2: Site Context Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**. The establishment of an appropriate study area was undertaken in accordance with the guidance set out in GLVIA3, in that:

- It has been established in consultation with the competent authority (ABC);
- It considers the area from which the Project will potentially be visible;
- It is proportional to the scale and nature of the Project; and
- It has been refined following detailed analysis and in discussion with the competent authority (ABC).

Establishing Baseline Conditions

8.4.12 A desktop review of the study area was undertaken, including a review of published landscape character information and relevant landscape and visual planning policy, and analysis of landscape context, landform, landscape features and landscape designations. Sources for information on designations are set out on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.2: Site Context Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**. Visits to the Site and its surroundings were subsequently undertaken in December 2021, March 2022, May 2022 and in July 2023 to verify the desk-based review's findings and underpin a robust understanding of the landscape and visual context of the Site. A final Site visit was undertaken in April 2024 to confirm that no substantial changes in the baseline have occurred since the previous Site visit.

8.4.13 To determine the extent of visual influence, a visual appraisal was undertaken of the Site and study area to consider the nature of existing views from publicly accessible viewpoints including roads, PRoW and public open space. The initial field survey, carried out in winter conditions, confirmed a substantially reduced visual envelope than that indicated by the Preliminary ZTV. By way of example, despite an extensive swathe of land in the Romney Marshes identified by the Preliminary ZTV as having widespread visibility of the Site, no such views were encountered as a result of a combination of distance and intervening vegetation.

8.4.14 A series of representative views were subsequently selected to demonstrate the character of the Site and its context, and to represent the visual experience of visual receptors. Views were considered from all directions and from a range of distances and were selected from approximately 180 panoramic photographs captured as part of the initial field surveys.

8.4.15 Representative views are not intended to be exhaustive and do not cover every possible view of the Site. Rather, they have been selected to proportionately represent the range of views available, taking into account the activity and sensitivity of visual receptors. In accordance with GLVIA3, the assessment of visual effects

has been based on the identified visual receptors and not specific views, unless specifically appropriate.

8.4.16 Following the site visits and desktop review, 33 viewpoints were initially selected. These viewpoints were provided to officers of ABC on 6 January 2022 who requested, at a virtual meeting on 28 January 2022, that three additional viewpoints also be included for assessment from that included in the EIA Scoping Report. A record of this correspondence is included in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.3: Viewpoint Correspondence (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

8.4.17 Subsequent field surveys were undertaken to capture photography from these viewpoints, as well as to reflect amendments to the Order limits, resulting in the inclusion of an additional viewpoint, and bringing the total number of viewpoints considered in the PEIR to 37 (the numbering sequence of the viewpoints was subsequently revised in the interests of clarity). The 2022 Statutory Consultation response from ABC confirmed that the 37 viewpoints were agreed and provide a reasonable and representative set of viewpoints to inform the assessment.

8.4.18 Following feedback received as part of the 2022 Statutory Consultation an additional viewpoint was included at the request of Natural England, resulting in a final count of 38 viewpoints for the assessment of visual effects.

8.4.19 Following the amendments to the Order limits in Autumn 2023, which generally resulted in a reduction in the Order limits, a review of the representative viewpoints was undertaken to confirm they remained appropriate for the assessment of the likely significant visual effects of the Project. This process was repeated following the 2024 Targeted Consultations with no further viewpoints included.

8.4.20 Representative viewpoint photographs for the 38 viewpoints are provided to support this assessment including winter and summer baseline annotated viewpoint photographs (TGN 06/19 Type 1). Spring and summer verifiable photomontages (TGN 06/19 Type 4) are also provided for a selection of the representative viewpoints, the locations of which were consulted upon as part of the 2023 Statutory Consultation. The methodology for preparing the verifiable photomontages is included alongside the photomontages themselves, in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.10: LVIA Visualisations** and **Appendix 8.11: Cumulative LVIA Visualisations (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

8.4.21 A description of the existing baseline characteristics of the study area is provided and includes reference to access, settlement patterns, topography, vegetation, landscape designations, relevant planning policy and published landscape character information, as well as appraisals of the character of the Site and its visual relationship with the study area. In particular, the following has been considered:

- Landscape Character: i.e. landform, vegetation cover, land use, scale, state of repair of individual elements, representation of typological character, enclosure pattern, form/line and movement;
- Landscape Value: i.e. national designations, local designations, sense of tranquillity / remoteness, scenic beauty and cultural associations; and

- Visual Influence: i.e. landform influences, tree and woodland cover, numbers and types of residents, numbers and types of visitors and scope for mitigating potential for visual impacts.

8.4.22 These factors combine to underpin an understanding of landscape value and resultant sensitivity.

8.4.23 On the basis of the above, a series of landscape and visual receptors have been selected to form the basis of the assessment of landscape and visual effects. The value of receptors has been appraised based on a combination of landscape-related planning designations and the attributes drawn from relevant guidance (Box 5.1 of the GLVIA3 and TGN 02-21) and cultural/historical associations of existing views.

8.4.24 Alongside the above, a detailed Valued Landscape Assessment of the Site with respect to the factors set out in TGN 02-21 has been carried out.

8.4.25 In addition to visual receptors in publicly accessible locations (e.g. roads, PRoW) the identified visual receptors include residential receptors who have the potential to experience significant visual effects as a result of the Project. Residential receptors have been grouped according to their location.

Identifying Likely Significant Effects

8.4.26 The LVIA methodology is set out in full in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: LVIA Methodology (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. The assessment of landscape and visual effects relies on linking judgements between the sensitivity of receptors and the magnitude of effect experienced. Sensitivity is defined by combining professional judgements of the value (defined as part of the baseline) and susceptibility of receptors. Landscape susceptibility is a measure of the vulnerability of a receptor to the type of development proposed without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation, while visual susceptibility is defined by the nature of visual receptors and their activity and experience of the landscape.

8.4.27 Magnitude is defined by combining judgements on the duration and reversibility of changes introduced by the Project and the scale and extent of that change with reference to Table 10: Magnitude Matrix contained within **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: LVIA Methodology (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. The matrix is not formulaic and professional judgement is employed at all stages in the assessment of effects.

8.4.28 The likely significance of effects has been determined by combining the judgements of sensitivity and magnitude with reference to Table 12: Significance Matrix contained within **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: LVIA Methodology (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. The matrix is not formulaic and professional judgement is employed at all stages in the assessment of effects.

8.4.29 Assessments have been carried out to identify the likely significant landscape and visual effects arising from the Project during construction, and during the operational phase in the first year after completion ('Year 1') and 15 years thereafter ('Year 15'). An assessment of the effects resulting from decommissioning has also been carried out.

8.4.30 In terms of operational effects, the establishment and growth of planting proposals and their ongoing maintenance, and the management of existing landscape features are considered as additional mitigation measures (secondary mitigation) and form the basis of the assessment of residual landscape and visual effects of the Project during the operational phase at Year 15.

8.4.31 Mitigation planting has been assumed to grow approximately 1m in height every 3 years. The growth rate will naturally vary according to species, soil conditions, sunlight, general climate and microclimate, management and maintenance. The assumption is based on detailed technical sources such as *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*[18]. However, information on growth rates of trees and shrubs is freely available from various online sources such as the Woodland Trust[19].

8.4.32 The Woodland Trust's website indicates that the assumed figure for plant growth is at the lower end of the ranges identified for some species included in the proposed landscape scheme (e.g. Alder - 60cm/year; Hazel – 40-60cm/year; Silver birch – 40cm/year).

8.4.33 A qualitative night-time assessment has also been carried out with respect to the construction and decommissioning phases, focusing on potential effects on the character of the night sky and the landscape, and also effects on specific visual receptors where appropriate. The methodology for the night-time assessment is also set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: LVIA Methodology (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

8.4.34 The Glint and Glare Assessment **ES Volume 4, Appendix 16.2: Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study (Doc Ref. 5.4)** has been reviewed and where relevant to the visual receptors, its findings have been considered in the assessment of likely significant visual effects. Further detail is provided in **Paragraph 8.6.14**.

8.4.35 The cumulative effects of the Project in combination with other planned schemes have been assessed where the potential for significant effects has been identified. The methodology for the cumulative assessment is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: LVIA Methodology (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

8.4.36 The assessment of cumulative effects has been informed by the preparation of cumulative ZTVs for a selection of the cumulative schemes scoped into the assessment. The selection is based on the scale of the cumulative schemes and likelihood for significant effects to arise in combination with the Project. The cumulative ZTVs use the same methodology as the ZTV for the Project on its own, but also model the height and visual envelopes of the cumulative schemes based on information available online on the planning portals for the respective schemes.

8.4.37 The assessment of cumulative effects focusses on the additional effect arising from the combination of the cumulative schemes and the Project over and above the effects of the Project on its own.

Limitations and Assumptions

8.4.38 In undertaking the landscape and visual assessment of the Site and wider surrounding area, there are a number of limitations and constraints affecting the outputs from this work. These include:

- The baseline appraisal has been based on information readily available at the time of undertaking the assessment;
- During Site visits, weather conditions, the time of day and seasonal factors have influenced the visual assessment and photographic record of the Site. Every effort has been made to ensure that the photographs and their locations are 'representative' of the Site and its surroundings;
- Photography for winter visualisations was carried out in April due to weather constraints and are not strictly winter views. However, the photographs were taken before trees were in leaf and they therefore provide a worst-case scenario in terms of visibility of the Site;
- In some instances, access to survey viewpoints for visualisations was not possible, and where this is the case non-verifiable 'Illustrative Visualisations' (TGN-06/19 Type 3) have been prepared; and
- Access to assess the predicted visual effects from private individual properties outside the Site has not been obtained. As a result, the assessment of likely significant visual effects arising from the Project has been made from vantage points with representative views taken from nearby public viewpoints (such viewpoints agreed with ABC) in combination with the views available from the Site itself.
- The Sellindge Substation Extension is situated within an area that is strongly influenced by existing lighting due to its immediate setting within the envelope of the existing Sellindge Substation and the proximity of the Sellindge Substation to major transport routes, the M20 motorway and HS1 railway line, and the existing Sellindge Sewage Treatment Works (located adjacent to the Sellindge Substation), much of which is permanent, and in a region where the appreciation of the night sky is limited. As such, considering the limited amount of lighting that would be required for the Sellindge Substation Extension, and that any lighting would be consistent with the approach that is currently applied to the existing infrastructure, it is not considered that there would be any material change to the existing baseline lighting position at Sellindge Substation that would influence the assessment within this ES and no significant effects are considered likely and this aspect is not considered further.

Basis of Assessment

8.4.39 The assessment of landscape and visual effects is based on the Project design set out on the **Works Plans (Doc Ref. 2.3),** the **Design Principles (Doc Ref. 7.5)** and **ES Chapter 3: Project Description (Doc Ref. 5.2)**, which together form the Project parameters and therefore the worst-case scenario for assessment purposes. The assessment also includes consideration of Embedded Mitigation in the form of landscape planting proposals and the maintenance and management of those proposals (primary and tertiary mitigation respectively). The growth and

establishment of proposed planting is secondary mitigation considered in the assessment of residual effects for the operational phase. The landscape proposals are based on the Illustrative Project Layout provided in **Book 2: Illustrative Project Drawings - Not for Approval (Doc Ref. 2.6)**. The design parameters of particular relevance to this assessment are set out in **Paragraphs 8.6.4 - 8.6.13** of this assessment.

8.5 Baseline Conditions

8.5.1 The following descriptions are based on a baseline timeframe of winter (2022/2023) and therefore consider a maximum visibility scenario, in accordance with paragraph 6.28 of the GLVIA3. The baseline descriptions were confirmed to remain accurate in following a Site visit in April 2024.

Site Context

Location and Land Use

8.5.2 As demonstrated by **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.2: Site Context Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**, the landscape of the study area comprises a diverse mixture of land uses, with a largely rural landscape interspersed with settlements, the largest of which are Ashford in the north-west and Hythe in the south-east. The intervening, predominantly agricultural, landscape contains a number of smaller settlements including Aldington / Clap Hill, located to the south of the Site and Mersham and The Forstal to the north of the Site.

8.5.3 The overriding landscape pattern of the study area is one of large irregular fields with some fragmentation as a result of transport routes and historic expansion of Ashford. The area is interspersed by farmsteads and clusters of agricultural buildings, often large and of modern origin.

8.5.4 Aldington itself comprises a nucleated core of houses focused on the junctions of a number of local roads. However, the settlement edge is loosely defined, with low density residential settlement extending outwards along the network of roads, most notably to the west (Aldington Frith) and to the north-east (Stonestreet Green).

8.5.5 The Sevington Inland Border Facility, comprising large areas of hard-standing and industrial units, is located on the south-eastern extent of Ashford, approximately 2.3km north-west of the Site. The substantial Sellindge Substation (operated by National Grid and UKPN) is located partially within the eastern extent of the Site on the north side of the High Speed 1 / Channel Tunnel Rail Link (the 'HS1 railway line'), with an existing solar farm (Partridge Farm) in close proximity to the south of the substation and the Site.

Transport Routes

8.5.6 The M20 motorway and the HS1 railway line are major transport routes that cut through the landscape in close proximity to the north of the Site, on a north-west to south-east alignment. The HS1 railway line is located immediately adjacent to the Site to the north. The M20 motorway carriageway lies a short distance further to the

north of the HS1 railway line. These routes result in strong physical severance within the landscape, albeit in perceptual terms this is lessened to a degree by strong vegetation that abuts the motorway, and where the railway is located within a cutting, or within a tunnel as it is in the vicinity of Mersham and The Forstal.

8.5.7 A network of rural roads, typically running parallel or perpendicular to the M20 motorway / HS1 railway line corridor, links the various settlements around the Site. Most relevant of these to the Project comprise:

- Roman Road / Bank Road, which runs north-west to south-east and bisects the Site, forming the main route through Aldington;
- Calleywell Lane, which extends in a north-easterly direction from Aldington, via Stonestreet Green, and also abuts / crosses the Site;
- Goldwell Lane, which runs parallel to the east of Calleywell Lane and partially falls within the Order limits;
- Frith Road, which extends westwards from Aldington / Clap Hill, running through Aldington Frith;
- Laws Lane, which links Frith Lane and Bank Road, passing north-west through the western extent of the Site; and
- Flood Street, which extends in a north-westerly direction from near the Site's western extent to The Forstal.

Topography and Hydrology

8.5.8 **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.3: Topography Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)** illustrates a strong variation in landform across the study area. To the north-west, Ashford is positioned within a gently undulating lowland landscape with the Great Stour River located at its centre, lying at approximately 35-40m AOD. To the north-east, the prominent ridgeline of the North Downs rises steeply in places as high as 180m AOD. The intervening landscape is strongly undulating, with hills and ridgelines defined by river valleys, including that of the west flowing East Stour River, and its minor side branches.

8.5.9 To the south, the expansive landscape of the Romney Marshes sits at just above sea level, with its northern edge defined by an abrupt, east-west oriented ridgeline, hereafter referred to as the 'Aldington Ridge', that forms the southern flank of the East Stour River valley. The Aldington Ridge itself undulates, and is formed of a series of small hillocks, including in east-to-west order, at Court-at-Street (107m AOD), Aldington / Clap Hill (80m AOD), Bank Farm (approximately 75m AOD) and Collier's Hill to the west of the Site, at 74m AOD.

8.5.10 **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.4: Topography Plan - Site Level (Doc Ref. 5.3)** shows that the Site itself sits predominantly within the bowl-like landscape of the East Stour River valley, for the most part occupying low lying land adjacent to the river itself. The Site also extends to a degree up the northern flank of the Aldington Ridge in the south and outwards to the more gently undulating landscape further west.

8.5.11 However, as demonstrated by **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.3: Topography Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**, the Aldington Ridge decreases in height and breadth from east to west, with the Site occupying only a limited part of its western extent.

Vegetation

8.5.12 With respect to vegetation, the agricultural landscape in which the Site is located is predominantly defined by a network of hedgerow field boundaries. These are typically robust, but are sometimes denuded or absent altogether, particularly in the lower lying landscape of the East Stour River valley.

8.5.13 The denudement and historic loss of hedgerows together with the general absence of woodland within the locale of the Site creates an open character to the landscape of the East Stour River valley from Station Road westwards towards Ashford.

8.5.14 In contrast, the hills that fringe this vale landscape are more strongly treed as shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.2: Site Context Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**, with a number of substantial blocks of woodland to the south and east of the Site, accentuating the underlying topographical containment. Most notable of these woodland blocks is Backhouse Wood, which lies adjacent to the southern boundary of the north-eastern part of the Site, and also Handen Wood and Poulton Wood to the south of Aldington.

8.5.15 Similarly, there are substantial blocks of woodland to the north of the M20 motorway / HS1 railway line corridor, including near Mersham and further north on the North Downs.

Public Rights of Way

8.5.16 As demonstrated by **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.2: Site Context Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**, the study area is well served by PRoW, including within the Site itself. Those relevant to this assessment include:

- PRoW AE385, which extends south from Bank Road through the western extent of the Site towards Laws Lane and Frith Road;
- PRoW AE396, a Byway Open to All Traffic ('BOAT') which extends south from Bank Road towards Frith Road through the southern part of the Site;
- PRoW AE370 and AE377, which extend through the Site in a north-westerly direction from Aldington towards Mersham and The Forstal;
- PRoW AE378, AE428, AE447 and AE448, located within the immediate setting of the East Stour River to the west of Calleywell Lane. PRoW AE428 continues northwards across the HS1 railway line cutting to the north of the Site;
- PRoW AE431, AE436, AE657 and AE656, which are associated with the East Stour River valley to the east of Calleywell Lane;
- PRoW AE457, which extends southwards from the East Stour River, following the eastern edge of Backhouse Wood;
- PRoW AE454, AE474 and AE475, which cross the south-eastern part of the Site;

- PRoW AE442, which runs northwards from Frith Road to Bank Road via Bank Farm on the southern part of the Order limits;
- PRoW AE401 and AE402, which rise up Collier's Hill to the west of the Site; and
- The North Downs Way National Trail, which follows the elevated ridgeline approximately 4.3km north-east of the Site, at its nearest point.

Designations

8.5.17 The Site is not located within a designated landscape. However, the following designations are of note within the study area and are illustrated on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.2: Site Context Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**:

- The Kent Downs NL, formerly known as the Kent Downs AONB, principally encompasses the North Downs ridgeline to the north of the Site. However, it also arcs to the south-east around the valley of the East Stour River, such that its boundary is located as near as approximately 330m to the south and 3km north-east of the Site;
- There are no listed buildings within the Site. However, several listed buildings are located within the Site's immediate context, including at Bank Farm, in Aldington/Clap Hill, on Frith Road, Calleywell Lane, Goldwell Lane, Laws Lane and Aldington Church;
- Several conservation areas are present within the study area, including most notably:
  - Aldington – Clap Hill conservation area, which encompasses a cluster at the junction of Bank Road and Frith Road, approximately 180m south-east of the Site, at its nearest point;
  - Aldington – Church Area conservation area, which comprises properties in the vicinity of St Martin's Church. The conservation area is located approximately 450m south-east of the Site, at its nearest point; and
  - Mersham conservation area, which comprises a cluster of residential properties located approximately 1.5km north-west of the Site, at its nearest point.
- Hatch Park Grade II Registered Park and Garden is located within a strongly wooded setting over 1.8km north of the Site, at its nearest point;
- There are numerous areas of ancient woodland scattered through the study area, the most notable of which is Backhouse Wood which lies adjacent to edge of the Order limits, as well as Handen Wood and Poulton Wood south of the Site, near Frith Road; and
- The south-western part of the study area, including the majority of the Site, is within the Proposed Dark Sky Zone (Policy ENV4 of the ABC Local Plan).

Landscape Character

8.5.18 The Landscape Character Assessment approach is a descriptive approach that seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the

country. This approach recognises the role of all landscapes, not just 'special' landscapes, as contributing factors in people's quality of life, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention[20]. It also ensures that account is taken of the different roles and character of different areas. The description of each landscape is used as a basis for evaluation in order to make judgements to guide, for example, development or landscape management. **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.5: Landscape Character Plan - National Character and Kent Downs National Landscape (Doc Ref. 5.3)** and **Figure 8.6: Landscape Character Plan - County and Local (Doc Ref. 5.3)** illustrate the extent of landscape character areas in the vicinity of the Site, as featured in published assessments.

