



A meeting of the **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** will be held in **THE CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **MONDAY, 18 AUGUST 2025** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

PLEASE NOTE THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA MAY CHANGE

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st August 2025.

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

3. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT - OTHER APPLICATIONS

To consider reports by the Planning Service Manager (Development Management).

(a) Haddon - 25/00652/FUL (Pages 9 - 66)

Installation of a solar park to export up to 25 MW (AC) electricity, comprising up to 40,000no. photovoltaic panels, up to 7no. inverters & transformers, 2no. electrical buildings, 1no. onsite control building, boundary fencing and gates, security cameras, and associated infrastructure and engineering operations - Land East of Billing Brook and North and South of Peterborough Road, Haddon.

4. APPLICATIONS REQUIRING REFERENCE TO DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

To consider reports by the Planning Service Manager (Development Management).

(a) St Neots - 25/00596/FUL (Pages 67 - 94)

Erection of four dwellings and associated works - Land Adjacent 31, Luke Street, Eynesbury.

(b) St Neots - 25/00756/FUL (Pages 95 - 118)

Erection of three-bedroom bungalow with garage & associated works (inc new planting and creation of off-street parking & turning to both existing and proposed properties) - Land Rear of 34 to 38 Ackerman Street, Eaton Socon.

LATE REPRESENTATIONS

6 day of August 2025

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registrable and Non-Registrable Interests

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registrable and Non-Registrable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings

This meeting will be filmed for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's YouTube site. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items. If you make a representation to the meeting you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed. By entering the meeting you are also consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you have any queries regarding the streaming of Council meetings, please contact Democratic Services on 01480 388169.

The District Council also permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with [guidelines](#) agreed by the Council.

Please contact Anthony Roberts, Democratic Services, Tel: 01480 388015 / email Anthony.Roberts@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

This page is intentionally left blank

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE held in THE CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Monday, 21 July 2025

PRESENT: Councillor D L Mickelburgh – Chair.

Councillors E R Butler, J Clarke, S J Corney, K P Gulson, P A Jordan, S R McAdam, J Neish, B M Pitt, T D Sanderson, R A Slade and S Wakeford.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R J Brereton, D B Dew, S Mokbul and C H Tevlin.

14 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th June 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

15 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor B Pitt declared an Other Registrable Interest in Minute No 17 (b) by virtue of the fact that he had participated in the debate when the application was considered at a meeting of St Neots Town Council's Planning Committee, left the room and took no part in the discussion or voting on the application.

Councillor B Pitt also declared an Other Registrable Interest in Minute No 17 (c) by virtue of the fact that he had participated in the debate when the application was considered at a meeting of St Neots Town Council's Planning Committee, left the room and took no part in the discussion or voting on the application.

Councillor R Slade declared an Other Registrable Interest in Minute No 17 (b) by virtue of the fact that the application related to the Ward he represented and that he was Chair of St Neots Town Council's Planning Committee, left the room and took no part in the discussion or voting on the item.

Councillor R Slade also declared an Other Registrable Interest in Minute No 17 (c) by virtue of the fact that the application related to the Ward he represented and that he was Chair of St Neots Town Council's Planning Committee, left the room and took no part in the discussion or voting on the item.

16 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT - SECTION 106 AGREEMENT- OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION WITH ALL MATTERS RESERVED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF UP TO 120 HOMES (USE CLASS C3) WITH ASSOCIATED PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, LANDSCAPING, PLAY AREAS, SURFACE WATER ATTENUATION, ROADS, CAR PARKING, PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE ROUTES, UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND ASSOCIATED

WORKS - LAND BETWEEN HOUGHTON GRANGE AND THE HOW, HOUGHTON ROAD, HOUGHTON - 23/00627/OUT

(P Riley-Smith on behalf of Houghton and Wyton Parish Council, Councillor M Whewell, Hemingford Abbots Parish Council, Councillor N Wells, St Ives Town Council, Councillors D Keane and D Dew, Ward Members, C Butterworth, objector, and J Strike, agent, addressed the Committee on the application).

With the aid of a report by the Planning Service Manager (Development Management) the Committee considered an application for outline planning permission with all matters reserved for the construction of up to 120 homes (Use Class C3) with associated public open space, landscaping, play areas, surface water attenuation, roads, car parking, pedestrian and cycle routes, utility infrastructure and associated works on land between Houghton Grange and The How, Houghton Road, Houghton.

Members were acquainted with the views of the Section 106 Agreement Advisory Group on the proposed obligation. They then discussed various aspects of the application including the proposed housing density, the application of tolerance in housing numbers, concerns about coalescence of Houghton and Wyton and St Ives and the extent to which the proposals were design-led. Having taken into account relevant local and national planning policies, it was

RESOLVED

that powers be delegated to the Head of Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection to approve the application subject to conditions to include those listed in paragraph 8 of the report now submitted and to the completion of a Section 106 obligation, or to refuse the application in the event that the obligation referred to above has not been completed and the Applicant is unwilling to agree to an extended period for determination, or on the grounds that the Applicant is unwilling to complete the obligation necessary to make the development acceptable.

At 9.06 pm the meeting was adjourned.

At 9.14 pm the meeting resumed.

17 APPLICATIONS REQUIRING REFERENCE TO DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Planning Service Manager (Development Management) submitted reports (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book) on applications for development to be determined by the Committee. Members were advised of further representations, which had been received since the reports had been prepared. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- a) **Construction of a Solar Farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) together with all associated work, equipment and necessary infrastructure, including a substation and underground cable to provide a connection to the grid - Solar Farm, Rookery Farm, Kimbolton Road - 24/00883/FUL**

(Councillor J Matthews, Stow Longa Parish Council, Councillor J Gray, Ward Member, and J Selwyn, applicant, addressed the Committee on the application).

that powers be delegated to the Planning Service Manager (Development Management) to approve the application subject to conditions to include those listed in paragraph 8 of the report now submitted and to an acceptable unilateral undertaking to secure Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring fees.

- b) **Change of Use, and partial demolition of former Public House to 9 residential units - 7 - 9 Market Square, St Neots - 24/01497/FUL**

(Councillor V Hitchen, St Neots Town Council, addressed the Committee on the application).

See Minute No15 for Members' interests.

that the application be approved subject to conditions to be determined by the Planning Service Manager (Development Management) to include those listed in paragraph 8 of the report now submitted.

- c) **Change of Use, and partial demolition of former Public House to 9 residential units - 7 - 9 Market Square, St Neots - 24/01498/LBC**

See Minute No 15 for Members' interests.

that the application be approved subject to conditions to be determined by the Planning Service Manager (Development Management) to include those listed in paragraph 8 of the report now submitted.

18 APPEAL DECISIONS

The Committee received and noted a report by the Planning Service Manager (Development Management), which contained details of four recent decisions by the Planning Inspectorate. A copy of the report is appended in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

Chair

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 18th AUGUST 2025

Case No: 25/00652/FUL (appeal ref. 25/00016/NONDET)
Proposal: Installation of a solar park to export up to 25 MW (AC) electricity, comprising up to 40,000no. photovoltaic panels, up to 7no. inverters & transformers, 2no. electrical buildings, 1no. onsite control building, boundary fencing and gates, security cameras, and associated infrastructure and engineering operations
Location: Land East Of Billing Brook And North And South Of Peterborough Road, Haddon
Applicant: Wessex Solar Energy Ltd - Ms Charlotte Peacock
Grid Ref: (E) 512683 (N) 293366
Date of Registration: 15.04.2025
Parish: Haddon

RECOMMENDATION –

Delegated powers to the Head of Planning, Infrastructure & Public Protection to make representations to the appeal on behalf of the District Council, in accordance with the putative reason for refusal in section 9 of this report.

This application, and by association the District Council's stance at appeal, is referred to the Development Management Committee (DMC) in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, following a call-in request from the Ward Councillor (Cllr Tim Alban).

IMPORTANT NOTE – An appeal against Non-determination has now been submitted and as such it is no longer open to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to make a formal determination of the application. The appeal has started (ref. 25/00016/NONDET) and the LPA is required to confirm its stance, either adopting putative reasons for refusal or otherwise confirming it does not intend to defend the appeal. The deadline imposed by The Planning Inspectorate for doing so is 20/08/2025.

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 1.1 The application site comprises approximately 25ha of Grade 3b agricultural land, situated in two parcels north and south of the A605, with the bulk of the site being to the north. The site is wholly within Haddon Parish, and Chesterton and Elton Parishes border the north and west edges of the northern part of the site, respectively.

- 1.2 Along the western edge of the northern parcel, running north to south, is Billing Brook, located within flood zones 2 and 3a, that cover the western most edges of the site. As identified in the 2024 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, the fluvial Flood Zones run concurrently with areas identified as being at risk from surface water flooding at the 1 in 30 and 1 in 100 year event category, which also run along the edges of the site, particularly along the A605. The 2024 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment identifies the area is at negligible risk of flooding from Groundwater Sources.
- 1.3 Bridleway 111/8 running partially along the western boundary into the site terminating midway in the field. These Public Rights of Way (PROWs) connect to others to the north and east of the northern parcel. The site is located within the Brickclay Mineral Safeguarding Area and along the eastern boundary of the northern half of the site runs an oil pipeline.
- 1.4 The application notes grid connection would be made through underground cables into the wider grid network at the Orton Substation. The works would be carried out by a Statutory Undertaker who has separate statutory powers to carry out these works, and therefore does not form part of this application.
- 1.5 Topographically, the site slopes down from east to west, reflective of the general landscape of this area that rises and falls in noticeable peaks and valleys. The site is located within National Character Area (NCA) 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, and within the Northern Wolds Landscape Character Area as identified in the adopted Landscape and Townscape SPD 2022. Along the eastern, western and northern edges of the site is established planting, predominantly hedgerows, with some intermittent trees, though with trees mostly sited around the areas of the site close to the A605 and along Billing Brook. The southern boundaries include hedgerows, but not as established as other boundaries, and with limited intermittent tree planting.
- 1.6 There are a number of designated heritage assets in the surroundings, with the closest being the Grade II* St Marys Church in Haddon, sited approximately 870m from the edge of the site where solar panels are proposed. Approximately 950m to the north is a Schedule Ancient Monument, a Roman Barrow, and approximately 1100m to the north west are a pair of Grade II listed buildings that form part of Sheepwalk Farm.
- 1.7 The application proposes the erection of ground mounted solar panels across most of the site, with a bank of panels being approximately 12.5m in length, 6.2m in depth, with the maximum height of the panel being 3.5m. Panels would be sited in rows, with gaps of 0.2m between each bank, and sited on regularly spaced columns that penetrate the ground. The exact depth of the mounting column will vary across the site due to topographical changes and to accommodate varying soil constraints but is indicatively shown as 2m.
- 1.8 The application also proposes 7no. cabins to house inverters and transformers, measuring 2.6m in width, 10.4m in depth and 3.2m in overall height with a flat roof and generally utilitarian in appearance. The proposed security fencing and gate to the perimeter of the solar panels measures approximately 2m in overall height. Engineering operations

are proposed to create new swales and the hardstanding to provide internal access. A single control building is proposed within the site, measuring 7m in width, 3m in depth, 4m in overall height and 3.5m to the eaves. 2no. substations are proposed measuring 9m in length, 4.2m in height and 3.5m in width.

- 1.9 This application follows a previous application (22/00668/FUL) and associated appeal. For comparison, this application proposes a reduction in the overall area of the site by approximately 20ha (or a 45% reduction on the previous 45ha), together with associated reduction in the number of panels from 65,000 to 40,000 and a reduction in supporting infrastructure.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE AND POLICY AND RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) sets out the three economic, social and environmental objectives of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF confirms that 'So sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development...' (para. 10). The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for, amongst other things:
- delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
 - achieving well-designed places;
 - conserving and enhancing the natural environment;
 - conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
- 2.2 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the National Design Guide 2019 (NDG) and the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) are also relevant and a material consideration.
- 2.3 For full details visit the government website [National Guidance](#).
- 2.4 Relevant Legislation;
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
 - Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
 - Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
 - Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

3. LOCAL PLANNING POLICIES

- 3.1 Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)
- LP1 Amount of Development
 - LP2 Strategy for Development
 - LP3 Green Infrastructure
 - LP4 Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
 - LP5 Flood Risk
 - LP10 The Countryside
 - LP11 Design Context
 - LP12 Design Implementation
 - LP13 Placemaking
 - LP14 Amenities
 - LP15 Surface Water
 - LP16 Sustainable Travel

- LP17 Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
 - LP19 Rural Economy
 - LP29 Health Impact Assessment
 - LP30 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
 - LP31 Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
 - LP34 Heritage Assets and their Settings
 - LP35 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
 - LP36 Air Quality
 - LP37 Ground Contamination and Groundwater Pollution
- 3.2 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2036 (Adopted July 2021)
- Policy 5 Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAS)
- 3.3 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment – Adopted 2022
 - Huntingdonshire Design Guide – Adopted 2017
 - Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD – Adopted 2017
 - RECAP Waste Management Design Guide (CCC SPD) – Adopted 2012
 - Developer Contributions – Adopted 2011 (Costs updated annually)
- 3.4 Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) – Solar and Protecting our Food Security and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land (May 2024)
- 3.5 Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy EN-1 (2024)
- 3.6 National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (2024)
- 3.7 *Officer note – National Policy Statements, with those relevant to this application set out in paras 3.4 and 3.5 above, are primarily produced to support the National Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime. However, both identify that they may be material planning considerations in standard planning applications, but it is for the decision maker to consider the level of weight that should be attributed to them in each circumstance. Noting the scale of development that they are specifically produced to support; officers consider the adopted local plan policies should take primacy in consideration.*
- 3.8 For full details visit the Council's website [Local policies](#).

