Proposed Solar Farm Development

Land at Fairy Hill, Compton Dando, Somerset

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment
Rev B

SWAN PAUL
PARTNERSHIP LTD
CHARTERED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Swan Paul Partnership Ltd is instructed Communities for Renewables to prepare this landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA). This assessment relates to the proposed installation of a 2.1 MW* ground mounted community solar array, within part of a 5.9 hectares field at Fairy Hill, Compton Dando, Somerset. (*estimated capacity).

1.1.2 The development is proposed to operate for a period of 30 years after which it will be possible to remove the panels and above ground infrastructure and return the site to its current condition or an alternative use; accordingly, the proposals are fully reversible.

1.1.4 Throughout this document measurements are provided of distances to and from the site of various elements. For the avoidance of doubt this should be taken to mean the site centre at grid reference ST 6478 6516.

1.2 A Description of the Development

1.2.1 A detailed description of the development proposal is given in section five of this report, but in brief the proposal comprises the installation of 4264 no. 500W ground mounted Photo voltaic modules along with its operational infrastructure, including access track, transformer substation, customer switchgear, DNO Cabin and satellite communication equipment. The development is set within a 5.9-hectare field, currently agricultural land, and will cover an area of approximately 2 hectares in the middle of the field. The installation will be surrounded by a 2m high deer fence. The location of the site is shown in the drawing **SPP01 Site Location Plan**.

1.2.2 The land around the Fairy Hill community solar array will be turned into a community resource including planting and habitat areas to create a new community wild space for the village.

1.3 Scope of Assessment

1.3.1 The report will consider the potential impact of these proposals, if any, from the surrounding areas both on views and to the landscape and if necessary to recommend appropriate mitigation. Its purpose is to inform and enhance the design of the proposed development and assist the Local Authority in its consideration of the proposal. During the assessment, effects on features identified as important to the landscape quality, or effects on the landscape character of the site and its setting are assessed together with effects on views of the site and its setting, or visual amenity.

1.3.2 The objectives of the assessment are to:

- Describe and evaluate the landscape and visual amenity of the site and surrounding area which may be affected by the proposed development;
- Identify and assess the level of any effects on landscape or visual amenity, associated with the proposed development;
- Set out mitigation measures which have been incorporated into the scheme design and are proposed in order to avoid, reduce or remedy adverse effects;

- Describe any enhancements of the landscape or visual amenity incorporated into the design of the proposed development.
- To enable the Determining Authority to make a decision on the planning application, based on the detailed and objective assessment of the above factors.

1.3.3 This LVIA report is supported by the following drawings, included in Appendix 1. The drawings are:

- **Drawing SPP01 Site Location**
- **Drawing SPP02 Landscape Appraisal**
- **Drawing SPP03 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)**
- **Drawing SPP04 Viewpoint Locations**
- **Drawing SPP05 Proposed PV Layout**
- **Drawing 3282.001 REV B Mitigation Plan**
- **Drawing SPP07 Cumulative Effects Developments**
- **Field Access Drawing 24002-001**
- **Fairy Hill (lane) photographs looking North and South**

2.0 Assessment Methodology

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The methodology used for assessing the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development is based on the recommendations and guidance published by The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)', third edition released April 2013. The guidance is not prescriptive, it concentrates on principles and process, but does not provide a detailed 'recipe' that is to be followed in every case. Swan Paul has therefore used this guidance to formulate a methodology which we believe is appropriate for purpose.

2.1.2 GLVIA3 is also written and in accordance with clarification 1/13 issued by the above. This gives further guidance on determining 'significance' and where the differences lie between EIA assessment and Non-EIA landscape assessment. As this development is one of the latter, point 4 of this document will apply and states:

- *4 - " For Non-EIA Landscape assessment and Visual Impact Appraisal:*
  In carrying out appraisals, the same principles and process as LVIA may be applied but, in so doing, it is not required to establish whether the effects arising are or are not significant, given that the exercise is not being undertaken for EIA purposes. The reason is that should a landscape professional apply LVIA principles and processes in carrying out an appraisal and then go on to determine that certain effects would be likely be significant, given the term 'significant' is enshrined in EIA Regulations, such a judgement could trigger the requirement for a formal EIA. The emphasis on likely 'significant effects' in formal LVIA stresses the need for an approach that is proportional to the scale of the development."

2.1.3 Clauses 3.32 – 3.36 of the GLVIA3 document give guidelines for the judgement of the significance of effects. As this this study is an LVIA and not a supporting chapter to a full EIA report, Swan Paul has used the guidelines to establish if any effects will be 'substantial', rather than 'significant'. This methodology therefore establishes a word scale to establish a distinction between levels of effect (3.34 GLVIA3) and these are described in the tables 6 and 7 of this LVIA.

2.1.4 Identifying and describing the effects of a proposal needs to assess the scale of the change it will have on the landscape character and visual amenity. These are determined through looking at the sensitivity and magnitude of both the landscape and visual receptors.

- "***Sensitivity"***- *(*The nature of the receptor) - *A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgments of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.*"
- "***Magnitude"*** *(*The nature of the effect*) - A term that combines judgments about the size and scale of the effect of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration."*

In a landscape and visual impact assessment, landscape and visual receptors need to be identified:

- *Landscape receptors* include the elements that physically form that landscape, its perceptual qualities and character.

- *Visual receptors* are the people who will be affected by changes in views or visual amenity at different places.

Different types of receptors may have different levels of sensitivity that can also affect the perception of the development for the landscape and visual receptor.

2.1.5 Landscape and visual impact assessment requires a combination of objective analysis and subjective professional judgment. It follows a defined methodology based on published guidance comprising a combination of desk studies and field surveys, with subsequent analysis. The desk study includes reference to other studies and landscape assessments, including those undertaken at a national, regional and local level. It involves analysis and evaluation of the baseline, including landscape features, landscape character, and views available of the site and the effects on them likely to arise from the proposed development. In outline, the assessment involves:

- A site survey and inspection of publicly accessible viewpoints with views of the site, including a photographic survey;
- A desk study to review landscape designations; a review of published landscape characterisation to define areas of distinct character, with a description of their distinguishing characteristics and qualities;
- An evaluation of the landscape of the site, its context and setting and the sensitivity of the site and the receiving landscapes, including their ability to accommodate the changes associated with the proposed development;
- Analysis of the sensitivity of the visual receptors and their ability to accommodate change, based upon a viewpoint survey;
- The identification of potential landscape and visual effects, their magnitude and scale;
- A consideration of cumulative landscape and visual effects, if relevant;
- Consideration of mitigation and enhancement measures to avoid, reduce or remedy detrimental effects on the landscape or on views;
- And an assessment of the scale of the impacts, with design and committed mitigation measures in place.

2.1.6 The extent of the study area is determined by the nature and scale of the development and the likely sphere of influence within which substantial effects could be expected (GLVIA3 clause 5.2). For this development a study area within a 5km radius has been selected for the wider implications of change to the baseline conditions. For the more detailed site level effects a distance of 1.0km from the site red line boundary is considered appropriate.

2.2 Landscape Baseline Methodology

2.2.1 Landscape receptors include elements of the physical landscape or landscape fabric, for example vegetation, boundaries, landform, land use and other landscape features. These are combinations of features and patterns, which give rise to particular characteristics or landscape character, and which may be affected by the proposed development.

2.2.2 The potential landscape receptors include:

- Topography that provides a backdrop or obscures views.
- Existing land, water bodies and vegetation that are part of the setting of the site and the selected study area.

- The value of landscape receptors can also reflect areas with landscape designations such as National Parks, AONB's, SSSI's etc.
- Landscapes that help define regional and local landscape character.
- Landscape tranquility.

2.2.3 The landscape character baseline is based on fieldwork observations and reference to other landscape studies and landscape character assessments. Assessments are ideally prepared at different scales that should fit together as a nested series or a hierarchy of landscape character types and/or areas, such that each level of assessment adds more detail to the one above. The three main levels identified by Natural England are: national scale; regional scale and local scale.

2.2.4 Landscape Value

As part of the baseline description the GLVIA 3 guidelines state that the value of the potentially affected landscapes should be considered in order to help inform the sensitivity of the receptor and its susceptibility to change (GLVIA3 5.19-5.32). This should consider the value not only of the site and its immediate environs, but also the defined study area. Landscapes or their component parts may be valued at the community, local, national or international levels. A review of existing landscape designations is usually a starting point, but the value attached to undesignated landscapes also needs to be considered. This assessment therefore examines the landscape and considers the potential value using the following terminology:

- **Excellent Value** - Areas of very high-quality landscape, probably within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Parks, but not exclusively so, having outstanding scenic values as well as quality managed landscapes. They may be nationally important in historical or cultural terms. Visitors and tourists will make special journeys to view and perhaps stay.
- **Good Value** -These areas are of particularly outstanding regional or local quality and may have a designated protection by the planning authority for example conservation areas, heritage listings, SSSI's or other national habitat designations. They will also be of high scenic quality with well-managed landscapes.
- **Average Value** - Landscapes that have an attractive quality, are unspoilt and are well maintained and enjoyed on a local level. Unlikely to have any designations.
- **Fair Value** - These areas are landscapes that have been changed and are unlikely to match the local character. Possibly related to urban areas or spoilt by adjacent developments.
- **Poor Value** -Landscapes that have been neglected or run down that have very little character and may need restoring. Any development may enable an improvement to such a landscape, by giving it a positive use.

2.2.5 The NPPF at paragraph 174 (a) states that the planning system should '*protect and enhance valued landscapes*' and this is further enhanced at Paragraph 176 where it states, regarding LPA policy: '*Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues*'. Designated landscapes would therefore have a higher rating on the value scale described in 2.2.4.

2.2.6 Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations - This report is at a transition between the previous methodology which uses the criteria from Box 5.1 of the GLVIA 3 guidelines, and the more recent Technical Guidance Note 02/21 issued by the Landscape Institute to update this process. Revision C of this report is an update of the original LVIA written when the previous methodology was current and as the differences between Box 5.1 and TGN 02/21 are fairly minor (the categories for consideration remain broadly similar). The discussion of the criteria from Box 5.1 therefore remains as below:
The site is not set within a designated landscape and the value is to be determined through a combination of desk study and site analysis of the factors that are considered to influence value in this location, as described in Box 5.1 (p84) of the Guidelines. The list is not prescriptive but can include the following:

- **Landscape Quality (condition):** A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.
- **Scenic Quality:** The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses (primarily but not wholly the visual senses).
- **Rarity:** The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare landscape character type.
- **Representativeness:** Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or elements which are considered particularly important examples.
- **Conservation Interests:** The presence of features of wildlife, earth science, archaeological or historical or cultural interest.
- **Recreation Value:** Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.
- **Perceptual Aspects:** A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness or tranquility.
- **Associations:** Some landscapes are associated with particular people , such as artists or writers or events in history.

Some of these elements are considered directly in the baseline studies section of this report and some may be considered within separate site survey and record notes (if of a lesser relevance). They are then distilled into the overall landscape 'Value' rating stated in the baseline studies.

2.3 Visual Baseline Methodology

2.3.1 The GLVIA 3 states that visual receptors are always people, and the baseline studies will identify some of the people within the study area who will be affected by the changes in views and visual amenity as defined by specific viewpoints. The viewpoints should be assessed for their susceptibility to change, and the value attached to particular views. The nature of views should also be considered in terms of whether they are direct, glimpsed or oblique and whether they will have seasonal variation.

2.3.2 Desk Study
The desk study includes computer studies to test the visibility of the proposed development, this is known as Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping and has been carried out in accordance with GLVIA3 (Clause 6.11) with a maximum height of the development set in this

case at 2m and taking an eye level sweep across the study landscape at 1.5m above ground levels. The ZTV map is used to identify the general locations and extent of the visual envelope for the proposed development. This only uses terrain data and does not take into account potential screening features such as vegetation and structures. From this plan a representative selection of viewpoints has been chosen to give a fair reflection of public views that may be possible from the surrounding area. These viewpoints are then tested at the site analysis stage, which in line with GLVIA3 (clause 6.10) are assessed for their effects on potential visibility by field study to see how conditions 'on the ground' relate to the ZTV plan and whether a particular viewpoint is suitable for inclusion in the analysis.

2.3.3 Photography

The photographs used in this assessment follow best practice set out in the *Landscape Institute's guidance TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of development proposals (as updated).* The guide recommends using a lens with a focal length equivalent to 50 mm for a 35 mm Single Lens Reflex (SLR) camera, and a horizontal field of view of a little under 40 degrees. The camera used for the appraisal photography was a Canon EOS 6D digital SLR camera; with a 50mm prime focal length lens with a viewing height of 1.5m.

2.3.4 The viewpoints are located with their Ordnance Survey grid reference and height above Ordnance Datum.

2.4 Assessment and Mitigation Methodology

2.4.1 The degree of the likely landscape effects associated with the proposed development is determined by relating the ability of the landscape to accommodate the changes, referred to as sensitivity, and the magnitude of the changes to which they would be subjected**. Tables 1 & 2** define the categories of landscape and visual sensitivity to change and **Table 3 &4** define magnitude.

Criteria for degrees of value or sensitivity, magnitude of change, and scale of effects, are set out in the following tables.

2.4.2 Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity combines judgments on the ability of the landscape receptors to accommodate the type of development proposed without serious change to the baseline conditions and value (2.2.7). It relates to the stability of landscape character, the degree to which that character is robust enough to continue and to be able to recuperate from loss or damage.

Table 1: Landscape Sensitivity

Level	Definition
High:	*A landscape of national/ international importance;* *Many landscape elements sensitive to disturbance;* *No or Limited potential for substitution or replacement.* *Landscapes of excellent value.*

Medium	*A landscape of regional importance;* *Some features sensitive to disturbance;* *Potential for substitution or replacement.* *Landscapes of good value.*
Low:	*A landscape of Local importance;* *Few features sensitive to disturbance;* *Good potential for substitution or replacement.* *Landscapes of average to fair value.*
Negligible:	*A landscape of minimal importance with no special scenic, ecological or historic designations.* *No features sensitive to change.* *Changes may improve character and value.* *Landscapes of poor value.*

2.4.3 Visual Sensitivity

The sensitivity of views is affected by factors such as the landscape value (2.2.7) and how many viewers are affected and the scale of the proposed development in the overall view. The context of the viewpoint may also contribute to the ability to accommodate change, for example, a view from residential properties or from a valued landscape is regarded as less able to accommodate change, than a view from an industrial context. Table 2 defines the categories of visual sensitivity.

Table 2: Visual Sensitivity

Level	Definition
High:	*A view from residential or community properties or experienced by many viewers;* *Daily, prolonged, or sustained views available over a long period, or where the view of the landscape is an important attractant.* *A view from a valued landscape, or a nationally important recreation facility.* *Landscapes of excellent value.*
Medium:	*A view from moderate numbers of residential or community properties or experienced by moderate numbers of viewers;* *Frequent open views available, or where the view of the landscape is an attractant;* *A view from a valued landscape, or a regionally important recreation facility.* *Landscapes of good value.*
Low:	*A view from small numbers of residential or community properties or experienced by small numbers of viewers;* *Occasional open views available, viewers are pursuing activities such as sports or outdoor work;* *A view from a landscape of moderate importance, or a locally important recreation facility.* *Landscapes of average to fair value.*

Negligible:	*A view of low importance, available to few viewers or where the view of the landscape is not the reason for visiting;* *Glimpsed views; passing views available to travellers in vehicles;* *A view available to few viewers where the development is a relatively unimportant element in the view, and with good potential for mitigation of adverse effects.* *Landscapes of poor value.*

2.4.4 Magnitude of Effect

For effects on landscape and visual receptors the effect needs to be assessed in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of an area or view which is influenced and the duration and reversibility of the effects. Table 3 defines the categories of landscape effect magnitude and Table 4 the visual effect magnitude.

Table 3: Magnitude – Landscape Effects

Magnitude of impact	Criteria
High	*Total loss, major alteration or major enhancement of the landscape character, features and key elements*
Medium	*Partial loss, alteration or enhancement to landscape character and / or elements*
Low	*Minor loss, slight change to character and / or elements*
Negligible	*Very minor change to character and / or elements*
None	*No loss or alteration*

Table 4: Magnitude – Visual Effects

Magnitude of impact	Criteria
High	*Total loss, major alteration or major enhancement of the visual resource, features and key elements*
Medium	*Partial loss, alteration or enhancement to visual resource and / or elements*
Low	*Minor loss, slight change to visual resource and / or elements*
Negligible	*Very minor change to visual resource and / or elements*
None	*No loss or alteration*

2.4.5 Assessment Criteria

The scale of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development is determined by the ability of the landscape to accommodate the changes arising from the development proposal (the sensitivity), and the degree of change this will potentially create in the landscape or view to which they will be subjected (the magnitude).

Previous methodologies (in GLVIA 1 and 2) put more emphasis on tabulating these effects to support the discussion and help the reader understand how a particular decision on the scale of effect has been made. GLVIA 3 is moving away from this approach as it can lead to a formulaic response and suggests that effects are described in detail in text form. Swan Paul has found that the typical audience receiving an appraisal/ assessment for consideration can be more

comfortable with the previous method and find reports easier to understand if the tabulated method of arriving at a scale of effect is retained in support of the text. The tabulated impacts should not be read in isolation, as the text provides a detailed description of the effects and explains any variation that may arise from the more formulaic tabulated methodology.

In this assessment, the following table (Table 5) is used to grade the scale of effect from substantial through moderate to slight, negligible and no change, and a definition of the grades and how they may impact on the landscape or visual resource is defined in Table 6 and Table 7. These should be read in conjunction with the detailed description of effects for each receptor in the text.