National Character Assessment

8.5.19 Natural England has produced a Countryside Character Map of England that includes broad descriptions of different character areas. The Site lies within two of the NCA identified:

- NCA 120: Wealden Greensand; and
- NCA 121: Low Weald.

8.5.20 NCA Profile 120: Wealden Greensand[21] describes the local character of the long, curved belt of the Wealden Greensand which runs across Kent, parallel to the North Downs, and on through Surrey as an '*area that features more open areas of heath on acidic soils, river valleys and mixed farming, including areas of fruit growing*' and *'around a quarter of the NCA being made up of extensive belts of woodland – both ancient mixed woods and more recent conifer plantations'* with outstanding landscape, geological, historical and biodiversity interest.

8.5.21 Within the 'Statements of Environmental Opportunity' section of NCA Profile 120 the following are important to consider in relation to the Project:

- SEO 1: *'Protect, manage and significantly enhance the area's intricate and characteristic mix of semi-natural ancient woodlands, gill woodland, shaws, small field copses, hedgerows and individual trees to reduce habitat fragmentation and benefit biodiversity, while seeking to improve and encourage access for health and wellbeing and reinforce sense of local identity'.*
- SEO 3: *'Work at a landscape scale to improve the quality, state and structure of all Wealden rivers, streams and standing waterbodies and their appropriate flood plains, taking account of water quality, water flow and hydraulic connection with the flood plain, while seeking to enhance biodiversity, historic features and recreation opportunities and reinforcing sense of place'*

8.5.22 NCA Profile: 120 Low Weald[22] describes the landscape character as being *'… a broad, low-lying clay vale which is predominantly agricultural, supporting mainly pastoral farming owing to heavy clay soils, with horticulture and some arable on lighter soils in the east, and has many densely wooded areas with a high proportion of ancient woodland'. The description also goes on to note that 'the area is generally*

wet and woody. It is dissected by flood plains and its impermeable clay soil and low-lying nature make many areas prone to localised flooding.'

8.5.23 Within the 'Statements of Environmental Opportunity' Section, the following are important to consider in relation to the Project:

- SEO 1: *'Protect, manage and significantly enhance the area's intricate and characteristic mix of semi-natural ancient woodlands, gill woodland, shaws, small field copses, hedgerows and individual trees to reduce habitat fragmentation and benefit biodiversity, while seeking to improve and encourage access for health and wellbeing and reinforce sense of local identity'.*
- SEO 3: *'Work at a landscape scale to improve the quality, state and structure of all Wealden rivers, streams and standing waterbodies and their appropriate flood plains, taking account of water quality, water flow and hydraulic connection with the flood plain, while seeking to enhance biodiversity, historic features and recreation opportunities and reinforcing sense of place'.*

8.5.24 The NCA profiles provide useful background to the baseline appraisal of landscape character, as well as informing the landscape strategy for the Project. However, due to the extensive scale of NCAs 120 and 121 (approximately 146,000ha and 182,000ha in area, respectively) in comparison to the Site (approximately 192ha), and the nature of the Project (including its temporary duration and reversibility, limited physical changes to fabric of landscape, and restricted height), it is not considered that the Project will result in significant effects on these receptors. As a result, they have been scoped out of this assessment.

County Landscape Character Assessment

8.5.25 The Landscape Assessment of Kent[23] is a landscape character-based study that draws together existing landscape character assessments of the county and updates them to conform to the current guidance. As shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.6: Landscape Character Plan - County and Local (Doc Ref. 5.3)**, the Site lies within three of the LCAs identified within the study area:

- Aldington Ridge LCA;
- Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands LCA; and
- Upper Stour Valley LCA.

Aldington Ridge

8.5.26 The Landscape Assessment of Kent describes the Aldington Ridge LCA as a *'raised landscape with steep slopes down to neighbouring character areas, with good quality loam soils and mixed, generally open farmland*.' The character area boasts '*dramatic views to the Low Weald, Romney Marsh and the Downs.'*

8.5.27 The condition of the landscape is judged moderate, and its sensitivity is high.

8.5.28 The policy recommendation is to 'conserve and restore' and includes the following guidance:

- *'Restore the frequency of woodland areas to the lower slopes of the ridgeline.*
- *Restore a smaller scale, but more open landscape by removing field boundary divisions.*
- *Conserve the infrequency of built form and conserve open views.*
- *Conserve the open nature of the field system.*
- *Conserve and restore small woodland areas.*
- *Restore ecological interest by the sensitive management and restoration of small pastoral grasslands.'*

Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands LCA

8.5.29 The study describes the Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands LCA as *'flat, or gently undulating with distinctive ridges and valleys dropping down to Romney Marsh.'* Large broadleaf or mixed woodlands along with small-scale pattern of pastoral fields can be found in the character area along with scattered settlements and historic churches, thus making the landscape feel remote.

8.5.30 The condition of the landscape is assessed as very good, and its sensitivity as moderate.

8.5.31 The policy recommendation is to *'conserve and reinforce'* with the following guidance identified:

- *'Conserve the woodland cover.*
- *Reinforce the low intensity and diversity of land use within small farming areas.*
- *Reinforce wooded areas to arable areas.*
- *Conserve the narrow winding characteristics of highways with wide verges, shallow ditches and well-maintained hedges.'*

Upper Stour Valley LCA

8.5.32 The study describes the Upper Stour Valley LCA as a *'flat, open valley landscape enclosed by outliers of Greensand.'* The land use is mainly mixed farming, with crest top woodlands and a high percentage of arable cropping, along with historic mills on the river.

8.5.33 The condition of the landscape is assessed as *'very poor',* and its sensitivity as *'low'* due to increased fragmentation as a result of loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, thus weakening the character of the place and losing its distinctiveness.

8.5.34 The policy recommendation is to *'create'*, accompanied by the following guidance:

- *'Create a new landscape structure building upon the existing ditches and hedgerows to create linked corridors for wildlife.*

- *Ensure that the important roadside hedgerows are gapped up and reinforced with standard trees to give structure to the landscape.*
- *Create new hedgerows and copses to screen intrusive elements such as the urban edge and transport corridors.*
- *Create new waterside and ditch vegetation using native wetland species and pollarded willows to reinforce the riparian character.'*

Local Character Assessment

8.5.35 The Ashford Landscape Character Assessment[24] assesses the wider rural area of Ashford. As shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.6: Landscape Character Plan - County and Local (Doc Ref. 5.3)**, the Site lies within three of the LCAs identified within the study, however the western part of the Site lies outside the scope of this study.

- LCA 10: East Stour Valley;
- LCA 14: Bonnington Wooded Farmlands; and
- LCA 25: Aldington Ridgeline.

East Stour Valley LCA

8.5.36 The study identifies the key characteristic features of East Stour Valley LCA as:

- *'Well vegetated East Stour River cuts through valley with land rising to Bested Hill in the north;*
- *Mosaic like pastoral field pattern;*
- *Mixed and broadleaf woodland blocks;*
- *Mature isolated oak trees within pasture;*
- *Narrow lanes follow the undulations of the landscape, often hedgerow and ditch lined.'*

8.5.37 The analysis concludes that the condition of the landscape is '*moderate'* while the sensitivity is '*high'*.

8.5.38 The policy recommendation is to *'conserve and restore'*, through the following guidelines:

- *'Conserve and appropriately manage ancient woodland*
- *Conserve native hedgerows and restore/gap up where deteriorating*
- *Seek to restore field pattern where hedgerows have been lost to agricultural intensification*
- *Conserve the well vegetated course of the Great Stour River*
- *Encourage marginal grasses and wetland flora along field and roadside drainage ditches*
- *Conserve isolated oak trees and plant new standards to ensure continuity of this distinctive feature*
- *Encourage sympathetic fencing types where necessary'.*

Bonnington Wooded Farmlands LCA

8.5.39 The study identifies the key characteristic features of Bonnington Wooded Farmlands LCA as:

- *'Undulating landform which forms part of the immediate foreground to the Kent Downs AONB which rises to the east;*
- *Mixed farmland with small fields;*
- *Deciduous and evergreen enclosing woodland blocks;*
- *Native hedgerows with large standard oak trees;*
- *Isolated oaks trees set within pasture;*
- *Strong sense of enclosure;*
- *Equestrian grazing and land use;*
- *Narrow and hedge lined roads'.*

8.5.40 The condition of the landscape is judged '*good*', and its sensitivity is '*moderate*'.

8.5.41 The policy recommendation is to '*conserve and reinforce*':

- *'Conserve and reinforce the rural landscape which provides the immediate setting of the Kent Downs AONB*
- *Conserve and appropriately manage woodland and hedgerows*
- *Conserve and reinforce the abundance of oak standards within hedgerows and pasture and provide continuation of this key characteristic by planting new standards*
- *Encourage sensitive integration of equestrian facilities, for example through positioning exercise arenas and stabling sympathetically within the landform and using appropriate planting blocks to help screen and integrate new structures'.*

Aldington Ridgeline LCA

8.5.42 The study recognises key characteristic features of Aldington Ridgeline LCA are identified as:

- *'High ridgeline topography*
- *North Downs frame the views to the north*
- *Mixed farmland with enclosed pasture immediately surrounding settled areas*
- *Loss of historic field pattern where land is intensively farmed*
- *Small woodland copses, tree belts and native hedgerows*
- *Very distinctive ragstone church and remains of Archbishops Palace isolated from main settlement of Aldington'.*

8.5.43 The condition of the landscape is noted as being '*moderate*', and its sensitivity is '*high*'.

8.5.44 The policy recommendation is to '*conserve and create'*:

- *'Conserve the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB;*
- *Resist further expansion of Aldington;*
- *Avoid large scale development along the visually prominent ridgeline;*
- *Encourage the restoration of historic boundary hedgerows;*
- *Encourage plantations of small woodland copses and shaws to improve the ecological network;*
- *Conserve and restore historic buildings and walling using appropriate materials;*
- *Conserve the pastoral land use and resist further agricultural intensification;*
- *Encourage the removal of alien conifer and replace with appropriate native planting'.*

8.5.45 The Ashford Local Development Framework Landscape Character Study[25] assesses the landscape on the edge of the Ashford urban area and identifies similar LCAs to the county level assessment and the Ashford Landscape Character Assessment noted above. As shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.6: Landscape Character Plan - County and Local (Doc Ref. 5.3)**, the Site is within three LCAs identified in this study:

- Aldington Ridge (AR2, AR3 and AR4);
- Upper Stour Valley (USV4); and
- Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands (OR5).

Aldington Ridge

8.5.46 The characteristic features and published guidance of the LCAs with reference to the component District Landscape Types are as follows:

AR2 Colliers Hill

8.5.47 Characteristic features:

- *'Predominantly arable farmland rising two distinctive knoll at Collier's Hill and extending to East Stour river at Swanton Mill;*
- *Large fields intensively farmed and evidence of hedgerow clearance;*
- *Mature hedgerow to Roman Road and tree cover limited to farmsteads and traditional pollarded willows at Swanton Mill;*
- *Broad oak on the Roman road is a mix of bungalows and traditional farm cottages.'*

8.5.48 Policy recommendations:

- *'Conserve open views from Colliers Hill;*
- *Restore hedgerows and pastoral grasslands'.*

AR3 Clap Hill

8.5.49 Characteristic features:

- *'Large open arable fields along the Aldington Ridge;*
- *Traversed by bank road - a Roman road with high hedges and localised tree cover;*
- *Extensive views north to Mersham, west and north-west to Ashford and the North Downs and south to Dungeness'.*

8.5.50 Policy recommendations:

- *'Conserve views from the ridgeline.*
- *Plant new hedges on the slopes'*

AR4 Aldington Frith

8.5.51 Characteristic features:

- *'A close grained landscape of gentle folds and sunken lanes contained with high hedges and trees which absorbs much of the development of Aldington Frith;*
- *Frith Road/ Priory Road crossroads has a collection of traditional Kentish style buildings, with newer properties to the lanes and scattered farmsteads;*
- *Mixed farmland with paddocks and hedges, and more open arable farmland'.*

8.5.52 Policy recommendations:

- *'Restore grassland'*

Upper Stour Valley – USV4 East Stour Valley

8.5.53 Characteristic features:

- *'Intensively farmed land of predominantly large arable fields within the East Stour River Valley floodplain;*
- *The area is bisected by tributaries, often delineated by willow pollards and carr such as around Swanton Mill, Evergate Mill and Flood Street;*
- *The area has undergone extensive clearance of hedges and ditches;*
- *Around The Forstal and Flood Street the scale is more intimate with smaller fields of improved grassland and remanent orchards;*
- *The CTRL bounds the northern edge and is for the most part in cutting'.*

8.5.54 Policy recommendations:

- *'Critical hinterland for flood defences and green infrastructure'.*

Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands – ORS 5 Aldington Frith Wooded Farmlands

8.5.55 Characteristic features:

- *'Rolling wooded mixed farmland to the south of Aldington Frith with grazing/ arable and variable field boundaries;*
- *Tilelodge Wood is extensive former hornbeam coppice with oak standards set within a steep valley with streams;*
- *Saxon Shore way footpath cuts through Tilelodge Wood;*
- *Some rhododendron invasion'.*

The Character of the Kent Downs NL

8.5.56 The Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update 2020[26] is a component part of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan. It provides an assessment of the characteristics, condition and qualities of the landscape which underpin the NL designation, on the basis of a series of LCAs.

8.5.57 Due to the distance between the Site and the NL, there is no potential for direct effects on the NL as a result of the Project. However, where there is potential intervisibility between the NL and the Project, there are likely to be indirect effects on character due to changes that are perceived within the setting of the NL.

8.5.58 With reference to the ZTV and the visibility of the Site as identified through field surveys, the LCAs that have intervisibility with the Project are LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale, LCA 4C Stour Valley and LCA 5B Lympne Greensand Escarpment. These LCAs are shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.5: Landscape Character Plan - National Character and Kent Downs National Landscape (Doc Ref. 5.3)**. The key characteristics, sensitivities and guidance for these LCAs which relate to setting are summarised below.

LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale

8.5.59 The relevant summary characteristics for LCA 2C are as follows:

- *'Landform comprises a strongly-crenellated and steep south-facing scarp, with an undulating landscape to the south...*
- *Woodland blocks and shaws throughout the vale, and a distinctive band of trees and shrubs at the base of the scarp slope;*
- *LCA is adjacent to urban areas, but within the LCA, settlement limited to scattered farms, and small historic springline villages with a dispersed pattern;*
- *Network of historic lanes and tracks, with east-west motorway and rail corridor superimposed;*
- *Contrasting textures between the smooth outlines of the scarp and the wooded farmland at the base;*
- *Outstanding views from the scarp and hill tops across the patchwork of fields and woodlands in the vale to the south;*
- *Popular for recreation and walking, with the North Downs Way, Saxon Shore Way and Elham Valley Way crossing the LCA;*
- *Sense of tranquillity away from large settlements and transport*

infrastructure'.

8.5.60 The assessment also states '*A characteristic of this Landscape Character Area is its long, panoramic views. These can be experienced from the scarp, looking over the patchwork patterns of the surrounding vale area'* (paragraph 7.16).

8.5.61 Under the heading 'Landscape Condition, Sensitivities and Forces for Change' the LCA is identified as being '*particularly sensitive because of the strong intervisibility between the scarp and the vale below. Views from the scarp mean that development and land management changes taking place below are visible from above. Similarly, any changes affecting the face or skyline of the scarp are visible from below'* (paragraph 7.3.2).

8.5.62 However, paragraph 7.3.3 notes that '*parts of this LCA are much more affected by nearby development than others. In the eastern part, around Folkestone, views from the scarp are affected by developments around Folkestone and associated with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. The transport corridor which contains the railway line and motorway has a localised influence on views from the central part of the LCA. Away from the development areas and transport corridors, the LCA has a setting of fields and farms which feels rural but is not static'.*

8.5.63 With respect to 'Landscape sensitivities and potential landscape impacts' the assessment states that the *'landscape is sensitive to the impacts of development and infrastructure within and beyond the AONB boundary. Current proposals within the setting of the AONB and which will be visible from it include Otterpool Park new town. A transport corridor containing High Speed Rail Line, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, M20 and A20 crosses the LCA east-west. As well as visual impacts on the landscape, the corridor also reduces tranquillity and increases light pollution and air pollution.'*

8.5.64 The Landscape Management Recommendations identified that are of relevance to the setting of the LCA include:

- *'Protect skylines, particularly where the scarp forms the backdrop to views'.*
- *'Protect sensitive views from the scarp, including those towards the distinctive rounded chalk hills'.*
- *'Within the setting of the LCA, work with Local Planning Authorities and designers to achieve the best possible landscape and ecological integration and minimal impact on views, with compensation achieved for lost qualities'.*
- *'Work with Local Planning Authorities and transport agencies to reduce and minimise light pollution and other tranquillity impacts from transport and infrastructure'.*

LCA 4C Stour Valley

8.5.65 The relevant summary characteristics for LCA 4C are as follows:

- *'Gentle slope on the west side, and steep, convoluted slope on the east…'.*
- *'River Great Stour runs from south to north, meandering within floodplain …'.*

- *'Blocks of plantation and estate woodland, particularly along the tops of the valley sides…'.*
- *'Valley sides form distinctive backdrops, particularly the steep and convoluted chalk slopes above Wye…'.*
- *'Strong sense of tranquillity away from main roads and settlements…'.*
- *'Long and dramatic views across valley from valley sides. Wye Crown is a distinctive landmark'.*

8.5.66 Views from the scarp above the village of Wye are noted in paragraph 11.2.3: *'From here, as from the rest of the scarp, there are splendid views across and along the valley, as well as out of the AONB to the south'.*

8.5.67 The scarp in the south-east of the LCA are noted in paragraph 11.2.6 as wide, dramatic views and being a popular spot for visitors and walkers. Also noted is that *'Within the lower part of the area, views are often constrained or framed by woodland, but there are long views from the scarp across the area and over the surrounding countryside'.*

8.5.68 With respect to 'Landscape sensitivities and potential landscape impacts' the assessment notes that *'Development in the setting of the AONB (particularly around Ashford) impacts on views from the scarps, and also affects light pollution, traffic levels, wildlife, recreation and water quality. These issues are likely to increase if further development occurs'.*

8.5.69 The Landscape Management Recommendations identified that are of relevance to the setting of the LCA include:

- *'Protect undeveloped skylines along the top of the valley sides, avoiding development which breaks the horizon in views across or from the valley.'*
- *'Protect the highly valued landscape heritage and quality, peace, serenity and relative tranquillity'.*
- *'Within the setting of the LCA, work with Local Planning Authorities and designers to achieve the best possible landscape and ecological integration and minimal impacts on views, with compensation achieved for lost qualities'.*

LCA 5B Lympne Greensand Escarpment

8.5.70 The relevant summary characteristics for LCA 5B are as follows:

- *'Landform dominated by a sloping south facing escarpment (a former cliff line), with undulating land above, and the flat, artificially drained land of Romney Marsh below'.*
- *'Woodland and scrub on the escarpment, with denser woodlands to the west'.*
- *'Spectacular views across Romney Marsh from the top of the escarpment. The escarpment forms the backdrop to views inland from Romney Marsh.'*

8.5.71 In the western extent of LCA 5B, 'spectacular views' can be experienced to the south across Romney Marsh and the English Channel from the escarpment, including Aldington Knoll.

8.5.72 With respect to *'Landscape sensitivities and potential landscape impacts'* intervisibility between the scarp and the marsh is noted.

8.5.73 With respect to new development and infrastructure, the following is noted:

'The potential new town site at Otterpool, and an industrial land use allocation are adjacent to this LCA, beyond the AONB boundary to the north. They are likely to impact on views from the AONB and its setting, as well as potentially affecting tranquillity, light pollution and recreational pressure. Developments on Romney Marsh (including for example large agricultural buildings, and solar farms) would impact on views from the scarp. In such a flat and distinctive landscape, it is important to note that poor attempts to screen new buildings (such as planting Leylandii hedges) can exacerbate the problem. Skylines on the summit of the scarp are particularly vulnerable, as changes here can have a dramatic impact on surrounding views.'