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 21/70004/SCRE - Proposed solar park and associated infrastructure across a 43.3ha (approx. 107 acres) site. Screening Opinion Adopted 02/02/21 – Concludes the development is not EIA Development.
- 4.2 22/00668/FUL – Installation of a solar park to export up to 25 MW (AC) electricity, comprising up to 65,000 photovoltaic panels, 10 inverter/transformer cabins associated works. Refused 21/01/2024. Dismissed at Appeal (see para. 7.3 below for brief summary).

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 Haddon Parish Meeting – No comments received.
- 5.2 Elton Parish Council (copies attached) – Objection. The solar farm at this location is inappropriate and would cause undue harm to landscape character, harm the amenity and enjoyment of the countryside, removes usable agricultural and causes possible hazards for aircraft contrary to national and local policy.
- 5.3 County Council Archaeology – No objection. Archaeological Evaluation has been previously undertaken across the development area. No further archaeological mitigation is required for the application area.
- 5.4 Active Travel England – No comments.
- 5.5 Fisher German (Oil Pipeline) – No objection. Exolum's apparatus will not be affected by the proposals.
- 5.6 Natural England – No objection. The development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutory protect nature conservation sites or landscapes. Referred to standing advice in respect of other matters.
- 5.7 Peterborough Flying School – Objection. The application has not made assessments based on the flying patterns that are actually carried out from Sibson Airfield. The submitted glint and glare assessments have failed to reflect the angle of ascent/descent or the flown circuits within the area that are restricted by the location of the parachute centre. They have not made a meaningful assessment of engine failure after take-off (EFATO) or engine failure on approach (EFAO).
- 5.8 CCC Rights of Way – No objections. Public Bridleway no. 8 crosses the site and must remain open and unobstructed at all times.
- 5.9 Historic England – No objections.
- 5.10 HDC Conservation – Recommend refusal on the basis of harm to the setting of Grade II Listed Sheepwalk Farmhouse and the associated Granary as the development will be visible from these listed buildings and therefore impact its setting. The harm is considered to be less than substantial and would be a relatively small part of the vista of landscape views, and it should be considered whether there is sufficient public benefit to outweigh the harm, in accordance with the NPPF.
- 5.11 CCC Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) – No objections. The submitted documents demonstrate that surface water can be managed through the use of a permitter swale system that will intercept increased runoff. Conditions are recommended in relation to the implementation of the surface water management scheme and means to control runoff during construction.
- 5.12 CCC Local Highway Authority – The submitted visibility splay and access drawings are generally acceptable, and it is noted that these show a left turn in/out access. A revised construction traffic management plan has not been submitted, and it is recommended this conditioned. Conditions are also recommended restricting fences and gates,

requiring the access and manoeuvring areas to be provided in accordance with relevant standards, the retention of vis splays and ensuring appropriate crossing of the culvert is agreed.

- 5.13 HDC Environmental Health – No objections.
- 5.14 Landscape Consultant – Support subject to conditions. The submitted LVA has been conducted in accordance with standard methodology and it is agreed there would be a medium scale of Landscape Change, with an effect moderate/minor significance on landscape character, reducing to minor following the establishment of planting at between 5-10 years, and neutral at 15 years.

The landscape mitigation plan involves native hedgerow and tree planting, and is generally comprehensive, but it is suggested further planting could be included in the south east corner of the southern field. It is recommended this is secured through conditions requiring full details and implementation of soft and hard landscaping.

- 5.15 Ecology Consultant – No objections subject to conditions. It is considered there is sufficient ecological information submitted to support determination of the application. The mitigation measures within the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment should be secured by condition and implemented, and the Biodiversity Net Gain Plan should be secured in accordance with the relevant legislation.

6. REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 HDC Cllr Alban (full copy available on Public Access) – Request the application is determined by Development Management Committee. The development will lead to a loss of agricultural land, adverse impacts to the landscape and the character of the countryside, loss of residential amenity and may adversely impact the operation of aircraft, contrary to policies LP10, LP14 and LP35.
- 6.2 CCC Cllr Bywater (full copy available on Public Access) – Objections. The application has not addressed the previous reasons for refusal upheld at appeal. It would result in the loss of productive agricultural land, and harm to the landscape within this rural area. There would be impacts from construction on highway safety and local amenity and impacts aircraft.
- 6.3 19no. objections received, raising the following summarised material points;
- The proposal would result in harm to landscape character and visual amenity.
 - The proposal would not accord with National Planning Policy.
 - There will be a severe visual impact to residential dwellings.
 - There will be an adverse noise impact.
 - The proposed development is substantially the same as the previously dismissed appeal.
 - Planting mitigation will take a considerable amount of time to mature and is unlikely to sufficiently mitigate the visual impact to the landscape.
 - The development results in the loss of productive agricultural land.

- The site is currently open arable land that will be changed to industrial, out of character with the surrounding area.
- There would be a fundamental visual intrusion into the landscape.
- The development is contrary to the adopted Local Plan.
- The development sits on a high point in the district and will be visible for a significant distance.
- The application has not demonstrated that the proposal would not adversely affect the safe functioning of surrounding airfields.
- Glint and glare assessments have identified that a significant number of assessed points are likely to give rise to impacts to flying from surrounding airfields.
- The western edge of the site is within Flood Zones 2 and 3.
- There will be an increase in surface water discharging into the river, adversely impacting existing flooding issues.
- There will be harm to protected species.
- There will be intrusive lighting that has not been assessed.
- There will be an adverse safety impact on the A605 from vehicles entering and existing the site.
- A decommissioning plan is required to ensure the development will be removed when the solar farm has reached the end of its lifetime.
- The proposal is unlikely to achieve the total power generation indicated and therefore overstates the benefits.
- Screening planted is unlikely to sufficiently mitigate visual impacts as the ground level change will mean solar panels sit higher than the treeline.
- There will be a glare impact to vehicles along the A605.
- Construction will negatively impact ecology and biodiversity.
- There will be an adverse impact to airfield safety due to glint and glare.
- There will be a loss of productive agricultural land.
- There is insufficient detail on how the site will be returned to its use at the end of the lifetime of the development.
- The loss of agricultural land will undermine food security.
- The benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the harm.
- The application has not been accompanied by sufficient information to demonstrate the impact to the landscape.
- The additional information does not address the concerns raised.
- Sibson Airfield flying patterns are largely to the south and therefore over this area.
- The flying patterns from airfields that have been assessed are not representative of actual flying patterns.
- The assessment of impact to private aircraft are not reflective of actual flying patterns and will lead to unsafe flying practices.

- 6.4 1 no. comments of support received, raising the following summarised material points;
- Any impact or reduce carbon footprint should be supported.
- 6.5 The following points have been raised that are not material considerations. Officer notes are *italicised* for explanation where necessary;
- Comments relating to who the applicant or landowner may be.
 - Comments relating to the applicant's reason for submitting the application.

- Concerns regarding precedent for other proposals or future proposed extensions. (*Officer note – Applications must be considered on their own merits. Speculation of future applications that may or may not be submitted is not material.*)
- Solar Panels should be sited on industrial buildings or brownfield land. (*Officer note – This is not in the control of the LPA, is not a matter of policy, and is not a relevant consideration of this application which must be considered on its own merits.*)
- Insufficient consultation has been carried out. (*Officer note – Consultations have been carried out in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.*)
- Impacts to private views. (*Officer note – Alterations to private views are not a material planning considerations. Other impacts to residential amenity are material and are considered below in this report.*)
- Comments relating to policy statements that either do not exist or have been removed in later policy documents. (*Officer Note – Determinations are made on the basis of the latest adopted policy. Where any policy has been superseded or withdrawn it is no longer adopted policy relevant to the determination of this application. Relevant policies are set out above and, as appropriate, considered in the assessment below.*)
- Matters that are not planning policy. (*Officer Note – Reports generated through other central government departments are not Material planning considerations. While they may provide context they are not determinant policy until such time as relevant planning policy is revised to accommodate them.*)
- The application is invalid because it has not clarified the output. (*Officer Note – The application proposes a solar farm that generates up to 25MW as a maximum cap. It is not proposed or assessed on the basis that it would only generate that amount.*)
- Comments relating to whether the application should have been accepted. (*Officer note – The power to decline to determine an application is limited and not met by this application.*)
- Matters relating to the sourcing of products in connection with forced labour camps (*Officer Note – This matter is controlled through other legislation and is therefore not a planning matter.*)
- Matters relating to the emerging Local Plan review and the call for sites. (*Officer Note – Applications are determined on their own merits in accordance with the relevant policy in place at the time of determination. That a local plan review, and associated call for sites, is underway does not change the current policy position against which this application is to be determined.*)
- The revised application should be considered noting the previous refusals. (*Officer note – it is not within the LPA's power to refuse to consider this application.*)
- National Policy Statements are not relevant to this application. (*Officer note – The NPS are clear that they may be material considerations in the determination of applications below Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project thresholds, and that the weight to be attributed is a matter for the decision maker.*)

7. ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- Principle of Development

- Character and Landscape
 - Highway and Transport Impacts
 - Public Rights of Way
 - Impacts to Safe Functioning of Aircraft
 - Ecology and Biodiversity
 - Drainage and Flood Risk
 - Impacts to Heritage Assets
 - Impacts to Neighbouring Residential Amenity
 - Contamination Risks and Pollution
 - Other Matters
- 7.2 The starting point for proposals, in accordance with section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is that developments shall be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.3 As noted above, the previous application (ref. 22/00668/FUL) was refused, and subsequently dismissed at appeal. That application was refused for four reasons, in summary;
- (a) The adverse impact on landscape character.
 - (b) The lack of information to demonstrate there would be no adverse impact to the safe fly of aircraft.
 - (c) The irreversible loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land.
 - (d) The adverse impact on the amenity of surrounding residential dwellings, particularly Bates Lodge to west.
- 7.4 The appeal was dismissed in respect of parts (a) and (b) above but was not upheld in respect of parts (c) and (d). The relevant part of the appeal decision is considered in more detail in the corresponding section in the report below, where relevant to the determination of this revised application.
- 7.5 A copy of the appeal decision, and the previous application, is available at the following web address;
<https://publicaccess.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=R8UHY2IKL3E00>

Principle of Development

- 7.6 This section is concerned with the broad principle of development for a renewable or low carbon energy generating scheme in the open countryside. More detailed, site-specific matters are considered elsewhere in the report.
- 7.7 The application site is located outside and built-up area and is therefore considered to be within the countryside for planning purposes. In such a location development is restricted under policy LP10 to those that are provided for in other policies within the Local Plan. The supporting text to that policy notes that this is in order to balance support for a thriving rural economy and land-based business, while protecting the character and beauty of the countryside.
- 7.8 Of particular relevance in this instance is policy LP35 which states that “a proposal for a renewable or low carbon energy generating scheme,

other than wind energy, will be supported where it is demonstrated that all potential adverse impacts including cumulative impacts are or can be made acceptable”.

- 7.9 As stated above, LP35 provides support in principle for renewable and low carbon energy generation and is therefore considered by Officers to be one of the specific opportunities for development in the countryside supported in the local plan, subject to a detailed assessment of the proposal and its impacts. In terms of the countryside location, and notwithstanding further assessment in respect of the use of agricultural land, it is therefore considered there is in-principle policy support for the proposal in this location.
- 7.10 In respect to the use of the site, the application site comprises approximately 20ha of agricultural land. Policy LP10, reflecting NPPF para. 187 protects Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land, defined as being grades 1, 2 and 3a, but for the avoidance of doubt is silent on lower quality land.
- 7.11 The application has been accompanied by an assessment of the Agricultural Land Classification that has undertaken an investigation into the site and concludes that there is no BMV Land within this site. This has included soil sampling and observation pits, in accordance with established best practice and otherwise accord with national DEFRA map information.
- 7.12 While it is noted that objections have been raised by local residents and elected members in respect of the loss of agricultural land, planning policy does not restrict the development of non-BMV land. EN-3, together with NPPF and PPG, are clear that land type should not a predominant factor in determining the suitability of a site location, but lower quality land should be preferred to higher quality land, avoidance BMV land where possible. The Government has been clear in the 2024 WMS that there is a need to increase renewable energy generation, specifically identifying that solar has an important role in delivery. It clarifies that there is a balance to be struck with the use of land, and that it should avoid best and most versatile land.
- 7.13 The appeal inspector (at paras 50 to 58 of the appeal decision) was clear that the development would not represent an irreversible loss of agricultural land, specifically in relation to BMV land which therefore benefited from a level of policy protection and officers note the previous reason for refusal, in accordance with policy requirements, only related to land classified as BMV, not other agricultural land that does not benefit from policy protection. The inspector concluded, at para 58; -
- “In giving due weight to the use of BMVAL, as required by the 2024 WMS, I find the proposal would have no undue impact on national food security overall. Taking all the matters above into account, I find that the proposal would not result in an irreversible loss or degradation of BMVAL to the detriment of food production and its contribution to the local and rural economy.”*
- 7.14 As this revised site does not include BMV land, there is therefore no policy provision for its protection, and officers therefore consider the location of the development is entirely in accordance with adopted policies LP10 and LP35.

