

Stonestreet Green Solar

Environmental Statement Volume 2: Main Text Chapter 2: Site & Context

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ES Volume 4, Appendices (Doc Ref. 5.4)

None.

2 Site and Context

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This chapter provides a description of the Site (see **ES Volume 3, Figure 1.1: Site Location Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)**) and its surrounding areas, including key features, designations and key sensitive receptor locations that may be affected by the Project. A full description of the baseline conditions relevant to the technical assessments is provided in each technical chapter (i.e., **ES Volume 2, Chapters 7 to 15 (Doc Ref. 5.2)**).

2.1.2 This chapter is supported by the following figures:

ES Volume 3 – Figures (Doc Ref. 5.3)

- Figure 2.1: Field Boundaries and Site Area Plan;
- Figure 2.2: Environmental Designations (Sheets 1 to 4); and
- Figure 2.3: Key Features Plan.

2.2 Site Location and Extent

2.2.1 The Site of the Project is located approximately 6.5km to the south east of Ashford Town Centre and approximately 13.7km to the west of Folkestone Town Centre, in the county of Kent. The Site is situated on land located to the north and west of the village of Aldington, centred at Ordnance Survey ('OS') National Grid Reference ('NGR') TR 05898 37766.

2.2.2 The Site is within the administrative boundaries of Ashford Borough Council ('ABC') and Kent County Council ('KCC').

2.2.3 The Site covers an area of approximately 192 ha (approximately 474 acres) and is predominantly in agricultural use for arable crops and grazing.

2.3 Site Description

2.3.1 The Site comprises primarily agricultural fields delineated by hedgerows and tree belts. **ES Volume 3, Figure 2.1: Field Boundaries and Site Area Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)** provides a Field Boundaries and Site Area Plan. Areas where infrastructure development is proposed are identified by field numbers. For ease of reference, the areas of the Site where infrastructure development is proposed are subsequently referred to as follows:

- South Western Area (Fields 1 to 9);
- Central Area (Fields 10 to 19 and 23 to 25);
- South Eastern Area (Fields 20 to 22);

- Northern Area (Fields 26 to 29);
- Project Substation (location of the Project Substation, in the north western section of Field 26);
- ‘Cable Route Corridor’ (export of electricity from the Project at 132kV via underground cables (the ‘Grid Connection Cable’) to the Sellindge Substation) and ‘Cable Route Crossing’ (use of an existing cable duct under the High Speed 1 / Channel Tunnel Rail Link (‘HS1’) railway or through Horizontal Directional Drilling (‘HDD’) beneath HS1 for the Grid Connection Cable); and
- Sellindge Substation (location of the existing Sellindge Substation).

2.3.2 Areas within the Order limits that are not identified by field numbers in Figure 2.1 are largely proposed for landscape and biodiversity enhancements. Further information on the Project is provided in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 3: Project Description (Doc Ref. 5.2)**.

2.3.3 The East Stour River (as shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 2.2: Environmental Designations (Doc Ref. 5.3)**) flows in an east to west direction through the Northern Area (Fields 26 to 29) and adjacent to Fields 25 and 19 within the Central Area. There are a number of unnamed drains (small open channel watercourses) running through the Site, which generally flow north / north west to drain into the East Stour River.

2.3.4 The Site includes a section of the existing Sellindge Substation and an area of land on the eastern side of the Sellindge Substation. Existing National Grid transmission lines connecting to the Sellindge Substation cross the South Eastern Area. There are no other major existing built development structures within the Site.

2.3.5 Station Road / Calleywell Lane runs north to south within and adjacent to the central part of the Site. Bank Road / Roman Road bisect the Central and South Western Areas of the Site. The Site also includes Bank Farm access track, which connects to Roman Road. Part of Goldwell Lane forms part of the Site, as cabling is proposed to be laid beneath the road surface (see **ES Volume 2, Chapter 3: Project Description (Doc Ref. 5.2)** for further details).

2.3.6 The Northern Area lies adjacent to and is accessed via Station Road. The South Eastern Area lies adjacent to and is accessed via Goldwell Lane. The Central Area lies adjacent to and can be accessed via Station Road, Calleywell Lane and Roman Road. The South Western Area lies adjacent to Roman Road and Laws Lane and can be accessed via Roman Road.