8.5.74 Land management guidelines for LCA 5B include:

- *'Protect historic sites and monuments, and their settings, taking account of the intervisibility between scarp and marsh…'*
- *'Protect skylines and the scarp slope (particularly the top of the scarp) from development…'*
- *'Protect long views across Romney Marsh from the scarp…'*
- *'Within the setting of the LCA, work with Local Planning Authorities and designers to achieve the best possible landscape and ecological integration and minimal impact on views, with compensation achieved for lost qualities'.*

Site Landscape Appraisal

8.5.75 A landscape appraisal has been undertaken to ascertain the existing character of the Site. This is achieved through recording and analysing the existing landscape features and characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced, and the value or importance of the landscape and visual resources in the vicinity of the Site. The elements of the landscape that contribute to landscape character include the built and natural form, the pattern of features, detailing, scale, planting, land use and human perception. In this regard, landscape character is derived as a result of the perception of, and action and interaction of, natural and human factors.

8.5.76 The character and physical features of the Site are described below with reference to Site Appraisal Photographs ('SAPs') A to O, included in **ES Volume 4: Appendix 8.4: Site Appraisal Photographs (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. The locations of photographic viewpoints are illustrated on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.7: Site Appraisal Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**.

8.5.77 In order to aid the analysis of character, the Site is described on the basis of a series of parcels which have been informed by minor but perceptible variations in the character of the Site. The parcels in turn are based on the established field numbering system for the Project (Fields 1-29) which are also illustrated on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.7: Site Appraisal Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**.

8.5.78 The Site encompasses approximately 192 ha of mainly agricultural land, with its boundary predominantly defined by existing hedgerows, with the north-eastern part of the Site abutting the outer boundary of the embankment of the HS1 railway line to the north and Backhouse Wood to the south. The East Stour River flows in an east to west direction through the Northern Area (Fields 26-29) and is adjacent to Fields 25 and 19 within the Central Area of the Site.

8.5.79 Starting from the western part of the Site, SAPs A, B and C illustrate the character of Fields 1, 2, 3 and 7 (Parcel A), which comprise a largely flat, simple agricultural landscape of fields bounded by hedgerows and canopy trees. Laws Lane extends through the area, with Bank Road forming Parcel A's north-eastern boundary, both defined by established hedgerows.

8.5.80 A large agricultural shed is located on the western edge of Parcel A (adjacent to Field 1), with three individual canopy trees further south. Existing built form is present to the south of Parcel A on Laws Lane, including Stonelees, a Grade II* listed building.

8.5.81 The eastern edge of this area is defined by hedgerows and a small block of woodland with a drainage ditch, with a noticeable rise in ground levels beyond.

8.5.82 Further east, Fields 4-6 and 8-13 (Parcel B) encompass the gently elevated northern extent of the Aldington Ridge. Parcel B is illustrated by SAPs D, E, F and G. Ground levels in Parcel B are generally above 50m AOD, and rise to a high point of over 70m AOD adjacent to Bank Farm where there are expansive views to the north-west as shown by SAP E.

8.5.83 A small section of the southern edge of this Parcel B abuts the back gardens of two houses on Frith Road, including Grade II listed buildings at Quested Cottage, as shown in SAP D. The remainder of residential properties along Frith Road are separated from the Site by intervening agricultural fields.

8.5.84 Bank Road rises up the spine of the ridgeline from north-west to south-east and is typically well-contained by robust hedgerows, except where gaps allow access to the fields. The fields to the north and south are large in scale, particularly to the north, where views across the landscape are open and expansive as demonstrated by SAP F, with the North Downs ridgeline seen as a distant backdrop.

8.5.85 Further north, in Fields 14-19 and 23-24 (Parcel C), a more enclosed character is experienced due to the containment of the East Stour River, albeit the large scale of fields and relatively sparse vegetation pattern maintains a strong sense of openness as seen in SAP G, which shows the transition from the gently sloping valley slopes to the flat, valley floor landscape of the East Stour River.

8.5.86 SAPs H and I illustrate the character of this valley floor landscape. The immediate landscape is open, with fields often defined by denuded ditches and watercourses. However, the valley landscape is set against a backdrop of landform and vegetation associated with tree belts along Calleywell Lane and the HS1 railway line cutting. Travelling eastwards, the openness of the landscape decreases due to smaller field patterns and a stronger vegetation pattern, as well as a perceptible narrowing of the valley floor landscape.

8.5.87 A narrow band of land links Field 24 to Fields 25 to 29 (Parcel D), illustrated by SAPs J, K, L and M. Baseline photography demonstrates how increased tree cover and landform associated with Backhouse Wood and the HS1 railway line embankment create a stronger sense of enclosure to the north-easternmost part of the Site. There is also a strong river valley character to this part of the Site, with a flood defence and flood storage area, known as the Aldington Flood Storage Area, creating seasonal flooding in the landscape upriver as shown in SAPs K and L. A narrow extension of Parcel D extends eastwards along the East Stour River and the HS1 railway line embankment, where a tree belt runs along PRoW AE656, as shown in SAP N. The Site also incorporates the Cable Route Corridor within which the underground Grid Connection Cable is proposed. The Cable Route Corridor comprises a narrow band of land that extends eastwards along the southern side of the HS1 railway. A small part of the railway line and the Sellindge Substation to the north are also included within the Site.

8.5.88 Fields 20-22 comprise Parcel E which is located further to the south-east and is physically separate to the remainder of the Site, albeit linked by a narrow extension of the Order limits which incorporates part of Goldwell Lane. Parcel E encompasses two existing arable fields bounded by hedgerows and tree belts. Apart from its southern boundary, which is partially denuded, the parcel is relatively well contained by the landform and vegetation. High voltage overhead power lines cross this part of the Site, as demonstrated by SAP O.

8.5.89 In summary, the Site is an extensive area of mixed farmland delineated with hedgerows and occasional trees or blocks of woodland with its boundary predominantly defined by existing hedgerows. Country roads divide the Site into parcels, with associated small clusters of settlement abutting. The landform varies from flat and low lying to gently undulating and rolling, with the key topographical features being the East Stour River valley and the Aldington Ridge, with the Site encompassing parts of both. Fields are often large scale, with increasing denudement of field boundaries associated with the river valley. There are existing influences of infrastructure resulting from the nearby HS1 railway line and overhead power lines to the east, and there are expansive views from higher ground towards the North Downs.

Visual Appraisal

8.5.90 ES Volume 3, Figure 8.8: Visual Appraisal Plan – Site (Doc Ref. 5.3) presents the location of representative viewpoints as well as the combined ZTV for the Project within the study area. ES Volume 3, Figure 8.9: Visual Appraisal Plan – Site Level (Doc Ref. 5.3) provides a zoomed-in version to provide further detail of the exact location of the close-range viewpoints but due to the zoomed-in nature excludes

some of the more distant viewpoints in the study area. The ZTV models the effect of large blocks of vegetation, built form and landform on the potential visibility of the Project. It should be noted that the ZTV does not take into account the screening effect of smaller areas of vegetation including hedgerows and is therefore only an indication of potential visibility. The findings of the ZTV were confirmed by field surveys in order to robustly and accurately assess the likely significant visual effects of the Project in accordance with GLVIA3.

8.5.91 Summer and winter baseline photographs are presented in ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.5: Representative Views – Winter (Doc Ref. 5.4) and ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.6: Representative Views – Summer (Doc Ref. 5.4). A description of the baseline visibility of the Site is set out below.

Close-Medium Range Views

8.5.92 The Site is visible in close range open views from a number of PRoW, particularly those that cross the open fields of the Site itself (including: PRoW AE385, AE370, AE377, AE378, AE428, AE447, AE431, AE436, AE457, AE656, AE657, AE454, AE474, AE475 and AE455). SAP viewpoints taken from PRoW within the Site comprise SAP I, SAP J, SAP M, SAP N, SAP O.

8.5.93 Where the aforementioned PRoW are located on the gently rising landscape of the north flank of the Aldington Ridge there are open long distance views towards the North Downs ridge. Most notable of these are PRoW AE370 and AE377 in Fields 10,12 and 13 and PRoW AE454 and AE474 in Field 20. Views northwards from the Aldington Ridge are Viewpoints 11 and 12 to the west of Aldington, Viewpoint 14 to the north, and Viewpoint 28 to the east. Heritage viewpoint 1 (**ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.2: Heritage Statement (Doc Ref. 5.4)**) provides an additional viewpoint from PRoW AE474 within the Site to the south of Parcel E.

8.5.94 Viewpoint 1 demonstrates the view from PRoW AE385 to the north of the Site's western extent, with open fields punctuated by occasional canopy trees. There are likely to be oblique views across this part of the Site from first floor windows in houses at the junction of Broad Oak and Bank Road, with the Site at a distance of approximately 180m.

8.5.95 Views from Laws Lane are typically screened or filtered by roadside hedgerows, with occasional gaps providing glimpsed views across the western extent of Fields 1 and 2, as demonstrated by Viewpoint 2. Built form in Ashford is partially visible at a range of over 5km, with the North Downs forming a distant backdrop. There are likely to be similar views from houses to the south of the Site on Laws Lane, albeit these are also likely to be partially screened and filtered by intervening vegetation.

8.5.96 Views of the Site are available from the southern section of PRoW AE396 as demonstrated by Viewpoint 3, where an existing field access allows a glimpsed view across Field 7. The rising landform of Field 6 can be seen in the background beyond an intervening hedgerow. The remainder of PRoW AE396 is predominantly lined with robust hedgerows such that the Site is strongly filtered-to-screened, while views from further south are also precluded by intervening vegetation and built form.

8.5.97 Viewpoint 4 demonstrates the view from PRoW AE442 as it climbs the landform towards Bank Farm. The Site is strongly filtered by overgrown hedgerow / tree belt, albeit there are more open views over the southern extent of Fields 7 and 8 from further north on the footpath.

8.5.98 Travelling further south from the Order limits, the combination of the generally flat landscape and screening effect of intervening hedgerows is such that visibility of western parts of the Site diminishes rapidly, as demonstrated by Viewpoint 5.

8.5.99 Further south, Viewpoint 6 shows the view from Frith Road, with the Site screened by intervening hedgerows and trees. The Sevington Inland Border Facility can be seen in the distance above the vegetation. No views of the Site were identified from Frith Road or anywhere in the landscape further south as a result of the landform and strong vegetation pattern on the Aldington Ridge.

8.5.100 Viewpoint 7 shows the view from Bank Road looking south across Field 5 through a field access gate. This is one of a limited number of glimpsed views that occur along the road. However, views for users of the route are predominantly screened by robust tall hedgerows, as demonstrated by Viewpoint 8 at the junction of Bank Road and Coopers Lane.

8.5.101 Similar views are available from Coopers Lane to the west of the Site, as demonstrated by Viewpoint 9, where the majority of visual receptors experience strong filtering of views owing to roadside hedgerows with the Site approximately 240m distant.

8.5.102 The height and robust nature of hedgerows flanking Roman Road are demonstrated by Viewpoint 10 on the eastern edge of Aldington. The Site is strongly contained even in winter conditions, with occasional glimpses to the north across the Site at existing field points. One such glimpse view is demonstrated by Viewpoint 11, where the gap in the hedgerow allows open and expansive views across the gently undulating landscape of the East Stour River valley, with the North Downs a distant backdrop.

8.5.103 Viewpoint 12 shows a similar glimpsed view from PRoW AE377 on the edge of the Order limits where a gap in the hedgerow allows. Expansive open views are experienced across the gently falling landscape of Fields 10-14, with Ashford and the North Downs ridge seen in the distance. Further north, there are likely to be similar views from houses at Handen Farm, particularly from first floor windows that face the Site, with some screening provided by existing boundary vegetation.

8.5.104 Views from Calleywell Lane to the north of Aldington are illustrated by Viewpoint 13, which shows that the Site is well-contained beyond intervening hedgerows and the nature of the landform. Further north however, the Site is visible in filtered close-range views from the road, at an oblique angle to the direction of travel. Some houses at the bottom of the hill are likely to have filtered views of Fields 17 and 18.

8.5.105 Further east, Viewpoint 14 demonstrates the view experienced from the northern edge of Aldington and recent residential development at Quarry House. The

photograph shows the view from PRoW AE449 and demonstrates that although much of the Site is screened from view by landform and vegetation, there are strongly filtered partial views of Fields 17-19 and 26-27 at a range between 250m and 1km in the lower-lying valley landscape.

8.5.106 Viewpoints 15 and 16 show views to the north-east and south-west respectively from Station Road where it crosses the Site to the south of the East Stour River. The open nature of the valley bottom allows open views across Fields 18, 19 and 23. To the south-west, the rising landscape of the Aldington Ridge can also be seen forming the backdrop to the view.

8.5.107 Further east on Goldwell Lane, Viewpoint 17 demonstrates that the open low-lying fields around the East Stour River are well-contained by intervening hedgerows, albeit Field 10 on the Aldington Ridge is again partially visible on the elevated skyline to the south-west, and the road itself is included within the Order limits.

8.5.108 Viewpoint 18 is representative of views from PRoW in the river valley landscape to the north-west of the Site, with the low-lying nature of the landscape resulting in some filtering by intervening trees and considerable foreshortening of Fields 16 and 19, reducing their perceived scale. The rising landscape of the Aldington Ridge, comprising Fields 10-14, is seen as a backdrop, with the core of Aldington concealed by woodland, and Bank Farm notable on the horizon.

8.5.109 Views to the south from further north on Station Road are demonstrated by Viewpoint 19, which shows that the Site is partially visible, with parts of Fields 15-19 and 24-25 seen over intervening hedgerows, and in glimpsed open views where gaps allow. Fields 10-14 can be seen on the distant horizon on the Aldington Ridge. Further north of the HS1 railway line however, the combination of landform and vegetation screens the Site, including from the M20 and A20.

8.5.110 Close range views of Fields 26-29 from PRoW within the Site are shown by Viewpoints 20 and 21, where the stronger sense of enclosure resulting from the HS1 railway line embankment and Backhouse Wood is notable and the remainder of the Site is not visible.

8.5.111 Viewpoint 22 shows the view to the west from Harringe Lane towards the Site. While the narrow easternmost part of the Order limits extends along the HS1 railway line corridor to within approximately 850m of this location, the main extent of the Site cannot be seen due to intervening landform and vegetation. The existing solar farm and the Sellindge Substation are notable features in the view, as well as high voltage power lines punctuating the skyline.

8.5.112 Views from the south-east of Field 29 are also screened by containing landform and the vegetation at Backhouse Wood, as demonstrated by Viewpoint 23.

8.5.113 From Goldwell Lane, views towards Fields 20-22 are typically screened or heavily filtered by roadside hedgerows and trees. Where gaps are present at the southern extent of the road, the ground plane of the Site is primarily contained within the bowl of lower lying landform that indents the ridge in this location. High voltage overhead

lines are a prominent feature with the North Downs visible in the background. Distant views of St Martin's Church, Aldington are also possible as shown in Viewpoint 24.

8.5.114 Viewpoint 25 demonstrates the view further north from PRoW AE475, where Fields 20 and 21 are partially screened and filtered by boundary vegetation, while Viewpoint 26 demonstrates that dense hedgerow vegetation on the northern edge of the Order limits provides strong visual containment. Notwithstanding the above, there are open views of Fields 20-22 from PRoW AE474 where the denuded southern edge of the Order limits provides little containment. Heritage Viewpoint 1 **(ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.2: Heritage Statement (Doc Ref. 5.4)**) provides a close range view of Field 20 from this location.

Medium-Long Distance Views

8.5.115 Views from Roman Road on the northern boundary of the south section of the Kent Downs NL are demonstrated by Viewpoint 27. The south-westernmost extent of Field 20 is visible, filtered by intervening trees and hedgerows, with the remainder of Fields 20-22, and the Site as a whole, screened by a combination of vegetation and landform. Similar views are available from a limited area within the NL to the south-east of Viewpoint 27, as demonstrated by the ZTV.

8.5.116 In views from the vicinity of St Martin's Church, Aldington, including the Aldington Church Area Conservation Area, Fields 20-22 are screened from view by the nature of landform as demonstrated by Viewpoint 28. The more elevated open landscape allows expansive views towards Ashford, with the Site contained within the valley of the East Stour River and the skyline punctuated by high voltage electrical transmission pylons.

8.5.117 To the west of the Site, the ZTV indicates areas of visibility extending to the limit of the study area to the south of Ashford. However, due to the broadly level landform and successive hedgerows and tree belts, no views of the Site were identified other than from atop Colliers Hill, where the elevated position on PRoW AE401 allows views to the east across the Site as demonstrated by Viewpoint 29. The low-lying landscape of Fields 1-4 can be seen, as well as the rising western aspect of the Aldington Ridge in Field 5. Bank Farm can be seen on the crest of the rise, with houses in Aldington, and St Martins Church also visible in the background. The North Downs are also evident in the distance to the north-east.

8.5.118 Viewpoint 30 shows the view to the south from PRoW AE428 near the HS1 railway line, with the Site at a distance of 465m. Fields 10-19 are seen partially filtered within the valley of the East Stour River and rising up the Aldington Ridge with Bank Road/Roman Road defining the skyline. Bank Farm is also notable on the horizon. The open, denuded nature of the valley landscape of this part of the Site is also evident.

8.5.119 Views from the eastern extent of The Forstal are represented by Viewpoint 31, showing that the northern flank of the Aldington Ridge is visible, partially filtered in the distance with Bank Farm on the skyline. The low-lying landscape of Fields 14-19 is strongly filtered by intervening vegetation or screened by landform and the Site makes up a relatively small extent of the overall view. Further north, the Site

becomes increasingly screened or filtered by intervening vegetation and the nature of landform, as demonstrated by Viewpoint 32. No views were identified within the settlements of Mersham and the Forstal.

8.5.120 Similarly, views from the undulating landscape to the north of the M20 / HS1 railway line corridor are limited due to vegetation and landform. However, Viewpoint 33 shows an isolated glimpsed view towards the Site, where Fields 10 and 12 are partially visible on the uppermost limit of the Aldington Ridge at a range of 3.5 - 4km. The Site forms a very small component in an intervening, strongly wooded and undulating landscape, with overhead power lines and pylons a prominent feature.

8.5.121 Views from the ridgeline of the North Downs within the Kent Downs NL are demonstrated by Viewpoints 34, 35, 36, 37 and 38 (the latter summer view only), located approximately 5.4km north-east, 4.6km north, 6.9km north, 8.1km north, and 7.2km east of the Site, respectively. The Site is visible in Viewpoint 34, with the uppermost extent of Fields 10 and 12 seen beyond Sellindge Substation. However, it is not readily perceived in the context of distant panoramic views across a large-scale landscape that includes areas of settlement and electricity transmission infrastructure.

8.5.122 In Viewpoint 35, the Aldington Ridge forms a distant backdrop to the view, however the Site is virtually imperceptible due to a combination of distance, intervening vegetation and landform.

8.5.123 In longer distance views from the Kent Downs NL in the north of the study area, the Site is not perceptible, as demonstrated by Viewpoints 36 and 37. In Viewpoint 38, the uppermost extent of Field 10 is visible, however at a distance of approximately 10.5km it is virtually imperceptible in the context of wide panoramas across a diverse landscape that includes substantial areas of settlement and infrastructure.

8.5.124 In all views from the North Downs ridgeline, the vale landscape to the north of the M20/HS1 transport corridor forms a dominant feature within the composition of views, and is the key visual component in the setting of the Kent Downs NL.

Visual Appraisal Summary

8.5.125 In summary, strong hedgerow field boundaries are such that close range views from outside the Site are only typically glimpsed from the local network of country roads. However, the open nature of the East Stour River valley allows more open views, including from the network of PRoWs in the immediate landscape to the north, north-east and north-west of the Site. Views from the extensive network of PRoWs that run across the Site are always partial, and importantly, the Site is not visible in its entirety from any one location. There are close range views of the Site from a limited number of residential properties that lie adjacent to the Site. However, there are no views from the cores of local settlements, including the two conservation areas in Aldington and from within Mersham and the Forstal.

8.5.126 Longer distance visibility of the Site diminishes rapidly to the south, east and west of the Site due to a combination of landform and vegetation, although Collier's Hill provides an elevated perspective over the western part of the Site. To the north,

there is visibility of the Site from the northern valley sides of the East Stour River, where parts of the Site on the more elevated, north flank of the Aldington Ridge form a backdrop to the landscape. However, beyond the HS1 railway line, the Site rapidly disappears from view due to intervening landform and vegetation, with only more distant glimpses possible from the undulating landscape to the north of the M20 motorway.