Character and Landscape

- 7.15 The Council's Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document 2022 (LTSPD) notes that this site sits within the Northern Wolds Landscape Character Area. In terms of nationally designation, the site also sits within National Character Area (NCA) 88 (Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Claylands) and NCA 89 (Northamptonshire Vales). The landscape is characterised predominantly through its strong visual topography, well vegetated valleys of an intimate scale, and open ridges and plateaus. It notes key issues within this area are the protection and enhancement of the distinctive ridge and valley landscapes, including the pattern of smaller fields in the valleys, the preservation of key views towards the distinctive skyline of ridge tops, church towers and woodland, the protection of existing watercourses and enhancement of their biodiversity value and the protection of ancient hedgerows and oaks within the valleys.
- 7.16 In respect to this application, the LTSPD particularly notes that all new development proposals should protect key views of the skyline of ridge tops and woodlands, improve the nature conservation value of streams and immediate valley sides and protect and enhance the distinctive characters of valleys and plateau landscapes through maintaining field patterns and long-distance views from the upland areas and protection of ancient hedgerows and oak trees within the valleys.
- 7.17 The application site sits within a valley, with the land rising to the eastern edge of the solar array and reaching a peak on the edge of the site and continuing as a plateau to the east. The topography of the area, forming peaks and valleys across relatively short distance, is distinct within the region, where generally topography has limited variation across shorter distances.
- 7.18 The development proposes the solar panels away from the edge of the site within the southern parcel, with vegetated landscape proposed along the edges in the form of high hedgerows, with interspersed clusters of trees along the boundaries, including stopping up existing gaps within existing hedgerows.
- 7.19 The application has been accompanied by Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) that has assessed the landscape as having a 'community' value in terms of the scale of importance attached to the landscape because of its special qualities or attributes in a national context. Officers consider this an appropriate classification in terms of the scale of locality in which this landscape is valued but note that this does not preclude further consideration of the actual value that might be placed on the landscape as a resource. The assessment considers the sensitivity of the landscape character on the whole to be low, having regard to the susceptibility to change and its value.
- 7.20 The LVIA has also been accompanied by viewpoints and assessment of the scale of change that would arise in the context of this development at various points. In general, it has concluded large scale effects would arise within the site and immediately adjacent to the southern parcel, but that effects beyond 300m of the northern parcel, and along Haddon Road and Bullock Road, would be small or negligible. It identifies that, in the short and long term, the effect of the proposal would be adverse,

and at a moderate/slight impact in terms of magnitude on the landscape character, and moderate/minor impact in terms of the significance.

- 7.21 The previous application was refused, and subsequently dismissed at appeal, on the basis of harm to landscape. The Inspectors comments highlighted that there is a small level of harm to long distance views (i.e. beyond 1km), and that while there would be views of the site these would be filtered, oblique, or mitigated by planting. The Inspector concluded similarly to views in the medium distance (300m to 1km), with slightly increased magnitude by virtue of that closer proximity.
- 7.22 Within 300m of the site, the Inspector concluded there was a significant level of harm, namely from Haddon Road, due to the prominence, the nature of open views across the site and the magnitude of change of both the built form and the planting. It is noted that impacts along on the A605 are considered minimal, given the existing vegetation and fast-moving receptors.
- 7.23 This revised application, in removing the southern field, is now sited approximately 440m from Haddon Road at its closest point. Any experience of the development from that road would now be at some distance and therefore set amongst a wider field of view of agricultural land. Planting proposals along the southern boundary of this revised site is generally limited to hedgerows, with no particular tree screening. This is considered to be the most sensitive view of the site, given the proximity to public views along lower traffic and slower moving roads, and with some limited intervening planting that would not be wholly effective given the topography.
- 7.24 HDC's Landscape Consultant has reviewed the submitted LVA and generally is in agreement with the conclusions. They consider that, in terms of landscape character impact, the proposal will result in a minor impact at 5-10 years post completion, and a neutral impact at 15 years, following completion of mitigation planting.
- 7.25 A number of comments received have raised objections on the grounds of adverse landscape impacts. They have noted the previous appeal and stated this application has not otherwise changed the adverse impacts to the landscape, particularly having regard to the topography of the land and the inefficacy of any screening against the higher areas.
- 7.26 Officers particularly note the comments of the appeal inspector with regards to the low levels of landscape harm at longer distances (beyond 300m), and with the removal of the southernmost field (and the associated 20ha reduction in scale) the only public viewpoint that would within this distance is bridleways 42/6 and 111/8 along the north and western edge of the northern parcel, the latter being the PROW that terminates within the site.
- 7.27 It is noted that the topography and existing planting from the north would limit the impact to some of these PROWs, and while one runs through the site this currently terminates in the field, vastly limiting its usability and contribution it makes to understanding the countryside. While there would be upgrades and a circular route created to connect that PROW which may increase its usage, this would only arise through the development and is therefore considered to be neutral in terms of the impact to that PROW. The existing screening and topography is

considered sufficient to mitigate any material harm to views from bridleway 42/6.

- 7.28 In terms of planting, while full details would be secured via a condition, the application has sought to demonstrate the approach to screen planting. This generally provides for hedging with interspersed clusters of tree planting, creating vertical breaks within the views that are considered an appropriate form of mitigation, and enhancing existing hedgerow patterns along the boundaries. That said, the southern boundary includes more limited tree planting and is a more open view from Haddon Road. While officers understand there may be some shading created by dense planting of trees along this boundary, it is considered reasonable that some additional tree planting be provided as a visual break in the vista. This is considered readily capable of being controlled through condition, as recommended by the Landscape Consultant.
- 7.29 On the whole, while officers note comments of local residents that the development would not be sufficiently screened due to topography, it is considered that the revised proposal would not materially harm landscape character, particularly once the proposed screening has established. Subject to such conditions, it is considered that the proposed development suitably responds to the landscape character of the area, and is therefore in accordance with policies LP11, LP12 and LP34.

Highway and Transport Impacts

- 7.30 The application is located north and south of the A605, a busy, national speed limit road that adjoins the A1 to the east and provides connection to Peterborough. The application proposes access from this road, making use of existing farm access points either side of the road, for both construction and maintenance. It is noted that there have been a significant number of accidents on that road. Physically, the A605 is a wide, well-made highway, appropriate to the nature and level of traffic it carries.
- 7.31 The application has been accompanied by a draft construction traffic management plan (CTMP) that estimates in the region of 353 vehicle movements across the construction stage, with a further 30 vehicles accessing the site per day associated with contractors. Once operational, the development is expected to require approximately 24 maintenance visits over the course of a year, one every two weeks. As the site would be monitored offsite, it is unlikely there would be any significant additional vehicle movements once the development is operational.
- 7.32 The Local Highway Authority have reviewed the submitted information and raised no objections in principle, subject to conditions relating to the construction and maintenance of accesses and appropriate control of construction traffic. They note that a revised CTMP has not been submitted, but have not raised an objection to this, and, as set out below, officers consider this could be conditioned. LHA have noted that there will be other consents required due to works necessary to facilitate the access, but these are separate from the planning process.

- 7.33 A notable level of local objection has been received, inter alia, on the basis that the development would give rise to adverse highway impacts, particularly along the A605, and in relation to both construction and operational aspects of traffic generation, including in relation to the level of visibility onto the road. Comments have also raised concern that electrical interference from the operation of the solar farm will result in adverse impacts to highway safety.
- 7.34 In respect of the vehicle movements generated during operation, it is considered the level of movement generated would not be materially noticeable in terms of transport capacity. While the A605 is a high-speed road there is plenty of visibility in both directions, which meets the requirements within Manual for Streets guidance and could be secured through condition, and which would provide adequate understanding of the traffic conditions for drivers to safely enter and exit the site.
- 7.35 The level of movement associated with the construction process is considered to be significant as a whole, given the level of delivery needed and the number of vehicle movements indicated, though it is noted this would be both limited in the length of time, and spread out through approximately 6 months, as indicated in the draft CTMP. It is proposed that access routes are from the A605, utilising the two existing accesses to the north and south parcels.
- 7.36 The majority of construction traffic would travel along the A605, where it is proposed to signalise the entrances and use a left turn in, left turn out access arrangement, controlled by banksmen, with vehicles turning at roundabouts where the A605 meets the A1 or Church St at Warmington to the east and west respectively. While it is likely this would cause some congestion, the controlled turning, together with conditions restricting delivery times to the site, would minimise that disruption. Given the relatively short period of construction time (indicated at potentially 6 months in the draft CTMP), this would further reduce the impact of the development. Subject to conditions limiting delivery times to avoid peak travel times, this would also prevent any notable transport network capacity impacts, as it would not be anticipated that the level of vehicle movement needed would be particularly apparent on the road network surrounding the A1 and A605.
- 7.37 It is noted the CTMP is submitted in draft form. While, in principle, officers consider it is acceptable, to ensure it is fit for purpose, a condition is recommended requiring that to be submitted in a finalised form. This would ensure the CTMP takes full account of any requirements outside planning legislation that are necessary to ensure the safe functioning of the highway.
- 7.38 On the whole, and subject to conditions, the development is therefore considered not to represent an adverse impact to highway safety or the capacity of the transport network and would therefore accord with policies LP16 and LP17.

Public Rights of Way

- 7.39 The application site includes 1no. Public Right of Way (PROW), Bridleway 111/8, which runs partway along the western edge of the northern field but otherwise terminates in the middle of the field. The

application proposes to create a circular permissive path around the perimeter of this field that would create a loop to that Bridleway for the lifetime of the development.

- 7.40 The County Definitive Maps Team, responsible for PROWs, have raised no objections to the proposal. They have noted that the developer has a responsibility to ensure the continued functioning and accessibility, but this would be a matter controlled through other legislation.
- 7.41 The application proposes a circular permissive path within the northern field, connecting to Bridleway 111/8. Noting this is within the development site, officers consider this could be fully controlled through a condition to ensure it is implemented.
- 7.42 While it is noted that this is proposed on a temporary basis, it would run concurrent with the operation of the solar farm itself. While it would have been preferential for the enhancement to become permanent officers consider this to be an acceptable arrangement as the improvement will remain in place for a proportionate time to the impact created by the development itself.
- 7.43 As no PROWs would be lost through the proposal, and the development would result in a temporary, albeit long-term, improvement to the PROW network, officers consider that, subject to conditions identified, the proposal would accord with policy LP16.

Impacts to Safe Functioning of Aircraft

- 7.44 Within the wider area are 2no. airfields, namely Sibson Aerodrome and RAF Wittering. RAF Wittering commented in relation to the previous application there would be no adverse impacts to the RAF base, which in turn was accepted by the Inspector during the appeal as sufficient demonstration that there would be no harm to that airfield.
- 7.45 Sibson Aerodrome, through Peterborough Flying School (PFS) as the operator, has raised objections to the development on the grounds that there would be a material harm to the safe functioning of the aerodrome.
- 7.46 In particular, they have stated that the assessed flying patterns in relation to glint and glare are not reflective of the actual flying patterns arising from the airfield, which are non-standard given the nature of flying from the site, including for parachute runs that depart and approach the runways are potentially very steep angles. They consider development is located within a location that might reasonably be required for emergency landings or otherwise force aircraft to make inappropriate manoeuvres. They have also identified that the aircraft circulation space is to the south and east, which would include areas of this site, with parachute sites are to the north and west.
- 7.47 Additionally, a private flying strip serving Furze Farm is located to the immediate west of the northern parcel, terminating on the boundary. Objections have been received on the grounds that the application has not demonstrated there would be an acceptable impact on the safe flying of private aircraft in association with this airstrip, particularly glint and glare, but also in relation to available space for landing in the event of engine failure.