2.3.7 Topographically, the Site is lowest at approximately 44m above Ordnance Datum (‘AOD’) within Field 19 in the north east and is highest on Goldwell Lane Site entrance at 76mAOD (see **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.3: Topography Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)** and **ES Volume 3, Figure 8.4: Topography Plan – Site Level (Doc Ref. 5.3)**).

2.4 Vehicular Access, Rights of Way and Public Transport

2.4.1 Vehicular access to the Site can be gained via the M20 motorway onto the A20 Hythe Road located to the north of the Site. As mentioned above, Station Road /

Calleywell Lane runs north to south centrally through the Site, connecting the A20 Hythe Road to the village of Aldington. Bank Road / Roman Road bisect the Central and South Western Areas of the Site.

2.4.2 There is a network of Public Rights of Way ('PRoW') and Byways which interact with the Site linking local villages as shown on **ES Volume 3, Figure 3.1: Existing Access Network (Doc Ref. 5.3)**. These include:

- AE 370 and AE 377 which run in a north west direction from Aldington to Mersham;
- AE 378, AE 428, AE 448, AE 431, AE 447 and AE 436 cross the Central Area of the Site adjacent to Station Road;
- AE 657 and AE 457 cross the Northern Area of the Site adjacent to the railway;
- AE 455, AE 475 and AE 454 cross the Site in the South Eastern Area;
- The AE 306 Byway runs south to north from Frith Road to Roman Road;
- AE 474 runs from Goldwell Lane in the west in a south easterly direction to Church Lane. It is a well-established and direct, off-road route;
- AE 385 currently runs through the South Western Area between Frith Road in the south, crossing Laws Lane, and continuing to intersect with Bank Road just east of Coopers Lane;
- AE 396 crosses the South Western Area, a BOAT which connects Frith Road to Bank Road; and
- AE 380 stops at Roman Road adjacent to the South Western Area.

2.4.3 There is limited public transport access surrounding the Site. The nearest bus stops are located within Aldington village along Roman Road, approximately 420m south west of the Site boundary at the closest point and serves bus routes 125 to Ashford and HS2 to Tenterden. The closest railway station to the Site is Ashford International, approximately 5.7km north west, and is served by both Southern Railway and Southeastern Railway.

2.5 Surrounding Area

Land Uses

2.5.1 The predominant surrounding land use in all directions is agriculture.

2.5.2 HS1 bounds the Northern Area and the Cable Route Corridor. The HS1 railway line is operated by Network Rail High Speed. A railway line, operated by Network Rail, runs between Ashford and Westenhanger and is located immediately adjacent to the HS1 railway line. A section of the Site crosses the HS1 and Network Rail railway lines where existing ducts containing UKPN infrastructure cross under the railway lines. UKPN has confirmed that they expect the existing ducts will be suitable for the cable route crossing under the railway lines but additional land under the railway lines and next to the Sellindge Substation is included to either side of the existing

UKPN infrastructure crossing ducts to allow for the installation of new ducting for grid connection cables if required.

- 2.5.3 The M20 motorway lies north of the railway, approximately 250m from the Site at its closest point, with distance to the M20 from the Site increasing towards the west. On the northern side of the railway line (south of the M20 motorway), there is Sellindge Substation (part of which forms part of the Site), HS1 feeder station and the Sellindge Sewage Treatment Works (located adjacent to the Sellindge Substation). To the north of the M20, west of Station Road, approximately 950m north of the Site, is The Caldecott School.
- 2.5.4 There is an existing circa 11MW solar project (Partridge Farm Solar Farm) located approximately 700m to the east of the Northern Area, directly south of Sellindge Substation which is accessed via Church Lane.
- 2.5.5 There is an existing UKPN 11kV substation and access track adjacent to Field 25 which does not form part of the Project or the Site.
- 2.5.6 The main residential area and other amenities (e.g. shops, pubs, open space) associated with the village of Aldington are located predominantly to the south and east of the Site. Visibility of the Site from Aldington is limited due to topography and existing vegetation.
- 2.5.7 There are a small number of residential properties close to the Site boundary, including to the south of the Site off Frith Road and at Roman Road/Bank Road (south of Fields 3, 7, 8, 9 and 12), to the east off Goldwell Lane and Church Lane (west of Fields 20 and 21), and to the west of the Site along Coopers Lane and Flood Street (west of Fields 1 and 2).