8.5.127 Further afield, there are dramatic, expansive views from the elevated ridgeline of the Kent Downs NL, where the Site is visible at a range of 5-10km. In these views, the Site is generally barely perceptible in the context of the wider landscape and only the north facing, uppermost extent of the Site on the Aldington Ridge is visible, with the remainder of the Site screened by landform and vegetation.

Night-time Baseline

8.5.128 A night-time appraisal was undertaken in order to demonstrate the existing night-time baseline of the Site and surrounding landscape in relation to light sources and perception of the night sky, and to provide an appraisal of the potential impacts of the Project on the character of the night sky and the landscape.

8.5.129 A night-time survey was carried out in June 2022, with photographs captured from a selection of the representative viewpoints identified on **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.8: Visual Appraisal Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**. The photographs have been selected to present a balanced and robust appraisal of the potential impact of the Project on the perception of the night-time landscape and night sky.

8.5.130 The Night-time Photographs ((‘NPs’) - NP14, NP16, NP22, NP27 and NP34) are presented in ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.7: Night-time Photographs (Doc Ref. 5.4). The locations of NPs are shown in ES Volume 3, Figure 8.10: Night-Time Appraisal Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3) which also identifies existing artificial light sources by way of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and Land Use Consultants’ NightBlight mapping[27].

8.5.131 **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.10: Night-Time Appraisal Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)** demonstrates that the south-western and north-eastern extents of the study area are predominantly dark landscapes identified as being in the second lowest band (0.25-0.5 nanowatt/cm^2/sr), although these areas are punctuated by substantial sources of light, such as Lymbridge Green to the north and Aldington to the south. Limited pockets within these areas are recorded as being in the darkest band (>0.25 nanowatt/cm^2/sr)[l], the closest of which is in the vicinity of Bilsington Priory, approximately 1.58km south-west of the Site.

8.5.132 **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.10: Night-Time Appraisal Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)** also illustrates that the study area is strongly influenced by a belt of artificial light sources that broadly follows the M20 motorway/HS1 railway line corridor, and encapsulates the settlements of Ashford, Port Lympne and Hythe. Artificial light sources in the highest radiance band (>32 nanowatt/cm2/sr) are associated with the centre of Ashford, approximately 4.3km north-west of the Site, while artificial light in the

[l] Nanowatt per square centimetre per steradian. A measure of radiance or brightness.

second highest band (16-32 nanowatt/cm/sr) extends across the majority of Ashford, including the Ashford International Truck Stop and the Sevington Inland Border Facility, located approximately 2.2km and 2km north-west of the Site respectively. Notable but less intense light levels are recorded from the south-eastern extent of the study area, including the M20 motorway Junction 11 services, which are recorded as also emitting light in the second highest band.

8.5.133 Between the aforementioned areas of higher artificial light radiance, the M20 motorway / HS1 railway line corridor comprises a strip of land with a minimum width of 2.3km that has artificial light radiance between 0.5 and 4 nanowatts/cm/sr.

8.5.134 The Site is located partially within, but mostly abutting this corridor, with the majority of the Site within the second lowest band, but with higher radiance levels evident on the Site's northern, western and southern fringes. No part of the Site is recorded as being in the darkest band and as such, the Site is not considered to be intrinsically dark.

8.5.135 On a regional scale, the Site is within an area where the existing influence of artificial light is relatively high. CPRE data[28] confirms that the Borough of Ashford is the 68th darkest out of 326 in England, while the South-East Region itself has an average brightness of 2.75 nanowatt/cm2/sr. As such, the appreciation of the night sky and perception of celestial phenomena is likely to be reduced compared to intrinsically dark areas (e.g. Isles of Scilly – average brightness 0.14 nanowatt/cm2/sr).

8.5.136 The night-time photography in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.7: Night-time Photographs (Doc Ref. 5.4)** accords with the above, with the Site itself generally devoid of any artificial lighting, but with notable point sources outside the Site area causing glare in the wider landscape, and the influence of infrastructure/settlements also notable.

8.5.137 The NPs have been selected to provide a range of views towards the Site, to illustrate the night-time baseline, and to represent the views of night-time receptors.

8.5.138 NP14 shows the view at dusk from the northern edge of Aldington. Whilst no sky glow can be perceived due to the natural light conditions, flood lights associated with industrial units to the north of the M20 motorway are notable sources of glare, while an array of light sources in Ashford, including aviation warning lights, can be seen.

8.5.139 NP16 shows the relatively dark nature of the Site itself, albeit sky glow is apparent to the south, likely to result from artificial light in Aldington.

8.5.140 From the eastern extent of the Site, NP22 demonstrates substantial sky glow emanating from the Sellindge substation and illuminating pylons, with glare from floodlights associated with Partridge Farm itself (not the existing solar farm) also notable in the landscape.

8.5.141 NP27, a view at dusk from further south, shows a view less influenced by Ashford and the M20 motorway / HS1 railway line corridor. However, any skyglow is not perceptible due to the fading natural light conditions.

8.5.142 NP34, taken from the North Downs Way, demonstrates a landscape strongly influenced by sky glow emanating from Ashford, from further afield to the east and west and from the Sellindge substation. Notwithstanding the immediate influence of the latter, the Site is within an area that has perceptible less sky glow compared to its wider surroundings. However, despite the clear conditions, very few celestial objects are visible and as such, the appreciation of the night sky is considered to be limited.

Future Baseline

8.5.143 The Site is currently in agricultural use and is located within a rural area that is unlikely to be subject to any significant foreseeable development pressure, although there is a higher likelihood of large-scale development on the outskirts of Ashford.

8.5.144 Notwithstanding the above, there are a number of small-scale residential development proposals in the immediate locality of the Site, including 1, Land north of Church View, Aldington and Land south-west of Goldwell Court, Goldwell Lane (both included in cumulative schemes (ID No. 7 and ID No. 8, respectively)). These schemes, if implemented, have the potential to increase the number of visual receptors who will have views of the Project, both in terms of transient receptors (e.g. users of PRoW or local roads) and fixed residential receptors.

8.5.145 However, these potential new visual receptors would experience similar effects to those already accounted for in the assessment (i.e. residents on Goldwell Lane and users of PRoW) and no new visual receptor groups need to be introduced to account for the future baseline scenario. As a result, the future baseline scenario will not alter the effects identified for the baseline scenario.

8.5.146 Were the Project not to proceed, it is likely that the Site would remain largely in agricultural use, which has the potential to result in further fragmentation and loss of hedgerows due to the continuation of intensive farming practices.

8.5.147 However, should renewable energy development in general not proceed, growing threats to the landscape resulting from current and predicted climate change have been identified by UK Government and are well understood. These include more extreme weather events such as droughts or heavy rainfall, greater impact from pests and diseases, native species decline, impact from non-native species and a reduction in the quantity of best and most versatile agricultural land across the UK.

8.5.148 Whilst the Project will not by itself prevent or reverse the changes to the landscape resulting from climate change, it is a large-scale renewable energy project which will meaningfully contribute to the decarbonization of the electricity supply in the UK.

8.5.149 On this basis, the trend for the future is one of growing pressure on the landscape from climate change, and resultant decline of valuable landscape features and

habitats. Notwithstanding the above, any resulting changes are unlikely to be perceptible within the timeframe of the future baseline, in 2026.

Summary of Receptors and Sensitivity

8.5.150 This section identifies the landscape and visual receptors that have been defined through the baseline analysis and refined as a result of the consultation process. For each receptor, the value, susceptibility and resultant sensitivity is set out. Full commentary is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)** and **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

Published Landscape Character Receptors

8.5.151 On the basis of a comprehensive review of published landscape character assessments and analysis of the landscape character of the Site and its context, a number of LCAs have been identified against which effects resulting from the Project have been assessed.

8.5.152 The boundaries of LCAs from the County level and multiple Borough level landscape character assessments are broadly similar in extents and are similarly named, however only the County level assessment provides full coverage of the Site. On this basis, and in the interests of avoiding unnecessary duplication or double counting of effects, it is considered appropriate to assess the likely significant effects of the Project on one set of combined landscape character receptors by reference to the County level assessment. However, the characteristics and guidance set out in the three landscape character assessments have been considered as part of the assessment and design development of the Project.

8.5.153 Due to the limited duration and intensity of construction / decommissioning activities and considering the reversible nature of the Project and its limited height and generally restricted visual envelope (as set out in the visual appraisal), it is considered unlikely that significant indirect effects on LCAs beyond the Site's boundaries will occur. As such, the general approach has been to scope out LCAs beyond the Site's boundaries. However, noting the typically high sensitivity of the Kent Downs NL to changes in its setting, the NL LCAs with intervisibility with the Project have been included as receptors for landscape effects.

8.5.154 **Table 8.6** sets out the value and susceptibility to the Project of published landscape receptors, as well as their resulting sensitivity. For full details refer to **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

Table 8.6: Summary of Published Landscape Character Receptor Sensitivity

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
LCA Aldington Ridge	Medium	High	High

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
LCA Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands	Medium	Low	Medium
LCA Upper Stour Valley	Low	Medium	Medium
NL LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale (Outside of the Site)	Very High	Medium	High
NL LCA 4C Stour Valley (Outside of the Site)	Very High	Low	High
NL LCA 5B Lympne Greensand Escarpment (Outside of the Site)	Very High	Very Low	Medium

Site Appraisal Landscape Receptors

8.5.155 On the basis of the Site appraisal, a series of landscape features/character areas have been identified as receptors for the assessment of likely significant effects arising from the Project. **Table 8.7** sets out a summary of the value, susceptibility and resultant sensitivity to the Project. For full details refer to **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

Table 8.7: Summary of Site Appraisal Receptor Sensitivity

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
Open Fields	Low	Medium	Medium
Hedgerows	Medium	Low	Medium
Canopy Trees	Medium	Medium	Medium
Woodland	Low – Medium	Low	Low - Medium
The Character of the Site	Medium	Medium	Medium

Valued Landscape Assessment

8.5.156 A valued landscape assessment has been carried out on the basis of the value indicating factors set out in Table 1 of TGN 02/2021, set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. On the basis of the assessment, the Site is not considered to be a 'Valued Landscape' as defined by paragraph 180a of the NPPF[29] and paragraph 5.10.12 of NPS EN-1.

Visual Receptors

8.5.157 On the basis of the visual appraisal, a series of visual receptors have been selected against which the likely significant effects of the Project on visual amenity have been assessed. Any visual receptors considered not to have the potential to experience significant visual effects have been scoped out of the assessment.

8.5.158 **Table 8.8** sets out a summary of the value, susceptibility and resultant sensitivity of visual receptors. Full details are set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

Table 8.8: Summary of Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
Users of PRoW within /adjacent proposed PV Arrays	Very Low	High	Medium
Users of PRoW within/adjacent to the Site with open panoramic views towards the Kent Downs NL	Low-Medium	High	Medium-High
Users of PRoW within Fields 26-29	Very Low	High	Medium
People travelling along Laws Lane	Very Low	High	Medium
Residents on Laws Lane	Medium	High	High

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
Users of PRoW AE396	Very Low	High	Medium
Residents on Frith Road	Medium	High	High
Users of PRoW AE442	Very Low	High	Medium
Users of PRoW AE385 – Outside of the Site	Very Low	High	Medium
People travelling along Frith Road	Very Low	Medium	Low
People travelling along Bank Road	Low	Medium	Medium
Residents on Bank Road (Becketts Green, Bow Cottage & Spring Cottage)	Very Low	High	Medium
Residents At Bank Farm / Broadbanks	Very Low	High	Medium
People traveling along Bank Road / Coopers Lane	Low	Medium	Medium
Residents at the junction of Bank Road / Coopers Lane	Very Low	High	Medium

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
People traveling along Coopers Lane	Very Low	Medium	Low
Users of PRoW AE377 – outside of the Site	Low	High	Medium
Residents at Handen Farm / Handen Farm Cottage	Very Low	High	Medium
People travelling along Calleywell Lane	Very Low	Medium	Low
Residents on Calleywell Lane	Very Low	High	Medium
Users of PRoW AE449	Low-Medium	High	Medium - High
Residents in the north of Aldington	Low-Medium	High	Medium - High
People travelling along Goldwell Lane/Station Road, within the Site	Very Low	Medium	Low
Residents on Station Road (Evegate Mill House)	Medium	High	High
Users of PRoW AE370 – Outside of the Site	Very Low	High	Medium

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
People travelling along Station Road, north of the Site	Very Low	Medium	Low
Anglers at the Aldington Flood Storage Area	Very Low	Medium	Low
People travelling along Harringe Lane	Very Low	Medium	Low
Users of PRoW AE457 – Outside of the Site	Very Low	High	Medium
People travelling along Goldwell Lane	Low	Medium	Medium
Residents on Goldwell Lane	Very Low	High	Medium
Users of PRoW AE475 - Outside of the Site	Very Low	High	Medium
Users of PRoW AE455 – Outside of the Site	Very Low	High	Medium
People travelling along Roman Road, and users of PRoW AE473	Medium	High	High
Residents on Roman Road	Very Low	High	Medium

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
Users of PRoW AE474	Medium	High	High
Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill	Medium	High	High
Users of PRoW AE428 – outside of the Site	Very Low	High	Medium
Users of PRoW AE370 – near The Forstal	Very Low	High	Medium
Residents in The Forstal	Very Low	High	Medium
People travelling along Bower Road	Very Low	Medium	Low
Residents in Mersham	Very Low	High	Medium
Users of PRoW HE307	Very Low	High	Medium
People travelling along the North Downs Way in the Kent Downs NL	Very High	Very High	Very High

Night-time Receptors

8.5.159 The value, susceptibility and sensitivity of the night-time receptors is set out below.

NP 14: Users of PRoW AE449

8.5.160 View is from a location that is within a Proposed Dark Sky Zone and therefore of **Medium** value. The receptor is users of a PRoW where their visual setting is important and the landscape is likely an important focus of their attention, and therefore of **High** susceptibility. The receptor is therefore judged to have **High** night-time sensitivity.

NP16: People travelling along Station Road, within the Site

8.5.161 View is from a location that is within a Proposed Dark Sky Zone and therefore of **Medium** value. The receptor is people traveling along a country lane where their visual setting is incidental to their enjoyment and attention is partly focused on the landscape and therefore of **Low** susceptibility. As a result, the night-time receptor sensitivity is judged to be **Medium**.

NP 22 People travelling along Harringe Lane

8.5.162 View is from a location that is not designated and with no notable cultural associations and therefore of **Very Low** value. Receptors are people travelling along a country lane where their visual setting is incidental to their enjoyment and attention is partly focused on the landscape, and therefore of **Low** susceptibility. On this basis, the night-time sensitivity of the receptor is judged to be **Low**.

NP27: People travelling along Roman Road, and users of PRoW AE473

8.5.163 View is from a location that is within an NL and a Proposed Dark Sky Zone and therefore of **Very High** value. Receptors include people using a PRoW who have **High** susceptibility. The resulting night-time sensitivity of the receptor is **Very High**.

NP34: People travelling along the North Downs Way in the Kent Downs NL

8.5.164 View from a location that is within the NL with notable cultural associations attached to the view and therefore of **Very High** value. People are attracted to these locations and are engaged in recreation where their visual setting is of utmost importance and the landscape is the main focus of their attention, resulting in **Very High** susceptibility. On this basis, the receptor's night-time sensitivity is judged to be **Very High**.

8.6 Embedded Design Mitigation

8.6.1 This section of the Chapter sets out the attributes that are included within the design of the Project and are key elements of embedded mitigation that have been taken into account in the assessment of landscape and visual effects. Embedded Mitigation includes primary mitigation, defined in the GLVIA3 as measures that are *'developed through the iterative design process, which have become integrated or embedded into the project design'.*

8.6.2 The Project has been designed, as far as possible, to avoid adverse effects on the landscape and views through option identification, appraisal, selection and refinement, as described in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2)**. A full description of the Project is set out in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 3: Project Description (Doc Ref. 5.2)**. However, the principles and characteristics set out below are highly pertinent to the assessment of the likely significant landscape and visual effects arising from the Project.

8.6.3 Management plans, including the **Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8), Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan ('Outline DEMP') (Doc Ref. 7.12** and **Outline LEMP (Doc Ref. 7.10)** provide further mitigation measures.

Project Design Principles

8.6.4 The heights of the Project components are limited by the **Design Principles (Doc. Ref. 7.5)**. PV panel heights will have a maximum height of 3.5m Above Ground Level ('AGL'), Inverter Stations, BESS Units and Intermediate Substations will have a maximum height of 4m AGL, security fencing will have a maximum height of 2.5m AGL and CCTV poles will have a maximum height of 3m AGL. A number of water tanks with a maximum diameter of 12m and a maximum height of 3.5m will be located within the Site and will not exceed the maximum height of the PV panels and therefore are likely to be perceived within the overall visual envelope of the PV panels.

8.6.5 A network of internal access tracks surfaced with a grass paving system will be provided across the Site for maintenance and emergency access. These tracks will be seeded with an appropriate grass seeding mix and from a landscape point of view will be maintained in the same way as surrounding areas. Therefore, the tracks are anticipated to readily blend within the Site.

8.6.6 The PV panels are static, with no movement or activity once the Project is completed. The proposed security fencing (up to 2.5m in height) within which the Project will be set will be akin to deer fences used to protect planting from browsing animals on forestry schemes and is therefore considered not uncharacteristic or overly intrusive in a rural environment.

8.6.7 The PV panels themselves will be arranged in rows and mounted on ground mounted metal frame. Individual rows will be set a minimum of 2m apart but row separation on average across the Project is expected to be 3.2m with at least 3.2m provided between the edge of the PV panels and the security fencing. As a result the Project will retain a relatively open, visually permeable appearance, particularly when viewed from the east or west. Furthermore, the panels do not have substantial massing or volume of built development.

8.6.8 A series of Inverter Stations, the majority of which will also include BESS units, will be provided, each contained within an earth bund with acoustic barriers to a maximum height of 4m. These are assumed to be timber although could be formed in part by the bund as shown in **Illustrative Project Drawings - Not for Approval (Doc Ref. 2.6).** The maximum height of equipment in these areas is 4m. The Inverter stations have been positioned away from PRoW (to the extent possible) and residential receptors, or in positions that will be screened by vegetation. It is noted that the Inverter Stations maximum height at 4m is only marginally higher than that of the proposed PV panels at 3.5m and therefore in views of the Project the Inverter Stations will be perceived within the overall visual envelope of the PV panels.

8.6.9 Intermediate Substations are proposed in Fields 3, 15, 20 and 26 with a maximum height of 4m AGL.

8.6.10 The Project Substation (and ancillary infrastructure) is located in Field 26 with a maximum overall height of 7.5m AGL. The Project Substation will be sited on a newly constructed platform at 56m AOD, except for a small area which will be at 55m AOD and which will accommodate storage containers and up to Intermediate

Substations included as part of Works No. 2. The Project Substation will be enclosed by palisade fencing which will not exceed 3m in height. The location of the Project Substation has been guided by consideration of landscape and visual sensitivities, with the compound positioned within a relatively low lying part of the Site in close proximity to the HS1 railway embankment and residential receptors. In order to provide a level platform on which to build the sub-station, retaining walls are proposed. The design of the retaining walls has been informed by landscape input, with a reinforced earth retaining wall system employed to the visually exposed flank of the Project Substation compound. This retaining wall will be seeded with native grass seed to soften its appearance.

8.6.11 The Project also includes works within the existing Sellindge Substation in order to provide a grid connection for the Project. This part of the Project comprises a relatively small extension to the existing major electrical infrastructure in this location and the changes are unlikely to be noticeable in the context of the existing footprint of the Sellindge Substation and substantial existing infrastructure located there. On this basis, this part of the Project is not considered to result in significant effects.

8.6.12 The modelled operational 40-year lifespan of the Project and the way in which it is constructed is such that it generally has a temporary character, and the existing baseline is readily reinstated on removal, save for the limited field margin areas of new planting that are anticipated to be retained.

8.6.13 The Project includes the diversion of a number of PRoW that cross the Site. A number of routes will be diverted along field boundaries, and thus will be slightly longer and less direct. New routes are also planned to increase the connectivity of the PRoW network as a whole and the Applicant has engaged with KCC to identify areas where broader improvements to the network can be made as part of the Project. On this basis, whilst these changes are likely to alter the way in which the Site is experienced, they are not considered to result in any adverse effects on landscape character or visual amenity in their own right.