- 7.48 The appeal to the previous application was dismissed partly on the grounds of the lack of information to assess the impact of glint and glare, and on the reduction of available land that is likely to be needed for emergency landings in the event of Engine Failure on Approach (EFOA) or Engine Failure After Take Off (EFATO). The inspector concluded that, in respect of landing space, that site may reasonably be the only location available to aircraft in relation to Sibson Airfield noting the location of the overhead power lines, but that it would be unlikely to materially harm safe flying from Furze Farm in the event of engine failure as there is reasonably available other land within a 45 degree angle that could accommodate emergency landings.
- 7.49 This revised application, beyond the removal of the southernmost field, has been accompanied by two glint and glare assessments that state there would be no material harm to safe flying by virtue of glint and glare. In respect to flying from Furze Farm, it is noted that they have concluded that the development would be acceptable subject to controls imposed on the flying patterns from that airstrip.
- 7.50 In respect of Sibson Aerodrome, officers particularly note the submitted assessments have been based on standard angles of ascent and descent and assumed circulation routes. While the agent has confirmed that they have reached out to PFS to understand appropriate patterns but have not received any responses, PFS have raised an objection that the assessments do not reflect actual flying patterns.
- 7.51 PFS have confirmed to officers that flying from the site is variable in scale, timing and the approach. This would be reasonably expected in a flying school given the need to ensure pilots are equipped to deal with a range of potential scenarios, and as parachute aircraft ascends steeply to facilitate fast ascent and descent.
- 7.52 Parachute space is located to the north of the airfield, and officers consider there is a reasonable likelihood this will present a limitation in available circulation space. Similarly, as was confirmed at the previous appeal, circulation space to the south is limited by overhead pylons, particularly in proximity to this site. PFS have confirmed that they fly circuits to avoid local villages, and noting the position of this site between villages south of the airfield it is considered likely this would be generally within the circuit path, and it has been confirmed that the approach when landing is predominantly from the south.
- 7.53 While the application has made some assessment of the potential impacts to flying from PFS, the use of limited angles of approach for aircraft and assumed flying circuits that do not represent actual flying patterns indicate the assessments are not suitably robust. It is noted that no assessment has been made of EFATO or EFAO but, as was concluded within the previous appeal, there is a reasonable prospect that this site may be the only one available in the event of a force landing.
- 7.54 In respect to the private flying strip at Furze Farm, the assessments have noted that glare may have a potential impact but could be mitigated by the pilot. The applicant's consultant recommends that mitigation measures include pilots from this airstrip wearing sunglasses, using darkened cockpit sun visors, overflying and inspecting the runway, landing in the opposite direction if wind conditions allow and planning their flight to land outside the times when sun glare if possible.

- 7.55 Officers note these measures are imposed on a third party, and while some of these are likely to be already in place or easy to accommodate, such as wearing sunglasses, NPPF para. 200 is clear that new development should integrate effectively with existing businesses, and that it is for applicants (the “agent of change”) to provide suitable mitigation, not existing operations. A number of the mitigation measures indicated may not be a realistic option, such as landing in the opposite direction or planning flights outside times for sun glare, it is not open to the LPA to impose conditions or restrictions on flights from Furze Farm. Without such controls to mitigate the impacts the applicant’s assessment concludes that there is a potential for harmful glare affects to arise.
- 7.56 On the whole, officers consider the information provided has not adequately assessed the impacts of the development on Sibson Airfield or Furze Farm. The application has failed to demonstrate that it would not materially harm the safe functioning of airfields through an inappropriate form of development that would give rise to unacceptable levels of glint and glare and remove land necessary to facilitate emergency landings, contrary to policies LP14 and LP34.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 7.57 The application has been accompanied by Ecological Reports, a Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan and detailed calculations of Biodiversity Net Gain. These set out the potential areas of ecological value within the site and its surroundings that may be of ecological significance and considers the potential mitigation and enhancement proposals to ensure the development does not result in adverse impacts to ecology and biodiversity.
- 7.58 HDC’s Ecology Consultant has raised no objections to the proposal, and considers there is sufficient information submitted to support the application on ecology grounds. They have noted that there are some elements of the proposal that required further detail, particularly in relation to ensuring adequate available land for skylarks and that planted species are suitably supported to ensure they are capable of surviving, but that these are capable of being secured by condition.
- 7.59 A small number of comments have locally raised concerns that the proposal would lead to a loss in ecology and biodiversity, including in relation to protected species within Billing Brook.
- 7.60 The application site itself is arable land, which in itself is of limited biodiversity value, with any features of biodiversity value predominantly located at the edges of the site. There are established hedgerows and tree belts along its boundaries, with Billing Brook to the west of the northern part of the site notable as a habitat features. There is a number of statutory and non-statutory designations within 5km and 2km distances respectively. The majority of these are beyond the A1 to the east, with a small number of protected road verges to the west and southwest. None of these are within 1km of the main solar farm site itself, though a County Wildlife Site is located approximately 920m to the east of the end of the cable.
- 7.61 The submitted report provides a number of construction mitigation measures that would be capable of being secured by condition. This

includes appropriate checks for the presence of any protected species, measures to limit the impact and access to active construction elements, and design measures to ensure connectivity remains through the site. Officers note that the mitigation measures also include some detail of habitat provision, including bat and bird boxes. The precise details of these have not been provided, however, in terms of location, but officers consider that detail is readily capable of being secured by condition, and there are plenty of trees and other locations to be retained such that these are considered capable of being provided.

- 7.62 The application proposes the retention of all existing ecological features within the site. No pruning or other significant works to the established trees are required to carry out the development, and no works are indicated within any root protection areas. The submitted Biodiversity Metric indicates a 23.89% increase in habitat units, a 13.02% increase in hedgerow units and a 24.83% increase in watercourse units, predominantly through habitat units. These are all above the minimum 10% requirement to accord with the Biodiversity Net Gain thresholds in the Environment Act. In accordance with the legislation, the standard net gain condition will apply and will secure the units following any approval.
- 7.63 On the whole, therefore, and subject to conditions identified above, as well as a condition requiring a finalised landscape management plan and the standard Biodiversity Net Gain Conditions, officers consider the proposal would protect existing ecological features and achieve measurable enhancement in biodiversity terms. It is therefore considered to accord with policies LP30 and LP31.

Drainage and Flood Risk

- 7.64 The application site is predominantly located within Flood Zone 1, at the lowest risk of flooding, with an area of the site along the western edge, close to Billing Brook, located within Flood Zones 2 and 3 at a higher risk of flooding. The application does not propose any physical structures within that area.
- 7.65 No objections have been received from the LLFA as the statutory consultee for surface water. They have recommended standard conditions seeking the fully detailed design should be submitted if the application is approved, details of its long terms management and details of how surface water will be managed during the construction process. Similarly, no objections have been received from the Environment Agency in respect of flood risk from river sources, subject to securing the mitigation in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) that proposes no development within flood zones.
- 7.66 A number of objections have been received raising concerns on drainage grounds. In particular, these raise concerns regarding flooding around Billing Brook and the concern flood risk will be increased, and also note concerns the development will give rise to wider drainage issues. It has been identified that areas have flooded along the A605 and around Billings Brook.
- 7.67 The application proposes to manage surface flows predominantly through a mix permeable paving, swales and filter strips, with discharge into Billing Brook. This would both control the rate of discharge and

provide water quality treatment. The LLFA have confirmed this would restrict rates of discharge to below greenfield levels. That level of restriction is considered sufficient to suitably ensure there is no change to flood risk arising from Billing Brook as a result of this development, as it would not experience any increase in the level or rate of surface water discharging into it.

- 7.68 While the solar panels themselves are not permeable, the development does not create substantial levels of hardstanding compared to, for example, a residential development. Water would reach the ground, and there would be some level of infiltration drainage naturally occurring, though as this is likely to be more focused into runs, the profile of how water runs along the ground is likely to change.
- 7.69 The proposed swales and filter strips would serve to slow water flow and create attenuation features that would hold the water while it discharges, and officers consider there is plenty of available land that can accommodate these features. The submitted FRA suggests that 468m of swales would be sufficient to meet the water storage need but proposes 847m to ensure interception of all surface water. While the final length and position of swales will fall to a more detailed design stage, this significant increase above baseline is considered sufficient to be satisfied there is adequate space to accommodate the required drainage measures.
- 7.70 Officers note the relevant test in this instance would be that the situation is not materially worse than the present arrangement. While the fully detailed design would be submitted at a later stage, the level of restriction indicated and the proposed mitigation measures that have been suitably demonstrated to be achievable are sufficient for officers to consider an acceptable drainage arrangement would be readily achievable.
- 7.71 In terms of flooding from river sources, a small section of the northern land parcel is located within Flood zones 2 and 3, with development located outside those areas. As a solar farm, the development is classified as “Essential Infrastructure” in accordance with Annex 3 of the NPPF and is therefore not subject to the sequential test. Such applications are still required to pass the exception test, in that proposals must demonstrate wider sustainability benefits to the community and demonstrate the proposal will be safe from flood risk and result in no increase in flood risk elsewhere.
- 7.72 Notwithstanding that no development is proposed within the areas of higher flood risk, in terms of sustainability benefits, those are considered to be readily apparent in the context of this solar array, as part of the reduction on non-renewable sources of energy, coupled with the net gain proposals that will support local biodiversity. It is noted that some comments have been received highlighting that generated energy will not be used locally, the application has not been proposed, or considered on the basis of supporting local need, but officers consider that the position of the solar farm, and its connection points into the grid, is likely to mean that there will be some reasonable level of energy use within the locality, increasing energy security for local residents as well as regionally/nationally.

- 7.73 Officers also consider the second part of the exception test, in that there is no increase in flood risk, has also been passed. As the development is located outside the flood zones there is no impact to the existing functional flood plain through a reduction in that area, and the development has demonstrated it can adequately accommodate the storage and release of surface water into the brook to less than greenfield rates such that there would be no material impact beyond current runoff rates. While comments highlighting existing flood events along the road and around Billings Brook are noted those areas are within identified Flood Zones and so would be reasonably expected to be subject to flood events. Noting that identified constraint and the specific areas it covers it is considered inappropriate to apply an increased potential flood risk level to the wider site with no evidence that it is likely to arise.
- 7.74 Subject to conditions, therefore, officers consider the proposal would not give rise to any adverse impacts to drainage through surface water or river sources. The proposal would therefore accord with policies LP5 and LP15.

Impacts to Heritage Assets

- 7.75 The decision on this application has to be made in accordance with section 66(1) and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (General duties as respects listed buildings and Conservation Areas in exercise of planning functions). Section 66(1) states, *"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority ... shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses"*. Section 72(1) imposes a duty on local planning authorities *"with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area... special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area"*.
- 7.76 The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 protects the archaeological heritage of Great Britain by making provision for the investigation, preservation and recording of matters of archaeological or historical interest.
- 7.77 HDC's Conservation Officer has reviewed the application. While they have raised an objection on the basis that there would be an impact to Sheepwalk Farmhouse and associated Granary, both Grade II listed, through development in their setting. These buildings are sited just under 1.2km to the northeast of the site. The Conservation Officer has noted that this is a low level of less than substantial harm, and noted these would need to be assessed in the context of the benefits of the development.
- 7.78 The County Historic Environment Team (CHET) have raised no objections and consider that the development would not impact any archaeological deposits.
- 7.79 In accordance with policy LP34, para. 212 of the NPPF, and the relevant legislation, great weight should be afforded the protection of heritage assets. Any harm should be considered in accordance with paras. 213

to 215 of the NPPF, and a development that gives rise to harm will need to be balanced against any public benefits of the proposal.

- 7.80 Generally, the topography of the area screens heritage assets to the west and south of the site, and they are sited either on top of the ridge, in the case of the Roman Barrow, or the other side, where the land starts to fall away, as is the case for St Marys Church. Other directions are similarly screened, though there may be some longer views as the ridgelines are more distant. There is existing intervening screening within some of these views, and additional screening would be secured as part of the development along the boundaries of the site to further create intervening barriers.
- 7.81 Officers note the previous application, and associated appeal, was not refused on the grounds of harm to any heritage asset within the surroundings, and no objections from consultees were received to that application. It was, and remains, officers view that the topography of the land the existing and proposed screening would limit views between the site and heritage assets. The submitted ZTV demonstrates that Sheepwalk Farm and the associated buildings are on the edge of the area of theoretical visibility, and officers consider it likely any views would be of a small section of the eastern edge of the northern parcel.
- 7.82 Officers note the comments of the Conservation Officer but remain unconvinced the application site is within the setting of Sheepwalk Farm and Granary, in line with the previous application, the comments of the Conservation Officer to that application and the associated appeal. Any views that would be available would be wholly limited in extent and lost in the wider context of agricultural land given the distance from the heritage asset.
- 7.83 The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with policy LP34 and the relevant provisions of the NPPF in respect to impact to heritage assets.

Impacts to Neighbouring Residential Amenity

- 7.84 The site is significantly distant from surrounding residential properties, with most being in excess of 1km. Of those closer, the closest is at approximately 480m to west of the southern field, being Bates Lodge. Comments have raised concerns in relation to the visual impact of the solar farms as adversely impacting the amenity of surrounding property, as well as impacts from intrusive lighting.
- 7.85 The third reason for refusal of the previous application (ref. 22/00668/FUL) was included on the basis of harm to amenity of Bates Lodge through impacts from glint and glare across the overall scale of the development. This was not upheld by the inspector, who considered the distance from surrounding property, combined with large areas that remained in agricultural use and enhanced screening would limit any impacts to amenity such that it would not be harmful.
- 7.86 This application, reducing the scale of the development by some 20ha, is considered to be even lesser in harm to amenity. While the ground level changes remain, and some panels are likely to appear above any screening, this would still be at a significant distance, and the impact could only be considered lesser than the previous application.