Table 5: Scale of Effect

Therefore magnitude + sensitivity = Scale of Effect

MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT	***SENSITIVITY OF RECEPTOR***			
	Negligible	***Low***	***Medium***	***High***
None	*No change*	*No change*	*No change*	*No change*
Negligible	*Negligible*	*Negligible/ Slight*	*Slight*	*Slight/ Moderate*
Low	*Negligible/ Slight*	*Slight*	*Slight/ Moderate*	*Moderate*
Medium	*Slight*	*Slight/ Moderate*	*Moderate*	*Moderate/ Substantial*
High	*Slight/ Moderate*	*Moderate*	*Moderate/ Substantial*	*Substantial*

2.4.6 Scale of Effect – Definitions

A definition of how the terms used to describe the scale of effect in Table 5 may apply to the development is shown in more detail in Tables 6 and 7 below. The tables establish a level of effect that is judged to be the most substantial towards the top of the scale and the least substantial towards the lower end. The assessment text will provide supporting information on whether the levels of effect can be considered very adverse for the landscape or visual resource in question. In general, this is likely to be the case for effects that are judged to be **moderate/ substantial** or **substantial**. The effects will also be assessed after any mitigation has been applied to reduce or offset the change.

The effect can additionally be described in the following ways:

- Type of effect: Direct, indirect, secondary or cumulative.
- Duration of effect: Short, medium or long-term.
- Nature of effect: Permanent or temporary and positive, neutral or negative.

Table 6: Scale of Effect - Impacts on Landscape

Measure of effects	Definition

Substantial	The proposed scheme would change the character and/or appearance of a sensitive landscape for a long period of time or permanently. The proposed scheme would result in effects that are at a complete variance within the landform, scale and pattern of landscape and could permanently degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of valued characteristic features, elements and / or setting : **or** Considerable improvement to the landscape over a wide area sufficient to alter perceptions and upgrade overall landscape character.
Moderate/ Substantial:	Considerable adverse change to the features, elements, character, or quality of a sensitive landscape, with limited scope for mitigation (or lesser change in very sensitive landscape); **or** Some improvement to the landscape over an area sufficient to alter perceptions and moderately improve landscape character.
Moderate:	Discernible adverse change to landscape character, features, or elements of medium-high sensitivity, but with scope for mitigation; **or** Positive improvements to landscape character and quality.
Slight/ Moderate:	Some adverse change to the existing landscape character which may affect an area of recognised landscape quality, but has good scope for mitigation; **or** Perceptible improvement to the existing landscape quality.
Slight:	Localised or limited adverse change to the existing landscape character with considerable scope for mitigation; **or** Localised improvement to the existing landscape quality.
Negligible/ Slight	Very slight change to the existing landscape character and quality, **or** the change is difficult to discern, and the impact is neutral.
Negligible/ None:	The proposed scheme is appropriate in its context and makes no negative or positive landscape impacts.

Table 7: Scale of Effect - Impacts on Visual Amenity

Measure of effects	Definition
Substantial:	Major visual intrusion experienced from settlements or numbers of properties and/or from sensitive public viewpoints where the development would cause a large deterioration in the existing view with limited scope for mitigation (or a lesser intrusion in highly sensitive views); **or** An improvement in the view, sufficient to provide benefits to visual amenity over a wide area.
Moderate/ Substantial:	Visual intrusion on settlements or numbers of properties and/or from public viewpoints where the development would cause deterioration in the existing view, but with scope for mitigation; **or** A reduction in visual intrusion, or considerable improvement in the view.
Moderate:	Noticeable visual intrusion with elements at variance with the scale and quality of the existing visual amenity but with scope for mitigation; **or** Good potential for reduction in visual intrusion, or very noticeable improvement in the view.

Slight/ Moderate:	Minor visual intrusion attributable to the development or a perceptible deterioration in the existing view, with scope for mitigation; **or** Localised reduction in visual intrusion & noticeable improvement in the local view.
Slight	The proposed scheme would cause small adverse changes to the visual amenity but would affect a limited number of receptors. Good scope for mitigation; or Localised improvement to the existing visual quality.
Negligible/ Slight	The proposed scheme would result in minimal change to the views and would be difficult to differentiate from its surroundings. It would affect few receptors; **or** the proposed scheme may have the potential to slightly improve the visual quality.
Negligible/ None:	The proposed scheme is appropriate in its context and makes no negative or positive visual impacts.

2.5 Glint and Glare

2.5.1 Background on Glint and Glare

There is a perceived issue of glint and glare surrounding the reflectivity of PV solar panels. As a result of the perceived reflection levels, there may be a concern of possible distractions to motorists, aircraft and other sensitive receptors. The Poly-Crystalline Solar Panels, the most commonly used type, are designed to absorb the suns energy and directly convert it to electricity (not to reflect it). PV modules of this type absorb approximately 82-90% of the light received.

2.5.2 The level of glare and reflectivity from PV solar panels is considerably lower than the level of glare and reflectance of farm land or other surfaces (see below) and is additionally reduced by the anti-reflective coating used on nearly all makes. PV panels therefore only reflect approximately 10-18% of energy which is less than typical rural environments which have a reflectivity of approximately 15-30%.

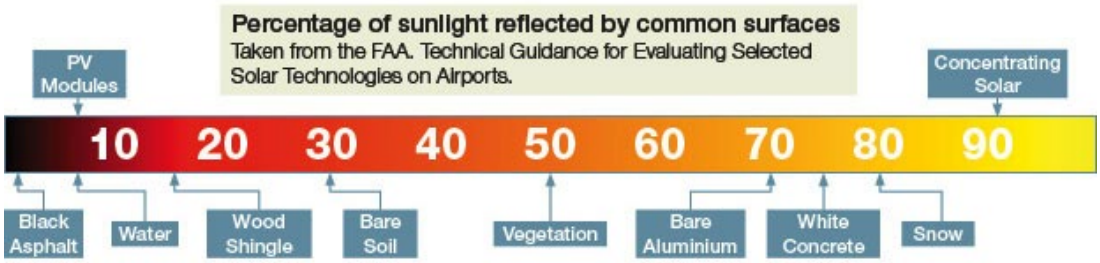


Figure 2: A comparison table showing the reflective qualities of a range of landscape elements.

2.5.3 The PV panels at solar farms have the same or less glint and glare than a body of water, an open-air car park or a field of ripe rapeseed. If glare is considered a particular issue at this site, then a separate glint and glare assessment should be carried out as it is not within the scope of this report to cover the subject in detail.

3.0 Policy Context

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This assessment will consider the national, regional and local planning policy which relates to landscape and visual matters and is of relevance to the proposed development at this particular site.

3.2 National Planning Policy Framework February 2021

The National Planning Policy Framework February (2021) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The specific policies of the NPPF that relate to issues of landscape character and visual impact are set out below.

3.2.1 At section 15 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment' there are paragraphs of the NPPF that identify how development proposals should respond to their location and setting. Those of relevance for this site and development proposal include:

Paragraph 174: Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 175: Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

Paragraph 176: Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

3.2.2 The NPPF states that local plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. Paragraph 176 specifically references nationally designated landscapes; however, paragraph 174 also references the protection of valued landscapes. The site does not lie within a nationally designated landscape but does fall within the Green Belt See 3.2.3

3.2.3 Habitats and biodiversity

Paragraph 179: To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of

importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

3.2.4 The site does not lie within a nationally designated landscape but does fall within the Green Belt within the Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan. Green Belt is a spatial planning tool with and not associated with landscape protection or landscape quality. It does however have a visual component.

At section 13 of the NPPF 'Protecting Green Belt Land '
Paragraph 142: The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

Paragraph 143. Green Belt serves five purposes:
a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
e) to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Paragraph 153. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 156. When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

At section 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Paragraph 163b goes on to state: "When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should: (…) b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable…"

3.3 Planning Practice Guidance for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy – Updated March 2015

3.3.1 This guidance was produced by The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) July 2013 and should be read alongside other national and local planning practice guidance.

3.3.2 Particular considerations for large scale PV farms include:

- *"where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays."*
- *"that solar farms are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use."*
- *"the proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety are considered."*
- *"the need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing"*
- *"great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting"*
- *"the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges."*

3.4 The Local Development Framework

3.4.1 The local development framework for the area is in the Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) Local Plan (2011-2029) Core and Placemaking incorporating the Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) (adopted 19 Jan 2023). The LPPU sets out a schedule of changes to the original plan to address a range of urgent issues in the area including the climate and ecological emergency declarations. It has strengthened the Local Plan Policy for Renewable Energy.

3.4.2 The is no neighbourhood plan in this area.

3.4.3 With reference to landscape and visual matters the relevant policies for this site would include:

- ***Core Strategy Policy CP3 'Renewable Energy'.***
  1) Proposals for all renewable and low carbon energy-generating and distribution networks, will be supported in the context of sustainable development and climate change, where:
  a) They balance the wider environmental, social and economic benefits of renewable electricity, heat and/or fuel production and distribution;
  b) They will not result in significant adverse impacts on the local environment that cannot be satisfactorily mitigated, and they accord with national policy, including:
  • impacts to biodiversity;
  • landscape and visual impacts including cumulative effects;
  • impacts on the special qualities of all nationally important or protected landscapes, which must be conserved or enhanced;
  • when considering applications for development within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances …….;
  c) They are informed by an assessment of the impact the development might have on the significance of heritage assets and their setting…;

d) They are supportive of land diversification and continued agricultural use;
e) They provide at least 10% biodiversity net gain and multi-functional Green Infrastructure e.g., permissive paths and wildlife corridors; and
f) There are appropriate plans and a mechanism in place for the removal of the technology on cessation of generation, and restoration of the site to its original use or an acceptable alternative use;

3) Ground Mounted Solar Energy
The Council particularly encourages ground mounted solar energy development proposals on land which is not functionally linked to nationally protected sites (SACs; SPAs, SSSIs) in the high, moderate-high, moderate potential areas set out in the Solar Assessment Report and shown on the Policies Map (LLPU 2023 Annex 1 CP3 Landscape sensitivity for solar energy (Band A) p261) (subject to the other criteria in this policy).
…….
In addition, ground mounted solar energy development proposals will be supported where they:

a).Are not sited on the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2, and 3a) unless significant sustainability benefits are demonstrated to outweigh any loss;
b) Maintain grazing regimes within SAC bat sustenance zones;
c) Avoid the loss of hedgerow & woodland connectivity;
d) Avoid the loss and deterioration of UK priority habitats (as shown on the Policies Map); and
e) Meet current best practice guidelines and standards on protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

- ***Core Strategy Policy CP6 'Environmental Quality'***
  seeks to protect, conserve and enhance the distinctive character and quality of the District's urban and rural environmental assets; historic environment; landscape and habitats.
  Policy NE2 provides a more detailed policy framework to ensure landscape character and quality is protected, conserved and enhanced across the District."
  Policy NE5 provides details for Ecology network and nature recovery and the need to create a coherent network of more robust and resilient natural habitats.
- ***Policy D2: Local Character and Distinctiveness***
  Development proposals will be supported where they contribute positively to and do not harm local character and distinctiveness and states that development proposals should
  a) positively responded to the site context, in particular the local character…….
  d) enhance and respond to natural features including landscape, green infrastructure, skylines, topography and landform and views.
  g) The development reflects materials, colours, textures, landscape and boundary treatments that are appropriate to the area

- ***Policy NE2 Conserving and Enhancing Landscape and Landscape Character***
  1) Development will be permitted where it:
  - *conserves or enhances local landscape character, landscape features and local distinctiveness.*

- *incorporates green space within the scheme that positively contributes to creating a high-quality environment by enhancing landscape character and biodiversity and providing sustainable public access and other landscape benefits.*
- *is demonstrated that the whole scheme, including hard landscape and planting proposals, will contribute positively to the local area including reference to relevant existing landscape assessments supplemented by any additional assessments.*
- *conserves or enhances important views particularly those to significant landmarks and features and take opportunities to create new local views and vistas.*

2) Development should seek to avoid or adequately mitigate any adverse impact on landscape.

3) Proposals with potential to impact on the landscape/townscape character of an area or on views should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment undertaken by a qualified practitioner to inform the design and location of any new development.

4) Great weight will be afforded to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty of designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), ….

- ***Policy NE5 Ecology Network and Nature Recovery –***
  Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate that a positive contribution will be made to regional Nature Recovery Networks as shown on the polices Map and for maintaining or creating ecological networks through habitat creation, habitat creation, protection, enhancement, restoration and/or management.
  Bath & North East Somerset is part of the West of England Nature Partnership (WENP) which has mapped a series of Nature Recovery Networks. The site is near both a woodland and waterway strategic network. (LLPU 2023 Annex 1 NE Nature Recovery Networks p271)

- ***Policy NE6 – Tree and Woodland Conservation***
  1) Development will only be permitted where:
  a) it seeks to avoid any adverse impact on trees and woodlands of wildlife, landscape, historic, amenity, productive or cultural value; and
  b) it includes the appropriate retention and new planting of trees and woodlands; and
  3) Development proposals directly or indirectly affecting ancient woodland or /and ancient trees or veteran trees will not be permitted.

- ***Core Strategy Policy CP7 'Green Infrastructure'***
  Green Infra structure is defined "as a network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities".
  Policy CP7 sets out a requirement so:-
  The integrity, multi-functionality, quality and connectivity of the strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) network will be protected, enhanced and managed. Opportunities will be taken to connect with, improve and extend the network. Existing and new GI must be planned, delivered and managed as a key delivery mechanism for nature recovery and an integral part of creating healthy and sustainable communities.

- ***Policy NE1:Development and Green Infrastructure***

1) *Development will be permitted provided.*
   a) it can be demonstrated that the proposed development will maximize opportunities for effective and functional Green Infrastructure (GI) focusing on the use of nature-based solutions to deliver community benefit.
   b) it does not adversely affect the integrity and value of strategic GI corridors;
   c) the scheme makes a positive contribution to the GI network through the creation, enhancement and management of new, and existing GI assets

The site is within a Strategic Green Infrastructure corridor as shown on the Policy Map BANES Council has adopted the West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy 2020-2030 (JGIS)

- ***Core Strategy Policy CP8 – 'Green Belt' –***
  The openness of the Green Belt will be protected from inappropriate development in accordance with national planning policy.

Bristol/Bath Green Belt within Bath and North East Somerset *Bristol/Bath Green Belt within Bath and North East Somerset*

Purposes of including land in the Green Belt:
1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of Bath and Bristol.
2. to prevent the merging of Bristol, Keynsham, Saltford and Bath.
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
4. To preserve the setting and special character of Bath.
5. To assist in urban regeneration of Bath and Bristol by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
6.To preserve the individual character, identity and setting of Keynsham and the villages and hamlets within the Green Belt.

Objectives for the use of land in the Green Belt:
1. To provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban populations of Bath, Bristol, Keynsham and Norton Radstock.
2. To provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near Bath, Bristol and Keynsham.
3. To retain attractive landscapes and enhance landscapes.
4. To improve damaged or derelict land.
5. To secure nature conservation interests.
6. to retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses

- ***Policy GB1- Visual Amenities of the Green Belt***
  Development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt should not prejudice but seek to enhance the visual amenities of the Green Belt by reason of its siting, design or materials used for its construction.

3.5 Planning for Solar Parks in the South West of England – Regen South West 2010

3.5.1 This guidance note has been prepared by Regen SW to support developers and decision makers in their consideration of planning issues raised by solar park development.

3.5.2 Extracts from the guidance on siting and design in order to minimize landscape and visual effects and which is of relevance to this site would include:

- *Sites should be screened from view where possible, either by the existing landscape or by*

planting hedges or vegetation. A balance is required between providing satisfactory screening and avoiding shading of the PV panels. The site layout is therefore an important consideration for the landscape impact.

3.6 Bath and North East Somerset Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) for Renewable Energy Development (LUC, 2021)

3.6.1 In response to developing National policy commissioned the Bath and North East Somerset Council commissioned the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) for Renewable Energy Development (LUC, 2021) which through the LPPU set out a landscape led approach for wind energy and ground-mounted solar PV to guide development to the best locations. (The sensitivity study is also considered in section 4.6 Baseline Conclusion: The Capacity of the Site to Accommodate Change)

3.6.2 The report identifies the potential for renewable energy development (both wind and ground mounted solar) of different sizes of development within the areas Landscape Character Types. The study considers 4 bands based on the size of the area less than or equal to 5 hectares (A), 5-10 hectares (B), 10-15 hectares (C) and 15-30 hectares (D). The report used a selection of landscape sensitivity indicators, informed by the attributes of the landscape. The study assessed 5 key criteria.

- Landform and scale (including sense of openness /enclosure);
- Landcover (including field and settlement patterns);
- Historic landscape character;
- Visual character (including skylines); and
- Perceptual and scenic qualities.

For Band A Solar PV Developments in the Landscape Character Type, where the proposed site lies (i.e. LCT 2 Rolling Farmland including the Chew Valley LCA 2B) the overall potential was considered to be **moderate to high** where "fewer of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are vulnerable to change. The landscape is likely to be able to accommodate new solar PV with limited change in character"

3.7 Informal Guidance Note: Renewable energy in the Green Belt in Bath & North East Somerset – Regen South West and Bath and North East Somerset Council 2013

3.7.1 This guidance confirms that "in order to meet the district-(Bath and North East Somerset) wide target and take advantage of the environmental and economic benefits of renewable energy, some renewable energy development in the Green Belt will be necessary. …Approximately 70 per cent of Bath & North East Somerset is designated as Green Belt land".

3.7.2 There is a national policy presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is harmful by definition. One of the purposes of the Green Belt is to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. The openness of the Green Belt is one of the key features and openness is defined largely by freedom from development. Harm to the openness of the Green Belt should be avoided if possible.