Glint and Glare

8.6.14 **ES Volume 4, Appendix 16.2: Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study (Doc Ref. 5.4)** includes an assessment of the anticipated impacts of solar reflections on receptors which include users of roads, occupants of dwellings and users of PRoW. The Glint and Glare Study concludes that subject to mitigation being implemented no significant residual effects are anticipated.

8.6.15 It is acknowledged that solar reflections when experienced are likely to make the Project more noticeable to visual receptors at certain times of the day, in certain weather conditions from certain locations on the PRoW network. However, it is also noted that section 8.2 of the Glint and Glare Study states:

'The reflection intensity is similar for solar panels and still water (and significantly less than reflections from glass and steel) which is frequently a feature of the outdoor environment surrounding public rights of way. Therefore, the reflections are likely to be comparable to those from common outdoor sources whilst navigating the natural and built environment on a regular basis'

8.6.16 These aspects have been considered in the assessment of visual effects relating to the operational phase of the Project.

Construction Phase

8.6.17 The principal elements and activities that will have an effect upon landscape character, landscape features and visual amenity during the construction phase include:

- The loss of openness and alterations to the existing appearance of the Site caused by the construction activities;
- The introduction of new temporary elements, including construction compounds, internal haulage road, equipment stockpiles, welfare facilities, plant and machinery and mobile construction site lighting;
- Groundworks, topsoil striping and excavation for substations, Inverter Stations, Intermediate Substations, water tanks and cables;
- The noise and movement of plant and machinery within the Site and the surrounding landscape, including crane activities and construction/delivery traffic on local roads;
- Removal of a small number of trees as identified in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 9.3: Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Doc Ref. 5.4)** and the permanent removal of limited sections of hedgerow as identified in the **Vegetation Removal Plan (Doc Ref. 2.8)**;
- The building and emergence of new built forms, including PV panels, Inverter Stations, Intermediate Substations, water tanks, Project Substation development platform, buildings and ancillary structures, fencing, internal access tracks and water tanks.

8.6.18 In the consideration of effects relating to construction, construction activities are assumed to take place continuously over the 12-month period, albeit at differing levels of intensity across the Site.

8.6.19 The following mitigation measures are embedded into the design of the Project for the construction stage and are set out in the **Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8)**.

- Existing vegetation on and around the Site will be protected from damage in accordance with BS 5837: 201220;
- Construction activities (including start-up and shut-down works) will be limited to 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday and 07:00 to 14:00 on Saturday; no construction activities will occur on Sundays, Bank Holidays or Public Holidays, thereby limiting the extent to which construction activities will affect receptors on a daily or weekly basis;
- All unloading/loading of construction materials and equipment would be provided within the Order limits, limiting adverse effects on character and views due to activities outside of the Site;
- Effects as a result of noise, dirt and dust levels will be mitigated, with local roads cleaned regularly where dirt is spread by construction traffic, limiting

adverse effects on local character due to the perception of construction activities; and

- Litter within and around the Site will be removed and the Site will be kept free from litter throughout construction activities.

Operational Phase

8.6.20 The design of the Project and its integrated landscape strategy has evolved as part of an iterative, mitigation by design process in accordance with GLVIA3 and the NPSs.

8.6.21 Details relating to the evolution of the design with respect to landscape and visual matters are set out in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2)** and in the **Design Approach Document (Doc Ref. 7.4)**.

8.6.22 The overall objectives of the landscape strategy for the Project are as follows:

1. To minimise the physical impact of the Project on the Site's landscape features including vegetation, landform, and wet features;
2. To maximise opportunities to enhance the landscape of the Site by reinforcing and reinstating pattern, by extensive new planting that is characteristic to the receiving environment, by introduction of new valuable habitats, and by improved management and custodianship of the landscape resource;
3. To visually and physically integrate the Project into the landscape as much as possible using a variety of natural features;
4. To retain and where possible enhance the existing use of the Site for quiet recreation; and
5. To minimise the visual impact of the Project on visual receptors, including views from residential properties, and the Kent Downs NL.

8.6.23 In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, the following key principles of mitigation are embedded within the design of the Project:

- The retention of the existing field boundary structure of hedgerows and trees, with limited hedgerow removal to provide access where required;
- Reinforcement of all existing hedgerows and other field boundary vegetation;
- The provision of new native hedgerows to visually break up the extent of PV panels, particularly in views from the north, and to provide new habitat connectivity. The location of new native hedgerows has been informed by historic maps of the area, such that characteristic features will be reinstated in accordance with published landscape character guidance;
- Retention of existing grassland pastures where present;
- Seeding of arable fields with appropriate native grassland mixes to enhance biodiversity and support conservation grazing wherever possible;
- Provision of grazing areas (where possible) within proposed perimeter

fences, providing the opportunity to retain the Site in agricultural use;

- 3.2m minimum buffers from existing hedgerows outside the Site to proposed security fencing to protect existing landscape features;
- Diversion of PRoW to follow existing/proposed field boundaries;
- All PRoWs will be a minimum of 2m wide and will sit within a corridor of 10m minimum width, with the exception of the section of PRoW 'New 3' adjacent to Work No. 3 (Project Substation) which will sit within a 5m corridor;
- Minimum 10m landscape buffers to the East Stour River and identified waterbodies with appropriate seeding mixes within these corridors to enhance biodiversity;
- Buffer to nearby residential properties;
- Proposed hedgerows to reinforce existing boundary planting around the Grade II* listed Stonelees;
- Proposed woodland buffers on Calleywell Lane; and
- Planting of individual native wetland feathered trees along the East Stour River and standards within existing and proposed hedgerows.

8.6.24 The **Illustrative Landscape Drawings - Not for Approval (Doc Ref. 2.7)** and **Table 8.9** provide an indication of the extent of different landscape components that could be delivered as part of the Project.

Table 8.9: Schedule of Landscape Components (Illustrative)

Landscape Component	Illustrative Scheme Indicative Quantities
Proposed native woodland planting	2.82 ha with 9,502 plants
Proposed carr woodland planting	0.3 ha with 1,484 plants
Proposed Woodland Edge / Scrub Mix	0.77 ha with 3,861 plants
Proposed orchard planting	0.65 ha with 264 plants
Proposed grazing pasture within fence seeded with a grazing grassland seed mix	100.89 ha
Existing grassland within fence retained	3.67 ha
Proposed tussocky grassland field margins	11.62 ha*

Landscape Component	Illustrative Scheme Indicative Quantities
Proposed wet meadow grassland	10.1 ha*
Proposed winter bird crop strips	2.81 ha
Proposed meadow grassland (EM1)	34.28 ha*
Proposed habitat pond	0.17 ha
Proposed habitat scrapes	0.25 ha
Proposed individual wetland trees	374 no.
Proposed hedgerow trees	128 no.
Existing hedgerows reinforced	11.25 km with 11,515 plants
Proposed hedgerow planting	5.48 km with 21,550 plants
Proposed skylark plots	0.06 ha
Proposed hydroseeded retaining wall	0.03 ha
Proposed grass paving - seeded	2.74 ha

*Proposed tussocky grassland, wet meadow grassland and meadow grassland are all forms of wildflower grassland and have a combined area of 56ha.

Decommissioning Phase

8.6.25 The decommissioning phase is expected to be broadly similar in nature and duration to the construction phase, with the removal of the built elements of the Project from the landscape, as set out in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 3: Project Description (Doc Ref. 5.2)**. Following cessation of energy generation at the Site from the Project, all physical infrastructure constructed as part of the Project (with the exception of elements of Work No. 4 that are within the Sellindge Substation, any repairs,

upgrades or replacements of/to the existing bridge / agricultural drain crossings, PRoW footbridges and highway improvements) will be removed and recycled or disposed of in accordance with good practice, market conditions and available technologies for recycling/reprocessing at that time.

8.6.26 Post-decommissioning the Site will be returned to the control of the landowners. For the purposes of the EIA, it has been assumed that the landowners will return those areas of the Site that are currently in arable use under the baseline condition (i.e., assessment year 2023) to arable use. Where existing field margins, i.e., uncropped arable land situated between arable fields under the baseline condition, have been re-enforced and upgraded to provide biodiversity and landscape enhancements as part of the Project it is assumed that these established habitats such as hedgerows and woodland will be retained and used as field margins. In addition, the Project will re-establish historic field boundaries with hedgerow planting, particularly on the north facing slopes of the Aldington Ridge line and create new field margins as a result. It is assumed that these new field margins will also be retained.

8.6.27 Limited removal of vegetation for decommissioning activities will be required, with these sections replanted once decommissioning is completed. The decommissioning phase will be subject to mitigation measures to protect existing trees and other vegetation, similar to the construction phase, and secured through the **Outline DEMP (Doc Ref. 7.12).**

8.7 Assessment of Effects

Construction Phase

Landscape Effects

8.7.1 Full explanatory commentary relating to the magnitude and significance of effects for the receptors is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4).** A summary of the landscape effects identified is set out below:

- Open Fields – Minor Adverse effect;
- Hedgerows – Negligible Adverse effect;
- Canopy Trees – Negligible Adverse effect;
- Woodland – No Impact;
- The Character of The Site – Minor Adverse effect;
- LCA Aldington Ridge – Minor Adverse effect;
- LCA Old Romney Shoreline Wooded Farmlands – Negligible Adverse effect;
- LCA Upper Stour Valley – Negligible Adverse effect;
- NL LCA 2C Postling Scarp And Vale – Minor Adverse effect;
- NL LCA 4C Stour Valley – Negligible Neutral effect; and
- NL LCA 5B Lympne Greensand Escarpment – Negligible Adverse effect.

8.7.2 None of the identified landscape receptors are considered likely to experience significant effects as a result of the construction phase of the Project.

8.7.3 This is primarily due to:

- the scale of LCAs in relation to the Site;
- the lack of widespread substantial and permanent changes to the physical fabric of the Site; and
- the very short duration of the construction period in landscape terms (assumed as 12 months).

Visual Effects

8.7.4 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of visual effects during construction is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4).** A summary of the significant effects identified is set out below.

8.7.5 Out of a total of 44 of the identified visual receptors, the following three are likely to experience significant visual effects as a result of the construction phase of the Project:

- Users of PRoW within/adjacent to the proposed PV Array (PRoW AE385, AE396, AE370, AE377, AE378, AE428, AE447, AE431, AE436, AE657, AE454, AE475 and AE455), as a result of close range open views of the construction phase, leading to a **moderate adverse (significant)** effect that is temporary and short term;
- Users of PRoW within/adjacent to the Site with open panoramic views towards the Kent Downs NL (PRoW AE370 /AE377 and AE474) as a result of close-to-medium range open views of the construction phase, leading to a **moderate adverse (significant)** effect that is temporary and short term; and
- Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill as a result of open elevated medium distance views of construction activities, resulting in a **moderate adverse (significant)** effect that is temporary and short term.

8.7.6 Four further receptors have been identified as having moderate – minor effects as a result of the construction phase:

- Residents on Laws Lane;
- Users of PRoW AE449;
- Residents on the northern edge of Aldington; and
- Residents on Station Road (Evegate Mill House).

8.7.7 The above receptors will experience filtered medium to long range views of the Project during the construction phase, resulting in moderate-minor adverse effects which are temporary and short term. These effects are not considered to be significant.

8.7.8 The remainder of visual receptors are likely to be subject to effects that are either minor adverse, negligible adverse or nil and therefore not significant. In general, these effects are as a result of the combination of the short duration of construction activities, partial views of the Site, where construction activities will only be perceived for a very short duration, intervening vegetation and landform and distance to the Site.

Night-time Effects

8.7.9 The following section sets out an assessment of the likely significant effects of the construction phase of the Project on the night-time landscape and appreciation of the night sky.

8.7.10 The potential sources of night-time lighting are considered to comprise the following:

- Headlights of construction traffic on local roads when such activities take place outside of daylight hours;
- Headlights of construction plant on local roads and the Site when such activities take place outside of daylight hours; and
- Temporary fixed lighting associated with construction compounds including welfare facilities and small scale task lighting for construction activities that may occur outside of daylight hours.

8.7.11 Construction activities (including start-up and shut-down works) will be limited to 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday, and 07:00 to 14:00 on Saturday. As such there are only likely to be night-time effects during the evening or early morning from September to April. In summer months it is unlikely there will be any appreciable night-time impact, and in the worst-case scenario (i.e. mid to late December) the impacts are only likely to be appreciable for a maximum of 4 to 5 hours per day.

8.7.12 On this basis, and considering that the construction phase is expected to occur over a 12-month period, the duration and continuity of night-time effects are expected to be limited. Any lighting associated directly with construction activities is also expected to occur transiently across the Site as work progresses. As such, most receptors are likely to experience effects for a very short period.

8.7.13 Furthermore, and as demonstrated by **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.10: Night-Time Appraisal Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)** and NPs 14, 16, 22, 27 and 34, the Project is located in an area that is strongly influenced by existing lighting, much of which is permanent, and in a region where the appreciation of the night sky is limited. As such and considering the modest and time-limited nature of lighting potentially associated with the construction phase, the scale of the impact is generally considered to be limited. Construction lighting will be controlled through measures included in the **Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8)**.

8.7.14 The anticipated night-time effects relating to the construction phase are set below.

NP 14: Users of PRoW AE449 – High Sensitivity

8.7.15 Distant strongly filtered glimpses of lighting in Parcels C and D seen intermittently and occupying a very small extent of the view. The effects will be compact in scale and very short in duration, resulting in a Very Small effect magnitude and a **minor adverse effect (not significant)**.

NP16: People travelling along Goldwell Lane, within the Site – Medium Sensitivity

8.7.16 Views of construction lighting in Parcel C will be intermittent and are likely to occupy a discrete extent of the view. The effects are modest in scale and very short in duration, resulting in a Very Small effect magnitude and a **negligible adverse effect (not significant)**.

NP 22 People travelling along Harringe Lane – Low Sensitivity

8.7.17 No views of the Project due to intervening landform and vegetation, therefore **no effect**.

NP27: People travelling along Roman Road, and users of PRoW AE473 – Very High Sensitivity

8.7.18 Lighting from activities associated with a very small part of the Site visible in distant glimpses. The effects are compact in scale and very short in duration, resulting in a Very Small effect magnitude and a **minor adverse effect (not significant)**.

NP34: People travelling along the North Downs Way in the Kent Downs NL– Very High Sensitivity

8.7.19 Distant partial views of lighting on the Site that are likely to be barely perceptible in the context of existing lighting evident in NP34. The effects are compact in scale and very short in duration, resulting in a Very Small effect magnitude and a **minor adverse effect (not significant)**.

Operational Phase

8.7.20 **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.10: LVIA Visualisations (Doc Ref. 5.4)** presents a series of AVRs prepared to support this Chapter. The AVRs present the anticipated appearance of the Project at Year 1 and Year 15 of the operational phase for following viewpoints, comprising:

- VP 6: View north from Frith Road;
- VP 12: View north from PRoW AE377;

  (Note: due to access restrictions, the AVR for VP 12 is positioned within the Site rather than on PRoW AE377. It is approximately 5m closer to the Project from the position of VP 12 on the PRoW, from which the baseline viewpoint photography was taken. As such the visualisation shows a closer and more open view of the Project than would actually be experienced. This is considered in the assessment of effects;
- VP 14: View north from PRoW AE449, on the northern edge of Aldington;
- VP 16: View south-west from Goldwell Lane;
- VP 20: View north-west from PRoW AE457 in Field 29;
- VP 22: View west from Harringe Lane;

- VP 27: View north-west from Roman Road, within the Kent Downs NL;
- VP 28: View west from PRoW AE474;
- VP 29: View East from PRoW AE401, on Collier's Hill;
- VP 30: View South from PRoW AE428, to the north of the Site;
- VP 31: View south-east from PRoW AE370, near The Forstal;
- VP 33: View south-west from PRoW HE307, near Stone Hill;
- VP 34: View south-west from Hampton Hill / North Downs Way / PRoW HE356, within the Kent Downs NL;
- VP 35: View south-west from the North Downs Way, Brabourne Down;
- VP 36: View south-east from the North Downs Way, Wye; and
- VP 38: View west from Tolsford Hill / PRoW HE282.

8.7.21 The AVRs are based on photography and survey data obtained in April and August 2023. As noted in **Paragraph 8.4.2** of this Chapter under 'Limitations and Assumptions', whilst the winter photography was carried out in April due to weather conditions this was prior to the trees being in leaf and therefore provides a worst-case scenario in terms of visibility of the Site.

Landscape Effects

8.7.22 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of effects for the receptors is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4).** A summary of the effects identified, including key narrative for any significant effects is set out below.

8.7.23 At year 1, out of the 11 identified landscape receptors, three are likely to experience significant effects as a result of the Project. They are as follows:

- Open Fields - will experience a major-moderate adverse (significant) effect, as a result of the direct physical changes to the fields of the Site, including changes in landform;
- The Character of the Site - will be subject to a major-moderate adverse (significant) effect as a result of the direct physical changes to the Site's landscape features as well as the change in character as a result of the introduction of built form; and
- Aldington Ridge LCA - will experience a moderate adverse (significant) effect as a result of the direct physical changes to the Site's landscape features and changes in character as a result of the introduction of built form.

8.7.24 Two receptors will experience minor-moderate adverse effects (not significant) as a result of the operational phase at year 1. These are as follows:

- LCA: Upper Stour Valley - as a result of direct physical changes introduced by the Project and changes in character as a result of the introduction of built form; and

- LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale - as a result of the high sensitivity of the receptor in combination with alterations to the setting of the LCA and impacts on views towards the Kent Downs NL.

8.7.25 Three landscape receptors will be subject to minor or negligible - minor beneficial effects (not significant) at year 1. These are:

- Hedgerows;
- Canopy Trees; and
- Woodland.

8.7.26 The **Illustrative Landscape Drawings - Not for Approval (Doc Ref. 2.7)** and **Table 8.9** provide an indication of the landscape mitigation strategy which will include new feathered/standard trees along the East Stour River and within existing and proposed hedgerows. Hedgerows as a receptor are also anticipated to benefit from over 5km of new hedgerows and over 11km of reinforced hedgerows.

8.7.27 The remaining landscape receptors will be subject to effects that are negligible and not significant.

Visual Effects

8.7.28 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of effects for the receptors is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4).** A summary of the significant effects identified is set out below.

8.7.29 Out of a total of 44 of the identified visual receptors, 19 are likely to experience significant visual effects as a result of the Project at year 1:

- Users of PRoW within / adjacent to the Project as a result of close-range views of the Project leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Users of PRoW within/adjacent to the Site with open panoramic views towards the Kent Downs NL, as a result of close to medium range views of the Project, combined with the higher sensitivity of the receptor, resulting in a major-moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Residents on Laws Lane, as a result of filtered short to medium range views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Users of PRoW AE396, as a result of glimpsed close-range views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Residents on Frith Road, as a result of open medium distance filtered views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- People travelling along Bank Road, as a result of glimpsed close range views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Residents on Bank Road (Becketts Green, Bow Cottage and Spring Cottage), as a result of filtered views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Users of PRoW AE377 – outside of the Site, as a result of glimpsed close-

range views of the Project, resulting in a moderate adverse (significant) effect;

- Residents at Handen Farm / Handen Farm Cottage, resulting from short-medium range views of the Project resulting in a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Residents on Calleywell Lane, resulting from short to medium range filtered views of the Project, resulting in a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Users of PRoW AE449, resulting from medium distance filtered views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Residents on the northern edge of Aldington, resulting from medium distance filtered views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- People travelling along Goldwell Lane/Station Road, within the Site, as a result of close range views of the Project, resulting in a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Residents on Station Road (Evegate Mill House), resulting from medium distance filtered views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Users of PRoW AE370 – Outside of the Site, resulting from medium range filtered/open views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant);
- Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill, as a result of elevated medium to long range views of the Project, resulting in a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Users of PRoW AE428 – outside of the Site, as a result of open, elevated medium to long distance views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Users of PRoW AE370 – near The Forstal, resulting from filtered medium to long range views of the Project, resulting in a moderate adverse (significant) effect; and
- Residents in Mersham, as a result of long-distance partial views of the Project, resulting in a moderate adverse (significant) effect.