- 7.87 Officers note comments have been received from local residents that the proposal will be visible from their property, including on the basis that the level of change will be so great that it will result in harm to amenity. That a development may be seen from or alter views from a private property is not material. The consideration in this respect is whether the magnitude of change is so great that it would materially impact the ability of any residential occupier to enjoy the property. Officers note the closest property, at 480m to west of southern field, is a substantial distance, and sits at a topographical level similar to the lower points of the application site. This is a significant distance, and as noted above planting would further reduce the impacts of the solar array through breaking up the visual impact of the array. Officers therefore do not consider that there would be such a visual impact to private views that the development would result in a material level of harm to the amenity of the property.
- 7.88 It is noted that comments have raised objections to lighting in the surroundings. It has been stated that no lighting is proposed, and officers do not consider there would be any need for floodlighting. It is noted that the Inspectors decision highlighted the use of Infrared or Night Vision CCTV for security purposes as a common requirement. Officers consider there may be some minor sensor lighting around any control buildings needed in darker months or late night, albeit on a minimal basis. A condition is recommended to require details of any lighting to be agreed before it is inserted, and which would be in line with the Cambridgeshire Police recommendations, which would cover any eventuality in relation to lighting. Noting the distance from surrounding property, officers consider there is no reasonable likelihood that lighting would materially impact residential amenity, noting how limited any such lighting would be.
- 7.89 In terms of noise, the operation of the solar farm is unlikely to result in any materially noticeable change in the current level of background noise, though in any event the distance from residential properties is considered sufficient to considered sufficient to mitigate any impacts that might arise.
- 7.90 The construction period is likely to give rise to higher levels of noise, though across a relatively short period of time. The Environmental Health Officer has raised no objections on the basis of noise and consider that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) can be conditioned to ensure adequate provision is made to further limit noise and other impacts during construction. The site does not immediately adjoin neighbouring property, and the nature of the development is such that there is likely to be more limited impacts in construction than might arise from, for example, more substantial or permanent built form. Noting the short timescale of the development, the position of the site and the physical nature of the works that would be required for the development, officers consider that suitable management proposals can be achieved within the site, secured by condition, that would not result in any material harm to the amenity of surrounding occupants through noise or other impacts arising from the construction period.
- 7.91 On the whole, and subject to the conditions identified, officers consider the proposal would accord with policy LP14.

Contamination Risks and Pollution

- 7.92 The Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection on the basis of contamination risks or air pollution. Natural England have raised no concerns subject to conditions to ensure that there would be no ground contamination, and the LLFA have noted the proposed mitigation measures would also provide filtering before surface water is discharged into Billing Brook.
- 7.93 A number of local residents have raised concerns with regards to contamination of Billing Brook through runoff, and a small number have also raised concerns in respect of air quality through emissions arising from ground disturbance and construction.
- 7.94 In terms of existing contamination, officers consider it likely that the active agricultural use of the site would have required some form of chemical use that could result in contamination, though it is not considered highly likely there would be any contaminants within the site. There are no notable brownfield uses within or surrounding the site that would give rise to concerns in terms of contamination, or any significant evidence of past uses that would indicate previous contaminative uses on or adjoining the site, notwithstanding the cable runs close to existing buildings. While the A605 and A1 are in relatively close proximity to the site, and are both likely to be sources of emissions, there are no designations covering these areas that indicate they are at or approaching levels of excessive particulate matter in the air that may be considered harmful to human health.
- 7.95 As a solar farm, the operational aspect would not give rise to emissions that would result in materially adverse impacts to air quality. While there would be some level of emissions during construction, the short length of the construction time is such that it is considered these would be marginal, and not at a level that would be considered harmful.
- 7.96 A number of objections have been received raising concerns that chemicals used in cleaning the panels will result in ground and water contamination. It is noted that no statutory or technical consultees have objected on this basis or raised concerns. The LLFA has noted the proposed surface water drainage measures will have a filtering effect to ensure discharge into Billing Brook does not adversely affect water quality, and the Environment Agency have raised no concerns regarding potential discharge of contaminations.
- 7.97 While officers consider there is likely to be some chemical use as part of regular maintenance of the site, both in cleaning solar panels as needed and as part of biodiversity management to limit the possible impact of inappropriate plant species, the level of use is considered likely to be low, having regard to the amount of maintenance visits likely to be carried out throughout the lifetime of the development. It is noted that any consideration should be made against a likely starting point that some chemical use would form part of standard agricultural practice use of the site, albeit in a materially different context.
- 7.98 Overall, and particularly having regard to the mitigation that will form part of the drainage scheme, officers consider the proposed development is

unlikely to lead to any materially harmful impact to water sources within and surrounding the site.

- 7.99 In respect to ground contamination, it is noted that no concerns have been raised by the Environmental Health Officer. The application has set out the aspects of the development that could potentially give rise to ground contamination, namely oil storage. This is covered by other legislation, both in respect to maintaining the appropriate form of storage as well as in the event of a spill.
- 7.100 There are no other sources likely to result in ground contamination particularly arising as a result of the development. As any water would be discharged into the nearby Brook, and as noted above is considered sufficiently remediated through the drainage proposals, it is considered this is sufficient to limit the impact of any possible chemical use.
- 7.101 On the whole, the proposal is considered to accord with policies LP36 and LP37 in respect to ground and water pollution and air quality.

Other Matters

- 7.102 The application has been accompanied by a Rapid Health Impact Assessment. While this is limited in its overall scope due to the nature of the proposal, the matters of air quality, noise and neighbourhood amenity, access to work and training, and climate change, are considered relevant matters to be addressed. The submitted document generally notes that no mitigation measures are required where it has identified relevant matters to this development as the proposal is likely to lead to a neutral or positive impact. Where there are potential impacts, the report identifies that other elements of the proposal will already include provisions that act as mitigation, such as construction management plans. Officers have reviewed the report, and particularly those items identified as requiring mitigation or enhancement and consider these are adequately covered by conditions already identified within this report. As such, it is considered the proposal accords with policy LP29.
- 7.103 A condition is considered appropriate to remove permitted development rights for fencing across the site. Officers note this is recommended by the County Council as both Local Highway Authority and Definitive Maps Team in order to safeguard highway safety and the impact of the development on rights of way. Officers consider this is also necessary to ensure the fencing approved under the condition suggested above is not replaced with a more inappropriate form that would have a greater impact and would therefore afford control in respect of landscape matters. Such a condition is considered necessary to ensure the development would accord with policies LP12 and LP17.

8. Planning Balance and Conclusions

- 8.1 The application must be considered in accordance with the statutory tests in s.38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, namely, in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 8.2 Having particular regard to the comments of the appeal inspector, officers consider that the applicant has sufficiently addressed the comments of the inspector in relation to the matter of landscape. However, the information submitted and the assessment of the impact to the airfields is not considered to sufficiently demonstrate the proposal would not adversely impact the safe functioning of Sibson Airfield or the adjacent private airstrip at Furze Farm.
- 8.3 In respect of all other matters, officers consider the application has sufficiently demonstrated that it would not give rise to any material harm, subject to conditions.

9. RECOMMENDATION – Delegated powers to the Head of Planning, Infrastructure & Public Protection to make representations on the appeal to the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the District Council, in accordance with the following putative reason for refusal;

1. The application has failed to demonstrate that it would not materially harm the safe functioning of Sibson Aerodrome or private flying strips through adverse impacts of glint and glare, and the loss of land necessary to facilitate emergency landings. The development is therefore contrary to policies LP14 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Enquiries about this report to **Aaron Sands, Senior Development Management Officer** aaron.sands@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street
Huntingdon PE29 3TN
Developmentcontrol@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

01480 388424
www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Head of Planning Services
Pathfinder House
St. Mary's Street
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire PE29 3TN

Planning Application: 25/00652/FUL

Case Officer: Aaron Sands

Proposal: Installation of a solar park to export up to 25 MW (AC) electricity, comprising up to 40,000 no. photovoltaic panels, up to 7 no. inverters & transformers, 2 no. electrical buildings, 1 no. onsite control building, boundary fencing and gates, security cameras, and associated infrastructure and engineering operations

Location: Land East of Billing Brook and North and South of Peterborough Road, Haddon



Elton Parish Council
Parish Clerk


Observations of Elton Parish Council

Please ☒ box as appropriate



ELTON PARISH COUNCIL STRONGLY RECOMMENDS REFUSAL because

- **Please refer to the attached submission** providing material planning reasons for the rejection of planning application 25/00652/FUL proposing a solar farm at a totally inappropriate location on west-facing hillsides of the Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds.

 Clerk to Elton Parish Council (For GDPR purposes please do not sign)

Date: 9 May 2025

Failure to return this form within the time indicated (by 10 May 2025) will be taken as an indication that the Parish Council does not express any opinion either for or against the application.

Please send response to email address below:-
Development.control@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
(Development Management)

Head of Planning Services
Pathfinder House
St. Mary's Street
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 3TN



Elton Parish Council

Parish Clerk
1 Rectory Farm Court
Elton
PE8 6S

Attention: Head of Planning Services
Attention: Aaron Sands, Case Officer
Copy: Clara Kerr, Chief Planning Officer

Reference: 25/00652/FUL

Friday, 9 May 2025

Objection to Planning Application 25/00652/FUL

Dear Mr Sands,

Thank you for the correspondence of 16 April 2025 from Clara Kerr, Chief Planning Officer, inviting Elton Parish Council to provide any views no later than 10 May 2025 regarding the recent planning application 25/00652/FUL submitted 2 April 2025 by Wessex Solar Energy Limited.

Elton Parish Council notes that **planning application 25/00652/FUL** proposing **construction of a solar park to export up to 25 MW (AC) electricity, comprising up to 40,000 photovoltaic panels, up to 7 inverters and transformers, 2 electrical buildings and 1 onsite control building, boundary fencing and gates, security cameras, and associated infrastructure and engineering operations**, is essentially the same development, at the same inappropriate location, as previously proposed with planning application 22/00668/FUL submitted 14 March 2022 by Wessex Solar Energy for construction of a solar park to export up to 25 MW (AC) electricity.

- The earlier planning application 22/00668/FUL was rejected by Huntingdonshire District Council on 23 January 2024.
- Subsequent to the refusal of planning application 22/00668/FUL, Wessex Solar Energy submitted an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, appeal reference APP/H0520/W/24/3344095, the independent Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State of HM Government duly considered all aspects of the case and dismissed the appeal on 11 November 2024, thus supporting the decision by Huntingdonshire District Council to reject the planning application for a solar farm at the proposed inappropriate location.
- Less than 5 months following the decision from the Planning Inspectorate, Wessex Solar Energy submit a planning application for what is basically the same development plan as previously rejected, the only substantial difference being a reduction in land area for the revised plan.

Elton Parish Council strongly objects to Planning Application 25/00652/FUL for the construction of a solar park on a greenfield site of agricultural land in the open countryside on the sloping west-facing hillsides of the Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds and maintains that the location proposed for this solar park is totally inappropriate, cannot be justified, and causes harm that far outweighs any public benefit, as further detailed hereunder.

Huntingdonshire District Council is presently conducting a statutory review and update of the local development plan (the 'Local Plan' – the current version being "*Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036*", issued 16 May 2019). As part of the local plan update process, Huntingdonshire District

Council invited landowners and developers to propose sites for development with a "Call for Sites" and "Ongoing Call For Sites 2023-2024" (with a closing date of 31 January 2025) - proposed sites were assessed with Land Availability Assessments and Sustainability Appraisals, with the results of the assessments being published and subject to public consultation, with potentially suitable sites to be included in the Draft Local Plan Update which will also be subject to public consultation later during 2025. The thorough process performed by Huntingdonshire District Council for the Local Plan Update is open and transparent, allows the public to provide opinions, ensures diligent assessment of proposed developments, and provides long-term planning and site allocations for development throughout the district to ensure sustainability and the satisfaction of requirements. Sites have been proposed for development of solar parks within the "Call for Sites" Local Plan Update process.

- Wessex Solar Energy has yet again deliberately ignored the "Call for Sites" for the Local Plan Update; therefore, the proposed Haddon Solar Park will not be part of revised Huntingdonshire's Local Plan Update and shows disregard for the need for site allocations in local development plans.

It is interesting that 25 MW(AC) (previously stated as 22 MW) was stated as the maximum output capacity for the 65,000 solar panels proposed in the 2022 planning application 22/00668/FUL; the revised planning application 25/00652/FUL, 2 April 2025, proposes a reduced project with 40,000 solar panels, yet still states an output capacity of 25 MW(AC)?

Elton Parish Council recommends refusal of the planning application and respectfully requests Huntingdonshire District Council to duly consider the objections against the development as submitted by the parish council (detailed further hereunder).

Should you have any queries or require any further information relating to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Parish Clerk, Elton Parish Council

Attached/

ELTON PARISH COUNCIL OBJECTION TO **WESSEX SOLAR ENERGY PLANNING APPLICATION 25/00652/FUL**

Contents

(1.) Summary.....	4
(2.) Character and appearance of the countryside.....	5
(2.1.) Intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.....	5
(2.2.) Visual Impact.....	7
(2.3.) Topography	9
(3.) Aircraft safety.....	11
(4.) Temporary nature of the proposal	11
(5.) Conclusions	13

(1.) SUMMARY

Considering the conflict with the development plan overall, the balance between harm caused versus the potential public benefit from this proposed project, and other material planning considerations as detailed further hereunder, Elton Parish Council respectfully suggests planning permission should be refused.