The guidance states "Many free-standing renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate

development in the Green Belt and will need to demonstrate 'very special circumstances' to clearly outweigh the harm. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate this including the following:

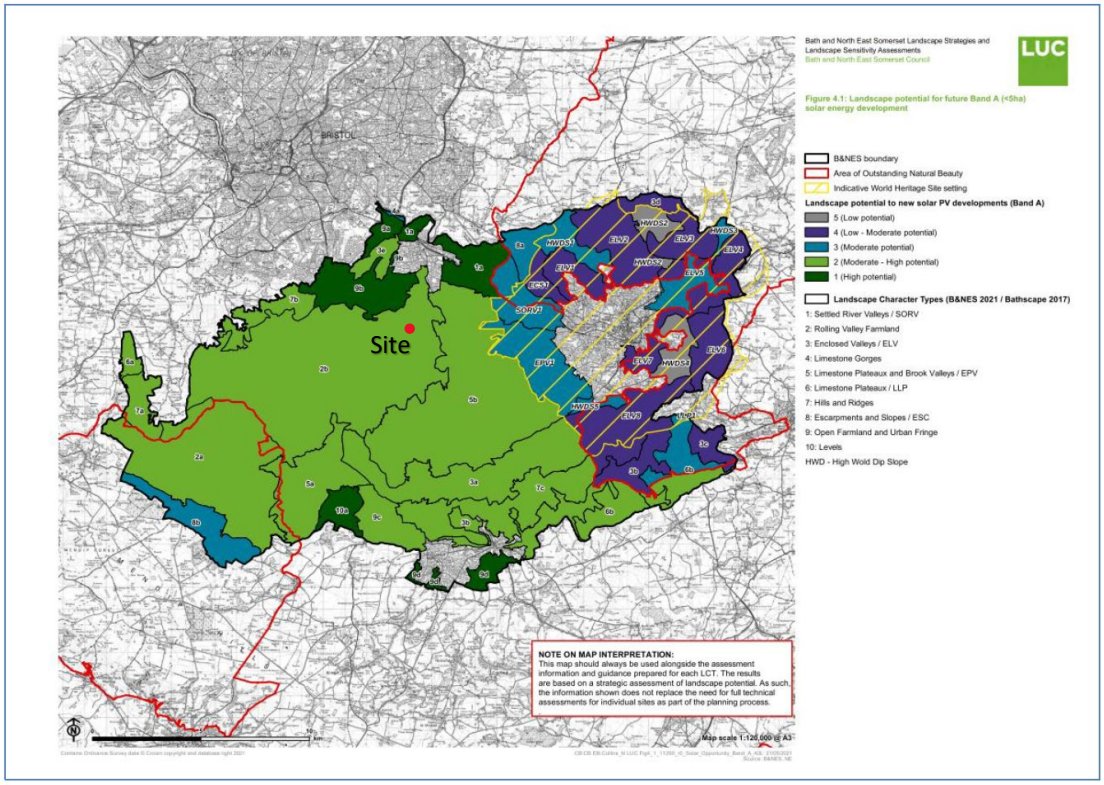
1. That the specific benefits of the renewable energy project proposed clearly outweigh the harm it would cause to the Green Belt, which may include:

- *Community benefits that the project might bring, for example:*
- *The temporary nature of the renewable energy development and the ability to restore land to its original condition at the end of the project's life.*

3. That the impact on the openness of the Green Belt has been considered and mitigated at the design stage. The NPPF states that local planning authorities should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. "

"In addition to considering impacts on the openness of the Green Belt, applicants may also wish to consider the landscape impacts of their proposal and how this might affect the character of the area. For example, it may be possible to reduce the impact of proposed development on the rural character of the countryside by using construction materials that match those used locally or by using landscaping techniques that take their lead from the existing and indigenous landscape and ecology. For example, by creating soil mounds or hedges, using wood and stone as construction materials and by enhancing biodiversity."

Annex 1 - CP3 Landscape Sensitivity for wind and solar energy (Solar Band A)



3.7.3 The site occurs within area 2 – A **Moderate to High** potential for solar development.

4.0 Baseline Conditions

4.1 Site Context

4.1.1 The land being considered for this development lies approximately 0.6km north of the centre of the village of Compton Dando; 1.7km west of the Hamlet of Burnett and 3,3km to the south west of Keynsham, within the boundary of Bath and North East Somerset Council.

4.1.2 The surrounding landscape is a low-lying undulating landscape in the Chew Valley. The River Chew flows through the base of the valley north towards Keynsham, where it joins the River Avon. The ridges along the B3116 to the east, A368 to the south and at Fairy Hill to the west of the site contain the valleys landscape. It is a working rural landscape with mixed sized fields contained by hedges. Hedgerow trees and scattered field trees occur along with blocks of woodland on higher ground as well as tree cover following the valley bottom along the River Chew and up tributaries give the area a well wooded feel. There is much Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland in the locality along with some coniferous woodland. The area is part of the Avon Forest.

4.1.3 The area is connected by a series of country lanes crossing through the area, bound by hedges and often on hedge banks along with an extensive network of footpaths. The high tree cover and landform means long distance views out from the valley are uncommon (except from the higher ground). The settlement pattern is scattered with small villages such as Compton Dando, Woollard and hamlets of Burnett and Hunstrete, with a few isolated farmsteads and dwellings between these. The general perception is of an agricultural rural landscape of good condition, rich in tree cover and hedges, with few detracting features, such as overhead powerlines or building within the landscape giving the area a strong sense of tranquility.

4.2 Site Appraisal

Figure 2: General View Across the Site – From Gateway in north west corner

4.2.1 The site consists of a single 5.9-hectare agricultural field. It is farmed in crop rotation, currently it is grass pasture having recently been arable. The field slopes to the south east with a high point of around 40m AOD near the access gate and low point of just below 20m AOD in the east on the banks of the River Chew. Within the field is a single mature oak, which is a high-quality natural resource, though there is evidence of some die back within its crown.

4.2.2 The site is bound to the west by single track lane, Fairy Hill, and to the east by the River Chew. The adjacent land is small scale agricultural fields, to the south being of a more smallholding / domestic nature, to the west the small-scale fields rise steeply up the side of Fairy Hill. The western boundary hedge with the Fairy Hill/Chewton Road is flail mown to around 4m in height. The northern and southern boundary's consists of overgrown hedgerows including trees, oak, ash, alder and elm with the latter suffering die back. The hedges are a mix of mainly hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, ash with oak, holly, spindle, elder, and elm. Along the eastern boundary are trees lining the River Chew, including willow and alders. The eastern section includes land within Flood Zone 3and 2, however most of the area is in Flood Zone 1

4.2.3 There is a noticeable band of woodland above the site to the north and on Fairy Hill to the west and appreciable tree cover between the site and Compton Dando. Tree cover to the south around Compton Dando includes sizeable mature trees includes some evergreen pines, which combined with field hedges and trees, and the proximity of the wooded river and its tributaries accentuates the perception of tree cover between the development site and the Village; and within the local area to the site.

4.2.4 The screening effect of vegetation means that built development in close proximity to the site is not overtly evident. Houses at Fairy Hill, 250m south of the site are buffered by the overgrown hedge and adjoining field and are partially visible through the vegetation in winter. A dwelling on Peppershell Lane is partly visible. The extent of other built development evident from the site is fairly restricted, properties to the north end of Burnett 1.7km are visible, other dwellings to the east of Burnett are discernible through the winter vegetation however the latter have gable ends facing the site with few or now windows.

4.3 The Landscape Baseline

4.3.1 The methodology for establishing the landscape baseline is described in section 2.2. The landscape resources are shown on plan **SPP02 Landscape Appraisal**, in the appendices.

4.3.2 **National Landscape Character**

Natural England (formerly The Countryside Agency) carried out an assessment, published in 1999, to value all England's landscapes and group their characters at a macro level. The site falls within Character Areas 118, Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges. The key characteristics of the area are:

- Low-lying, shallow vales that contrast sharply with high, open downland ridges as the varied landform reflects the complex underlying geology.
- The River Avon cuts a steep-sided valley through the area from the east. It is joined by the Frome at the centre of Bristol and the Chew near Keynsham. Other streams and rivers in the south-east flow eastwards to join the Avon outside the NCA.
- Water supply for Bristol and the surrounding area is provided by local reservoirs including Chew Valley Lake and Blagdon Lake.
- A wide range of soil types, from brown earths on Limestone outcrops to poorly draining gleys on clays, which reflects the underlying influence of the complex geology.
- The most extensive areas of woodland lie between Congresbury and the Avon Gorge and on the Failand Ridge. These are internationally significant, containing rare endemic whitebeam species. Elsewhere, woodlands are smaller and fragmented and mainly

confined to steeper land; the majority are broadleaf.

- Agriculture is predominantly livestock rearing, with arable in the flatter land to the north-east, with larger field sizes and infrequent hedgerow trees. Valleys and steeper slopes in the south-east tend to have irregular fields and overgrown, species-rich hedges.
- A diverse landscape important for greater and lesser horseshoe bats. Grasslands of high nature conservation interest remain on the wetter valley bottoms and dry downland slopes;
- A long, historic timeline, with important fossil features, Neolithic long barrows and stone circles, iron-age hill forts and historic associations with Bristol's port and parkland creating important landscape features.
- Settlements dating from the medieval period, clustered around springheads of the Cotswold scarp or along the spring line of the Mendips. In the vales they are scattered, linked by a complex network of lanes, with linear mining villages superimposed. Settlement becomes especially dense in the southeast, with many villages enlarged as commuter settlements.
- Older village buildings, gentry houses and mansions of local ashlar, which includes pale yellow Jurassic oolitic limestones and grey Carboniferous and Lias limestones. Red or brown sandstone is used in the north.
- Bristol and its commercial, industrial and residential areas; major roads (M4 and M5 motorways); the airfields (Filton and Bristol); and reservoirs, which occupy a substantial area around Bristol. There is considerable commercial development around Cribbs Causeway, Aztec West and Abbey Wood.

4.3.3 Statements of Environmental Opportunity of relevance to the site include:

- SEO1 – "Conserve and manage the distinction between small rural settlements and the densely urban City of Bristol, the urban fringe transitional zone and the commuter settlements; ……. and provide well-designed green infrastructure to enhance recreation, biodiversity and water flow regulation. by for example:
- SEO2 – ": Protect and manage the strong sense of history and many historical asset……., to enable recreation and access, education, tourism and continued enjoyment of the heritage of the area." by for example:
    - Protecting the remaining earthworks of the Saxon Wansdyke.
    - Conserving and protecting the area's many ancient and veteran trees.
- SEO2 – ": Protect and manage the strong sense of history and many historical asset……., to enable recreation and access, education, tourism and continued enjoyment of the heritage of the area." by for example:
- SEO3 – "Conserve and sustainably manage the gentle clay vales and limestone ridges and downs of the rural agricultural landscape and enhance the network of semi-natural habitats, linking them together to create a coherent and resilient ecological network, enabling ecosystems to adapt both to climate change and for the benefits to landscape, biodiversity, water flow, water quality, soil quality, soil erosion, rural heritage and culture." by for example:
    - Managing and restoring the historic network of field boundaries, including hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
    - Connecting the woodland network by managing hedgerows appropriately, to link woodland with other wooded habitats – such as traditional orchards and

wood pasture and parkland.

- Managing, restoring and planting traditional orchards, to conserve the genetic continuity of fruit species; to retain significant archaeology and wood pasture habitats, including a continuity of deadwood and rot holes; and to improve the condition of the underlying grassland to enhance the lowland meadow resource.

- SEO4 – "Protect and manage the landscape, heritage and biodiversity associated with the Avon River corridor, other river valleys and lakes, planning for a landscape-scale enhancement of wetlands, wet woodland and semi-natural grasslands along river flood plains for the benefits to biodiversity, climate regulation, water quality and flooding mitigation." by for example:
    - "Enhancing and protecting the river landscape, particularly the Avon, through landscape-scale approaches to conservation and restoration of semi-natural habitat, particularly flood plain habitat such as wet woodland and flood meadows. This will create a coherent river and flood plain ecological network."
    - "Conserving and expanding areas of semi-natural habitat, woodland and hedgerows, which slow the flow of water across the landscape".

4.3.4 National Character areas are a 'broad brush' assessment of a large area of landscape. NCA 118 covers a diverse landscape including a large expanse of Bristol and its suburbs along with the surrounding rural areas. While the site does contain a few of the key characteristics listed in this LVIA at 4.3.2, for example a 'varied landform', 'agricultural landscape', 'association with the river catchments' and 'a long, historic timeline', the effects resulting from the detailed small scale change that will be experienced at a site level would be a negligible magnitude of change to the whole NCA. The change at site level was not considered significant at this much wider scale and so will not be considered further in the assessment. The statements of environmental opportunity however remain valid.

4.3.5 **Local Landscape Character**

The Bath and North East Somerset Council Landscape Character Assessment 2021 (LUC 2021) covers the rural area outside of the setting of Bath and updates the previous 2003 assessment "The Rural Landscape of Bath and North East Somerset SPG."

The 2021 assessment has identified 10 Broad Landscape Character types and divided these into 23 more distinctive landscape character areas within the district and provides profiles of each, the report does not provide management guidelines for the areas. The site falls within character type LCT2 – Rolling Valley Farmland which is sub divided into 2 further Landscape Character Area. The site falls within LCA 2b – Chew Valley. The Chew Valley LCA encompasses the broad valley of the River Chew and its tributaries and consists of low-lying undulating pastoral farmland. Key Characteristics and Features of the Chew Valley of relevance to the proposals are shown below:

Table 8: Local Landscape Character – 2b- Chew Valley - (Rolling Valley Farmland LCT)

Landscape Characteristic	Extent of presence on site
The valley becomes increasingly narrow and undulating to the north-east with steeper valley sides and a complex pattern of tributary valleys.	2

High-quality agricultural land, particularly in the west, with slowly permeable soils	4
Mainly grassland with some arable land-use	2
Large woodlands particularly in the east, such as Lord's Wood, Hunstrete Plantation and Common Wood.	3
Patches of bracken in hedges and in areas of rough grazing	4
Characteristic small regular fields of late medieval enclosure	2
Less common irregular fields on slopes created by medieval enclosure of woodland	3
Standing stones at Stanton Drew	4
Strong industrial heritage linked to waterpower, with stone-built mills and bridges.	3
Reminders of the area's mining heritage around Pensford, including spoil heaps and the viaduct which carried the North Somerset Railway line over the valley	4
Settlements on lower slopes or nestled into the valley sides and often amongst trees	3
Locally distinctive church towers provide skyline features	3
Rich variety of traditional building materials reflecting local availability	3
Occasional small groups of more recent housing in elevated locations	4
Network of sunken lanes	3
Extensive views across Chew Valley, with views to the Chew Valley Lake	4
Tributary valleys have a more intimate character enclosed by hedges, trees and side slopes	3

4.3.6 The Extent of Landscape Character Attributes Present on Site

The Swan Paul methodology has made an assessment of the site to examine the strength and extent to which published landscape character features are actually present on the site. This is shown in the second column of Table 8 (above). The immediate site attributes have been described at the start of this chapter in sections 4.1 and 4.2. A basic scoring system is detailed below:

1 - A unique characteristic of the LCA that is present on site and is fundamental to defining the character.

2 - A representative characteristic of the LCA that is present on the site but is not a particularly rare attribute.

3 - A representative characteristic of the LCA that is present in the setting or visual context of the site but is not found within it.

4 - A characteristic or feature of the LCA description that is not found on the site or within its visual context and setting. (in grey)

4.3.7 From desk study and site visits the 'Chew Valley' character features on the site are it being farmland currently laid to grassland with one edge bordering the banks of the River Chew. The site lies within an area with an increasingly undulating landform with slopes to the west, creating a narrow valley margin to the west of the river. It is close to Compton Dando which is nestled in the valley with a strong tree presence. The local field pattern is small and regular and possibly medieval in origin.

Within the wider study area, the landscape characteristics of the Chew Valley LCA are strong.

The valley landform, increasingly becoming narrower and undulating to the north-east of the LCA, with steeper valley sides and a complex pattern of tributary valleys giving an intimate character enclosed by hedges, trees and side slopes. There is also a high visual presence of large woodlands within the landscape. The settlements are often on lower slopes or nestled into the valley sides and often amongst trees and linked by sunken lanes.

4.3.9 **Landscape Designations**

The site and area of study do not lie within any landscape designations. The closest edge of the Cotswold AONB is 4.5km to the East North East and that of the Mendip AONB 8km to the South West. There is no visual connection between these AONB's and the site due to the local topography.

4.3.10 **Habitats**

There are no nationally designated habitats i.e., Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the potential influence of the site nor any Special Conservation Areas which would be valuable landscapes within the area.

The River Chew borders the site to the east. The river and associated marginal vegetation are designated as part of the "River Chew and adjacent Land Site of Nature Conservation Interest" (SNCI). SNCI's are sites which contain features of substantive nature conservation value at a local level. These sites are locally designated through a Local Sites Partnership (LSP), using an agreed set of criteria. There are a few ancient woodlands identified in the study area which are also designated NCI's, but none close enough to be affected by the development. There is a complex pattern of hedgerow, woodland, orchards, scrub linked with the river and its tributaries and the surrounding landscape.

Whilst the pattern of habitats in the local area provides a context in which to consider the potential landscape impacts and any mitigation and enhancement, the impact on specific habitats will be negligible and will not be considered further in this appraisal.

4.3.11 **Historic Landscape Elements**

Plan SPP02 in the appendices shows several nationally designated heritage resources within the potential influence of the development. Clause 5.9 of the GLVIA3 states that historic landscape characterisation studies may be relevant to inform the assessment process in some cases. This LVIA seeks to concentrate on impacts to heritage assets that affect them as landscape and visual receptors – visual receptors being people at the receptor, not the receptor itself. The heritage value of the receptor itself is not within the remit of the landscape and visual assessment; as this only seeks to assess how the landscape and visual setting of the heritage feature aids its understanding within the landscape. A full historic landscape characterisation report of the study area is therefore outside the scope of this LVIA.