8.7.30 Three receptors have been identified as likely to experience minor-moderate effects which are not significant as a result of the operational phase of the Project at Year 1. These are:

- Users of PRoW within Fields 26-29;
- Users of PRoW AE475 - Outside of the Site; and
- Residents in The Forstal.

8.7.31 The remainder of the visual receptors are likely to be subject to effects that are either minor, minor-negligible, negligible or nil (no effect), which are not significant.

Night-time Effects

8.7.32 In accordance with **ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.2: EIA Scoping Opinion (Doc Ref. 5.4)** night-time effects relating to the operational phase of the Project have been scoped out of this assessment due to the nature of the Project, which (with the exception of the Sellindge Substation Extension) will not require permanent lighting during operation with lighting is limited to emergency and overnight maintenance lighting at Inverter Stations, Intermediate Substations, and the Project Substation. Lighting in relation to the Sellindge Substation Extension is assumed to be consistent with the lighting approach for the existing Sellindge Substation infrastructure and no significant effects are considered likely.

Decommissioning Phase

8.7.33 The decommissioning phase is anticipated to be largely similar to the construction phase in terms of the nature of change and duration. However, the proposed landscape strategy is not proposed to be removed as part of the decommissioning of the Project. Therefore, proposed planting will be in place, following 40 years of establishment and ongoing maintenance as set out in the **Outline LEMP (Doc Ref. 7.10)**. As a result, the perceived changes in character as well as the impact on visual receptors will typically be reduced. The presence of established planting has been considered for all receptors in the assessment of effects.

Landscape Effects

8.7.34 No significant effects have been identified as a result of the decommissioning phase. All receptors will be subject to effects that are minor (adverse and beneficial), or negligible (adverse, beneficial and neutral), which are not significant.

Visual Effects

8.7.35 One significant visual effect has been identified as likely to arise from the decommissioning phase. Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill are likely to experience a moderate adverse effect which is temporary, short-term and significant as a result of open elevated views of decommissioning activities in the western part of the Site.

8.7.36 Users of PRoW within/adjacent proposed the PV Arrays are likely to experience moderate-minor adverse effects as a result of the decommissioning phase, which are temporary, short term and not significant.

8.7.37 The remainder of visual receptors will experience effects that are minor, minor-negligible, negligible, or nil (no effect) which are not significant as a result of the decommissioning phase of the Project.

Night-time Effects

8.7.38 No significant effects were identified on night-time receptors as a result of the construction phase. Night-time effects relating to the decommissioning phase are expected to be similar or less than the construction phase (due to similar operations combined with increased screening after 40 years of planting establishment).. On

this basis, the assessment has not been repeated and no significant effects are expected from the decommissioning phase.

8.8 Additional Mitigation, Monitoring and Enhancement Measures

Construction Phase

8.8.1 No further additional mitigation measures are proposed for the construction phase, beyond those included in the **Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8)**.

8.8.2 The **Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8)** and **Outline LEMP (Doc Ref. 7.10)** include measures to protect retained vegetation.

Operational Phase

8.8.3 The measures required to secure the successful establishment and ongoing monitoring of the proposed landscape planting are secured by the **Outline LEMP (Doc Ref. 7.10)** which is Embedded Mitigation. However, as set out in **Paragraph 8.4.3**, for the purposes of the assessment of residual effects on landscape and visual receptors, the maturation and establishment of proposed planting is secondary mitigation.

8.8.4 Monitoring arrangements to ensure the successful establishment of the planting proposals are set out in the **Outline LEMP (Doc Ref. 7.10)**, which include measures for the 40 year lifetime of the Project.

Decommissioning Phase

8.8.5 No further additional mitigation measures are proposed for the decommissioning phase, beyond those included in the **Outline DEMP (Doc Ref. (7.12)**.

8.9 Residual Effects

Construction Phase

8.9.1 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of effects for the receptors is set out in ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4) and ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4).

8.9.2 No secondary mitigation is proposed for the construction phase, therefore the residual landscape and visual effects relating to the construction phase will remain as identified in **Paragraphs 8.7.1 – 8.7.3**.

Operational Phase

Landscape Effects

8.9.3 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of effects for the receptors is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. A summary of the effects identified, including key narrative for any significant effects is set out below.

8.9.4 As set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: LVIA Methodology (Doc Ref. 5.4)** the assessment of residual effects relating to the operational phase accounts for the growth and establishment of proposed planting as secured by the measures set out in the **Outline LEMP (Doc Ref. 7.10)**.

8.9.5 At Year 15, out of the 11 identified landscape receptors, five are likely to experience adverse and beneficial significant effects as a result of the Project:

- Open fields - will be subject to a combination of moderate adverse and beneficial (significant) effects as a result of the established landscape proposals alongside physical changes as a result of the built elements of the Project;
- Hedgerows - will be subject to a moderate beneficial (significant) effect which is significant as a result of the establishment of extensive hedgerow planting across the Site;
- Canopy trees - will be subject to a moderate beneficial (significant) effect which is significant as a result of the establishment of substantial numbers of trees across the Site;
- The Character of the Site - will be subject to a combination of moderate adverse and beneficial (significant) effects as a result of the ongoing change in character from of the presence of built form and the enhancements to the Site's physical features including the establishment of native grassland, proposed and reinforced hedgerows, woodland and canopy trees, ponds, scrapes and other habitat features; and
- LCA Aldington Ridge - will be subject to a combination of moderate adverse and beneficial (significant) effects as a result of the ongoing change in character from the presence of built form and the enhancements to the Site's physical features and public access.

8.9.6 One landscape receptor, Woodland, will be subject to a minor-moderate beneficial residual effect as a result of the operational phase of the project due to the establishment of substantial new areas of woodland within the Site. This effect is not considered to be significant.

8.9.7 The remaining landscape receptors are judged likely to experience effects that are minor or negligible, which are not significant.

Visual Effects

8.9.8 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of effects for the receptors is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. A summary of the effects identified is set out below.

8.9.9 At Year 15, out of a total of 44 of the identified visual receptors, 4 are likely to experience significant adverse visual effects as a result of the Project:

- Users of PRoW within the Site – as a result of close range open partial views of the Project leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;

- People travelling along Bank Road – as a result of sequential glimpsed, open short to medium range views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect;
- Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill – as a result of elevated open medium to long range views of the Project, resulting in a moderate adverse (significant) effect; and
- Users of PRoW AE428 – as a result of open, elevated medium to long distance views of the Project, leading to a moderate adverse (significant) effect.

8.9.10 Five further receptors are identified as likely to experience minor-moderate adverse effects which are not significant, as a result of the Project at year 15, comprising:

- Users of PRoW within/adjacent to the Site with open panoramic views towards the Kent Downs NL;
- Residents on Bank Road (Becketts Green, Bow Cottage & Spring Cottage);
- Users of PRoW AE370 – Outside of the Site;
- Users of PRoW AE370 – near The Forstal; and
- Residents in Mersham.

8.9.11 The remainder of visual receptors are likely to be subject to residual effects that are either minor, negligible or nil (no effect), which are not significant.

Decommissioning Phase

8.9.12 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of effects for the receptors is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.8: Landscape Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)** and **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.9: Visual Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

8.9.13 No secondary mitigation is proposed for the decommissioning phase, therefore the residual landscape and visual effects relating to the decommissioning phase will remain as identified in **Paragraphs 8.7.33 – 8.7.37** (i.e., one significant visual adverse effect on Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill as a result of open elevated views of decommissioning activities in the western part of the Site resulting in a moderate adverse effect (significant) which is temporary).

8.10 Summary of Landscape Effects

8.10.1 The following section provides additional explanatory narrative on the landscape effects identified as a result of the Project for landscape receptors grouped by type.

Landscape Features

8.10.2 Four landscape features on the Site have been identified: Open Fields, Hedgerows, Canopy Trees and Woodland. These have been assessed as having medium sensitivity with the exception of Woodland which is assessed as medium-low sensitivity.

8.10.3 During construction, limited vegetation removal will be required resulting in negligible adverse effects on Hedgerows and Canopy Trees, and no effect on Woodland. However, due to physical changes to the Open Fields of the Site for a very short duration, the receptor would experience a minor adverse effect. On this basis, no landscape features will experience significant effects during the construction phase.

8.10.4 At Year 1 of the operational phase of the Project, the introduction of built form across the Open Fields for a medium-term basis would result in a major-moderate adverse effect, the only significant effect on landscape features at this stage of the assessment. Due to the extensive planting proposals included in the Project, the remaining receptors would experience minor beneficial effects except for the effect on Woodland which would be negligible-minor beneficial.

8.10.5 Following establishment of planting proposals ay Year 15, the effect on Open Fields would reduce to moderate, comprising a combination of adverse and beneficial effects due to the continued presence of the Project's built form and the establishment of extensive areas of new habitats. The Year 15 effects on Hedgerows and Canopy Trees would be moderate beneficial, while the effect on Woodland would be minor-moderate beneficial. As such all four receptors would experience beneficial effects, three of which are significant, and one would experience significant adverse effects.

8.10.6 During the decommissioning phase, Hedgerow, Canopy Trees and Woodland would be subject to minor or negligible beneficial effects due to the presence of established planting proposals, while Open Fields would experience a combination of minor adverse and minor beneficial effects due to physical disturbance caused by decommissioning in conjunction with enhancements brought about by the established landscape proposals.

8.10.7 Therefore, no landscape features will experience significant effects during the decommissioning phase.

Direct Effects on Landscape Character Areas

8.10.8 The Character of the Site has been identified as a receptor for the assessment of effects on landscape character and assigned a medium sensitivity to development of the type proposed.

8.10.9 The assessment has considered the effects of the Project on three LCAs from published Landscape Character Assessments which contain the Site and are therefore subject to direct effects as a result of the Project: LCA Aldington Ridge (high sensitivity), LCA Old Romney Shorelines (medium sensitivity) and LCA Upper Stour Valley (medium sensitivity).

8.10.10 The construction phase of the Project will result in minor adverse effects on The Character of the Site and LCA Aldington Ridge, while LCA Upper Stour Valley and LCA Old Romney Shorelines would experience negligible adverse effects. Therefore, no LCAs containing the Site will experience significant effects as a result of the construction phase.

8.10.11 At Year 1 of the operational phase, The Character of the Site will be subject to a major-moderate adverse effect while LCA Aldington Ridge will experience a moderate adverse effect, both of which are significant. At the same stage, LCA Upper Stour Valley will experience a moderate-minor effect at Year 1 and LCA Old Romney Shorelines will experience a negligible adverse effect.

8.10.12 Following the establishment of landscape proposals and the integration of the Project within the landscape at Year 15 of the operational phase, The Character of the Site and LCA Aldington Ridge will both be subject to a combination of moderate effects that are adverse and beneficial. The remaining LCAs would experience minor neutral or negligible adverse residual effects. Therefore, out of four receptors, two would experience both adverse and beneficial significant residual effects.

8.10.13 During the decommissioning phase, LCA Aldington Ridge will experience a temporary minor adverse effect, while the remaining receptors will be subject to negligible effects (adverse and neutral). On this basis, no significant effects will be experienced by this receptor group during the decommissioning phase.

Effects on NL Landscape Character Areas

8.10.14 Indirect effects on the character of LCAs within the NL have been assessed in order to identify the effects resulting from changes in the setting of these areas and therefore the designated landscape. The three LCAs included in the scope of the assessment are LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale, LCA 4C Stour Valley, and LCA 5B Lympne Greensand Escarpment. Except for the latter, these have been assessed as having high sensitivity to development of the type proposed. LCA 5B Lympne Greensand is assessed as having medium sensitivity due to its setting being primarily the Romney Marshes, with little interaction or intervisibility with the Site, and therefore reduced susceptibility.

8.10.15 During construction, LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale will be subject to a temporary minor adverse effect due to visibility of construction activities. LCA 4C Stour Valley and LCA 5B Lympne Greensand Escarpment will experience effects that are negligible neutral and negligible adverse respectively.

8.10.16 At Year 1 of the operational phase, LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale will be subject to a minor-moderate adverse effect reducing to minor adverse at Year 15. The remaining NL LCAs will be subject to negligible effects that are adverse or neutral at Year 1 and Year 15.

8.10.17 During the decommissioning phase, the Project will result in a minor adverse effect on LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale, whilst the remaining receptors will experience negligible neutral effects.

8.10.18 On the basis of the above, no significant effects have been identified on the setting of the National Landscape during any stage of the Project.

8.11 Summary of Visual Effects Experienced by Receptor Groups

8.11.1 In response to comments provided by ABC and their appointed landscape consultants LMS, the following section provides additional explanatory narrative on the visual effects identified as a result of the Project for receptor groups. This considers the visual effects of the Project.

Local PRoW Users

8.11.2 The Project will be visible in close range views from the PRoW network within the Site itself, with the exception of Fields 26-29 where the Project Substation will be visible at a distance of over 300m. The assessed sensitivity of visual receptors on the PRoW network within the Site varies between medium to medium-high, dependent on their location within the Site. The heightened sensitivity is as a result of open, long distance views towards the Kent Downs NL which are available from locations on the PRoW network on the more elevated north flank of the Aldington Ridge, where distant intervisibility with the North Downs ridge results in a higher value.

8.11.3 Visual receptors travelling along the PRoW network within and immediately adjacent to the Site will experience effects that are moderate adverse (or minor adverse in Fields 26-29) during the construction phase, and effects that range from major-moderate adverse (for medium-high sensitivity receptors) to moderate adverse within the majority of the Site, and to minor-moderate adverse for receptors in Fields 26-29 at year 1 of the operational phase.

8.11.4 Visual effects are predicted to diminish rapidly with distance from the Site in views from the PRoW network to the south and east of the Site (e.g. VP 5, VP23, VP25, VP 26, VP 28). The same is true for the most part in views from the west where the low-lying landform and strongly vegetated landscape limits the potential for the Project to be seen, however the isolated hillock of Colliers Hill provides an elevated vantage point where moderate adverse effects will be experienced during the construction phase and year 1 of the operational phase.

8.11.5 However, to the north of the Site, the visual influence of the Project will be experienced over a wider local area with visual receptors travelling on the PRoW network in the East Stour valley likely to be experience minor adverse (not significant) effects during construction, and moderate adverse and significant effects during year 1 of operation. These effects are likely to be experienced within the area to the north of the East Stour River and the south of the HS1/Network Rail railway line, between Station Road and the Forstal and are as a result of the openness of the East stour River valley landscape, the slightly elevated position of the viewpoints, and the elevated position of part of the Project on the north flank of the Aldington Ridge.

8.11.6 Notwithstanding the above, due to the underlying pattern of landform and existing vegetation, visibility of the Project diminishes rapidly to the north of the HS1/Network Rail railway, and to the west of the Forstal.

8.11.7 Following establishment of proposed planting at Year 15, the effect on views from the PRoW network on the north flank of the Aldington Ridge will diminish to minor-moderate (not significant) as the growth of existing and proposed hedgerows in Fields 12, 13 and the southern part of Field 20 will further integrate the Project within the landscape.

8.11.8 However, further north within the lower lying East Stour River valley, open close-range views of the Project will remain where the diverted PRoW network runs through the proposed PV area, notwithstanding substantial buffers which are proposed to be provided. The impact on views from the PRoW network in Fields 26-29 will also diminish to minor adverse as a result of views of the Project Substation. However, there will also be positive changes to those views as a result of the extensive landscape enhancements that are proposed in this location, alongside enhanced public access and seating. Nonetheless, moderate adverse residual effects will continue to be experienced by visual receptors on PRoW within a sizeable part of the Site.

8.11.9 In views from beyond the Site's boundaries, established planting will generally reduce the predicted visual effects of the operational phase of the Project, most notably to the south of the Site (VP 3, VP5, VP4, VP12 and VP25), but also to the north (e.g. VPs 18 and 31) where proposed planting will reduce the scale of impact to a degree in views from the low-lying valley landscape, or further afield from the Site.

8.11.10 Nonetheless, in open views from an elevated position on Collier's Hill (VP29) and PRoW AE428 (VP 30), the Project will remain visible resulting in moderate adverse residual effects. Both viewpoints are located within approximately 500m outside the Order limits and no significant effects further afield on the PRoW network have been identified.

8.11.11 During the decommissioning phase, proposed vegetation (at this point established for 40 years) is likely to result in substantially increased levels of containment/filtering of views, such that it will lead to effects ranging between moderate-minor to negligible adverse on receptors using the PRoW network within the Site.

8.11.12 Due to the elevated position of visual receptors on Collier's Hill, the decommissioning phase is likely to result in a moderate adverse effect; the only significant visual effect from this phase of the Project.

Residents

8.11.13 The Project will be visible in close to medium range views from a number of residential properties within the Site's local context, including the following:

- Residents on Laws Lane;
- Residents on Frith Road;
- Residents on Bank Road / Bank Farm;

- Residents at the junction of Bank Road / Coopers Lane;
- Residents at Handen Farm / Handen Farm Cottage;
- Residents on Calleywell Lane;
- Residents on the northern edge of Aldington;
- Residents on Station Road;
- Residents on Goldwell Lane;
- Residents on Roman Road;
- Residents in the Forstal; and
- Residents in Mersham.

8.11.14 During the construction phase, no residents have been assessed as having a significant effect as a result of the Project. The effects on views from properties on Laws Lane, Station Road and the northern edge of Aldington have been assessed as moderate-minor (not significant), with the remainder of receptors experiencing views that are minor adverse, minor-negligible adverse or negligible adverse.

8.11.15 At Year 1 of the operational phase, significant moderate adverse effects will be experienced by residents on Laws Lane, Frith Road, Bank Road, Handen Farm/Handen Farm Cottage, Calleywell Lane, residents on the northern edge of Aldington, Station Road, and Mersham. Three receptors will experience effects that are minor-moderate adverse (residents in the Forstal, Users of PRoW AE475 - Outside of the Site and Users of PRoW within Fields 26-29) or minor adverse and, applying professional judgment, not significant. The remainder of receptors will experience effects that are minor or negligible and not significant, or nil (no effect).

8.11.16 However, the growth and establishment of planting proposals will result in the Project becoming increasingly visually contained, such that at Year 15 (representing the residual effect) no residential receptors are judged likely to experience significant visual effects. Residents in Mersham and on Bank Road are considered likely to experience minor-moderate adverse effects which are not significant, with all other receptors either minor adverse, minor-negligible adverse, negligible adverse or negligible-neutral.

Settlements

8.11.17 In terms of the impact of the Project on views from Aldington, the Project will be visible in glimpsed views from the northern edge of Aldington (VP14), the eastern edge (VP24) and the western edge (VP10), however these views are isolated partial glimpses and there are no views of the Project from within the core of the settlement, including from within the Aldington Clap Hill Conservation Area. This is as a result of a combination of landform, with the Site sloping away from the village, and existing vegetation, with blocks of woodland providing containment of the western, eastern and north-eastern fringes of the settlement. There are also substantial areas of open agricultural land around the settlement to the north, east and west that will not be affected by the Project. These areas, and the woodland noted above, form the primary component of the setting of the village.

8.11.18 Likewise, there are no views from within the settlement areas of Mersham or the Forstal, with viewpoints 31 and 32 illustrating views toward the Site that can be experienced from the eastern edges of the villages. The Site is also at a considerable distance (over 1km) from these settlement edges. Whilst the Project is visible in cross valley views, the immediate setting of the settlements (the undulating landscape to the north of the East Stour River) will remain unaffected.

8.11.19 Notwithstanding the above, visual receptors travelling on local roads to and from the villages in the Site's immediate vicinity may experience glimpsed views of the Project, which, with the exception of Station Road, will be due to access and gaps in the hedgerows. A description of these effects is set out below for each receptor group.

Station Road

8.11.20 People travelling along Station Road from the north will not have views of the Project until they have crossed the HS1/Network Rail railway line, at which point they will have a glimpsed view (VP19) of the Project at close range in Field 25, as well as long distance cross valley views towards the Project on the northern aspect of the Aldington Ridge. These views will be experienced transiently by receptors before they travel further south into the East Stour River valley, where existing hedgerows will enclose Field 25, and longer distance views south become increasingly filtered and then screened by vegetation along the river itself. Further south, the road crosses through the Site, and open close-range views of the Project in Fields 19 and 23 will be experienced over a section of the road approximately 200m in length.