Refusal of planning permission is justified under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; the current development plan of Huntingdonshire District Council, in particular “*Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036*” (“**the Local Plan**”), with Local Plan Policies such as LP10: Countryside and designated site allocations for development; “*Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document 2022*”; and the Government “*National Planning Policy Framework*” (“NPPF”, December 2024 as amended 7 February 2025).

The environmental benefit of low carbon energy is not in dispute, including the use of photovoltaic solar panels in the mix of sources of renewable energy, but such potential benefit does not confer an automatic approval; the consideration is whether the perceived public benefit outweighs the harm for a proposed project at a specific location.

Attempting to justify this particular project at this particular location, Wessex Solar Energy repeatedly refers to the general national need for, and national policies regarding renewable energy, especially solar energy (despite the NPPF stating that applicants are not required to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy); however, such pleading about the national need for solar energy deliberately attempts to distract from the real matter at hand – the specific site location as described in the planning application is totally inappropriate (as concluded by Huntingdonshire District Council¹ and the HM Government Planning Inspectorate² when rejecting the previous proposal for a solar farm at this same location).

This representation from Elton Parish Council focuses solely on the substantive issue - that a solar farm at this particular location is inappropriate and would cause undue harm to the designated landscape character area of the Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds; harm the amenity and enjoyment of the countryside for residents and visitors; needlessly removes usable agricultural land; and cause possible hazards for aircraft;

¹ Huntingdonshire District Council Refusal of Planning Permission Application 22/00668/FUL, 23 January 2024

² Planning Inspectorate Appeal Decision APP/H0520/W/24/3344095, 11 November 2024

as such, the project is not in accordance with national or local policies – basically, the small benefit does not outweigh the significant and unnecessary harm if this project were to proceed.

The 2022 planning application 22/00668/FUL described a solar farm of 65,000 solar panels with a maximum output capacity of 25 MW(AC).

The revised planning application 25/00652/FUL, 2 April 2025, proposes a reduced project with 40,000 solar panels, but still states an output capacity of 25 MW(AC)?

When rejecting the previous proposal for a solar farm at this location, both Huntingdonshire District Council and the Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State concluded that the proposal would conflict with the local development plan taken as a whole and the significance and level of the combined harm would not be outweighed by the public benefits.

- The main revision to the proposal as submitted in the latest planning application 25/00652/FUL is a reduction in the number of photovoltaic solar panels from 65,000 panels proposed previously to 40,000 panels proposed now – so the public benefit from renewable energy will be reduced significantly (a 28% reduction in solar panels), yet the harm caused cannot be remedied, the harm caused is merely reduced somewhat by the reduction in land area utilised but the balance remains that the slightly reduced combined harm would not be outweighed by the reduced public benefits.

(2.) CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

(2.1.) INTRINSIC CHARACTER AND BEAUTY OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

The NPPF³ states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Local Plan Policy LP10: The Countryside⁴ also recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

It is indisputable that the construction and subsequent long-term operation and maintenance of a solar farm with arrays of black solar panels on a greenfield site in open countryside will cause unavoidable detriment to the landscape character and beauty of the area.

Bearing in mind that the revised proposal as described in the current planning application 25/00652/FUL is basically a somewhat reduced version of the project described in the previous planning application 22/00668/FUL except that the southernmost field has now been omitted, it is worthwhile recalling the Planning Inspector comments⁵ when dismissing the appeal against rejection of the previous planning application for a solar farm at this location:

“significant harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the Northern Wolds Landscape Character Area”,

“The site’s characteristics of open fields would unquestionably change to utilitarian arrays of solar panels up to 3.5 m high”,

“the proposed development type, which overall would be discordant in form, height, and colouring compared to the surrounding agricultural fields and vegetation.”,

“The topography would result in visibility of the expanse of panels for up to approximately 3 km from various points from the north round to the south west, plus at closer range to the north east.”,

“At a range of 300m and closer along Haddon Road, the proposal would be very prominent. The open views across the site and long-range views to the countryside beyond would be effectively blocked by the panels stretching out to the highest viewpoint. Their 3.5m height would dwarf the human scale at this proximity, albeit with grazing pasture underneath. The additional hedgerow screening, when matured, would predominantly block the panels but would also block this view and thus effect large scale change. In this

³ “NPPF” - National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024 as amended 7 February 2025

⁴ “Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036”, 16 May 2019

⁵ Planning Inspectorate Appeal Decision APP/H0520/W/24/3344095, 11 November 2024

regard I am most persuaded by the objectors to the proposal, who place a greater magnitude of change and effect on significance”,

“The proposal would therefore have a significantly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area overall.”,

“There would be a resulting conflict with the LP Policies LP10, and LP35⁶, which together and amongst other matters, aim for renewable energy schemes to compensate to make their impacts acceptable, recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and not give rise to impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others.”

“The LTSPD⁷ identifies that development proposals in this area should protect key views towards the distinctive skyline of ridge tops, and protect and enhance the distinctive characters of the valley and plateau landscapes through maintenance of field patterns and long distance views from the upland areas. As such, I find the proposal would be partly in conflict with these requirements.”

The nation may need renewable energy, including solar power, but there is no need to destroy the landscape character and beauty of unspoilt, open countryside.

The proposed site lies near the edge of Natural England National Character Area 89: Northamptonshire Vales and within the National Character Area 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, a broad, gently undulating, lowland plateau dissected by shallow river valleys.

The proposed site also lies within the designated Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds Landscape Character Area, described as *“an attractive and relatively unspoilt part of the district with a strong historical character. Both villages and countryside are vulnerable to unsympathetic development”*.⁸ Surely it is beyond contestation that a solar farm on these hillsides is an **“unsympathetic development”** driven more by mammon rather than any noble desire to mitigate global warming.

The proposed site is not abutting, or even close to, any urban or suburban ‘built-up’ area, industrial area, brownfield site, or so-called “greyfield site”. There is one main road running through the area, the local single-carriageway A605 east-west distribution road (a local county road, not a major national highway). Other than the A605 road, the area is open countryside, agricultural land with homesteads and small hamlets and traditional, rural villages set in the distinctive ridged topography of the Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds.

The effect of the project proposed at this particular location would be that the currently rural and agrarian character and appearance of the area would be drastically and noticeably altered with the introduction of an overtly industrial infrastructure into the open countryside.

There would be massive (albeit temporary, for a period of circa 6 months) detrimental impact during the construction phase, with large-scale industrial work, with major visual impact and noise disturbing local residents and visitors, disturbing wildlife in existing hedgerows, trees and the nearby river valley (perhaps unlawfully if considering the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981), and causing increased HGV traffic on the roads, particularly the A605 road (the A605 Peterborough roundabout is already severely congested during peak periods). The disturbance of wildlife during installation could have effects beyond the actual construction phase.

Following installation, the particulate air pollution from construction operations, local air pollution from HGV and heavy plant usage, noise, odour, and the constant disturbance to wildlife will decrease significantly during the longer-term operation and maintenance of this industrial facility (perhaps some of the wildlife scattered during the construction phase may eventually return to the hedgerows).

However, the visual impact will remain, and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside will be destroyed, perhaps forever, with fields covered with arrays of black solar panels where there had been arable land surrounded by seasonally changing green and yellow open countryside.

⁶ “Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036”, 16 May 2019, Policies LP10 and LP35

⁷ “Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document 2022”, 17 March 2022

⁸ “Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document 2022”, 17 March 2022, a material planning consideration in determination of planning applications.

(2.2.) VISUAL IMPACT

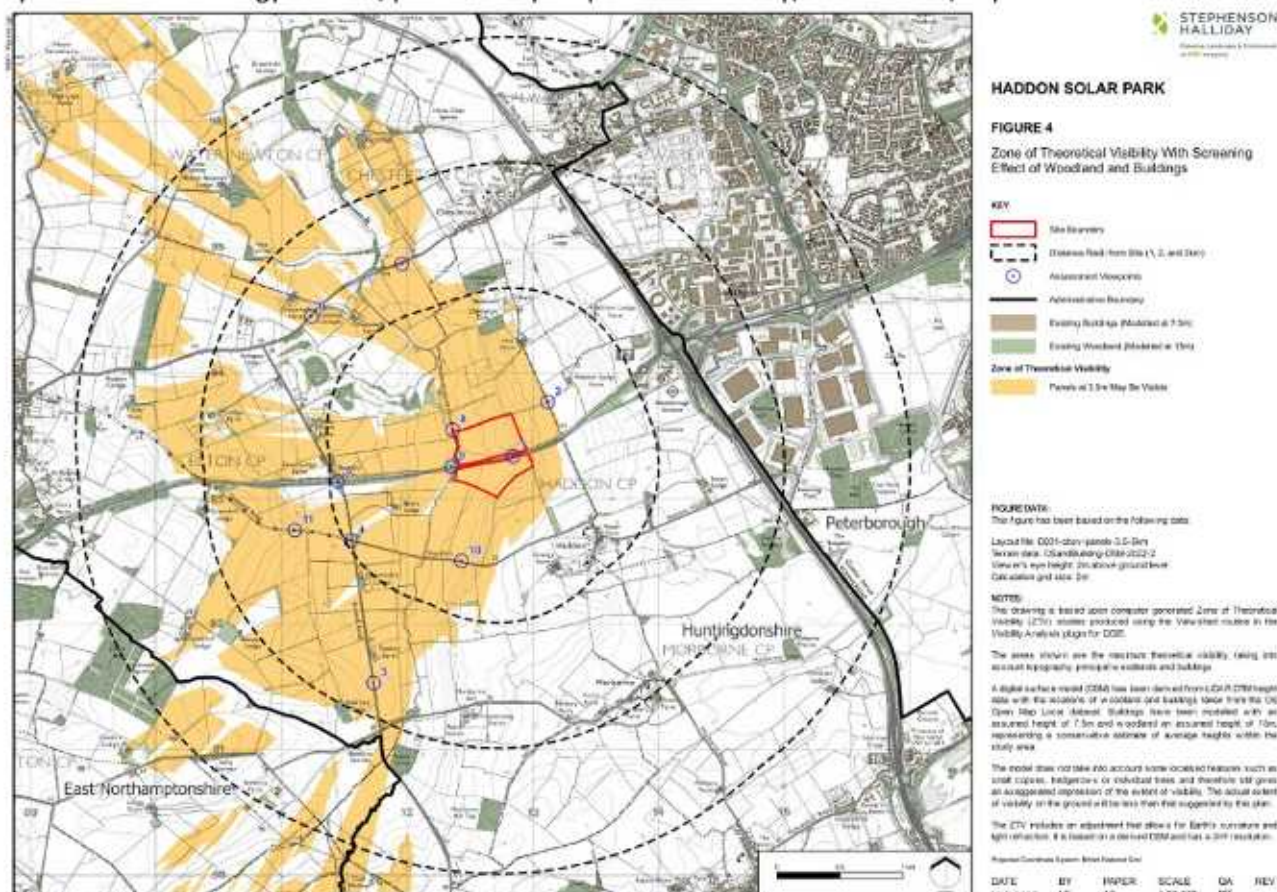
For this particular planning application at this specific site, the long-term impact is worsened, and unable to be mitigated, as the proposed site for this solar farm is on west-sloping hillsides, rather than on lower-lying, level land (almost as if there is a desire to have the solar farm visible for miles throughout the formerly unspoilt area of northern Huntingdonshire).

The visual impact cannot be avoided, the balance is whether the impact is very localised or more widespread; is the area open countryside with a distinctive 'unspoilt' character; and can the impact be mitigated to an acceptable degree

- this particular planning application at this specific location fails so badly on all counts that it is amazing the location was ever proposed back in 2022, and incredulous that the development at the same location is proposed again after being rejected previously.

Because of the western hillside location, only the nearby village of Haddon (to the south-east, on the other side of the ridge) is saved from the stark visual impact. The visual impact extends for miles west and north, as shown below, destroying the landscape character.

Refer to the "Zone of Theoretical Visibility With Screening Effect of Woodland and Buildings", as submitted by Wessex Solar Energy Limited, produced by Stephenson Halliday, March 2025, copied below.



Visibility Assessment of proposed Haddon Solar Park

The facility will be detrimental to the visual amenity of residents and visitors for miles around, particularly to the north and west of the site.

The most affected residents, with clear views of the PV panel arrays covering the western slopes of hills will be in the civil parish of Elton at Bate's Lodge; Lawrence's Lodge; Tookey Farm; Rectory Farm; Elton Lodge Farm; and Furze Farm; and at Hill Farm in the parish of Chesterton.

These impacted dwellings are not just some modern additions to the area; these farms are shown in Ordnance Survey maps of the 18th and 19th centuries⁹. For hundreds of years, families living at these locations have looked out over open countryside, but would be faced with a stark, black industrial landscape if this solar farm is constructed at this location. This impact not only needlessly spoils the unspoilt landscape character, to impose such harm on local people, against the wishes of the local people, would rend the very soul of this rural area.



View of the proposed site from west of Bullock Road

These western slopes of hillsides north and south of the A605 road would be covered with black arrays of PV solar panels, visible for miles to the west and north – impossible to screen because of the topography.

(The white truck near centre of the photo is on the A605 road.)