There are a number of historic landscape resources in the area including:

Scheduled Ancient Monuments:
4 Schedule monuments occur within the study area. These are:

- Compton Dando Bridge (Ref 1004517) (also a Grade ii Listed Building) occurs 300m to the south.

- A historic (Saxon) intermittent linear feature, The Wansdyke, crosses through the study area from south east to west, passing through Compton Dando. It is the line of an ancient linear defensive earthwork, or ditch and bank. At the closes point this alignment is 150m to the southwest of the site. The feature is recognisable in places and here it is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monuments This is at:
  - "Part of the linear boundary known as Wansdyke 585m north of Tuckingmill Farm (Ref 1007004) and
  -"Part of the linear boundary known as Wansdyke 375m South East of Knowle Farm" (ref 1004523.
- Stantonbury Camp and adjacent sections of Wansdyke (Ref 1002487) lie on high ground 2.9km to the south east of the study area and lies within the ZTV.
  These Scheduled Monuments lie within the ZTV generated for the development. There is no indivisibility between the site and Compton Dando Bridge. The other scheduled ancient monuments are considered further within the visual assessment. Viewpoints 7,14,19 and 22.

Listed Buildings

There are scattered Listed Buildings in the study area mainly focused on the villages and hamlets of Compton Dando immediately to the south of the site, Woollard 1.7km to the west south west and Burnett 1.6km to the east north east.

Listed Building within 1km of the site include:

- Compton Dando Bridge Grade II (ref 1004517) 0.3km to the south
- Mill Farmhouse Grade II (ref 115376) approximately 0.32km to the south.
- Church of St Mary's Grade ii* (ref 1320443) 0.35km to the south – making of very high archaeological and cultural value.
- The Rectory Grade ii (ref 1320444)
- Other Grade ii buildings in the village include Church View, The Gamekeeper Public House, Priory Farmhouse, Village School and adjoining school house, Court Hill House, K6 Telephone Kiosk and Compton Cottage

However, due to the building within the village and extent of tree cover around Compton Dando these do not have intervisibility to the site. The development is therefore not considered to have an effect on the heritage setting of these listed building and are not considered further in the assessment.

Designated Parks and Gardens

Two Designated Parks and Garden occur to east of the site, Kelston Park Grade ii* ref 1000536 and Newton Park Grade ii* ref 1000567. These are 5km away and there is no intervisibility with the site, therefore these are not considered further in this appraisal.

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest designated by local planning authorities. The nearest conservation area to the development is at Woollard 2.7km to the south west of the site. However, there is no indivisibility with the site and so is not considered further in this appraisal.

Historic landscape characterization

Historic Landscape Characterization maps indicate field system and patterns are late medieval origin.

4.3.12 **Settlements**

The settlement pattern is one of small villages and hamlets with a few isolated farms and buildings, connected by a network of lanes often sunken and bounded by hedges and a network of public rights of way. The centre of the village of Compton Dando lies 0.6 Km to the south of the development and the centre of Burnett 1.7km to the east and centre of Woollard to the 2.7km to the west south west. Local screening as a result of landform, tree cover, hedges and the built form limits the extent of intervisibility between the site and the villages. The assessment only considers views from publicly accessible areas.

4.3.13 **Tree Preservation Orders and Forest of Avon**

There are no tree preservation orders close to the site. The site lies within the Forest of Avon, a voluntary initiative aimed at promoting, creating, and regenerating well wooded landscapes around Bristol that provides wildlife and amenity benefits.

4.3.14 **Agricultural Land Classification**

The ALC system classifies land into five grades, with Grade 3 subdivided into subgrades 3a and 3b. The best and most versatile (BMV) land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a by policy guidance and the NPPF. This is the land that is most flexible, productive and efficient. According to information found on DEFRA's (Department of Food and Rural Affairs) website MAGIC, the site is located on land classified as agricultural Grade 3b, (Good to Moderate). The surrounding farmland is mostly grade 3a or b with a few areas of Grade 4 land along the ridges to the north and west of the site and running north from Burnett; and a few areas of Grade 2 very good land to the south of Compton Dando.

4.3.15 **Green Belt**

The site and surrounding area are within Green Belt. This is a spatial planning tool and not a landscape designation. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics are their openness and their permanence. Current Green Belt policy does not relate to landscape quality, and does not require land to be of a high landscape quality. The effect of the proposals on openness in the Green Belt in considered in the assessment.

4.4 The Visual Baseline

4.4.1 The methodology for establishing the visual baseline is described in section 2.3.

4.4.2 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) plan at a scale of 1:25,000 has been created and is used to establish potential viewpoints from where the development can be assessed, and this is shown on **Drawing SPP03**. The locations of the assessment and appraisal photographs (the viewpoints) are shown on **Drawing SPP04.** For this visual impact assessment, a ZTV study area of a 5km radius was used.

4.4.3 Within the ZTV there are some Viewpoint locations where the development site cannot be seen due to intervening vegetation, structures or other factors which is established during field work,

and these are shown in red on **drawing SPP04**. The selected viewpoints are shown in blue and demonstrate a field of visibility which includes longer distance views in from the south east, through to east north east and closer views less than 1km from the site to be from locations to the east and near views in from the west, north, south and east. Glimpses of the site can be gained from footpaths crossing farmland to the south at higher elevations, but these are infrequent. The visual envelope therefore extends from a few metres to around 2.0 km at its furthest extent.

4.4.4 Perception of the Proposal

More emphasis is placed on where a higher density of people (receptors) is likely to view the site, for example from the adjacent footpaths and roads and whether these people are mobile or static. The most extensive and intrusive viewpoints are generally chosen to illustrate the worst potential impact of the proposed development.

- WHO - Visual receptors in the study area will be users of public roads and public rights of way, these will include local people and visitors to the area; agricultural workers and; residents of a few local properties.
- WHERE - For this study Swan Paul has concentrated on publicly accessible viewpoints and site assessment has found these to be users of the roads and public rights of way primarily in the immediate vicinity of the site and locations along public rights of way to the south east to east to east-northeast of the site. However, the visual baseline has also considered the wider perceptual qualities of the study area. The closest point of visibility occurs from the gateway on Fairy Hill/Chewton Road and on the public footpath to the east that crosses the eastern edge of the site and is part of the Two Rivers Way.
- HOW - The nature and extents of the views and visual amenity in the area is influenced by the nature of the folded landscape and the visual foil and screening provided by the many hedges, trees, woodlands and buildings in the area and the reasons for visual receptors being present. Receptors will therefore be on local footpaths moving through the area specifically for the enjoyment of the landscape and views; on local roads moving from A to B; on private property; or working within adjoining fields.

4.4.5 Skylines

The skylines are provided by the high ground around the valley, the ridges along the B3116 to the east (between Keynsham and Stantonbury Hill), to the south along the A368 and the woodland around Hunstrete and Lordswood and to the west close the site is wooded character at the top of Fairy Hill.

4.4.6 Scenic Quality

The local area has an attractive scenic quality, being a managed rural landscape with a pattern mix of pastoral and arable farmland land with hedgerow, field trees and woodland. The course of the river and tributaries have good tree cover, and the area is without detracting elements such as major roads or pylons. The small villages and hamlets and field patterns convey an area steeped in history. There are many opportunities to experience the area on the numerous public rights of way and lanes around Compton Dando and there are good levels of tranquility throughout the area. However, within the area there are no specific viewing points shown on the Explorer Map, where the views are considered to be of specific value in their own right. A dense network of hedges and woodland copses also closes off many views of the site from the

south. The scenic quality will be appreciated by visitors to the area but most valued by local residents.

4.4.7 Potential Views from Transport Routes

The study area is characterised by numerous country lanes bound by hedges. The high hedges bordering the roads will restrict these to a few locations. Therefore, on these roads it is only occasional views of the site that are experienced where the lanes descend hills and look directly towards the site or at gateways. These views occur for short sections of Fairy Hill/Chewton Road travelling south, Bathford Hill travelling west towards Compton Dando and Old Burnett Lane travelling towards Compton Dando. These roads are not defined scenic routes and given the narrow nature of the lanes drivers attention would not typically be drawn to the views. The Avon Cycle Way, an 85-mile route around the Bristol area includes the stretch of Old Burnett Lane from Burnett to Compton Dando. The B336 runs down the eastern site of the study area and to the south part of the A368, however given the distance from the site and hedges and other landscape features along the roadside the site will not be perceptible from these.

4.4.8 Potential Views from Public Rights of Way & Recreational Resources

A footpath BA8/84 cross the site to the east beside River Chew (Part of the Two Rivers Way). Elsewhere in the study area are numerous public footpaths and byways. Other public footpaths close to the site are the footpath up Fairy Hill to the West (BA8/33), PRoW across open fields to the east (BA8/51). Further away Footpath across open farmland to east through to north east BA8/91 and BA8/56 and afford views to varying degrees (section 6.2). There are numerous paths that cross farmland to the south of Compton Dando, however vegetation restricts most views from these. There are no other recreational resources from where receptors may have views.

4.4.9 Potential Views from private property

The pattern of settlements and vegetation cover in the area means there are a limited number of private dwellings with potential views of the site, however this is not a residential amenity report and a comprehensive assessment of these is not included its scope. These residential properties are in Compton Dando at Fairy Hill close to the site where views through intervening vegetation may occur at first floor and a dwelling on Peppershells Lane; In Burnett a few dwellings on the north side of the village are visible from the site along with a dwelling on the east side of the village, however the latter does not appear to have principle window and views out in the direction of the site.

4.5 Landscape Value

4.5.1 The landscape within the site and study area is not subject to any statutory landscape designations such as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is general undesignated countryside, that lies between two designated Areas of Outstanding Beauty to the north east and south west, the Cotswold AONB and the Mendips AONB respectively. The landscape of the study area displays many of the characteristics of the Chew Valley Landscape Character Area (4.3.7).

4.5.2 For the purposes of this study the landscape value is therefore considered:

The Study Area: The study area is general undesignated countryside, mostly in good condition

and well managed. Although in many cases attractive, with no distracting features such as main roads or electric pylons, there are no particularly strong or rare character examples that would lift it out of the ordinary. This has resulted in no nationally recognized landscape designation or protection being conferred upon it such as an AONB. Heritage features including Scheduled Monuments do occur within the study area and the River Chew is locally designated Site of Nature Conservation Interest. The value of this land is therefore considered to be **'average'** (2.2.4).

4.5.3 **The Site:** At a site level the desktop and site-based analysis has established at Table 8 that again there are no particularly strong or rare landscape characteristics that would confer any special designation and that it remains representative. The general landscape baseline has established that it is not experienced in the setting of any designated landscape feature and has limited visibility from designated heritage assets; and that the grade of the agricultural land is in the mid-scale at 3.

Site level analysis has also considered the qualities that can contribute to the consideration of value in undesignated landscapes and outlined in the GLVIA3 guidelines at Box 5.1 where the following points can be distilled from site notes:

- The landscape is in good condition with agricultural boundaries well maintained although there is some tree die-back. The immediate surrounding landscape is attractive but subject to smaller scale farming interventions and areas of unmanaged woodland and new planting. It displays some general regional characteristics such as 'an undulating pastoral landscape'.
- It site has a good scenic quality which is currently pastoral in nature with a single field tree, strong tree line adjacent to the river and boundary hedges on three sides.
- There are no rare landscape features on site,
- It has conservation value in the surrounding hedges and along the adjoining river, but not in the heart of the site.
- The surrounding rights of way, including through the site suggest that it has recreational value and is enjoyed for its tranquility.
- It has no particular associations in the artistic fields.

Using the criteria discussed in section 2.2 the landscape value is considered to be **'average.'**

4.6 Baseline Conclusion: The Susceptibility of the Site to this type of Change

4.6.1 The susceptibility of the site to accommodate change is derived from the inherent landscape and visual sensitivities as described in tables 1 and 2 of this document, when considered against the specific baseline qualities of the site and the type of development being proposed. This ranges from a high susceptibility to change, typical for the most sensitive landscapes with more attributes of value; through medium, low and finally negligible susceptibility to change for landscapes of low sensitivity and value. Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value.

4.6.2 Due to the limited features of value on the Site, its relationships with the surrounding landscape and its perceptual qualities the landscape of the site is considered to have a **low/moderate**

susceptibility to the type of change arising from a small scale (Band A) ground-mounted solar PV development . The site is in a low-lying area with some good enclosure provided by hedges and neighbouring tree cover, though some areas lack screening. The site is contained in a single medium sized field situated in close proximity to the village of Compton Dando. The field is grade 3 (good to moderate grade land) typical of the surrounding area. The site is enclosed within the landscape of the north east part of the Chew Valley with the surrounding ridges preventing distance views. These skylines are simple and contribute to the sense of enclosure in this area. There are no designated historic assets on site nor are there historic features important to the character of the area that would be harmed as a result of this type of development. The perceptual and scenic qualities of the site whilst pleasant and rural do not display any rare or unique attributes to be considered more than average quality.

Within the Informal Guidance Note: Renewable energy in the Green Belt in Bath & North East Somerset – Regen South West and Bath and North East Somerset Council 2013 the site occurs within area 2 – A moderate to High potential for solar development. (section 3.7 of this report 0.

Within the Bath & North East Somerset landscape sensitivity study (LUC 2021) overall recommendation and strategic guidance for Solar PV Development within the Landscape Character Areas are provided (see Table 9).

Table 9: Overall Recommendation for Solar PV Development in LCT 2 Rolling Farmland

Overall Recommendation and Strategic Guidance for Solar PV Development in LCT 2 Rolling Farmland (Including Chew Valley LCA 2b)
Opportunity for new band A and B solar to be sited on more gentle slopes or flat areas where screening is provided by the hedgerow network or in area of trees and woodland.
New solar should not be sited on sloping landform with visual prominence
Don't impact on distinctive hedgerow pattern, trees providing interconnecting habitats
Choose sites low lying flat fields, enclosed by hedgerows and hedgerow trees where development would be less visible and have less influence on landscape character
Locate solar development in sheltered folds in the landscape and in lower-lying areas such as the minor tributary valleys, where it will be less visible and have less of an influence on landscape character.
Avoid siting in areas of habitat interest
Preserve historic field pattern by minimising number of adjacent fields that are developed and setting PV panels back from the edges of the field
Consider views from popular rights of way such as Two Rivers Way
Protect the landscape's valued hedgerow and in-field trees, avoiding any loss of specimens through the impacts of development.
Avoid locating solar PV development where it would be directly overlooked at close quarters (e.g. from main roads or public rights of way), particularly from the side or back - where the rows of panels would be discernible).
Protect the rural and tranquil qualities of the landscape away from major road and ensure don't detract from traditional agricultural character of the landscape

Ensure solar PV developments form part of a mixed farmland mosaic rather than becoming the dominate use.

4.7 Baseline - Cumulative Effects Other Ground Mounted Solar PV Developments within the Area

4.7.1 The GLVIA 3 guidance refers to cumulative effects as: *"the additional changes caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effect of a set of developments, taken together."*

4.7.2 Using the Councils online mapping other ground mounted solar arrays were identified within the study area (SPP05 – Other Solar Farms in Area – Cumulative Effect).

3 domestic scale ground mounted solar array:

- Manor Farm, Burnett, in field south of Farm Buildings 14/01729/FUL, 432 panels, 1.5km to east. – In operation.
- Manor House, Burnett in Eastern Paddock 21/03965/FUL, 1.75km to the east. Refused. Going to appeal
- Mill House, Woollard, on land adjoining Mill House, 4K array 11/03505/FUL – In operation.

Three solar farm developments:

- Parcel 1326 Main Road Chelwood, 14/018951, 3.3km to the south side of A39 - In operation.
- Parcel 0153 – Solar Farm Hunstrete 14/0042/FUL 2.9km to the south side of A39- -In operation.
- Marksbury Plain, Top Lane Farmborough. 21/04881/FUL – 3.1km to the south side of A39 –Permitted.

4.7.3 The baseline survey ascertained that given the location of these sites; the distance from and lack of intervisibility with the proposed development due to intervening vegetation, hedges and woodland or settlements, they would not be physically present nor manifest themselves in the landscape relating to the site.

4.7.4 Therefore **no cumulative landscape or visual effects** would arise as a result of the proposals.

5.0 Potential Sources of Impact and the Mitigation Proposals

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section describes the main aspects of the proposed development which could potentially affect landscape and/or visual amenity. It also identifies features of the proposals which will assist in mitigating adverse landscape and visual impacts.

5.2 The Development Proposal and Potential Sources of Impact

5.2.1 The proposal is for a 2.1MW solar farm comprising eleven 170m long and ten 56m long rows of ground mounted PV solar panels. This capacity is the current estimated design subject to panel availability at the time of construction. Details of the proposed solar arrays are provided in the application drawings. The panels will be arranged facing south on static frames, with a back height of 1.9m. The compound is surrounded by a 2.0m deer fence.

5.2.2 In addition, there will be other operational infrastructure located in the north west side of the proposals consisting of:

- One DNO cabin building at approximately 6m (l) x 3.4m(h) x 5m(w),
- Customer switch gear housing at 12.2m (l) x 2.6m (h) x 2.4m(w),
- Transformer substation at approximately 12.2m (l) x 2.6m (h) x 2.4m(w).
- Satellite mast which is likely to be erected on the customer substation,

5.2.3 A new 4m wide crushed stone access track will link from Fairy Hill/Chewton Road via the existing field gate in the north west corner of the field. The track will veer north and then turn parallel to the northern hedge for about 100m to enter the compound via a gate. The track will be within the enclosure to the north of the array for a further 45m to serve the operational infrastructure. At the end of the planning period the track will be removed.

5.2.4 For access to the development the intention is to use and retain the existing access into the field. Alterations are necessary for large vehicle access during the construction period (see Field Access Drawing 24002-001 in the appendices). This will involve the temporary removal of a small section of hedge to the north of the entrance, and creating a new, secure fence and gate access. The existing hedges will need some pruning back to visibility splays as shown. These alterations are temporary and at the end of the construction period it will be returned to its original condition and the hedge re-planted.