8.11.21 During the construction phase, receptors travelling south on the route will experience effects that are minor-negligible adverse to negligible adverse effects where they experience views. During the operational phase at year 1, these effects will range from moderate adverse (and significant) to minor adverse (not significant).

8.11.22 On establishment of proposed planting at year 15 of the operational phase, the Site will be increasingly contained by hedgerows along the section of the road within the Site, and woodland at the northern edge of Field 25, resulting in visual effects decreasing to minor adverse or negligible adverse.

8.11.23 Due to the increased levels of containment during the decommissioning phase, the Project has been assessed as resulting in negligible adverse effects.

Calleywell Lane

8.11.24 There are two lengths of Calleywell Lane (approximately 200m and 135m) where open views of the Project in Fields 17 and 18 will be experienced. The Project is set back from the road edge by approximately 20m, where advanced planting of woodland will provide some filtering of views from the outset of the Project. There are no views of the Project further south on Calleywell Lane, which extends a further 370m to the core of Aldington.

8.11.25 During construction, receptors travelling along the road will experience a negligible adverse effect as a result of the Project, while at year 1 of the operational phase,

receptors will be subject to a minor adverse effect. Following establishment of planting at year 15, the Project will be strongly contained by proposed woodland resulting in effects that are negligible adverse. The decommissioning phase has also been assessed as resulting in a negligible adverse effect on this receptor.

Goldwell Lane

8.11.26 At the northern extent of Goldwell Lane, there will be filtered and glimpsed views of the Project in Field 23. At the southern end of the road there will be glimpsed longer distance views of the Project in Field 20. Between these two points, the Project is strongly contained by existing vegetation along the road.

8.11.27 During the construction phase, visual receptors travelling the route will experience minor – negligible adverse effects to the north and negligible adverse effects to the south. With respect to the latter, the primary source of effects will be from views of construction operations on the access to Field 20, rather than operations within the field itself.

8.11.28 At year 1 of operation, the effects on this receptor group will range between moderate adverse (significant) to the north and negligible adverse to the south. Following establishment of landscape proposals (including advanced planting), these effects will decrease to minor adverse in the north and negligible neutral to the south. The decommissioning phase is likely to give rise to negligible adverse effects on this receptor group.

Bank Road

8.11.29 Bank Road to the west of Aldington is generally strongly enclosed by tall hedgerows, while its position on the Aldington Ridge is such that the Site generally falls away from the road making it less readily perceptible. However, there are a number of gaps in the hedgerow that allow glimpsed, open, close-range views of the Site. The Project includes proposals to plant up many of these gaps, although some must be retained for access, and the diversion of PRoWs requires new gaps to be made. The majority of these breaks in hedgerow are short and receptors will therefore generally experience a sequence of glimpsed views along the route from Aldington to Broad Oak.

8.11.30 During construction, receptors travelling along Bank Road will experience negligible adverse effects. At year 1 of the operational phase, the effects will range from moderate adverse (significant) where glimpsed open views are experienced from the elevated ridge, to negligible adverse further west where landform reduces the Site's visibility. Following establishment of proposed planting, the opportunity for views of the Project will reduce, however glimpsed open views from the ridgeline will remain, resulting in a moderate adverse (significant) residual effect. Visual receptors further west on Bank Road will continue to experience a negligible residual effect at year 15.

Roman Road

8.11.31 Travelling east from Aldington, the Site is generally screened by roadside hedgerows. However, a brief transient view of the southern edge of Field 20 at a distance of over 300m is experienced as shown in Viewpoint 27. People travelling along this route will experience a minor adverse effect during the construction phase and a negligible adverse effect during the decommissioning phases of the Project. At year 1 of the operational phase the effect will be minor adverse effect, but this will decrease to negligible adverse following establishment of proposed planting on the southern edge of the Order limits.

Frith Road

8.11.32 People travelling along Frith Road may experience a strongly filtered transient glimpse of the Project at all stages beyond successive existing (and subsequently proposed) hedgerows. This view is only available from one limited location (VP 6) and is unlikely to be experienced by receptors in cars due to the height of roadside hedgerow. On this basis, the Project is likely to lead to negligible adverse effects at all stages.

Coopers Lane

8.11.33 Receptors travelling along Coopers Lane are likely to have strongly filtered transient glimpses of the Project in Field 2 at a distance of approximately 240m, with advanced planting of Site boundaries providing some initial filtering of the Project. On this basis, the Project has been assessed as resulting in negligible adverse effects during construction and year 1 of operation. Following establishment of planting on the western boundary of field 1 it is unlikely the Project will be visible from the majority of Coopers Lane, albeit there is potential for long distance glimpsed views from the junction of Coopers Lane and Bank Road, where the residual effect would be negligible adverse.

The Kent Downs NL

8.11.34 The Project will be visible in medium range views from a very limited part of the NL to the south-east of the Site and in long range elevated views from the North Downs ridgeline. Visual receptors on the North Downs ridgeline have been assessed as having very high sensitivity whilst the former are assessed as high sensitivity.

8.11.35 In medium range views from the south-west (from Roman Road and PRoW AE473), the construction phase of the Project will lead to a minor adverse effect due to visibility of a very limited extent of the Project in Field 20. The effect will continue to be minor adverse at Year 1 of the operational phase. As proposed hedgerows establish on the southern boundary, this visibility of the Project will diminish, such that at year 15 the effect will be negligible adverse. The decommissioning phase will also lead to a negligible adverse effect on receptors in this location.

8.11.36 In views from the North Downs ridgeline, within the Kent Downs NL, the Project will lead to a barely perceptible change in views due to distance to the Site, intervening vegetation and landform which results in only very partial visibility, and the expansive nature of views, encompassing areas of existing settlement and

infrastructure. As a result, the Project has been assessed as leading to negligible adverse effects during construction and decommissioning, and minor-negligible adverse effects during year 1 and year 15 of the operational phase.

8.11.37 In summary, no significant visual effects have been identified for visual receptors in the Kent Downs NL.

8.12 Cumulative Effects

8.12.1 The potential for interaction of construction / operation / decommissioning effects from the Project with other schemes set out in the Focused Long List (**ES Volume 4: Appendix 6.1: List of Cumulative Schemes (Doc. Ref. 5.4)**) was considered. The Focused Long List schemes were reviewed and schemes with the potential for spatial or temporal overlap in effects were identified, e.g., overlapping ZoIs, identification of common receptors/ receptor groups and the predicted scheme timelines. From the Focused Long List, the following Cumulative Schemes were considered for further assessment in the cumulative effects assessment:

- ID No. 3 Pivot Power Battery Storage;
- ID No. 4 Walsh Power Condenser Project;
- ID No. 7 Land north of 1 Church View;
- ID No. 8 Land southwest of Goldwell Court;
- ID No. 9 East Stour Solar Farm; and
- ID No. 10 Otterpool Park Development.

8.12.2 The remainder of Cumulative Schemes identified (**ES Volume 4, Appendix 6.1: List of Cumulative Schemes (Doc Ref. 5.4)**) have been scoped out due to the scale or type of developments proposed, distance between the Project and the scheme, or lack of intervisibility. The scoping of Cumulative Schemes has been undertaken to ensure a reasonable and proportional approach that focuses on the identification of likely significant cumulative effects in line with paragraph 7.20 of GLVIA3.

8.12.3 As set out in **Paragraph 8.4.1** the assessment of cumulative effects focusses on the additional effect likely to occur when combining the Project with the cumulative schemes assessed against the baseline, compared with the Project on its own. Where there is no additional effect, no cumulative effect is identified.

8.12.4 This cumulative assessment assumes a realistic worst-case assessment scenario and in the interests of proportionality assumes the concurrent phasing of the cumulative schemes and the Project, with the exception of ID No. 10 Otterpool Park Development. As such, the assessment assumes that all, bar ID No. 10 Otterpool Park Development, of the schemes listed above would be under construction in year 2026 and completed and operational in 2027.

8.12.5 With respect to ID No. 10 Otterpool Park Development, a different approach is taken due to the scale and nature of the scheme i.e. a new garden town comprising approximately 8,500 homes likely to be built out over a period greater than 20 years.

Whilst the precise phasing of ID No. 10 Otterpool Park Development is not known, it is assumed in this chapter that Phase 1a[30] of this cumulative scheme (comprising approximately 1,900 homes in the north-east of the overall outline planning consented site) will be constructed and operational in a similar timeframe to the Project. On this basis, the construction and year 1 operational phase cumulative assessment accounts for Phase 1a only. However, the year 15 operational phase assessment assumes the entirety of ID No. 10 Otterpool Park Development is in place. This is considered to represent a realistic worst case scenario in assessment terms.

8.12.6 The cumulative assessment is supported by a series of cumulative ZTVs to illustrate the areas where each Cumulative Scheme and the Project could potentially both be visible. Within each ZTV, the cumulative scheme has been modelled to the maximum parameters which could come forward. The maximum height parameter modelled for each scheme is set out below. The cumulative ZTVs are presented on the following plans:

- **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.11.1: Cumulative ZTV, Otterpool Park (Doc Ref. 5.3).** Maximum height parameter: 12m, 15m and 18m;
- **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.11.2: Cumulative ZTV, East Stour Solar Farm (Doc Ref. 5.3).** Maximum height parameter – 3m;
- **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.11.3: Cumulative ZTV, Walsh Power Condenser Project (Doc Ref. 5.3).** Maximum height parameter – 11m and 12m; and
- **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.11.4: Cumulative ZTV, Pivot Power Battery Storage (Doc Ref. 5.3).** Maximum height parameter – 3m and 6m.

8.12.7 Further information on the data used in the preparation of the ZTVs is set out on the figures themselves.

8.12.8 Cumulative ZTVs have not been prepared for Cumulative Schemes ID No. 7 and ID No. 8 as these are relatively small scale residential schemes located adjacent to the existing settlement pattern in Aldington. On this basis, they are considered unlikely to combine with the Project in such a way as to cause significant cumulative visual effects in long distance views. However, noting that they are in close proximity to the Site and located in close proximity to a viewpoint, they have been included within the scope of this cumulative assessment.

8.12.9 The cumulative assessment is also supported by cumulative visualisations which illustrate the appearance of the Project alongside the main parameters of each cumulative scheme. The cumulative visualisations are included in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.11: Cumulative LVIA Visualisations (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. The viewpoints for which cumulative visualisations have been prepared are set out in **Table 8.10** and their locations are illustrated in **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.8: Visual Appraisal Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)** and **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.9: Visual Appraisal Plan – Site Level (Doc Ref. 5.3)**. **Table 8.10** also provides commentary on the visibility of the cumulative schemes from each viewpoint.

Table 8.10: Schedule of Cumulative Visualisations

Viewpoint	Cumulative Schemes Visible
Viewpoint 6	No cumulative schemes visible
Viewpoint 12	No cumulative schemes visible
Viewpoint 14	ID No. 9
Viewpoint 16	No cumulative schemes visible
Viewpoint 22	ID No. 9 (Project not visible)
Viewpoint 24	ID No. 7, ID No. 8 and ID No. 9
Viewpoint 25	No cumulative schemes visible
Viewpoint 27	ID No. 7, ID No. 8 and ID No. 9
Viewpoint 28	ID No. 7, ID No. 8 and ID No. 9
Viewpoint 29	ID No. 3, ID No. 4 and ID No. 10
Viewpoint 30	ID No. 7 and ID No. 8
Viewpoint 31	ID No. 7 and ID No. 8
Viewpoint 33	ID No. 3, ID No. 4 and ID No. 9
Viewpoint 34	ID No. 3, ID No. 4, ID No. 9 and ID No. 10
Viewpoint 35	ID No. 3, ID No. 4, ID No. 9 and ID No. 10
Viewpoint 36	ID No. 9
Viewpoint 38	ID No. 9 and ID No. 10

Receptors for Cumulative Landscape Effects

8.12.10 In terms of landscape features (i.e. Open Fields, Hedgerows, Canopy Trees and Woodland), for the purposes of this cumulative assessment, these receptors and the effects of the Project are entirely contained within the Site's boundaries.

Therefore, no cumulative effects will occur, as these receptors will not be affected by the Cumulative Schemes.

8.12.11 The Character of the Site is primarily influenced by landscape change that occurs within the Site itself, while changes to the wider setting have the potential to alter the perceptual aspects of this receptor. However, considering the location and nature of the Cumulative Schemes, as outlined below, it is considered that no cumulative effect on The Character of the Site will occur as the cumulative schemes are highly unlikely to lead to appreciable effects on the setting of the Site and therefore would not alter the findings of the assessment from the Project on its own.

- ID No. 3 and No. 4 are separated from the Site by rail infrastructure and over a 1km away from the nearest above ground infrastructure for the Project (i.e., Project Substation);
- ID No. 7 and No. 8 whilst adjacent to the South Eastern Area of the Site are separate from all other above ground infrastructure for the Project by built development and Blackhouse Wood LWS;
- ID No. 9 is separated from the Site by the Blackhouse Wood LWS and over 500m away from the nearest above ground infrastructure for the Project (i.e., PV panels in the South Eastern Area); and
- ID No. 10 is over 2km away from the nearest above ground infrastructure for the Project (i.e., Project Substation) to the nearest point of its red line boundary.

8.12.12 In accordance with GLVIA3 (paragraph 7.21), the study area for the assessment of cumulative landscape effects has been set to the LCAs containing the Site (i.e. LCA Aldington Ridge, LCA Upper Stour Valley and LCA Old Romney Shorelines). **Table 8.11** sets out the location of each cumulative scheme and the approximate extent of the LCA affected. However, as the cumulative schemes are also located within the setting of the Kent Downs NL, the three LCAs identified for the assessment of effects on the NL setting (LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale, LCA 4C Stour Valley and LCA 5B Lympne Greensand Escarpment) have also been included in the cumulative assessment.

8.12.13 As set out in **Table 8.11**, none of the Cumulative Schemes are located within LCA Old Romney Shorelines therefore no cumulative effects will occur. In addition, due to limited intervisibility there are unlikely to be any indirect effects on the LCA and it was scoped out of further assessment.

Table 8.11: Schedule of Cumulative Scheme Locations

Cumulative Scheme	Location and Extent of LCA
Pivot Power Battery Storage, ID No. 3	Located within LCA Upper Stour Valley on a 2.1ha area of agricultural land adjacent to Sellindge Substation. Adjacent to ID No. 4.

Cumulative Scheme	Location and Extent of LCA
Walsh Power Condenser Project, ID No. 4	Located within LCA Upper Stour Valley on a 5ha area of agricultural land adjacent to Sellindge Substation. Adjacent to ID No. 3.
Land north of Church View, ID No. 7	Located within LCA Aldington Ridge on a 0.3ha area of agricultural land. Adjacent to ID No. 8.
Land south-west of Goldwell Court, ID No. 8	Located within LCA Aldington Ridge on a 1.8ha area of agricultural land. Adjacent to ID No. 7.
East Stour Solar Farm, ID No. 9	Located within LCA Upper Stour Valley on a 104ha area of agricultural land.
Otterpool Park Development, ID No. 10	Phase 1a is located outside of LCAs containing the Site.
	Full extent of outline planning permission located partially within LCA Upper Stour Valley (approximately 35ha of the overall scheme (645ha)) and partially within LCA Aldington Ridge (approximately 222ha of the overall scheme).

Receptors for Cumulative Visual Effects

8.12.14 Based on a review of the cumulative ZTVs (**ES Volume 3, Figures 8.11.1-8.11.4 (Doc Ref. 5.3)**), the cumulative visualisations (**ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.11 (Doc Ref. 5.4)**) and the winter and summer baseline LVIA representative views (**ES Volume 4, Appendices 8.5: Representative Views - Winter** and **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.6: Representative Views - Summer (Doc Ref. 5.4)**) the following visual receptors have been scoped out of the cumulative assessment, due to a lack of intervisibility:

- People travelling along on Laws Lane;
- Residents on Laws Lane;
- Users of PRoW AE396;
- Residents on Frith Road;
- Users of PRoW AE442;
- Users of PRoW AE385 – Outside of the Site;
- People travelling along Frith Road;
- People travelling along Bank Road;
- Residents on Bank Road (Becketts Green, Bow Cottage & Spring Cottage);

- Residents at Broadbanks;
- People traveling along Bank Road / Coopers Lane;
- Residents at the junction of Bank Road / Coopers Lane;
- People traveling along Coopers Lane;
- Users of PRoW AE377 – outside of the Site;
- Residents at Handen Farm / Handen Farm Cottage;
- People travelling along Calleywell Lane;
- Residents on Calleywell Lane;
- People travelling along Goldwell Lane/Station Road, within the Site;
- Residents on Station Road (Evegate Mill House);
- Users of PRoW AE370 – Outside of the Site;
- People travelling along Station Road, north of the Site;
- Anglers at the Aldington Flood Storage Area
- People travelling along Harringe Lane;
- Users of PRoW AE457 – Outside of the Site;
- Users of PRoW AE475 – Outside of the Site;
- Users of PRoW AE455 – Outside of the Site;
- People travelling along Bower Road; and
- Residents in Mersham.

8.12.15 The remainder of visual receptors will have views of the Project in combination with the cumulative schemes and have been included in the scope of the assessment. These are:

- Users of PRoW within/adjacent to the Site – in the interests of proportionality the three receptor groups for users of PRoW within or adjacent to the Site identified in the main assessment of visual effects have been grouped together;
- Users of PRoW AE449;
- Residents in the North of Aldington;
- People travelling along Goldwell Lane;
- Residents on Goldwell Lane;
- People travelling along Roman Road, and users of PRoW AE473;
- Residents on Roman Road;
- Users of PRoW AE474;
- Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill;
- Users of PRoW AE428 – Outside of the Site;
- Users of PRoW AE370 – Near The Forstal;

- Residents in The Forstal;
- Users of PRoW HE307; and
- People travelling along the North Downs Way in the Kent Downs NL.

8.12.16 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of effects for all cumulative effects is set out in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.12: Cumulative Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**. A summary of effects is set out below in **Paragraphs 8.12.17 - 8.12.59**.

Construction Phase

Landscape Effects

8.12.17 No significant cumulative landscape effects have been identified as a result of the construction phase.

8.12.18 LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale would experience a minor adverse cumulative effect as a result of the construction phase of the Project and the cumulative schemes, should construction activities overlap. This effect is temporary and not significant.

8.12.19 LCA Upper Stour Valley would experience a negligible adverse cumulative effect as a result of the construction phase which is temporary and not significant.

8.12.20 The remainder of landscape receptors will not experience additional cumulative effects beyond those identified for the Project on its own as outlined within **Section 8.7**.

Visual Effects

8.12.21 One visual receptor has been identified as likely to experience a significant cumulative visual effect as a result of the construction phase.

8.12.22 Users of PRoW (within/adjacent to the Site) will experience a moderate adverse cumulative effect which is temporary and significant as a result of sequential views of the Project and East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) in succession due to their proximity. Whilst the effects identified for this receptor are broadly the same as for the Project on its own, the geographical extent of the cumulative effects will extend further to the east.

8.12.23 The Project on its own would result in a negligible neutral effect on Users of PRoW AE474. However in combination with East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9), this receptor would be subject to a moderate-minor cumulative effect which is temporary and not significant as a result of the construction phase.

8.12.24 As set out in **Section 8.7**, people travelling along the North Downs Way in the Kent Downs NL will experience a negligible adverse effect as a result of the Project in isolation. However, in cumulation with Pivot Power Battery Storage (ID No. 3), Walsh Power Condenser Project (ID No. 4), East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) and Phase 1a of Otterpool Park (ID No. 10), the cumulative effect will be minor adverse which is temporary and not significant.

8.12.25 People travelling on Goldwell Lane and Users of PRoW HE307 will experience negligible adverse cumulative effects as a result of the construction phase.

8.12.26 The remainder of visual receptors will not experience additional cumulative effects beyond those identified for the Project on its own as identified within Section 8.7.

Operational Phase (Year 1)

Landscape Effects

8.12.27 No significant cumulative landscape effects have been identified as a result of the operational phase at year 1.

8.12.28 The Project in cumulation with Pivot Power Battery Storage (ID No. 3), Walsh Power Condenser Project (ID No. 4), East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) and Phase 1a of Otterpool Park (ID No. 10), will result in a moderate-minor adverse cumulative effect on LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale which is not significant as a result of the presence of development within the setting of the LCA, and associated loss of intervisibility.