Other Development

- 2.5.8 The ES includes an assessment of likely significant cumulative effects of the Project with other relevant existing and / or approved development ('cumulative schemes'). Further details on cumulative schemes and assessment methodology are provided in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 6: EIA Methodology (Doc Ref. 5.2)**, **ES Volume 3, Figures 6.1 to 6.3 (Doc Ref. 5.3)** and **ES Volume 4, Appendix 6.1: List of Cumulative Schemes**. The cumulative effects of the Project with cumulative schemes are presented within each of the technical chapters of the ES (i.e., **ES Volume 2, Chapters 7 to 15 (Doc Ref. 5.2)**), with **ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Assessment (Doc Ref. 5.2)** providing a summary of significant cumulative effects identified.
- 2.5.9 The following cumulative schemes are located within 1km of the Site boundary:
- **ID. No. 1 Agricultural Barn** – Planning permission to change the use of an existing poultry shed to provide 75 self-storage units (use class B8) approved in March 2022.
 - **ID. No. 2 Goldwell Farm** – Planning permission for the demolition of an existing hay storage barn and erection of a proposed dwelling approved in January 2023.

- **ID. No. 3 Pivot Power Battery Storage** – Planning permission for a new battery storage facility on land between the East Stour Solar Farm and Church Lane, immediately west of the Sellindge Substation submitted by Pivot Power (part of EDF Renewables) approved in August 2023.
- **ID. No. 4 Walsh Power Condenser Project** – Planning permission for the erection of a synchronous condenser plant with ancillary infrastructure, access, landscaping and other incidental works approved in August 2023.
- **ID. No. 6 Glendale House, Coopers** - Planning permission for the demolition of existing units and hardstanding and erection of 3no. detached dwellings with associated access, parking, landscaping and infrastructure approved in August 2022.
- **ID. No. 7 Land north of 1 Church View** - A planning application for residential development consisting of 6 dwelling houses with associated infrastructure submitted in June 2019 and currently pending a decision.
- **ID. No. 8 Land south west of Goldwell Court** – A planning application for residential development consisting of 11 dwelling houses with associated access, parking, surface water attenuation pond and associated landscaping (including provision of open space) and agricultural field access submitted in June 2020, currently pending a decision.
- **ID. No. 9 East Stour Solar Farm** – A planning application for installation of a solar farm with a generating capacity of up to 49.9MW on land adjacent to the Site (and south of Sellindge Substation and north of the HS1 railway) submitted by EDF Renewables to ABC in April 2022. Refused in April 2024.
- **ID. No. 10 Otterpool Park Development** – Outline planning permission granted by Folkestone & Hythe District Council ('FHDC') in April 2023 for a comprehensive residential led mixed use development including up to 8,500 residential homes.

2.6 Environmental Designations

- 2.6.1 This section provides a summary of the existing environmental designations within the Site and within the surrounding area, with further baseline information provided within the technical chapters of the ES (i.e., **ES Volume 2, Chapters 7 to 15 (Doc Ref 5.2)**, **ES Volume 3, Figure 2.2: Environmental Designations (Doc Ref 5.3)** and **ES Volume 3, Figure 2.3: Key Features Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)** identify the existing environmental designations and key features within and close to the Site.

Cultural Heritage

- 2.6.2 There are no Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites, Registered Battlefields, or Registered Parks and Gardens within the Site. The closest Scheduled Monument is the 'Romano-British building S of Burch's Rough', which is 1.6km east of the Site boundary at its closest point. The closest Registered Park and Garden is Hatch Park located approximately 1.4km north west of the Site.
- 2.6.3 There are no designated built heritage assets within the Site. The Site has certain areas that hold the potential for archaeology as defined by the ABC Local Plan¹. The Site contains one designated heritage asset comprising the crash site of the

Second World War aircraft Messerschmitt Bf109E-4 (HER DKE22255) which crashed on or near the Site (in the vicinity of Handen Farm). The crash site is a Protected Military Remains ('PMR') site under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986. The Ministry of Defence granted a licence to the Applicant under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986 which applies to a radius of 100m around OS grid reference TR 059374. All available evidence indicates that the aircraft was recovered at the time of landing, or shortly thereafter, and no evidence of the aircraft now remains within the Site.