5.2.5 Post and wire deer style fencing will extend around the perimeter of the arrays for security purposes, with gated access in the north west corner as mentioned above. The fence will be set off of the solar arrays by 5m, leaving space around the south, west and east of the development for community use and biodiversity enhancement. The final submitted site plan is a carefully considered response to the technical requirements and the findings of the landscape and visual assessment.

5.2.6 Different solar PV installers adopt varying configurations comprising angle and rear height that in turn affect the separation distance between the arrays. It is proposed that 2 panels in portrait format are an angle of 15deg, front height 0.7m, rear height 1.9m, footprint, giving a dimension

of the arrays in plan as 4.09m with a gap between the arrays of 3.4m, resulting in a front-to-front dimension of 7.49m.

5.2.7 The main features of the development proposal which could potentially result in landscape and visual impacts are:

- Activities and movement of equipment during the construction period.
- Surrounding roads are tight and use by HGV will have some impact in construction stage.
- Some noise and reduction in tranquility during construction.
- Temporary access arrangements and new access track.
- Changes to land use.
- Change pattern, colour and texture.
- Solar temporarily prevents arable farming, though grazing beneath the panels is viable. Soils may experience an increase in quality as a result of the fallow period.
- Introduce new and contrasting elements into the landscape.
- New operational infrastructure, including building design and materials selection.
- New elements such as a satellite mast, security cameras and fencing.
- New planting areas.
- Change in the management of the land.
- Change to the operational activities on site.

5.3 Proposed Mitigation

5.3.1 There are few development schemes that do not require some mitigation measures to help reduce the perceived landscape and visual impacts and to help assimilate built development into the local landscape setting. Some mitigation measures can also bring landscape and conservation benefits to a site. Mitigation varies in scale depending on the location and nature of development. In this case, the scale of development requires a small level of mitigation to assist with assimilation into the landscape setting and enhance the biodiversity of the site.

5.3.2 The site-specific design response and mitigation measures can be summarised as follows:-

During construction:

- Ensure all existing site vegetation and trees (apart from hedge removed for the temporary access) are retained and protected.
- In particular protect the existing oak tree and boundary hedge vegetation in accordance with BS: 5837 ‘Trees in relation to construction’.
- Ensure construction operations do not conflict with conservation interests such as archaeology, or the seasonal requirements of flora and fauna.

During Operation:

- Planting areas for screening to the west side of the site to lessen the side on views of the panels, including hedging in the east to provide relatively quicker screen to the footpath.
- Plant additional “in field “ trees to provide long term tree cover.
- Maintain existing hedges at a minimum of 4.5m and retain the hedgerow trees to the

north and south boundaries to keep continuity of screening throughout the year. The west hedge to Fairy Hill will be maintained at 2.0-2.5m.

- Use of Deer fencing style timber post and galvanized mesh for the perimeter fencing to the arrays, so they are recessive in the landscape and fit in with the rural setting.
- Locate site buildings close to and behind the panels to lessen their prominence in the landscape.
- Consider the colour and texture of materials, particularly site buildings, to be recessive against the backdrop of existing vegetation.
- Landscape management plan in place for the lifetime of the scheme.
- Incorporate enhancements / mitigation measures to the development that would be in keeping to local character and provide biodiversity benefits which could accord with the SNCI, West of England Nature Recovery Network opportunities and Strategic GI projects within BANES.

5.3.3 These objectives have been focused on specific mitigation suggestions for this particular proposal on this site and these are shown in the appendix in **plan 3282.001 REV B.**

6.0 The Landscape and Visual Analysis – Assessment of Effects

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section will examine the potential impacts and effects that may be expected as a result of the development. This will take the form of an analysis of the viewpoint photographs to assess the potential visual effects, followed by an analysis of the landscape resources identified in the baseline studies, to determine the potential landscape effects. It will then go on to consider any cumulative or residual effects that may be relevant to the development. In line with GLVIA 3 it will not examine every possible effect that could be envisaged but will instead focus on those that are reasonable and proportional to the type of development and would be large enough to cause a definitive change to the baseline conditions.

6.1.2 Impacts and Effects Terminology:
GLVIA 3 states that:

- An impact is the action that the development creates – for example a change of land cover from pasture to PV panels, or the removal of a pond at part of the site.
- An effect is the result of the action (impact) – for example a reduction in visual amenity or a reduction in breeding habitat for a particular species or group of species as a result of the removal of the pond.
- The term impact should NOT be used to describe a combination of effects.

For each landscape or visual receptor, this study will first identify the potential impacts of the development and describe the resulting effects. It will then make a judgment on the scale of the effect using the methodology described in Section 2.0.

6.1.3 Public Perception to Change:
The perception of change is linked to the visibility of the site at the receptor and the visual sensitivity, landscape value and whether a particular element or feature can be accommodated without unacceptable consequences for the maintenance of the baseline (existing) conditions.

6.2 The Visual Effects

6.2.1 The visual effects will be examined from a series of representative viewpoints taken within the study area.

6.2.2 A total of 22 views were taken to illustrate the site and its appearance in publicly available views. The viewpoints typically range from a distance of 0 to 2km, from the centre of the site. The elevation of viewpoints ranges from 21 to 90 m above ordnance datum, in comparison to the site centre at 30 metres. Photographs were taken in February 2023, therefore winter in relation to vegetation density. The viewpoint photographs are included in the separate appendix document which also includes **Drawings SPP001 to SPP006**.

6.2.3 Assessment of photographs is based firstly on anticipating the effect of the proposal without mitigation during construction and in operation, and then considering how the proposed mitigation may alter that assessment.
The effects are identified by establishing and describing the changes resulting from the different

components of the development and the resulting effects on visual receptors. The potential effects will be considered as follows:

- Type of effect: Direct, Indirect or Cumulative.
    - Direct effects – An effect directly attributable to the proposed development.
    - Indirect effects – Effects that result as a consequence of the direct effects, often occurring away from the site, or as a sequence of interrelationships. They may be separated by distance or time from the source of the effects.
    - Cumulative effects – Effects caused by the development in conjunction with other developments of a similar nature, which combined can cause a magnification of the effect which is greater than that caused by the developments individually.
- Duration of effect: Short, medium or long-term.
- Nature of effect: Permanent or temporary and neutral, positive or negative.
    - Neutral – No change to the baseline conditions.
    - Positive – An improvement to the landscape and visual qualities described in the baseline conditions.
    - Negative – A degradation of the landscape or visual qualities described in the baseline conditions.

6.2.4 The viewpoints considered are in table 10 below and the viewpoint location plan **Drawing SPP 004** can be viewed in the separate appendices.

Table 10 Viewpoints

Viewpoint Number	Location	Distance from Centre of Site (km)	Elevation Above Ordnance Datum (metres)	Grid Reference	Bearing to the Site
Viewpoint 1	Public Footpath BA8/84 -North East corner of Field on Two Rivers Way	0.19km	15m	ST 6495 6517	256° True
Viewpoint 2	Public Footpath BA8/84 -South East corner of Field on Two Rovers Way	0.15km	22m	ST 6485 6507	289° True
Viewpoint 3	Public footpath BA8/33 by seat on Fairy Hill	0.36km	82m	ST 6441 6510	72° True
Viewpoint 4	From top of Fairy Hill/Chewton Road	0.23km	67m	ST 6461 6530	151° True

Viewpoint 5	View gateway to Field on Chewton Road/Fairy Hill	0.15km	42m	ST 6462 6516	86° True
Viewpoint 6	On Public Footpath BA8/52, East side of Compton Dando	0.56km	32m	ST 6489 6462	332° True
Viewpoint 7	On Footpath BA8/51 on Wansdyke at Gateway in fields	0.55km	34m	ST 6502 6465	332° True
Viewpoint 8	Public footpath BA8/51 in field, east of site	0.63km	32m	ST 6545 6501	282° True
Viewpoint 9	Footpath BA8/51 by Old Burnett Lane	0.79km	35m	ST 6557 6511	274° True
Viewpoint 10	Gateway on Old Burnett Lane	0.95km	47m	ST 6572 6525	264° True
Viewpoint 11	On Old Burnett Lane	1.03km	64m	ST 6577 6530	268° True
Viewpoint 12	Footpath B8/60	1.06km	63m	ST 6584 6539	257° True
Viewpoint 13	Public Footpath BA8/3	1.09km	52m	ST 6413 6422	49° True
Viewpoint 14	Gate way on Bathford Hill near Old Burnett Lane	0.85km	38m	ST 6527 6446	324° True
Viewpoint 15	Tuckingmill Lane Byway BA8/90	1.41km	43m	ST 6558 6399	318° True
Viewpoint 16	Footpath to South BA8/6	1.68km	68m	ST 6518 6352	341° True
Viewpoint 17	North of Burnett Footpath BA8/59	1.67km	91m	ST 6643 6555	261° True
Viewpoint 18	Public footpath BA8/56 south of Burnett	1.57km	90m	ST 6634 6488	287° True

Viewpoint 19	Public footpath BA8/56 south of Burnett as it crosses Wansdyke- Schedule monument	1.81km	83m	ST6630 6413	311° True
Viewpoint 20	BA8/56 crossing fields North of Bathford Hill	1.89km	86m	ST 6626 6402	302° True
Viewpoint 21	From Road - Bathford Hill	1.68km	58m	ST 6594 6403	313° True
Viewpoint 22	Stantonbury Hill Public Footpath BA15/33	2.83km	173m	ST6720 6370	299° True

6.3 Viewpoint Photographs Analysis

The viewpoint photograph sheets can be found in the appendices; however, all relevant text and analysis is given below, rather than on the sheet itself. Some potential viewpoints within the ZTV where checked on site and found to have no views of the site; these have been marked with a red symbol on **drawing SPP04 Viewpoint Locations**.

It should be noted that the planning period will be for 30 years, when the site will be returned to agriculture. The effects are therefore temporary and fully reversible. In addition, during the planning period, the site will have public access to allow the curious to see the development from outside the deer fence, and enjoy the site for wildlife, fruit and recreation.

Note that the receptor 'road users' can be taken to mean people in vehicles, walkers, cyclists or horse riders etc. The nature of the road will therefore affect the sensitivity of receptors. Quiet rural lanes are likely to have more of the latter recreational users than busy, faster roads, and receptors on the former would have a higher sensitivity.

6.3.1 **Viewpoint 1 and 2– Public footpath BA8/84 – on the Two Rivers Way to the east of site.**
VP1 - North east corner of site - 0.19km from centre of site; (100m from the perimeter fencing); 15m AOD
VP2 – South East Corner of the site -0.15km from centre of site; (55m from the perimeter fencing); 22m AOD

These 2 views are grouped together and represent the views from the PRoW BA8/84 which crosses the eastern side of the site and is part of the Two Rivers Way. The area beside the River Chew is a site of Nature Conservation Interest and in a Strategic Green Infrastructure corridor. A bench beside the footpath near the river implies people can stop on their walks in this area.

VP1 in the north east corner is a view looking across the open field towards Fairy Hill. To the left of the view (beyond the photo) is the tree lined River Chew. The field slope is gentle up from this part of the field, so views look up towards the proposed area for the solar panels. This area of the field is within the flood zone 3 of the River Chew.

VP2 in the south east corner of the field looks toward the site. A local ridge in the field means part of the field to the north west is obscured. The view is of the field and hedgerows in particular the NE corner of the site, with views beyond to the tree covered hillside. To the right

of the view (beyond the photo) is the River Chew. As people walk through the field the view of the site opens out to views representative of VP1.
Sensitivity: The viewpoint is from the Two Rivers Way through the site where walkers are present for the enjoyment of the landscape. The area is a Site of Nature Conservation Interest and a Strategic Green Infrastructure area, with the value assessed as 'average'. The sensitivity is considered to be **medium/ high**.

Receptors: Users of the footpath

Visual Effects
The banks of solar panels rising up the field will be seen in particular along their eastern edge of along with boundary fencing and CCTV cameras. The close proximity will mean a large part of the view will be affected for much of the walk between VP1 and VP2. There will be a change in character from an open agricultural field to a solar farm. The view will be of the side/ end of the row and look along the panels.
Mitigation planting on the east side of the solar arrays in the form of a native hedge and areas of native tree and scrub, an orchard some field trees is proposed. Given the panels are 2m high allowing the hedge to grow tall would screen them from view in time, whilst retaining occasional views to Fairy Hill beyond. Therefore after 15 years the effects magnitude will reduce.

During construction;
Construction work for the solar farm is expected to take 4 months and be light in construction terms, not requiring changes to the topography. During construction there will be movement of equipment and construction activity on the site, which would be experienced by the receptors in this location. Construction vehicle movement would focus around the main access track and compound on site likely to be to the north west of the field. The Magnitude of the construction effect is judged as 'high'.
The effects will be direct, short term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/HIGH**	Magnitude: **HIGH**	Impact: **MODERATE/ SUBSTANTIAL adverse**

During Operation;
During operation the site is monitored externally and there will be no permanent staff on site or permanent lighting. Scheduled activities will consist of annual vegetation management, regular inspection and cleaning of panels, servicing and maintenance of parts when required.
These activities would be for a short duration.
The mitigation planting, particularly the new hedge to the east of the development will grow to close off views to the site in time, reducing the magnitude of impact to Low. Glimpses could remain at hedge gaps and in winter, but within a more heavily vegetated character in the view.
Receptors accessing the public areas of the development from Two Rivers Way will have views of the panels out of choice, with the public resource considered neutral in nature from these close views.

At 0-1years
The effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/HIGH** Magnitude: **MEDIUM/ HIGH** Impact: **MODERATE adverse**

At 15 years
The effects will be direct, long term and temporary neutral.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/HIGH** Magnitude: **LOW** Impact: **MODERATE neutral**

6.3.2 **Viewpoint 3 – View Public footpath BA8/33 by seat on side of Fairy Hill**
0.36km from site; 62m AOD

This view is from public footpath BA8/33 that climbs the hillside of Fairy Hill. It is a direct view into the site from the west with nearly all the site visible. From this elevated location, long and distant views are seen across the Chew Valley to Burnett. There are further panoramic views to the right of the photo over the village of Compton Dando towards Stantonbury and Winsberry Hill, Marksbury and Common Wood to the south. An overhead electric line detracts from the view.

Sensitivity: The viewpoint is from a footpath in a rural area with an assessed value of 'average', looking directly towards the site. The sensitivity is considered to be **medium/high**.

Receptors: Users of the footpath; Agricultural workers

Visual Effects

Virtually the entire area of solar panels will be seen from this elevated location, and it will form a large part of the foreground of the view. However, it is part of a wider 180^0 panorama and consequently forms a lesser part of that wider view. There will be a change in character from an agricultural field to solar farm. Mitigation planting around the site, particularly the trees and scrub to the west will help filter views of the development, however due to the elevation the view will not be fully screened. There would be no change to the extent of long and long-distance views that can be seen.

During construction;

The effect of the construction phase of the development will be similar to that discussed for VP1 and VP2. It is more distant but more of the site is visible, and the magnitude of the construction effect is judged as 'high'.
The effects will be direct, short term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/HIGH** Magnitude: **HIGH** Impact: **MODERATE/ SUBSTANTIAL adverse**

During Operation;

The operation activities will be the same as discussed at VP1 and VP2. The construction activity will cease, bringing a reduction of impacts at 0-1 years.
The mitigation planting will grow and provide a softening of the development within the field pattern with the trees to the west filtering views over time, reducing the magnitude of the effect. The solar panels would be visible but within a more heavily vegetated landscape.

At 0-1years
The effects will be direct, long-term and temporary negative .

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/HIGH** Magnitude: **MEDIUM/ HIGH** Impact: **MODERATE adverse**

At 15 years
The effects will be direct, long term and temporary positive.
Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/ HIGH** Magnitude: **MEDIUM** Impact: **SLIGHT/ MODERATE adverse**

6.3.3 **Viewpoint 4 – View from top of Fairy Hill/Chewton Road**
0.23km from site; 67mA OD
This is a near view from the single-track road that passes the west side of the site. It is moderately busy, being a short route to Keynsham from Compton Dando. The road is characterized by tall hedges and hedge banks on each side; therefore, the view is glimpsed for a short section of the road as it descends into Compton Dando. The west and south west side of the field is seen along with the infield oak tree. Beyond the site, views are across into Compton Dando towards the high ground near Marksbury and the woodland to the east of Hunstrete.
Sensitivity: Sensitivity of receptors at the view is considered to be **medium.**

Receptors: Road users.

Visual Effects
A section of the western part of the site will be seen, along with mitigation and enhancement planting to the western side of the site. The panels here are set back 50-80m from the west boundary so only a part of the visible site will include panels. The retained oak tree will remain in the foreground, together with areas of scrub and new field trees to the west of the panels. Existing trees to the north boundary hedge also provide screening. There will therefore be some change as a consequence of the solar panels introducing structures into the view, but views of panels will be broken and filtered by vegetation. Travellers in vehicles would also have a shorter duration of view than other receptors. The long-distance element of the view would not be interrupted by the development.

During construction;
The effect of the construction phase of the development will be similar to that discussed for VP1 and VP2, however more of the north west side of the site and around the road access to the site is apparent from this area and there would be some construction vehicle movement on the site and road.
The effects will be direct, short term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM** Magnitude: **MEDIUM** Impact: **MODERATE adverse**

During Operation;
Construction activity would cease, reducing the magnitude of the effects. Mitigation planting in the west and north of the site will further screen the development over time, but glimpses of panels in the landscape will remain, particularly in winter.
At 0-1years
The effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM** Magnitude: **LOW/ MEDIUM** Impact: **SLIGHT/ MODERATE adverse**

At 15 years
The effects will be direct, long term and temporary.
Sensitivity: **MEDIUM** Magnitude: **LOW** Impact: **SLIGHT adverse**

6.3.4 **Viewpoint 5 –View through gateway to Field on Chewton Road/Fairy Hill**
0.15km from site; 42m AOD
This is a close view looking into the site at the gateway to the site from Fairy Hill Road. The site can be seen over and through the gate with hedges to each side screening wider views of the site.
Sensitivity: The visual receptors will be road users. Sensitivity is assessed as **medium.**

Receptors: Road users.