View of the proposed site from east of Bullock Road

⁹ Ordnance Survey, One-Inch, England and Wales, Sheet 171 – Kettering, surveyed: 1882 to 1887, revised: 1897, published 1899, and First edition Ordnance Survey maps of the topographic series of England and Wales, surveyed 1784-1869.

When dismissing the Gayton, appeal 3314266¹⁰, 13 March 2024, the then Secretary of State concluded ***“Visual harm to landscape character and appearance carries major weight reducing to major-moderate over time”***.

Detriment to landscape character and visual amenity were concluding reasons for dismissing the Alfreton appeal 3299953¹¹, ***“The need for renewable or low carbon energy does not automatically override environmental protections. I have taken into account all the other matters raised including the proximity of a suitable grid connection, but in the overall balance, the harm caused to landscape character and visual amenity is decisive”, “In this case, the solar farm would be mounted largely on sloping land with a very significant zone of visual influence extending for several km across attractive and locally valued countryside in a transitional character area with long reaching views”, “Planning Practice Guidance advises that local topography is an important factor in assessing whether large scale solar farms could have a damaging effect on landscape”***.

For residents and visitors alike, there is an open outlook of the Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds, with the experience of seasonal changes; if a solar farm is installed on this landscape, the panels would be a significant detractor with major adverse effects.

- The adverse effects cannot be mitigated because of the topography of the area.

(2.3.) TOPOGRAPHY

A review of the topography map of this proposed development, 22 March 2025 (copied below) clearly shows:

- In the field north of the A605 road, the terrain slopes from approximately 19.8 m amsl at the western boundary hedge up to 42.86 m amsl near the crest of the hill at the eastern boundary hedge, an increase in elevation of 23.06 m (almost 76 feet). Hedgerow (when eventually mature after 10-15 years and only during seasonal periods of foliage) along the western and northern boundaries will be totally ineffective for visual screening at any distance other than walking along right next to the hedge.
- In the field south of the A605 road, the terrain slopes from a low of 20.4 m amsl at the western boundary hedge up to 44.3 m amsl near the crest of the hill at the eastern boundary hedge, an increase in elevation of 23.9 m (over 78 feet). Hedgerow screening as proposed along the western boundary will be totally ineffective for visual screening at any distance other than walking along right next to the hedge.

The solar farm should simply not be planned for this location (or any similar rural hillside location in the open countryside).

- Wessex Solar Energy has made no serious attempt to consider alternative, more appropriate, locations for a solar park with level, lower-lying topography (allowing adequate screening) that would result in less visual impact and detriment to the landscape character of the area, or on ‘brownfield’ land (as per national guidance), or adjacent to the main north-south railway line east of the A1/A1(M) highway, or on level ground adjacent to the A1/A1(M) highways (such as the Cell Energy proposal for a 35 MW solar farm near Vicarage Lane, Diddington).

It is of interest that the same landowner has much land to the east of the proposed site and the landowner wishes to change the land use from agriculture and allocate this land for development adjacent to the western edge of the A1(M) motorway, from the A605 road and Peterborough Service Station south to the Haddon Road (by Toon’s Lodge).

Ideally, in accordance with national guidelines and local policies, solar parks should be sited on ***“previously developed and non-agricultural land”***; however, if there happens to be some strong justification for destroying the countryside, then at least the alternative site (owned by the same landowner), immediately west of the A1(M) motorway and south of the A605 road, sloping down to an area of quite level ground

¹⁰ Paragraph 46, Appeal APP/W2845/W/23/3314266, Gayton, West Northamptonshire, dismissed by the Minister of State for Local Government on behalf of the Secretary of State, 13 March 2024.

¹¹ Appeal Ref: APP/M1005/W/22/3299953, Alfreton DE55 7AH, 5 December 2022.

adjacent to the A1(M) motorway, would avoid much visual impact and detriment to the landscape character of the Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds and perhaps allow adequate screening.



It is interesting to note that in the 18 July 2024, appeal decision S62A/22/0006 supporting the planning application for a solar farm on land at Berden, Uttlesford, The Planning Inspector accepted there would be harmful impact on landscape character and detrimental visual effects; but, questioned the extent of that harm. The Planning Inspector accepted that “because of the relatively flat lie of the land, there would be no significantly jarring longer-distance views of the installation.” - The Planning Inspector (while supporting the proposed solar farm at Uttlesford) thus makes the point that harm can sometimes be mitigated by using **appropriate sites on flat land**. But this is not the case for the proposed Haddon Solar Park on the western slopes of hills in the unspoilt Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds where there will indeed be “significantly jarring longer-distance views of the installation”.

To further support the point that locating a solar farm on slopes of undulating countryside is inappropriate (let alone the attractive and relatively unspoilt hillsides of the Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds landscape character area), The Planning Inspector concluded in Appeal: 3317818, 14 November 2023¹², that “*Much of the landscape effect of this proposal relates directly to the sloping nature of the site, which has the consequence of increasing visibility and potentially increasing the effect of the scheme. This consideration is in the light of the national and industry approach to the best siting of solar developments.*”

¹² Paragraphs 41 through 44, Appeal: APP/A1910/W/23/3317818, Little Heath, Berkhamstead, 14 November 2023.

(3.) AIRCRAFT SAFETY

Adjacent to the northern edge of the proposed site is a private airstrip at Furze Farm, and Sibson Aerodrome is 3–4 miles further north. The potential risk to aircraft safety from the solar panels at the proposed site is increased as air traffic typically enters Sibson's circuits from the south and east and approach the airfield from these directions.

Updated assessments of glint and glare have been submitted by Wessex Solar Energy; however, the new report continues to understate conclusions given 38% of the assessments (for some Sibson Flying School receptors and most Furze Farm receptors) indicate glint is predicted and will persist at these receptors throughout the planned 40-year duration of the project and will be evident to pilots until screening matures to a height of 3.5 m, but fails to acknowledge that screening will be inadequate to block 40,000 reflective panels rising 25 m on hillsides.

The safety risks therefore remain, particularly when considering the flying patterns that are established at Sibson Aerodrome.

The proposed solar farm at the location specified in planning application 25/00652/FUL would thus continue to be detrimental to Sibson Aerodrome considering the adverse effect on safety near a notifiable installation contrary to Local Plan Policy LP14 Amenity¹³.

The proposed solar farm would be counter to the Department for Transport General Aviation Strategy, 2015, and NPPF para 111(f) (page 32)¹⁴.

Bearing in mind that the revised proposal as described in the current planning application 25/00652/FUL is basically a somewhat reduced version of the project described in the previous planning application 22/00668/FUL except that the southernmost field has now been omitted, it is worthwhile recalling the Planning Inspector comments¹⁵ regarding aircraft safety when dismissing the appeal against rejection of the previous planning application for a solar farm at this location:

"Insufficient demonstration that the proposal would cause no harm to the safe functioning of aircraft."

"In the absence of more detailed evidence on how glint is experienced and reacted to by pilots during various airborne manoeuvres, it is reasonable to assume that its impacts could have a catastrophic outcome. I find that a precautionary principle needs to be in place in this instance, due to the lack of detailed information as to exactly how the solar panels may affect these local aircraft, which have flight patterns significantly differing from those modelled. I do not have sufficient confidence to be able to declare that there would be no harm resulting from glint."

"there appears to me to be a potentially noticeable impact for some Furze Farm flying manoeuvres across a large proportion of the day/year. The mitigating factors do not sufficiently indicate to me that any glint which is experienced, would not be harmful to pilots."

(4.) TEMPORARY NATURE OF THE PROPOSAL

Developers of solar parks make great claims that the project, and the unavoidable harm to the landscape character, local amenity, and farmland, is only "temporary" with the possibility that land could perhaps be returned to agricultural use after 40 years or so – this claim has become standard in all planning applications for solar farms.

¹³ "Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036", 16 May 2019, Policy LP14 para (h) (page 71)

¹⁴ "NPPF" - National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024 as amended 7 February 2025

¹⁵ Planning Inspectorate Appeal Decision APP/H0520/W/24/3344095, 11 November 2024

But, claiming that a project duration of 40 years is “temporary” should be given little weight where the project entails a stark contrast to the previous land use, the surrounding landscape character, and the enjoyment of people, and will be visible for miles around (as ruled by the Secretary of State and various Planning Inspectors), the industrial installation should even be considered as “permanent” and judged as such (as decided by some Planning Inspectors).

The latest version of the NPPF Paragraph 168(c) (page 49)¹⁶ states, *“applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site”*; thus accepting that once a site is used for a ‘temporary’ solar farm (of 25-40 years effective duration), it is then beneficial to continue the project with replacement solar panels and infrastructure – basically, the development is permanent, not ‘temporary’.

When considering the harm to landscape character, visual impact and land use, a solar farm project of 40 years duration should be treated as effectively a permanent installation.

When dismissing the Gayton appeal 3314266¹⁷, 13 March 2024, the then Secretary of State agreed that the scheme could possibly be returned to agricultural use at some stage, *“but considered this claim should be afforded only negligible weight”* and *“little weight should be afforded to the potential reversibility of the proposal in landscape or visual terms”*.

When dismissing the West Wickham, South Cambridgeshire appeal 3300777¹⁸, 22 September 2023, The Planning Inspector reasoned, *“impacts could be limited by condition to a period of 25 years. This however is a relatively long period of time during which the adverse impacts would be experienced. Therefore, I am not persuaded that the development would be justified on this basis.”*

When refusing planning permission and dismissing the appeal for a solar farm near Little Heath, Berkhamstead, appeal 3317818, 14 November 2023¹⁹, The Planning Inspector reasoned, *“Leaving aside the discussion as to what may happen at the end of the 40 year period – which can only be speculation.... Although the proposal is for a limited period, the length of that period is very substantial..... it cannot be right that the fact that approval is sought for a 40-year period is accorded more than very limited weight in favour of the scheme in relation to the loss of openness. To do so would go against the concept of permanence.”*

When refusing planning permission for a solar farm at Manuden, Uttlesford, application s62A/2022/0011, 11 May 2023²⁰, The Planning Inspector concluded, *“This would be highly contrasting industrial infrastructure that would be present for an extended period of around 40 years. This extended chronological span, together with the scale and size of the proposal, would be perceived as permanent rather than temporary features within the landscape”* and *“Given this duration the proposed development would be seen as permanent features rather than as temporary.”*

Likewise, when dismissing the Alfreton appeal 3299953²¹, 5 December 2022, The Planning Inspector concluded, *“I consider that 40 years is a very significant period in people’s lives during which the development would seriously detract from landscape character and visual amenity.”*

¹⁶ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024 as amended 7 February 2025

¹⁷ Appeal APP/W2845/W/23/3314266, relating to a planning application for construction of a solar farm near Gayton, West Northamptonshire, was dismissed by the Minister of State for Local Government on behalf of the Secretary of State, 13 March 2024.

¹⁸ Paragraph 11 of Appeal: APP/W0530/W/22/3300777, Land to the South East of Burton End, West Wickham, South Cambridgeshire CB21 4SD, 22 September 2023.

¹⁹ Paragraph 19 of Appeal APP/A1910/W/23/3317818, Little Heath Lane, Little Heath, Berkhamstead, 14 November 2023.

²⁰ Paragraphs 18, 51, Decision Notice & Statement of Reasons, Application Reference: s62A/2022/0011, Land East of Pelham Substation, Maggots End, Manuden, Uttlesford, Decision date: 11 May 2023.

²¹ Concluding paragraph 60 of Appeal APP/M1005/W/22/3299953, Alfreton DE55 7AH, 5 December 2022.

If there happens to be some strong justification to allow long-term harm to the landscape character and amenity of the countryside at a particular location with a development project proposed as “temporary” (whether a solar farm or indeed any other project), with a claim by the developer that the project will eventually be decommissioned and land fully restored, such restoration needs to be guaranteed.

Planning Conditions, with the need for a decommissioning plan to be submitted many years hence, are insufficient (the operator of the solar farm simply ‘ring-fences’ the project within a dedicated limited company, transfers profits throughout the project, and then, with the project laden with debt, declares voluntary liquidation prior to any decommissioning obligations and walks away with no liability or recourse).

If the developer has truly honest intent, eventual decommissioning can be somewhat assured either by a substantial reinstatement bond held in an ESCROW account or by a suitable insurance policy (whereby in the event the operator of the solar farm is liquidated, the insurance policy finances the reinstatement).