- 2.6.4 Designated heritage assets recorded within 1km of the Site include two Grade I Listed buildings, six Grade II* Listed buildings, seventy Grade II Listed buildings, two Conservation Areas and three further PMR sites.
- 2.6.5 The nearest heritage assets are the Grade II Listed assets at Bank Farm; 'Bank Farmhouse and wall attached' and 'Barn and 2 stable ranges attached, about 20 metres north of Bank Farmhouse'.
- 2.6.6 **Section 7.5 'Baseline Conditions' of ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage (Doc Ref. 5.2)** provides further details of heritage designations and assets.

Landscape Designations

- 2.6.7 The Site is not subject to any national or local landscape designations. The Kent Downs National Landscape ('NL'), formerly known as the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ('AONB'), is approximately 330m to the south and 3km north east of the Site. **Section 8.5 'Baseline Conditions' of ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Views (Doc Ref. 5.2)** provides further details of landscape designations.

Biodiversity

- 2.6.8 The Site is not subject to any statutory designations for nature conservation including Special Areas of Conservation ('SAC'), Special Protection Areas ('SPA'), Ramsar sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSI'), National Nature Reserves ('NNR') or Local Nature Reserves ('LNR').
- 2.6.9 There is one statutory designated site of national importance for its ecological interest within 2km of the Site: Hatch Park SSSI which is located approximately 1.8km to the north of the Site boundary.
- 2.6.10 One statutory designated site of local importance, Poulton Wood LNR, is located approximately 470m south of the Site boundary at its closest point. This LNR is known to support ancient and semi-natural woodland.
- 2.6.11 There are several non-statutory designated sites within 1km of the Site, including Backhouse Wood Local Wildlife Site ('LWS') (adjacent to the Northern Area), Aldington Sand Pit LWS (approximately 55m south east of the Site), Aldington Woods LWS (approximately 370m south of the Site), and Bilsington Woods and Pasture LWS (approximately 720m south west of the Site). These are shown on **ES Volume 2, Figure 9.2: Local Wildlife Sites (Doc Ref. 5.3)**.

- 2.6.12 The Site does not contain any ancient woodland, which are described as ancient, replanted woodland. The closest ancient woodland is associated with Backhouse Wood LWS immediately south of the Northern Area and Handen Wood approximately 85m south of Field 8.
- 2.6.13 **Section 9.5** 'Baseline Conditions' of **ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Biodiversity (Doc Ref. 5.2)** provides further details of nature conservation designations.

Water Resources and Flood Risk

- 2.6.14 The Site lies within the East Stour River and Romney Marsh between Appledore and West Hythe surface water catchments; with approximately 99% within the East Stour River surface water catchment. Due to its proximity to the East Stour River, the Site is located across Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3. A large flood storage area and embankment, the Aldington Flood Storage Area ('AFSA'), is located in the Northern Area. The AFSA embankment is located to the east of Fields 24 and 25.
- 2.6.15 Environment Agency ('EA') Flood Mapping (**ES Volume 3, Figure 10.4: Flood Map For Planning (Doc Ref. 5.3)**) indicates that the majority of the Site is located within Flood Zone 1 (identified as having less than a 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river (fluvial) flooding, which is defined as 'low' probability). Most of the Northern Area (Fields 26 to 29) and Fields 19 and 23 to 25 of the Central Area of the Site are classified by the EA as in Flood Zone 2 (identified as land having between a 1 in 100 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding, which is defined as 'medium' probability) and Flood Zone 3 (identified as land having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding, which is defined as 'high' probability). Parts of the Cable Route Corridor and Sellindge Substation are also located within Flood Zones 2 and 3.
- 2.6.16 The majority of the bedrock beneath the Site is not considered to be an aquifer (i.e. holds no groundwater). There are however areas of the Site which are underlain by Principal Aquifer although there are no abstractions or private water supplies within 2km of the Site; and the Site is not within a Source Protection Zone ('SPZ').
- 2.6.17 Further details are provided in **Section 10.5** 'Baseline Conditions' of **ES Volume 2, Chapter 10: Water Environment (Doc Ref. 5.2)**.

Air Quality

- 2.6.18 The Site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area ('AQMA'). The closest AQMA to the Site is over 30km west in the administrative area of Maidstone Borough Council.

References

- ¹ Ashford Borough Council, (2019). Ashford Local Plan 2030. February 2019. Accessed October 2023. <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/jw3nbvq1/adopted-ashford-local-plan-2030.pdf>