Visual Effects
The western side of the solar panels and fence will be seen together with the access leading from the gate to the infrastructure buildings near the northern boundary (left of the view). There may also be wider, winter glimpses of the panels through the hedging. Mitigation planting of native trees and shrubs will be apparent in front. To the right of the view (see also Figure2) the retained oak tree will be apparent within an open section of the field, with a section of solar panels visible behind. Longer distance views across the valley over the panels are retained. There will be a change in character as a consequence of the solar panels, introducing structures into the view and mitigation planting. Mitigation planting would grow up and increase the tree/shrub cover in the area, reducing the extent of the development as seen.

During construction;
Approximately 3-4m of the hedge to the left of the view will be removed and a stone access track, with a new security gate will replace the existing gate. This will be temporary for the duration of the construction period only; at which time it will be restored. Construction activity on the site is apparent from this viewpoint and there would some construction vehicle movement on the road.
The effects will be direct, short term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM** Magnitude: **HIGH** Impact: **MODERATE/ SUBSTANTIAL adverse**

During Operation;
Views of construction activity on the site and road will cease. After construction the baseline condition of the entrance will be restored with a replanted section of hedge and a 3m field gate re-installed, with the track retained for operational access. Initially the hedge planting will be small with views into the site, but this will grow and have its original effect after 4 or 5 years. Mitigation planting will grow to screen panels to the left and right of the view and long-distance views will be retained.
At 0-1years up to 5 years

The effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM**	Magnitude: **MEDIUM/ HIGH**	Impact: **MODERATE adverse**

At 15 years
The effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM**	Magnitude: **MEDIUM**	Impact: **SLIGHT-MODERATE adverse**

6.3.5 **Viewpoint 6 – View from footpath to the east of Compton Dando**
0.56km from site; 32m AOD

This viewpoint and Viewpoint 7 are near views to show the variation in views gained from the eastern side of Compton Dando on the footpath network. Hedgerow and trees along the River Chew provide screening to differing extents subject to the location and direction of the view. Viewpoint 6 is across an open field; Viewpoint 7 is at a gateway between hedges .
In Viewpoint 6 the western area of the site can be seen, beyond the southern boundary hedge. This area will be more apparent in winter (as the photo illustrates). The rest of the site is heavily screened by trees.
Sensitivity: The viewpoint is from a footpath in a rural area with an assessed value of 'average', looking directly towards the site. The sensitivity is considered to be **medium/ high**.

Receptors: Users of the footpath;

Visual Effects
The western part of the arrays and the infrastructure buildings in the north will be seen in the view, partially screened by the southern hedge (and to a greater extent in summer). The southern elevation of the solar panels will be seen as a change in colour and texture. Mitigation planting will increase vegetation cover in the area, but this will not screen the panels. Given the amount of site seen and geographic extent of the view, the magnitude of the effect will be low. There will not be much change in the effect during operation phases 0-1 and 15 years and there is only one operation stage assessment as a result.

During construction;
There may just be some construction activity seen on site. The effect of the construction phase of the development will be similar to that discussed at VP1. and VP2, but with increased distance the magnitude of the change would be less.
The effects will be direct, short term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/ HIGH**	Magnitude: **LOW**	Impact: **SLIGHT/MODERATE adverse**

During Operation;
The magnitude of the change will be low. Mitigation planting in the west of the site will infill a section of the field pattern with tree and shrubs and this will be integrated into the landscape. However, from this angle an area of panels and the infrastructure buildings will remain visible.
The effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/ HIGH** Magnitude: **LOW** Impact: **SLIGHT adverse**

6.3.6 **Viewpoint 7 - On Footpath BA8/51 on Wansdyke at Gateway in fields 0.55km from site ; 34m AOD**

This viewpoint is on footpath BA8/51 at a gateway between field boundaries to the eastern side of Compton Dando. It is situated on the line of Wansdyke Scheduled Monument and is included to show views from this feature. From this viewpoint hedgerows and trees along the River Chew provide heavy screening to the site with only the western edge of the site near the oak tree visible and small glimpse of the field through the hedgerow vegetation. The screening effect will be greater in summer. With the extent of screening there will be barely any change to the view. Given the distance and lack of intervisibility there will be no effects to the setting of the Schedule Monument and therefore impacts are not considered further.

6.3.7 **Viewpoints On footpaths East of Site**

Viewpoint 8 – Public Footpath BA/51 in field -1.06km from site; 32m AOD
Viewpoint 9 – N end of Footpath BA8/51 by Old Burnett Lane – 0.79km from site 35m AOD
Viewpoint 10 – Gateway on Old Burnett Lane 0.95km from site 47m AOD
Viewpoint 11 - On Old Burnett Lane 1.03km from site 64m AOD
Viewpoint 12 – Public Footpath BA8/60 at gap in hedge 1.63km from site 32m AOD

These viewpoints have been grouped as part of the assessment as the effects are similar. The views provide a representative of the medium and long-distance views seen from the PRoW BA8/51 and glimpsed from Old Burnett Road. They are within 0.6 to 1.1km from the site, the extent of the site seen increases with the elevation of the viewpoint. The site is seen in the low-lying valley but is experienced as part of a wider panoramic view that looks to the wooded slope and skyline beyond and further to the right and left of the photos. The views from these footpaths are across open fields with a large field pattern and few intermediate hedges or trees. The tree cover along the River Chew is also slightly more sparse north of Compton Dando, and combined with the increased elevation of the view, provides less screening of the site. Views on Footpath BA/51 are experience for about 300m between Viewpoint 9 and Viewpoint 8. View 10 is at a gateway on Old Burnett Lane and is similar to the glimpsed view at Viewpoint 11 on Old Burnett Lane. The latter will be perceived for a short distance when travelling by car (estimate of 100m) when full views of the site are perceived.

Sensitivity: For VP8 and 9 the viewpoints are from a footpath in a rural area with an assessed value of 'average', running parallel along the valley to the site. This gives a sequential view. The sensitivity of VP 8 & 9 is considered to be **medium**. For VP10 (at a gateway on the road, VP11 (on the road) and VP12 (at a gap in a hedge) The sensitivity is less and considered to be **low**.

Receptors: Users of the footpath; Agricultural workers; Road users (Viewpoint 11 only)

Visual Effects

These viewpoints give full views of the site looking down into it from elevation. Visual receptors will be walkers. The solar farm will be seen for a reasonable distance on this footpath (BA8/51) with the site being parallel to the line of travel and so in sight, particularly when travelling from east to west where the rows of panels will be seen from the side. The infrastructure buildings in the north west of the site will be seen associated with the northern hedge but be fairly small when viewed at this distance The geometric shape of the panels and fence will be incongruous with the landscape.

Planting to the NW will screen the track in time and provide a backdrop in the north west. Planting along the east will in time soften the edges of the site, help contain the site within a field and provide some screening to the sides of the panels. However, given the viewpoints being higher than the site the mitigation will not be able to conceal all the solar panels and so they will become part of the landscape and view.
The panels will be a part of the view contained within one existing field and the open landscape will make it more prevalent. The magnitude of the effect increases with elevation as more of the site is seen.

During Construction;
The effect of the construction phase of the development will be similar to that discussed at VP1. and VP2. Construction activity will be visible on the site, but distant and there will be a change evident from a field to the development, with the panels visible as a change of colour and texture. The magnitude of effect is less apparent and considered 'medium'.
The effects will be direct, short term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM and LOW** Magnitude: **MEDIUM** Impact: **MODERATE adverse**

During Operation;
Construction activity and movement will cease on the site but is difficult to perceive at this distance. Initially the magnitude of the effect will therefore remain the same. Mitigation planting in the east of the site will increase the perceived vegetation cover along the River Chew and soften the edge but some of the will remain visible.
At 0-1years
The effects will be direct, long term and temporary.
Sensitivity: **MEDIUM and LOW** Magnitude: **MEDIUM** Impact: **MODERATE adverse**

At 15 years
As the scheme is reversible, the effects will be direct, long term and temporary.
Sensitivity: **MEDIUM and LOW** Magnitude: **LOW/MEDIUM** Impact: **SLIGHT/ MODERATE adverse**

6.3.8 **Viewpoint 13 –Public footpath BA8/3**
1.09km from site; 52m AOD
This is a long-distance view from public footpath BA8/3 at a similar elevation to the site. The viewpoint illustrates the well wooded character of the area to the south of Compton Dando, which screens much of the views of the site. From this viewpoint the hedgerows and trees along the valley provide heavy screening to the site with no visibility of it and the screening effect will only be greater in summer. With the extent of screening there will be no change to the view, and therefore impacts are not considered further.

6.3.9 **Viewpoint 14 - Gateway on Bathford Hill near Old Burnett Lane Close to part of Wansdyke Schedule Monument**
0.85km from the site 38m AOD

This medium distance viewpoint is at a roadside gateway on Bathford Hill, near the end of Tucking Mill Lane and the junction with Old Burnett Lane. It is close to the alignment of the Wansdyke. The view is across an open fields looking towards the site and the sloping fields and wooded slopes beyond. A small part of the site is seen with trees in the middle-distance screening much of the development, with the site being more apparent in winter than in summer.
Sensitivity – The viewpoint in a rural area looking across an undesignated landscape, near an Ancient Monument and is not on a public footpath. Sensitivity is considered to be **low.**

Receptors: Road users, Agricultural workers, Landscape setting of Scheduled Monument.

Visual effect
The solar panels may just be perceived as a change in colour and texture in the northern parts of the site, but other sectors are heavily screened by trees. Mitigation planting would grow in the western side of the site giving an increase in tree cover. There would be no impact from the development on the heritage setting.

During Construction
The will be no significant difference between the visual effect during construction and operation at this distance.

During Operation
At this distance there will be no discernible difference between the perceived impact in year 0-1 and Year 15.
The effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **LOW**	Magnitude: **NEGLIGIBLE**	Impact: **NEGLIGIBLE/ SLIGHT adverse**

6.3.10 **Viewpoint 15 - Tuckingmill Lane Byway BA8/90**
1.41km from site; 43m AOD
This medium distance viewpoint is a glimpsed view at a gap in the hedge on Tuckingmill Lane. The byway is typically bound by hedges on both sides and views of the proposed site are largely obscured by vegetation. The view is across open fields looking towards the site and the sloping fields and wooded slopes beyond. Small glimpses of the site may be visible through trees in the middle-distance, with the site being more apparent in winter than in summer. (Similar to VP 14)
Sensitivity – The viewpoint is from a gap in the hedge beside the footpath in a rural area with an assessed value of 'average'. The sensitivity is therefore considered to be **medium/ high**.

Receptors: User of the Byway

Visual effect
The solar panels may just be perceived as a change in colour and texture to a small part of the site but are mainly screened. The change will be barely discernible in summer, with a slight presence in winter. Mitigation planting would grow in the western side of the site giving an increase in tree cover. Given the distance and screening of the site, the overall magnitude of the effect is negligible.

During Construction
The will be no significant difference between the visual effect during construction and operation.

During Operation
At this distance there will be no discernible difference between the perceived impact in year 0-1 and Year 15.
The effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/ HIGH** Magnitude: **NEGLIGIBLE** Impact: **NEGLIGIBLE adverse**

6.3.11 **Viewpoint 16 – Public Footpath BA8/6 to South of Compton Dando**
1.68km from site: 68m AOD
This is a long-distance view from a public footpath and at a similar elevation to the site. The viewpoint illustrates the well wooded character of the area to the south east of Compton Dando, which screens much of the views of the site. From this viewpoint the hedgerows and trees along the valley provide heavy screening to the site with no visibility of it and the screening effect will only be greater in summer. With the extent of screening there will be no change to the view, and therefore impacts are not considered further.

6.3.12 **Viewpoint 17 - North of Burnett on Public Footpath BA8/59**
1.67km from site: 91m AOD
This far viewpoint (over 1.5km) is on footpath BA8/59 which runs east from behind the houses, in the direction of the site. As a result of being on higher ground and in line with the site the majority of the fields are visible and the it is seen in a landscape rich in woodland.
Sensitivity: – The viewpoint is from a footpath in an elevated location with open views in an area with an assessed value of 'average'. The sensitivity is therefore considered to be **medium/ high**.

Receptors: Users of the footpath; Agricultural workers; potentially a residential property on north side of Burnett

Visual Effects
Receptors here get a direct but distant view of the site. The rows of solar panels and infrastructure buildings will be seen from parts of this footpath (BA8/59) before descending into an undulating topography that would obscure the site. However, with the increased elevation in this view more tree cover is seen in the middle ground creating a more wooded appearance to the site. Mitigation planting will add to this but won't provide full screening leaving a large part of the solar arrays and infrastructure buildings visible in the distance. The arrays being low in the valley would not change the extent of the wider panoramic view and views beyond the development.

During Construction
The will be no significant difference between the visual effect during construction and operation due to the distance.

During Operation;
At this distance there will be no discernible difference between the perceived impact in year 0-1 and Year 15. The panel arrays may be seen as a change in colour and texture to a small part of the view. Mitigation planting to the eastern edge of the development will grow to create greater screening from this direction. There will be a greater extent of wooded character, which will integrate into the landscape pattern.
As the scheme is reversible, the effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/ HIGH** Magnitude: **LOW** Impact: **SLIGHT/MODERATE adverse**

6.3.12 **Viewpoint 18 – Public footpath BA8/56 south of Burnett**
1.57km from site; 90m AOD
This view is distant (over 1.5km), from a public footpath on higher ground near Burnett, east of the site. A very small part of the north west of the site can be glimpsed between a gap in the hedge in the middle distance. In general, from this path vegetation screens longer distance views into the valley bottom. The view is not in the direction of travel of the path.
Sensitivity: The viewpoint is from footpath not characterised for its open nature. The sensitivity is therefore considered to be **low/ medium**.

Receptors – Users of the footpath; Agricultural Workers

Visual Effects
The proportion of the view affected by the change is extremely small and may be affected by seasonal growth of crops in the foreground field. A small part of the site may be glimpsed as a change in colour or texture. Receptors are likely to be moving and will need to look sideways through the gap to view the site and hence views will be for a short duration.

During Construction
The will be no significant difference between the visual effect during construction and operation at this distance.

During Operation
At this distance there will be no discernible difference between the perceived impact in year 0-1 and Year 15. The scheme is reversible; the effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **LOW/ MEDIUM** Magnitude: **NEGLIGIBLE** Impact: **NEGLIGIBLE adverse**

6.3.13 **Viewpoint 19 – Public footpath BA8/56 South of Burnett crossing open fields at Wansdyke Scheduled Monument**
1.81km from site; 83m AOD
This view is distant (over 1.5km) from public footpath BA8/56 crossing open fields on higher ground to the east of the site, at the point where it crosses Wansdyke Scheduled Monument. The undulating topography and blocks of deciduous and coniferous woodlands severely restricts the extent of the site that is seen. At this location there is a glimpse of the south west corner of the field. The view is not in the direction of travel of the path, but at a natural break point in a journey.

Sensitivity: The viewpoint is from footpath with open views at a Scheduled monument. The sensitivity is therefore considered to be **Medium/ High**.

Receptors:- Users of the footpath; Landscape setting of a Schedule monument; Agricultural workers

Visual Effects
Only a very small part of the site is seen within a wider panoramic view of the landscape and the majority of the solar panels are screened by the trees in the middle distance. A small part of the south west corner of the site may be visible. The setting of the Scheduled monument will not be affected as a result of the development.

During Construction
The will be no significant difference between the visual effect during construction and operation at this distance.

During Operation.
At this distance there will be no discernible difference between the perceived impact in year 0-1 and Year 15. The change will be very small with barely discernable changes in colour or texture. Mitigation planting in the west of the site will infill a section of the field pattern and this will be integrated into the landscape.
The scheme is reversible; the effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/ HIGH** Magnitude: **NEGLIGIBLE** Impact: **NEGLIGIBLE adverse**

6.3.14 **Viewpoint 20 – Public footpath BA8/56 crossing field north of Bathford Road 1.89km from site; 86m AOD**
This view is distant (over 1.5km) from public footpath (BA8/56) crossing an open field on higher ground to the south east of the site. The undulating topography and blocks of woodlands give a well wooded scene. A partial view of the site is visible in the valley behind a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees. The site remains in view as you cross from the gate into the middle of the field but is very distant. The view is part of wider panoramic views in all directions that will be experienced when walking this section of footpath.
Sensitivity: The viewpoint is from footpath enjoying open views in a rural area with an assessed value of 'average'. The sensitivity is therefore considered to be **Medium/ High**.

Receptors: Users of the footpath and Agricultural workers.

Visual Effects
There will be a distant perceptual change from agricultural land to PV panels mostly perceived as a change in texture or colour. The site is seen broken up by the trees in the middle ground. About 50 % of solar cells and the operational buildings along the north side may just be discernable. The visual effect will be less in summer when trees are in leaf and the proportion of the view affected is small.

During Construction
The will be no significant difference between the visual effect during construction and operation

at this distance.