8.12.29 In combination with East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9), Pivot Power Battery Storage (ID No. 3) and Walsh Power Condenser Project (ID No. 4) LCA Upper Stour Valley will experience a minor-moderate adverse cumulative effect which is not significant as a result of the operational phase at year 1 due to the direct changes affecting the eastern parts of the LCA.

8.12.30 The remainder of landscape receptors will not experience additional cumulative effects beyond those identified for the Project on its own.

Visual Effects

8.12.31 Four visual receptors have been identified as likely to experience significant cumulative visual effects as a result of the operational phase at year 1.

8.12.32 Users of PRoW (within/adjacent to the Site) will experience a moderate adverse cumulative effect which is significant as a result of sequential views of the Project and East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) in quick succession due to their proximity. Whilst the effects identified for this receptor are the same as for the Project on its own, the geographical extent of the cumulative effects will extend further to the east.

8.12.33 As set out in **Section 8.7**, people travelling along Goldwell Lane will experience a negligible adverse effect as a result of the Project in isolation. In combination with close range views of Land North of 1, Church View, Aldington (ID No. 7) and Land Southwest of Goldwell Court, Goldwell Lane (ID No. 8), and distant partial views of East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9), the receptors will be subject to a moderate adverse cumulative effect which is significant.

8.12.34 The Project in isolation has been identified as resulting in a negligible adverse effect on Users of PRoW AE474. In combination with views of East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) on Bested Hill, the receptor will experience a significant moderate adverse cumulative effect.

8.12.35 People travelling along the North Downs Way in the Kent Downs NL have been identified as likely to experience a minor-negligible effect from the Project on its own. In combination with views of Pivot Power Battery Storage (ID No. 3), Walsh Power Condenser Project (ID No. 4), East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) and Phase 1a Otterpool Park (ID No. 10) the receptor would experience a significant moderate adverse effect.

8.12.36 The Project on its own would result in a negligible adverse effect on users of PRoW HE307. In combination with partial views of Pivot Power Battery Storage (ID No. 3), Walsh Power Condenser Project (ID No. 4), and East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9), the receptor will experience a minor-negligible adverse cumulative effect which is not significant.

8.12.37 The remainder of visual receptors will not experience additional cumulative effects beyond those identified for the Project on its own.

Decommissioning Phase

Landscape Effects

8.12.38 No significant cumulative landscape effects have been identified as a result of the decommissioning phase.

8.12.39 LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale will experience minor adverse cumulative effect as a result of the decommissioning phase while LCA Upper Stour Valley will experience a negligible adverse cumulative effect compared with a negligible neutral effect for the Project on its own.

8.12.40 The remainder of landscape receptors will not experience additional cumulative effects beyond those identified for the Project on its own.

Visual Effects

8.12.41 No visual receptors have been identified as likely to experience significant cumulative visual effects as a result of the decommissioning phase.

8.12.42 Users of PRoW (within or adjacent to the Site) will experience a moderate-minor adverse cumulative effect which is temporary and not significant as a result of sequential views of the Project and East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) in quick succession due to their proximity. Whilst the effects identified for this receptor are broadly the same as for the Project on its own, the geographical extent of the cumulative effects will extend further to the east.

8.12.43 People travelling on Goldwell Lane, Users of PRoW AE474, Users of PRoW HE307 and People Travelling on the North Downs Way in the Kent Downs NL will experience negligible adverse cumulative effects as a result of the decommissioning phase.

8.12.44 The remainder of visual receptors will not experience additional cumulative effects beyond those identified for the Project on its own.

Residual Cumulative Effects

Construction and Decommissioning

8.12.45 No further mitigation is proposed for the construction and decommissioning phases, therefore the effects will remain as identified above.

Operational Phase (Year 15)

8.12.46 As with the assessment of the effects relating to the Project on its own, the growth and establishment of proposed planting by year 15 (and maintained thereafter) is considered as secondary mitigation against which the residual effects of the operational phase are assessed. Mitigation proposals included in the cumulative schemes have been reviewed and considered in the assessment, and where available have been modelled in the cumulative visualisations.

Landscape Effects

8.12.47 Three significant cumulative landscape effects have been identified at year 15 of the operational phase.

8.12.48 LCA Aldington Ridge would be subject to a combination of moderate-major adverse effects and moderate beneficial effects as a result of the Project in combination with the entirety of Otterpool Park (ID No. 10) which is assumed to be in place at Year 15. This is compared with moderate adverse and beneficial effects as a result of the Project on its own as set out in **Section 8.7**.

8.12.49 The Project in isolation would result in a minor (not significant) adverse effect on LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale. In combination with the presence of Pivot Power Battery Storage (ID No. 3), Walsh Power Condenser Project (ID No. 4), East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) and the entirety of Otterpool Park (ID No. 10) and associated loss of intervisibility within the setting of the NL LCA the receptor will experience a moderate adverse cumulative effect which is significant. It is considered that without Otterpool Park (ID No. 10), the cumulative effect would be less than or equal to moderate-minor, and therefore below the threshold for significant effects.

8.12.50 The Project on its own would result in a minor neutral effect on LCA Upper Stour Valley. In combination with Pivot Power Battery Storage (ID No. 3), Walsh Power Condenser Project (ID No. 4), East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) and the entirety of Otterpool Park (ID No. 10), the receptor will experience a combination of adverse and beneficial cumulative effects which are moderate and significant as a result of the presence of proposed built form alongside established planting proposals.

8.12.51 The remainder of landscape receptors will not experience additional cumulative effects beyond those identified for the Project on its own.

Visual Effects

8.12.52 Three visual receptors have been identified as likely to experience significant cumulative visual effects at year 15 of the operational phase.

8.12.53 Users of PRoW (within / adjacent to the Site) will experience a moderate adverse cumulative effect which is significant as a result of sequential views of the Project and East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) in quick succession due to their proximity. Whilst the effects identified for this receptor are broadly the same as for the Project on its own, the geographical extent of the cumulative effects will extend further to the east.

8.12.54 As set out in **Section 8.7**, users of PRoW AE474 will experience a non-significant negligible neutral effect as a result of the Project on its own. In combination with the cumulative schemes, the receptor would be subject to a significant moderate adverse cumulative effect as a result of views of East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) on Bested Hill in combination with distant partial glimpses of the Project.

8.12.55 The Project on its own has been identified as likely to result in a minor-negligible adverse effect on people travelling along the North Downs Way in the Kent Downs NL. Cumulatively, the receptor would experience a major-moderate adverse cumulative effect which is significant as a result of views of Sellindge Battery Storage (ID No. 3), Walsh Power Condenser Project (ID No. 4), East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9) and the entirety of Otterpool Park (ID No. 10), with Otterpool Park (ID No. 10) contributing the greatest degree of change within the views. It is considered that without Otterpool Park (ID No.10), the Year 15 cumulative effect would reduce to moderate-minor, below the threshold for significant effects.

8.12.56 The above conclusion is supported by the findings of the cumulative assessment submitted as part of the Supplementary Environmental Information[31] (SEI) by EDF for East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9). It is also supported by the responses provided by the Kent Downs AONB Unit for East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9), (that the proposals are not considered to *'result in significant or unacceptable impacts on the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape'*), and for the Project *'it is not likely to result in any material harm to those seeking to enjoy the Kent Downs AONB within the nationally protected landscape'*.

8.12.57 User of PRoW HE307 would experience a negligible adverse effect as a result of the Project on its own. In combination with partial views of Pivot Power Battery Storage (ID No. 3), Walsh Power Condenser Project (ID No. 4), and East Stour Solar Farm (ID No. 9), the receptor would experience a minor-negligible adverse cumulative effect which is not significant.

8.12.58 People travelling along Goldwell Lane will experience no cumulative effect at year 15 as a result of cumulative schemes ID No. 7 and ID No. 8 truncating existing views of the Site i.e. the presence of the cumulative schemes will result in no views of the Project from this location.

8.12.59 The remainder of visual receptors will not experience additional cumulative effects beyond those identified for the Project on its own.

8.13 Summary

8.13.1 The following section presents a summary of ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Views including key assessment findings. This section should be read in conjunction with **Table 8.12: Summary of Residual Effects**.

8.13.2 An assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects arising from the Project has been undertaken in accordance with the GLVIA3.

8.13.3 The landscape and visual baseline has been comprehensively reviewed and recorded by way of desktop studies and field surveys. The baseline with respect to site context, land-use and pattern, topography, access and designations has been described, as well as the character and physical features of the Site and the visual baseline.

8.13.4 The Site is not designated in landscape terms, however it is within the setting of the Kent Downs NL, and there are Conservation Areas and a number of listed buildings within the study area, as well as Ancient Woodland directly abutting the Site (albeit approximately 240m from any proposed built infrastructure). The Site is also partially within an area proposed to be designated as a Dark Sky Zone.

8.13.5 Review and analysis of national, county and borough level published landscape character assessments has been carried out. These published assessments describe a raised landscape of mixed, open farmland with dramatic views to the North Downs enclosing a flat, open and sometimes denuded valley landscape featuring historic mills; a mosaic of pastoral and arable fields with mixed crest top woodlands with a sense of time depth.

8.13.6 Guidance for development set out in published character assessments includes:

- Conserving the rural setting of the Kent Downs NL;
- Avoid large scale development along the visually prominent ridgeline;
- Conserve and restoring native hedgerows and restore historic boundary hedgerows;
- Conserve the well vegetated course of the Great Stour River and encourage marginal wetland plants along field boundaries and ditches;
- Conserve trees and ancient woodland and plant small woodland copses to enhance the ecological network; and
- Conserve and appropriately manage ancient woodland.

8.13.7 The Site comprises an extensive area of mixed farmland delineated by hedgerows and occasional tree cover and sub-divided by country roads with sporadic clusters of houses. The landform varies from gently undulating to rolling, with the Site broadly occupying the bowl-like landscape of the East Stour River valley and the western part of the Aldington Ridge. Fields are often large scale and partially denuded. There are existing influences of infrastructure resulting from the nearby HS1 railway line, Sellindge substation and overhead power lines to the east, and there are expansive views from higher ground towards the Kent Downs NL.

8.13.8 In visual terms, strong hedgerow field boundaries are such that close range views from outside the Site are only typically glimpsed from the local network of country roads. However, the open nature of the East Stour River valley allows more open views, including from the network of PRoWs in the immediate landscape to the north, north-east and north-west of the Site. Views from the extensive network of PRoWs that runs across the Site are always partial, and importantly, the Site is not visible in its entirety from any one location. There are close range views of the Site from a limited number of residential properties that lie adjacent to the Site. However, there are no views from the cores of local settlements, including the two conservation areas in Aldington and from within Mersham and the Forstal.

8.13.9 Visibility of the Site diminishes rapidly to the south, east and west due to a combination of landform and vegetation, although Collier's Hill provides an elevated perspective over the western part of the Site, and there are glimpses of the parts of the Site closest to the East Stour River from the Aldington Ridge to east of the Site.

8.13.10 To the north, there is visibility of the Site from the northern valley sides of the East Stour River, where parts of the Site on the more elevated, north flank of the Aldington Ridge form a backdrop to the landscape. However, beyond the HS1 railway line, the Site rapidly disappears from view due to intervening landform and vegetation, with only more distant glimpses possible from the undulating landscape to the north of the M20 motorway. The Site is barely perceptible from the Kent Downs NL and is not considered to be a valued landscape.

8.13.11 The future baseline of the Site has been considered based on the year 2026, with the predicted change comprising the presence of additional visual receptors as a result of approved residential development.

8.13.12 A comprehensive series of mitigation measures has been embedded in the design of the Project from the outset, with the aim of reducing adverse effects resulting from its introduction. The design of the Project has evolved as part of an iterative process and has been informed by the findings of the baseline landscape and visual amenity conditions.

8.13.13 An assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the Project has been undertaken during the construction phase and at Years 1 and 15 of operation, the latter accounting for the growth and establishment of proposed planting. The effects relating to the decommissioning of the Project have also been considered.

8.13.14 No landscape receptors are anticipated to experience significant effects as a result of the construction and decommissioning phases of the Project. This is as a result of the scale of LCAs in relation to the Site, the lack of widespread, permanent and substantial changes to the physical fabric of the Site and the very short duration of effects relating to the construction and decommissioning phases.

8.13.15 Three visual receptors are considered likely to experience significant effects during the construction phase of the Project. These are users of PRoW within/adjacent to the Site (two receptor groups) and users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill.

8.13.16 No significant effects on night-time receptors have been identified as a result of the construction phase, and effects from the decommissioning phase are likely to be reduced as a result of established planting.

8.13.17 Once operational, at Year 1 following completion, three landscape receptors are considered likely to experience significant effects as a result of the Project. The Open Fields of the Site and the Overall Character of the Site will be subject to major-moderate adverse effects, while the Aldington Ridge LCA will experience a moderate adverse effect. However, following establishment of proposed planting at Year 15, those three receptors are considered likely to experience a combination of moderate adverse and moderate beneficial effects which are significant. Two further landscape receptors (Hedgerows and Canopy Trees) will be subject to significant moderate beneficial effects following establishment of proposed planting.

8.13.18 At Year 1 of the operational phase, 19 visual receptors are considered likely to experience significant moderate adverse effects as a result of the Project, with one receptor judged to experience a moderate-major effect, all of which are significant. The majority of these receptors are in close proximity to, or within the Site. Following establishment of mitigation planting at Year 15, the number of visual receptors experiencing significant effects will reduce to four, all of which are moderate adverse.

8.13.19 During the decommissioning phase, one receptor has been identified as likely to experience significant effects as a result of the Project: Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill will be subject to a temporary moderate adverse visual effect. The remainder of receptors will experience effects that are moderate-minor, minor minor-negligible, negligible or nil (no effect) as a result of the decommissioning phase of the Project.

8.13.20 No significant effects on any landscape and visual receptors within the Kent Downs National Landscape have been identified at any stage of the Project.

8.13.21 A cumulative assessment has been carried out including the following cumulative schemes:

- ID No. 3 Pivot Power Battery Storage;
- ID No. 4 Walsh Power Condenser Project;
- ID No. 7 Land north of 1 Church View, Aldington;
- ID No. 8 Land south-west of Goldwell Court, Goldwell Lane;
- ID No. 9 East Stour Solar Farm; and
- ID No. 10 Otterpool Park Development.

8.13.22 A summary of the cumulative effects identified as part of the assessment is set our below. For full details relating to the cumulative assessment, refer to **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.12: Cumulative Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4)**.

8.13.23 The cumulative assessment identified that the majority of receptors are unlikely to experience significant cumulative effects. During the construction phase, no

landscape receptors will experience significant effects, however one visual receptors will experience a temporary significant moderate adverse effect (Users of PRoW within / adjacent to the Site).

8.13.24 No significant effects on any landscape and visual receptors have been identified during the decommissioning phase.

8.13.25 During the operational phase at year 1, no landscape receptors will experience significant cumulative effects.

8.13.26 LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale and LCA Upper Stour Valley will be subject to moderate-minor adverse effects which are not significant at Year 1.

8.13.27 However, in combination with the full implementation of ID No. 10 Otterpool Park at Year 15, both receptors will experience significant cumulative effects (LCA Upper Stour Valley – Moderate Adverse and Beneficial effects, LCA 2C Postling Scarp and Vale – Moderate adverse effect). A further landscape receptor, LCA Aldington Ridge will be subject to a moderate-major significant cumulative effect at year 15. Without the inclusion of ID No. 10 Otterpool Park, it is likely that no significant cumulative effects would be identified on landscape receptors at Year 15 of the operational phase.

8.13.28 During the operational phase at year 1, four visual receptors will be subject to significant effects as follows:

- People travelling along the North Downs Way in the Kent Downs NL – Moderate adverse cumulative effect;
- Users of PRoW within / adjacent to the Site – Moderate adverse cumulative effect;
- People travelling along Goldwell Lane – Moderate adverse cumulative effect; and
- Users of PRoW AE474 – Moderate adverse cumulative effect.

8.13.29 Following the establishment of mitigation planting at year 15 the number of visual receptors experiencing significant effects will reduce to three. However, the inclusion of the entirety ID No. 10 Otterpool Park results in a more significant effect for one receptor, as set out below:

- People travelling along the North Downs Way in the Kent Downs NL – Major – Moderate adverse cumulative effect;
- Users of PRoW within /adjacent to the Site – Moderate adverse cumulative effect; and
- Users of PRoW AE474 – Moderate adverse cumulative effect.

8.13.30 **Table 8.12** provides a summary of the significant landscape and visual effects of the Project.

Table 8.12: Summary of Significant Residual Effects

Table 8.12 includes a summary of the significant effects of the Project on its own and does not include landscape or visual receptors where effects have been identified as not significant at all stages of the assessment. Table 8.12 does not include cumulative effects as these are summarised separately in **ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.12: Cumulative Effects Table (Doc Ref. 5.4).**

Receptor	Description of Impact	Significance of Effect without additional mitigation	Additional Mitigation/ Enhancement measure	Residual effect after mitigation
Construction Phase				
Landscape Effects				
No significant landscape effects identified.				
Visual Effects				
Users of PRoW within /adjacent proposed solar PV areas	Temporary medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	None	Moderate adverse
Users of PRoW within/adjacent to the Site with open panoramic views towards the Kent Downs NL	Temporary medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	None	Moderate adverse

Receptor	Description of Impact	Significance of Effect without additional mitigation	Additional Mitigation/ Enhancement measure	Residual effect after mitigation
Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill	Temporary small magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	None	Moderate adverse
Operational Phase				
Landscape Effects				
Open Fields	Medium duration large magnitude landscape impact	Major-Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate adverse and beneficial
Hedgerows	Medium duration small magnitude landscape impact	Minor beneficial	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate beneficial
Canopy Trees	Medium duration small magnitude landscape impact	Minor beneficial	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate beneficial
The Character of the Site	Medium duration large magnitude landscape impact	Major-Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate adverse and beneficial

Receptor	Description of Impact	Significance of Effect without additional mitigation	Additional Mitigation/ Enhancement measure	Residual effect after mitigation
LCA – Aldington Ridge	Medium duration medium magnitude landscape impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate adverse and beneficial
Visual Effects				
Users of PRoW within /adjacent proposed solar PV areas	Long duration large magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate adverse
Users of PRoW within/adjacent to the Site with open panoramic views towards the Kent Downs NL	Long duration large magnitude visual impact	Major - Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Minor - Moderate adverse
Residents on Laws Lane	Long duration small-medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Minor adverse
Users of PRoW AE396	Medium duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Negligible adverse

Receptor	Description of Impact	Significance of Effect without additional mitigation	Additional Mitigation/ Enhancement measure	Residual effect after mitigation
Residents on Frith Road	Long duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Minor neutral
People travelling along Bank Road	Medium duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate adverse
Residents on Bank Road (Becketts Green Bow Cottage & Spring Cottage)	Long duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate – Minor adverse
Users of PRoW AE377 – outside of the Site	Medium duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Minor adverse
Residents at Handen Farm / Handen Farm Cottage	Long duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Minor adverse
Residents on Calleywell Lane	Long duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Negligible adverse

Receptor	Description of Impact	Significance of Effect without additional mitigation	Additional Mitigation/ Enhancement measure	Residual effect after mitigation
Users of PRoW AE449	Long duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Minor adverse
Residents on the northern edge of Aldington	Long duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Minor adverse
People travelling along Goldwell Lane/Station Road, within the Site	Long duration large magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Minor adverse
Residents on Station Road (Evegate Mill House)	Long duration small-medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Minor adverse
Users of PRoW AE370 – Outside of the Site	Long duration large magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate - Minor adverse
Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill	Long duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate adverse

Receptor	Description of Impact	Significance of Effect without additional mitigation	Additional Mitigation/ Enhancement measure	Residual effect after mitigation
Users of PRoW AE428 – outside of the Site	Long duration large magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate adverse
Users of PRoW AE370 – near The Forstal	Long duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate – Minor adverse
Residents in Mersham	Long duration medium magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	Planting establishment secured by the Outline LEMP	Moderate – Minor adverse
Decommissioning Phase				
Landscape Effects				
No significant landscape effects				
Visual Effects				
Users of PRoW AE401, Collier's Hill	Temporary small magnitude visual impact	Moderate adverse	None	Moderate adverse

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