During Operation;
At this distance there will be no discernible difference between the perceived impact in year 0-1 and Year 15. Mitigation planting will grow and provide more tree cover particularly to the east edge of the development which will provide additional screening from this direction.
The scheme is reversible; the effects will be direct, medium term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM/ HIGH** Magnitude: **LOW** Impact: **SLIGHT adverse**

6.3.15 **Viewpoint 21 – Bathford Road looking towards the site.**
1.68km from site; 58m AOD
This view is distant (over 1.5km) from Bathford Road to the south east of the site, glimpsed from the country road for a short section as it descends into Compton Dando, and is lined with hedges and hedge banks. The sunken character limits views of the wider landscape, and this will be greater with summer growth of the foreground, roadside hedge. Along with more distant tree cover and woodland views into the valley bottom are further restricted. At this viewpoint there is a partial view of the site, mainly in winter.
Sensitivity: The viewpoint is a glimpsed view from a road and likely to be seasonal. The sensitivity is therefore considered **low**.

Receptors: Road users.

Visual Effects
There will be a perceptual change from agricultural land to PV panels. Given the distance it will be mostly perceived as a change in texture or colour. About 10 % of the development will be seen broken up by the trees in the middle ground and the screening effect would be almost total in summer. The proportion of the view affected is small and mitigation planting in the northwest would provide screening.

During Construction
The will be no significant difference between the visual effect during construction and operation at this distance.

During Operation;
At this distance there will be no discernible difference between the perceived impact in year 0-1 and Year 15. Mitigation planting will grow provide a more wooded texture to the field with any visibility being fleeting and seasonal.
As the scheme is reversible, the effects will be direct, medium term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **LOW** Magnitude: **NEGLIGIBLE** Impact: **NEGLIGIBLE adverse**

6.3.16 **Viewpoint 22 – Public footpath BA8/33 at Stantonbury Camp Schedule Ancient Monument 2.82km from site; 173m AOD**
This is a far viewpoint from Stantonbury Hill, which includes the scheduled monument of Stantonbury Camp and part of Wansdyke. This viewpoint is on footpath BA8/51 at a gateway between field boundaries to the eastern side of Compton Dando. It is situated on the line of

Wansdyke Scheduled Monument and is included to show views from this feature. From this viewpoint trees around the monument, together with mid-distance woodlands and hedges provide heavy screening to the site. The screening effect will be total in summer and receptors are unlikely to be concentrating on such small, distant parts of the view to notice the development. Given the distance and lack of intervisibility there will be no effects to the setting of the Schedule Monument and therefore impacts are not considered further.

6.3.17 **Night time visual effects**

The proposals do not include any permanent lighting and construction work will be carried out in daylight. Therefore, no visual effects will be present.

6.4 The Landscape Effects

6.4.1 The effects are identified by establishing and describing the changes resulting from the different components of the development and the resulting effects on landscape receptors described in the landscape baseline analysis. The potential effects will be considered as follows:

- Type of effect: Direct, Indirect, Secondary or Cumulative.
- Duration of effect: Short, medium or long-term.
- Nature of effect: Permanent or temporary and neutral, positive or negative

6.4.2 Landscape Character Effects – District Landscape Character

The site and study area lies exclusively within the Chew Valley Landscape Character Area LCA2 as defined by the Bath and North East Somerset Landscape Character Assessment. The LCA encompasses the broad valley of the River Chew and its tributaries and consists of low-lying and undulating farmland. The key characteristics are clearly displayed locally to the area including *the valley becoming narrower and undulating to the north east with steeper valley sides and complex pattern of tributary valleys; undulating farmland of pasture with some arable; settlements on lower slopes or nestled into valley sides and often amongst trees, characteristic woodland on slopes and hillside, fields of late medieval enclosure, network of sunken lanes and tributaries having a more intimate character.*

Sensitivity: With a landscape value considered as **'average'** (4.5) and the susceptibility of the site to this type of change as **'low/ moderate'** (4.6) the sensitivity is therefore assessed as **low/ medium.**

Landscape Effects

The character of the local landscape will undergo a change from an open agricultural field to one with a third of the field covered by PV panels with infrastructure and enclosed by fencing. The solar array is a small-scale operation of 2.2 hectares (described as Band A <5 hectares in the sensitivity study (4.6.)). There will be no change to landform or to the existing hedges or field tree, rather a perceptual change of land use from agriculture to a solar and the introduction of mitigation planting to enhance character and habitats.

During construction;

During construction, at a district level, there will be movement of equipment and construction traffic to and from the site, through the country lanes which may result in a loss of tranquility in the area but will be over a short duration. A small amount of the district field pattern and cover

will change to that of the PV development.
The effects will be indirect, negative and temporary.

Sensitivity: **LOW/ MEDIUM**	Magnitude: **LOW/ MEDIUM**	Impact: **SLIGHT/ MODERATE adverse**

During operation;
The solar farm has a light operational effect being monitored externally. There will be quite a high level of change at the immediate field scale but at a district landscape level the general pattern of the landscape will notice very little change.
The mitigation planting will help assimilate the development into the landscape and along with less intense management will increase biodiversity associated with the River Chew. The general native hedge, tree and shrub cover of the landscape being enhanced in time, making effects neutral. The development is temporary and fully reversible.
The landscape effect at district level will be indirect, neutral and temporary.

Sensitivity: **LOW/ MEDIUM**	Magnitude: **LOW**	Impact: **SLIGHT neutral**

6.4.3 Landscape Character Effects – Site Features and Character
The area immediately local to the site displays key characteristics of District landscape assessment. It is 'undulating pasture and enclosed by hedges' but there are no rare or unique features present at site level. This is covered in more detail at Table 8 (4.3.6). The site is close to the River Chew (SNCI) and in an area that has good tree cover. The SNCI and Natural Recovery networks, along with existing hedgerows and tree cover means mitigation planting can integrate well into the landscape.
Sensitivity: With a landscape value considered as **'average'** (4.5) and the susceptibility of the site to this type of change as **'low/ moderate'** (4.6) the sensitivity is therefore assessed as **low/ medium.**

Landscape Effects
The solar array is a small-scale operation of 2.2 hectares (Band A <5 hectares 4.6.) .The character of the field will change to include the addition of solar panels, buildings, fencing and security. There will be no landscape change to landform, field pattern and existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees and field tree will be retained, and grassland will continue beneath the solar panels. The greatest impact is a perceptual change of land use from agricultural to solar farm. Additional mitigation planting will be incorporated around the site and grasslands diversified for biodiversity interest. The characteristics of the site within its landscape context means that mitigation planting will integrate into the structure of the landscape and provide ecological enhancement, which is accompanied by enhance public access into the area. These planting elements would then form part of the wider landscape character.

During Construction
During construction, there will be movement of equipment and construction activity on the site, which may result in a reduction in tranquility during the works. The construction process, however, is light and has low impact on the land and will be completed within 4 months.
The effects will be direct, short term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **LOW/ MEDIUM** Magnitude: **MEDIUM** Impact: **SLIGHT/ MODERATE adverse**

During Operations
The character of the local landscape will undergo a change from an open agricultural field to the development and mitigation. This will be for the 30-year Planning period after which the development can be fully returned to farmland and is therefore temporary.
The mitigation measures will add structural landscape elements such as hedges, scrub, trees and meadows, improving character and habitats and therefore neutral in nature due to these benefits at this scale. The Mitigation planting will help the development integrate into the overall landscape pattern and strengthen the landscape character. Over time the magnitude of impacts will therefore reduce.
Landscape effects at the field/local scale are therefore considered to be indirect, neutral and temporary.

Sensitivity: **LOW/ MEDIUM** Magnitude: **LOW/ MEDIUM** Impact: **SLIGHT neutral**

6.4.4 **The Localised Character Effects upon Fairy Hill (lane)**
At a micro level it is important to note the existing character of Fairy Hill (lane) adjacent to the site. Consideration of this will help ensure there is minimum long-term change to the lane. There is potential for both visual and landscape character change along the lane, however any visual change is considered at Viewpoint 5 in the visual effects section. Relevant graphics need to be consulted in the Appendices 1 – Figures and Plans document. These are the last two sheets – Views of the lane looking north and south; and Field Access Drawing 24002-001.
Receptors: Users of the lane in vehicles, walkers, cyclists, horse-riders etc. Views are along the lane itself or will be fleeting and through the entrance area and gate to the east side.

Sensitivity: The landscape value is considered as average (4.5.3) and the lane forms part of this overall character and is not special within it. It is a route from Compton Dando to Keynsham and is well used, being shorter than the route via the B3116 to the east and has recreational value, and the sensitivity is therefore assessed as **medium.**

Landscape Effects
The Appendices 1 photos show the existing character of the lane to be a fairly wide rural tarmac lane with hedges to both sides. The hedges beside the route are typical mixed native species and cut to a height of approximately 2.5m. At the time of taking the photos (April) the hedges on the site side had not been cut and were 3-4m high, perhaps suggesting a different ownership to the hedges on the west side of the road, and hence different cutting regimes. The mitigation measures state that site hedges will be cut to 4.5m generally, but on Fairy Hill they will be cut to 2.5m to match the character of other hedges along the lane. This may not be every year and cuts made in the 2nd or 3rd year of growth would be more beneficial for wildlife.

During Construction
At the construction stage the new access arrangements for the site will see the removal of a section of the existing hedge and the installation of a security fence, new stone track surface and gate. Construction vehicles may also use the lane, diminishing tranquility. This will have a small, localized effect on part of the lane, reducing the tranquility and rural character and the

magnitude of change is considered to be **high**, and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM**	Magnitude: **HIGH**	Impact: **MODERATE/ SUBSTANTIAL adverse**

During Operation;
The site access is returned to nearly its original state with only the track remaining and the hedge reinstated, and a new field gate reinstalled. The new hedge will take 4-5 years to reach a similar size to the existing hedge, at which point it will return to its original condition and maintenance regime of 2.5m cutting height. At the decommissioning of the facility the track will be removed and there will be a full return to the baseline conditions. The change from the baseline will therefore be **negligible** and permanent. The nature of the change is considered to be neutral because of the return to baseline conditions.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM**	Magnitude: **NEGLIGIBLE**	Impact: **SLIGHT neutral**

6.4.4 Effects on the Landscape Designations
There are no statutory or non-statutory landscape designations covering the development site or within the vicinity.

6.4.5 Effects on the Habitat Designations
There are no national habitat designations covering the development site or within the vicinity. The eastern boundary joins the River Chew a locally designate Site of Nature Conservation Interest
Sensitivity- Medium

Landscape Effects
The solar panels are located to the west of the site away from the river and SNCI. Mitigation planting around the site will contribute to biodiversity improvements and will integrate with the SNCI and Nature Recovery Area.

During construction;
During construction there will be movement of equipment and construction activity on the site, and planting within the eastern side of the area, which may result in a loss of tranquility in the receptor setting. Other construction management procedures would minimize the effect on the SNCI.
The effects will be indirect, short term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM**	Magnitude: **LOW**	Impact: **SLIGHT adverse**

During Operation;
The site area adjoining the SNCI receptor will change from open farmland to one with solar panels and the development. Mitigation planting will supplement the SNCI and river habitats, providing a greater range and connectivity of habitats in the area. It will help the development integrate into the overall vegetation pattern in time and strengthen the biodiversity adjoining the SNCI.
The effects will be indirect, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM** Magnitude: **MEDIUM** Impact: **MODERATE beneficial**

6.4.6 Effects on the Heritage Designations

The heritage designations described in the landscape baseline are either well screened from the development as a result of intervening vegetation or buildings; and/ or are at a distance away from the development, such that the development won't have any effect on them or on their setting. For the Scheduled Monuments this was verified in the visual assessment. VP7,14,19 and 22.

Landscape Effects

There will be no landscape effects or changes arising from the development or mitigation planting that would have an impact on any heritage designations or their settings.

6.4.7 Effects on the Recreational resources

There are a number of recreational resources described in the baseline, which would be affected by the proposed development, in particular public footpaths:
BA 8/84 –crossing the eastern side of the site,
BA8/3 climbing Fairy Hill to the immediate west of the site.
BA8/51 crossing fields to the east of the River Chew.

Landscape Effects

No paths will be diverted or removed. The experiential qualities of the PRoW's will be altered with some having their countryside setting changed by the development. Mitigation planting to the east of the development will provide positive contribution to the immediate character of PRoW BA8/84. Additional Community enhancements projects may further provide additional access around the perimeter of the solar farm and use for community benefit.
Sensitivity: The footpaths as landscape receptors have **medium** sensitivity, with its experiential qualities sensitive to disturbance.

During construction;

During construction there will be movement of equipment and construction activity on the site, which may result in a loss of tranquility.
The effects will be indirect, short term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM** Magnitude: **MEDIUM** Impact: **MODERATE adverse**

During Operation;

The change will be in the experiential qualities. Mitigation on the site will modify and improve screening and habitat in the longer term and lessen the effect. Operation will involve the occasional vehicle on site for maintenance purposes but otherwise the tranquility will be maintained. Public access onto the site from the Two Rivers way will be a benefit, allowing new recreation opportunities and is considered to modify the nature of effect to neutral..
The effects will be indirect, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **LOW** Magnitude: **LOW** Impact: **SLIGHT neutral**

6.4.8 Effects on Agricultural Land

DEFRA maps were consulted to establish grade of land in this area, which was found to be Grade 3b on this site. This is average quality land and therefore considered to have a **medium** sensitivity rating.

Landscape Effects

There will be a change from agricultural land to solar panels. The grass will remain underneath the panels and opportunities to graze the land remain. The development is reversible, and the land can be returned to agricultural use at decommissioning phase. The mitigation planting will take up part of the area of agricultural land. The magnitude of change is therefore considered to be **low**.

The effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM**	Magnitude: **NEGLIGIBLE**	Impact: **SLIGHT adverse**

6.4.9 Effects on residential property

Because of the nature of the local landscape there are few residential buildings close enough to the development to have their landscape setting affected. Within close proximity are the terraced properties on Fairy Hill. These are around 245m from the centre of the site and 130m away from the nearest most southerly panel, and buffered by an intermediate field, of a domestic/smallholder nature and mature native hedge with hedgerow trees on the site's southern boundary.

Landscape Effects

The change will be the introduction of new and contrasting elements into the landscape, the solar panels. The solar panels are low lying structures and will be buffered by the hedge and intermediate field. Activities from the energy generation on the site would not create additional noise beyond that already experienced by farming.

Sensitivity: Given the distance from the site the sensitivity is **low**.

During construction;

During construction there will be movement of equipment and construction activity on the site, which may result in a small loss of tranquility in the receptor setting.

The effects will be indirect, short term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **LOW**	Magnitude: **NEGLIGIBLE**	Impact: **NEGILGILBE/-SLIGHT adverse**

During Operation;

In terms landscape impacts upon the receptors as residences, and given the intervening field and hedge, there will be limited change to the baseline conditions. The properties could experience a small increase in noise, leading to a reduction in levels of tranquility during construction but this would be for a limited period. The mitigation measures would be to retain the hedge as a substantial buffer along the site's southern boundary.

The effects will be indirect, long term and temporary neutral.

Sensitivity: **LOW** Magnitude: **NONE** Impact: **NO CHANGE**

6.5 The Cumulative Effects

6.5.1 The GLVIA 3 guidance refers to cumulative effects as: "the additional changes caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effect of a set of developments, taken together."

6.5.2 Using the Councils' online mapping tool other ground mounted solar arrays were identified within the study area baseline (4.7).

6.5.3 The baseline survey ascertained that given the location of these sites, the distance from and lack of intervisibility, due to intervening vegetation, hedges and woodland or settlements, with the proposed development, they would not be physically present no manifest themselves in the landscape. So, there would be **no cumulative landscape or visual effects** arising as a result of the proposals.

6.6 The Residual Effects

6.6.1 GLVIA 3 states that residual effects are those effects considered to still be present once all mitigation measures have been installed. In the case of planting mitigation this is assumed to be when planting has matured to a sufficient degree to have the effect that was intended. For the purposes of this study this is assumed to be at 15 years for trees and 4-5 years for hedges and scrub. Only **operational effects** are considered in this section as residual effects are considered after a period of time has passed. The receptor in this case is considered to be the general landscape locality and, at 4.6 the baseline conclusion, with reference to its susceptibility to this type of change, is judged to be **low/ moderate**. This is an appropriate

6.6.2 Landscape Effects:
Once all mitigation planting is mature the residual effect of the development would be the temporary introduction of the solar panels, with new and contrasting elements into the landscape. District landscape character would have a negligible change to their baseline with only very local effects being measurable. As the landscape change is only experienced at a very local level and is of a temporary nature the magnitude is considered to be low.
The Operational Residual effects will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **LOW** Magnitude: **LOW** Impact: **SLIGHT- adverse**

The development is temporary and reversible and would be returned to a field after operations are complete in 30 years, although some mitigation planting may be retained, becoming part of the landscape character of the area. The effects at this point will be **negligible** neutral.

6.6.3 Visual Effects:
Once all mitigation planting is in a mature condition the residual visual effects would be that parts of the solar farm and site infrastructure would remain visible from some locations.
This will be most apparent at close view from the elevated viewpoints at VP3 to the west of the site on footpath BA 8/33 climbing Fairy Hill, and elevated medium to long distance views from

footpath BA8/51, BA8/59 crossing more open farmland to the east and north east of the site. VP9, VP10 and VP17. The assessment of viewpoints has considered that mitigation planting will provide screening and soften the effect for most other cases. From those few isolated locations, the impact will remain as at operation stage.
The Operational residual visual effects from a few specific locations will be direct, long term and temporary.

Sensitivity: **MEDIUM** Magnitude: **MEDIUM** Impact: **MODERATE adverse**

The development is reversible and would be returned to agriculture after operation.

6.7 Effect on openness and permanence of the Green Belt.

6.7.1 Openness and Permanence are two essential characteristics of Green Belt spatial policy. The development of solar renewable energy is classed by NPPF as inappropriate development in the Green Belt and ""very special circumstances" will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other consideration".

There is no definition of openness in the Green Belt, but it is accepted that "openness is open textured" and a number of both, spatial and visual, factors are capable of being relevant when it comes to applying it to the particular facts of the project. Those factors relevant to landscape and visual are considered below.

Approximately 70% of Bath and North East Somerset is Green Belt land.(3.7.1). The proposal is a temporary, fully reversible development for 2.2 hectares of solar panels which are low lying structures at around 2m high.

The landscape character of Green Belt is derived from the interaction of component elements of landform, land cover and land use, which can vary across the same Green Belt and which this influences the visual aspects of openness.

The site is in an area of the Bath and North East Somerset Green Belt lying in the north east area of the Chew Valley and area visually contained by the surrounding high ridges, and with no visual connection to the wider Green Belt. The area consists of an undulating landscape primarily a mix of farmland with areas of woodland as identified in the landscape baseline. (At 4.1-4.3). The site is in a low lying gently sloping field to the side of the valley bottom with adjacent land rising steeply. The hedges, tree and woodland cover near the site and within the wider valley, providing degrees of visual screening of the site, giving the site further natural enclosure within the valley.

Visual Aspects; The visual assessment has shown the visibility of the site is limited to elevated land to the immediate west of the site VP3, to the west at the entrance gateway (VP5); to the immediate east VP1&2, and longer views in from the east and north east as seen in VP9. (At Section 4.4 and 6.2).

General long-distance views across the local area of the Green Belt are not interrupted by the

development; due to its low-lying nature. Where seen in longer distance views, the low-lying panels means development is seen mainly in change in colour and texture in the horizontal plane of the field (VP17) rather than in height. The open view from the elevated public footpath close to the site, is not interrupted by the development even though it is appreciable, (VP3).

For low level viewpoints to the immediate east of the development (VP1&2) these location are more enclose in nature and where mitigation planting is proposed to screen the development this planting fits in with existing pattern of vegetation and tree cover' and enhances the character of the River Chew and Green infrastructure network and contribute to biodiversity enhancement for nature recovery, which are objectives for the area. For the low-level viewpoint to the immediate west (VP5) mitigation planting is proposed to screen the infrastructure buildings but keeping some areas clear to retain far view across the site to the south east

The low-lying nature of the panels and ability to graze beneath them means the use of the area can be retained. The temporary nature of the development, 30years whilst a long period of time, means that the site is fully reversible and so on completion of operations the solar infrastructure will be removed, and land returned to the current condition continuing thereby retaining the openness and permanence of the Green Belt.

In addition, the Bath and NE Somerset Green Belt policy CP8 (3.4) the objective for the Green Belt includes for providing opportunities for access, recreation, and nature conservation interest which the scheme provides.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This report has followed accepted good practice in trying to make as an objective assessment as possible of the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposal.

7.1.2 At 4.5 and 4.6 the baseline qualities of this site have been discussed and the landscape and visual qualities of the site have been assessed against its overall **Sensitivity** – which is: 'With a landscape value considered as **'average'** (4.5) and the susceptibility of the site to this type of change as **'low/ moderate'** (4.6) the sensitivity is therefore assessed as **low/ medium'.**
This has led to a base-line conclusion that it has a **low/moderate** susceptibility to the type of change arising from a Band A ground mounted solar PV development (4.6.2). This has modified the effects considerations accordingly.

7.2 Mitigation

7.2.1 The mitigation measures are aimed at trying to assimilate the development by maximising the benefits of the natural resources and setting of the site, combined with enhancements that aim to create an appearance in context with the surrounding landscape and improve the mitigation of winter impacts. In this case, the scale of development requires a moderate level of mitigation to assist with assimilation into the natural setting.

In general, the aspirations of mitigation can be summarised as follows:-

- Maintain existing hedgerow planting at 3m and retain hedgerow trees to the north and south boundaries to keep continuity of screening.
- Protect the existing oak tree and boundary hedge vegetation in accordance with BS: 5837 'Trees in relation to construction', during construction.
- Ensure construction operations do not conflict with conservation interests such as archaeology, hydrology or the seasonal requirements of flora and fauna.
- Use blocks of native tree and shrub panting and hedges to close views of the development and reduce visual impacts. Plant in field trees for longevity.
- Consider the colour and texture of the material of buildings and fencing so they are recessive in the landscape and fit in with the rural setting.
- Locate site buildings close to and behind the panels to lessen their prominence in the landscape.
- Have a landscape management plan in place for the lifetime of the scheme.
- Incorporate enhancements / mitigation measures to the development that would be in keeping to local character and provide biodiversity benefits which could accord with the West of England Nature Recovery Network Wetland Opportunities Flood Zone 2 and 3 and Woodland Network model and accord with the River Chew Strategic Green Infrastructure within B&NES.

7.3 Benefits and Policy Compliance

7.3.1 In terms of promoting the policies and recommendations of national planning policy the proposal meets with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework as described in clause 3.2 in that it is not on land with a high environmental or amenity value (Para 175); is outside local protected landscapes (Para 176); conserves and enhances the natural environment and improves biodiversity in the mitigation landscaping (Para 179).

7.3.2 In accord with Local Planning Policy, Core Policy CP3 for Renewable Energy, the proposals lie within an area identified in the local plan as having a high to medium potential area for Band A ground mounted solar development. It avoids the best quality land in the local area and has potential to maintain grazing below the panel and is not in a SAC bat sustenance zone. It avoids hedgerow loss and includes mitigation planting to enhance biodiversity and will provide multifunctional green infrastructure.

7.3.3 In consideration of Green Belt Policy, the assessment has considered the visual aspect of and character of openness for the site. Whilst solar array developments are considered inappropriate (NPPF Para 147) the proposals are being sort under "very special circumstance" The proposals are temporary fully reversible and have been developed to avoid harm to the openness of the Green Belt in accord with Local Planning Policy Core Policy CP8 for Green Belt and not to prejudice visual amenities (GB1).

7.3.4 The proposal follows local planning policy and guidance with relation to landscape and visual effects by encompassing policies from the LDF as outlined in section 3.4:

- The development conserves and enhances local landscape character and incorporates green space that positively contributes to landscape character in the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures (NE2)

- Mitigation planting to the east of the site responds to the Ecology Networks and Nature Recovery Agenda being part of a nature recovery network and beside SNCI and provide habitat creation and enhancement (NE5) and also contributes positively to an existing a strategic green infrastructure assets River Chew Reconnected (NE1)
- Existing Field tree is retained, and new tree planting proposed to enhance biodiversity and woodland recovery (NE6)

7.3.5 Within the Bath & North East Somerset landscape sensitivity study (LUC 2021) overall recommendation and strategic guidance for Solar PV Development s are provided (see Table 9). The proposals have incorporated these recommendations.

7.4 Landscape Impacts – Conclusion

7.4.1 The landscape impact of the development will include the change of landscape cover on the site from an agricultural field to a temporary ground mounted solar panel PV development with its associated infrastructure. Mitigation planting will add to the woodland cover and hedges in the area, increasing biodiversity.

7.4.2 The construction phase will last 4 months and give rise to temporary short term landscape effects, it would be distinct from the operation phase, which is for duration of 30 years, as there would be more activity on site. During operation phase, the assessment of viewpoints has considered that mitigation planting will soften many effects of the proposal in the landscape and for this phase the relatively low level of activity on site will not affect levels of tranquility from the baseline.

7.4.2 Landscape Impacts During Construction
The landscape impacts during this period will be:
An increased amount of activity on the site will lead to a possible reduction in tranquility for the duration of the construction period. This will mainly impact on landscape receptors close to the site.

- District Level landscape character level (Chew Valley LCA2) effects are considered to be a slight decrease in levels of tranquility due to construction activity, together with a small change to the landscape field cover. These will be localized and are not expected to greatly change the baseline conditions over the whole character area and have therefore been assessed as **slight/ moderate** adverse.
- The effects on site features and character, will be similar to that as above but also include changes near the access into the site and land cover on the site which is more apparent at the local level. Due to the smaller, and more intimate nature of the local character assessment they have been assessed as **slight/moderate** adverse.
- The micro level changes to the landscape resource at Fairy Hill will include temporary changes at the site entrance, but the character of hedges along the lane is retained with the west hedge being maintained at 2.5m to give continuity with other hedges along the lane, and past conditions. The initial change is large but only for the 4 month construction period and is considered to be **moderate/ substantial** adverse.
- For effects on habitats the changes to land cover and disturbance to tranquility due to construction activity and initial planting activities is assessed **slight** adverse.
- Increased activity on site will impact on the tranquility of the landscape at a recreation

resource for those footpaths close to the site, notably the Two Rivers Way and this impact is considered **moderate** adverse.

- During construction there will be disturbance to the ground and the impact on agricultural land is considered **slight** adverse.
- Local residential properties on Fairy Hill may be impacted by slight noise during construction and loss of tranquility, but otherwise are buffered from the development. These receptors have been assessed as potentially experiencing effects of **negligible/ slight** adverse.

The above impacts are considered temporary while the construction phase is active.

7.4.3 Landscape Impacts During Operation

The landscape impacts at operation will be the introduction of new and contrasting elements in the landscape which will in time be moderated by the mitigation measures and at this development these are considered to be the native tree and shrub planting, which will have its expected effect after around 15 years. For hedge planting the effect would be felt sooner. The operational phase of the solar development will have a relatively low activity on site, and the level of tranquility is not likely to be significantly different from the baseline. The effects during this period will be:

- District Level landscape character (Chew Valley LCA2) will experience a slight moderation to effects as a result of the mitigation planting and the temporary nature of the development. Planting will improve vegetation cover and habitats and slightly improve character. These will be localized and are not expected to greatly change the baseline over the wider character area and have therefore been assessed as **slight** neutral.
- The effects on site features and character area, at site level will be similar to that above but also include reversing the changes to the access into the site, together with the landscape and habitat improvements created as a result of the mitigation planting. Levels of tranquility will return to the baseline situation following construction and may increase further as mitigation planting matures and biodiversity increases. Due to the smaller and more intimate nature of the local character the mitigation is considered to be neutral in nature and the landscape impact at this stage is assessed as **slight** neutral.
- The micro level changes at Fairy Hill will be modified by returning the site entrance to its original condition (although the stone track will remain for the 30 year period) and ensuring the roadside hedges are maintained to a similar height and condition to each other. This will return and maintain the character of the lane for the planning period and the effect is considered to **slight** neutral.
- Operation effects on habitats will include the growth of the new enhancement planting that will mitigate the temporary changes to land cover, and changed management will greatly strengthen biodiversity so that the landscape effect on habitats improves to **moderate** beneficial.
- Following construction, the tranquility of the landscape as a recreation resource for those footpaths close to the site, will return and as mitigation planting matures may increase further. -Additional recreation opportunities would provide further enhancement and the impact is improved to **slight** neutral.
- The operational phase keeps this parcel of land out of agricultural production for the duration of the planning period and is hence reversible and temporary. But it is

identical to the construction phase and therefore remains a **slight** adverse effect.

- Following construction the tranquility will return to the baseline, and so it is expected that the impact on the landscape receptors for local residential properties around Fairy Hill will return to the baseline situation with no effects.

7.4.4 The above factors lead to the conclusion that the landscape impacts are not considered substantially adverse.

7.5 Visual Impacts – Conclusion

7.5.1 From this appraisal it is considered that the site is less visible than the Zone of Theoretical Visibility would suggest. Field work has established that south of Compton Dando there are no or limited views of the site due to intervening vegetation and structures and undulating landscape. Increased distance and elevation provided some view of the site from isolated locations but these are partial and seen within a larger panorama, as a result magnitude of the effect is negligible or barely perceptible (VP13,16,18,22). Views to the east across the open flat landscape create more opportunities for views into the site over a wider area (VP8-12,17), as did close views on elevated land to the west (VP3,4); on public footpath through the east if the site (VP1,2), and from the gateway looking into the site in the west (VP5).

7.5.2 The proposals are a small-scale solar PV development (over 2.2hecatres) with a low profile of 2m. The proposals are temporary for an operational use of 30 years and fully reversible.

7.5.3 Visual Impacts during Construction

The construction phase is over a relatively short period and effects are considered to be views of activity on site, traffic movements and the visible changes as the land covered by solar panels increases.

- The viewpoint analysis has established that during construction the local scene will experience change, such as at viewpoints 1, 2, and 3. These are representative of walkers on the Two Rivers Way on site; on footpath up Fairy Hill, who will experience the greatest magnitude of change and where assessments of **moderate/ substantial** adverse are predicted. At viewpoints 4 and 5, additional construction traffic around the access could lead to a change predicted as **moderate** and **moderate/ substantial** adverse respectively at this stage.
- VP4 is on Fairy Hill lane as it descends towards the site and is in the direction of travel for receptors travelling south. It has an elevated view of the west third of the site, but the arrays have been kept away from this area and are set back 50-80m from the west boundary. Construction activity will be evident on the site, but the view is chanelled and of short duration for some receptors in vehicles. The effects is judged to be **moderate** adverse.
- VP 6 and 7 have some elevation but heavy tree cover to the valley around the River Chew severely restricts views such that VP7 is dismissed and VP6 only has the far north west corner of the site visible. Some construction activity may be visible to the north west corner and the effects here are **slight/ moderate** adverse.
- Viewpoints 8-12, 17 and 20 on the eastern side of the river have visibility of the construction activities at either the whole site or the westerly side. However, being further away, the effects would be smaller in magnitude so predicted as **slight/**

moderate and **slight** adverse.

- The remaining viewpoints are more distant and have a low proportion of the site visible and the impacts are judged to be **none**, **negligible** or **negligible/slight**.

The above impacts are considered temporary while the construction phase is active.

7.5.4 Visual Impacts during Operation

The operation phase effects are considered to be mainly a result of the visible changes of the site as a result of the solar panels and infrastructure, as operational activity on site will be low. There will also be change to views as the mitigation planting matures to its desired effect. This will be around 15 years. The initial negative nature of effects is as a result of the introduction of new and contrasting elements into the landscape and the construction activity to install them. however, as mitigation planting grows it will lessen this effect to various extents.

- The change in effect at close VP1,2,3 and 5 will a reduction in effects to **moderate** initially as the construction activity ceases, improving to **slight/ moderate** adverse over time as the mitigation planting takes effect and screens the development. From elevation such as at VP3 more of the development will be visible initially but trees in the new planting to the west will provide additional screening.
- VP4 is on Fairy Hill and has an elevated view of the west third of the site, but the arrays have been kept away from this area and are set back 50-80m from the west boundary. Mitigation is designed to screen and break up these views and the effect reduces to **slight** adverse over time.
- VP 6 and 7 have some elevation but heavy tree cover to the valley around the River Chew severely restricts views such that VP7 is dismissed and VP6 only has the far north west corner of the site visible. When construction activity ceases the effects here are predicted to reduce to **slight** adverse.
- At further distance VP 8-12, 17 from the east , the angle of the view and elevation means mitigation planting will have less screening effect but will provide additional vegetation in the landscape providing a backdrop to the development the impact is considered to be **slight/moderate** adverse.
- At VP20, in from the SE – due to elevation – mitigation planting will strength tree cover to area around the site and impact is assessed as slight to moderate.

7.6 Cumulative Impacts - Conclusion

7.6.1 The development site has been considered cumulatively with other, ground mounted solar arrays developments in the locality at 4.7 of this assessment. The baseline ascertains that there would be no cumulative effect, due to a lack of any relationship between other arrays in the area, due to distance or screening.

7.7 Residual Impacts - Conclusion

7.7.1 The residual effects are considered to be those still present once all mitigation has taken effect. For this development this is considered to be when the planting has reached a sufficient level of maturity to screen the development as much as intended and would be at around 15 years. The ultimate residual effect would be after 30 years when operations have ceased, and the solar arrays and infrastructure are removed, and the land restored to the baseline field conditions.

7.7.2 Landscape Effects:
The main residual effect at around 15 years) is the temporary loss of land to the solar farm, along with its change in colour and texture to the landscape pattern. Mitigation planting will mature to provide landscape structure and biodiversity benefits for the long term. Overall residual landscape impacts are considered **slight** adverse.

7.7.3 Visual Effects:
After mitigation planting has matured the site will remain visible from some locations, including close elevated views from footpaths at VP3 and elevated medium to long distance views on footpaths VP9,VP10,VP17 from east to north east. Overall residual visual impacts are considered **moderate** adverse at this 15 year period. It should be borne in mind that the development has a 30 year planning period, after which the site will be returned to its base-line condition and effe cts at this point are considered to be **negligible** neutral.

7.8 Impacts on openness and permanence of the Green Belt - Conclusion

7.8.1 The development proposals will result in some harm to the openness of the green belt in terms of encroachment of development and a reduction in openness. The following mitigation measures have been proposed to reduce this impact as much as possible:

- The perception of a loss of openness is reduced from many locations by the careful placing of mitigation planting. However, some views of the development remain at others.
- Although the landscape cover is changed, the field pattern is unaltered by the proposals, with all existing hedges retained.
- Some landscape character elements are enhanced such as habitats, new hedges and trees.

When considering changes to the Green Belt it is important to note that the planning period of the project is for 30 years and ultimately, the site will return to its current condition. At which point it will have no further impact on the openness, permanence and characteristics of the Green Belt.

7.8.2 In terms of the requirements of the NPPF and how they relate to the landscape and visual impacts of the development, the following matters are of relevance:
Paragraph 143. Green Belt serves five purposes:

a) The development does not comprise the 'unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas';
b) The development does not facillitate 'neighbouring towns merging into one another';
c) The development does not cause the permanent 'encroachment' of the countryside;
d) The development is minimally in the 'setting and special character' of Compton Dando; and
e) The development is not part of any urban regeneration strategy.

Paragraphn153 and 156. Appropriateness
Although some of the built elements of the development could be considered inappropriate in the Green Belt some important mitigating factors include its temporary nature and the positive benefits that come with the landscape mitigation.

Paragraph 163b

This report considers that the mitigation and its benefits outweigh the temporary harm of the development upon the Green Belt, and it can be considered acceptable in this location.