(5.) CONCLUSIONS

1. The importance of renewable energy is appreciated; but the need for renewable energy does not confer automatic approval of solar farm projects if a particular proposal is inappropriate; the consideration is whether the public benefit outweighs the harm for this project at the proposed location.
2. This objection from Elton Parish Council focuses on the proposal submitted by Wessex Solar Energy to construct a solar farm at the site specified in Huntingdonshire District Council planning application 25/00652/FUL - vague arguments regarding the generality of benefits of solar energy projects and the need for renewable energy have not been presented as relevant to this particular planning application.
3. The project is not a “Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project” (“NSIP”). [Therefore, the “Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy” (EN-1) and “National Policy Statement renewable electricity generation (both onshore and offshore)” (EN-3), although containing much interesting information, are not appropriate or applicable to this planning application (despite being referred to by Wessex Solar Energy), these NPS are intended for NSIP as set out in The Planning Act 2008.]
4. The revised plan as described in planning application 25/00652/FUL reduces the project from 65,000 solar panels to 40,000 solar panels; therefore, the potential public benefit from renewable energy is significantly reduced compared with the previous proposal which was refused in 2024.
5. The area onsite, and near the proposed site and for miles around the proposed site is rural with an open countryside character. Apart from one east-west single-carriageway local distribution road (the A605 road), there are no nearby major urban, suburban, industrial, commercial, mixed-use, brownfield or greyfield developments – the area is a truly “unspoilt” landscape, enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.
6. The proposed site straddles the border between Natural England National Character Area 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands (field south of the A605 road) and NCA 89: Northamptonshire Vales (field north of the A605 road).
7. The proposed site of this project is in a rural setting of open countryside on the western slopes of hills of the Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds.
8. The Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds are a designated landscape area described as *“an attractive and relatively unspoilt part of the district with a strong historical character. Both villages and countryside are vulnerable to unsympathetic development”*.
9. Proposing the solar farm for the western slopes of hills of the Huntingdonshire Northern Wolds would ensure the facility could be seen for miles around, particularly to the north and west.

10. Although the proposed location is in the parish of Haddon, the proposed location is on the western slopes of hills; so, over the ridge to the east, there would be no visual impact on the village of Haddon. The visual impact detrimental to the character and beauty of the landscape for miles around causes substantial harm to the residents of and visitors to the parish of Elton, and, to a lesser extent, the fringes of the parishes of Warmington, Chesterton, and Sibson-cum-Stibbington, all to the west and north of the proposed site.
11. Because of the proposed installation on the slopes of hills, it will be impossible to adequately screen the structures with perimeter hedgerows.
12. The project proposed at this location would drastically alter a rural and agrarian landscape with a stark, black industrial infrastructure affecting not only the immediate site and nearby surrounding areas, but also the views far to the north and west, thus impacting the landscape character and harming the intrinsic beauty of the countryside for miles around. As such, this project proposed for this location conflicts with the local development plan, local policy, national guidance and national policy, with harm that far outweighs potential benefit.
13. The proposed project would directly and severely affect the amenity of nearby residents, particularly to the west of the proposed site, in the parish of Elton. Dwellings in use for hundreds of years (as shown in 19th century Ordnance Survey maps) having views of seasonally yellow and green open countryside, would be faced with a stark, black industrial landscape.
14. Because of the long-range views of this development, the amenity of residents further afield and visitors would also be harmed.
15. Potential safety hazards to aircraft have not been mitigated or fully addressed.
16. The unnecessary and unjustified detriment to amenity conflicts with district, county and national policies and guidance.
17. Despite the standard claim that the proposed project is only “temporary” (with a duration of 40 years) to justify harming the landscape character, appearance, amenity and agricultural land, there has been sufficient decisions by Planning Inspectors, Secretary of State and the High Court to accept that such long-term projects should not be considered “temporary”; the argument of a “temporary” nature should be given negligible weight or even accepted that for most practical purposes the change of land use is effectively permanent.
18. It is noted that the proposed point of connection to the grid is over 3 km away, on the other side of the A1(M) motorway.
19. There has been no serious attempt by Wessex Solar Energy to consider alternative, more appropriate locations to generate solar power for the benefit of the nation - locations that would not cause the degree of harm anticipated from this proposal.
20. Whereas Wessex Solar Energy ignored the “Call for Sites” process, other potential solar farm sites have been proposed by developers complying with the Huntingdonshire “Call for Sites” process and the sites have been assessed by Huntingdonshire District Council during the ongoing Local Plan update process, such as “Abbotsley 4: Pear Tree Solar Farm, Abbotsley” (72 hectare site east of St. Neots and west of Abbotsley, south of Abbotsley Golf Hotel and Course) and “Diddington 1: Cell Energy, Vicarage Lane, Diddington” (47.17 hectare site, adjacent to the A1 highway, south of Buckden, with a capacity of 35 MW).

For the reasons stated above Elton Parish Council recommends planning permission is refused.

Huntingdonshire District Council
Development Services
Pathfinder House
St. Mary's Street
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 3TN



Elton Parish Council

Parish Clerk
1 Rectory Farm Court
Elton
PE8 6S

Attention: Aaron Sands, Case Officer

Friday, 11 July 2025

Objection to Planning Application 25/00652/FUL

Dear Mr Sands,

Thank you for the recent correspondence from Development Services of Huntingdonshire District Council notifying some residents of Elton of revised and additional details received on 19 June 2025 related to the recent planning re-application 25/00652/FUL by Wessex Solar Energy Limited, and the invitation to submit further comments regarding the additional information by 14 July 2025.

The additional information relates to the proposed installation of an industrial solar power facility of up to 40,000 black photovoltaic panels with associated inverters, transformers, electrical buildings, onsite control building, boundary fencing and gates, security cameras, and other infrastructure and engineering operations on a greenfield site of agricultural fields east of Billing Brook both north and south of the A606 local county road in the civil parish of Haddon.

Elton Parish Council has reviewed the recently submitted additional information, being:

"Amended - Site Access onto A605 Peterborough Road: Site Plan", MBC drawing 33444/200 rev A, date 05/2022.

"Amended - Site Access onto A605 Peterborough Road: Inset Details", MBC drawing 33444/201 Rev , date 05/2022.

(Both the above drawings are dated May 2022, so if these drawings are meant to be recent amendments, there seems to be an issue with normal document control practices?)

Also, *"Amended - Haddon Road Visuals"*, a few selective landscape photographs from Stephensen Halliday, reported as taken on 7/10/2021, printed June 2025.

And the *"Neo Environmental Response to Peterborough Flying School Continued Objection"*.

The additional information submitted on 19 June 2025 has no bearing on the fundamental objections to the construction of this industrial solar power plant as proposed for this particular location.

Elton Parish Council continues to object to Planning Application 25/00652/FUL for the construction of a commercial solar facility on a greenfield site of agricultural fields both north and south of the A605 road, on sloping hillsides of the Northern Wolds in rural Huntingdonshire.
- Elton Parish Council confirms the objections submitted on 9 May 2025.

Regarding the *"Amended - Haddon Road Visuals"*, these selected viewpoints are no substitute for a properly scaled east-west elevation drawing which would show the 25 m rise of the slopes of the

Northern Wolds on which this industrial plant is proposed - such topography is not suitable or desirable for the location of an extensive commercial solar facility because adequate visual screening is impossible. This point has been made in various previous objections, and UK Government Planning Inspectors have repeatedly supported opinion that siting of solar panels on hillsides where the visual impact extends for miles is totally inappropriate.



These western slopes of hillsides north and south of the A605 road would be covered with black arrays of PV solar panels, visible for miles to the west and north – impossible to screen because of the topography.

Regarding ***“Amended - Site Access onto A605 Peterborough Road”***, the visibility splay amendments fail to address the safety risks of permitting access on either side of the busy A605 local road and the lack of mitigation to prevent traffic exiting the site cutting across oncoming traffic travelling at 60mph on an already hazardous carriageway.

Further west on the A605 road, at the access to Elton Quarry, there are physical obstructions to ensure trucks comply with the traffic management plan.



Access to Elton Quarry

Regarding the ***“Neo Environmental Response to Peterborough Flying School Continued Objection”***

Neo Environmental on behalf of Wessex Solar Energy claims the Glint and Glare Assessment, 31 March 2025, *‘fully considered the potential impacts of glint and glare from the proposed development on aviation safety’*. However, the industry standard modelling software used an assumed circuit pattern to predict the duration and type of glare impacts which fails to represent the typical circuit patterns at Sibson Airfield. Relevant information about the actual circuits in use at Sibson was submitted by Peterborough Flying School but ignored. No circuits from Sibson fly to the north of the airfield (partly because of frequent parachuting activity). When considering other factors such as noise abatement requirements and the electricity pylons to the east of the airfield, it seems that the assumed circuits do not represent the actual circumstances.

As well as the ‘glint and glare’ issue, flying predominantly to the south of Sibson must also consider the risk of engine failure after take-off and engine failure on approach - the heightened safety risk of having a solar farm directly to the south of the airfield in relation to circuit departure and arrival points is flawed.

As such, the claim that the concerns of the Planning Inspector have been addressed is untrue as the inaccurate circuit patterns ignore the fact that most flying to and from Sibson takes place to the south – flying overhead Haddon, on both departure and arrival.

The obvious hazard presented by earlier assessments of significant glint and glare from the proposed solar farm being only 50 m from the end of the runway at Furze Farm grass airstrip is also ignored. It is suggested glare impacts at Furze Farm could be mitigated if pilots could *‘... land in the opposite direction if wind conditions allow and planning their flight to land outside the times when sun glare is possible’* - pilots do not actively land downwind nor should the amenity of using the flying strip be limited to when the glare of the sun from the solar panels is not causing a safety risk to flying.

The safety risk and detrimental impact on amenity for both Sibson Aerodrome and Furze Farm air strip remains the same as when this proposed industrial facility was refused planning permission by Huntingdonshire District Council in January 2024 and the Planning Inspectorate Decision of 11 November 2024 dismissed the appeal.

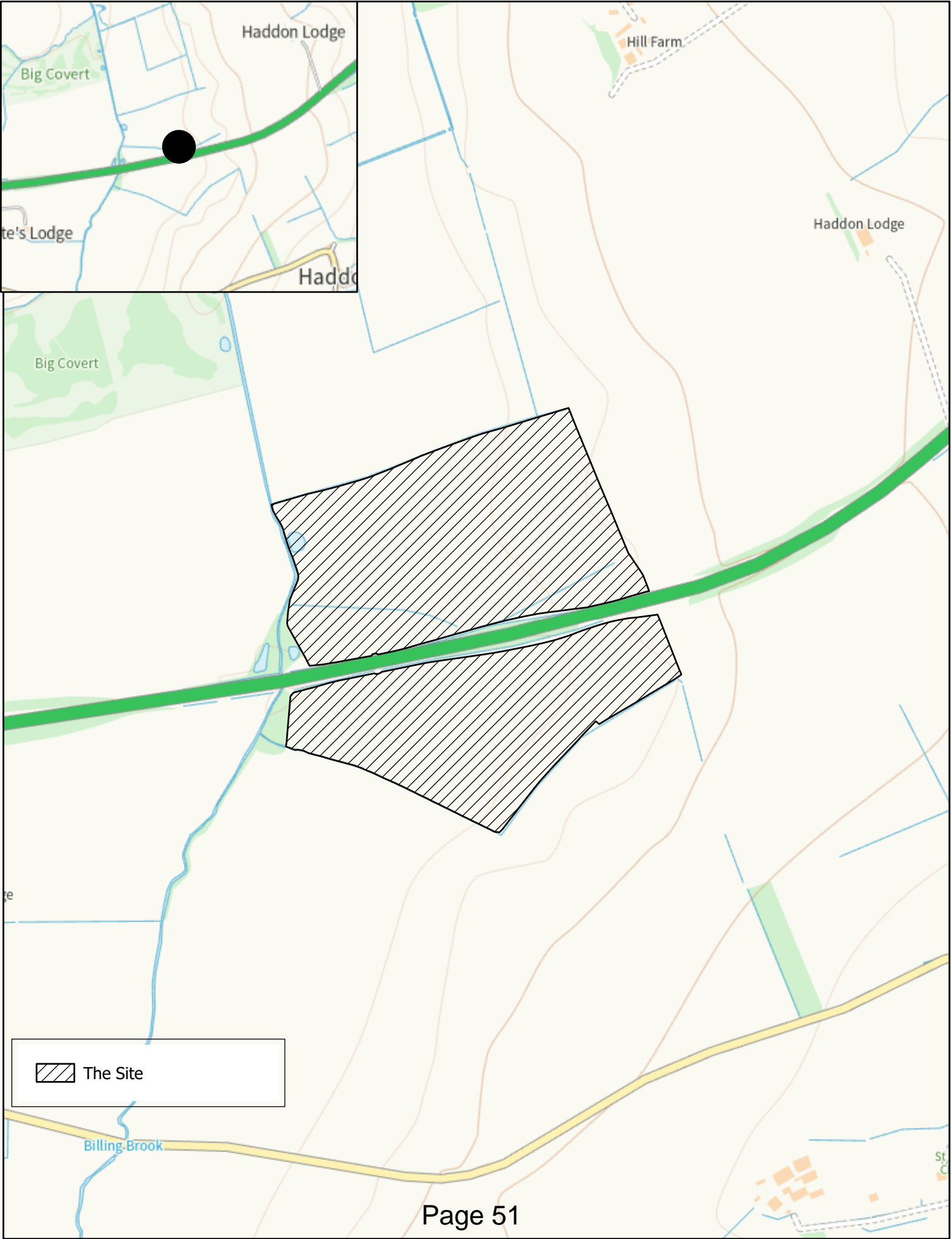
For the reasons stated above and stated previously in the submission from Elton Parish Council dated 9 May 2025, Elton Parish Council recommends refusal of the planning application and respectfully requests Huntingdonshire District Council to accept the objections against the development as submitted by the parish council.

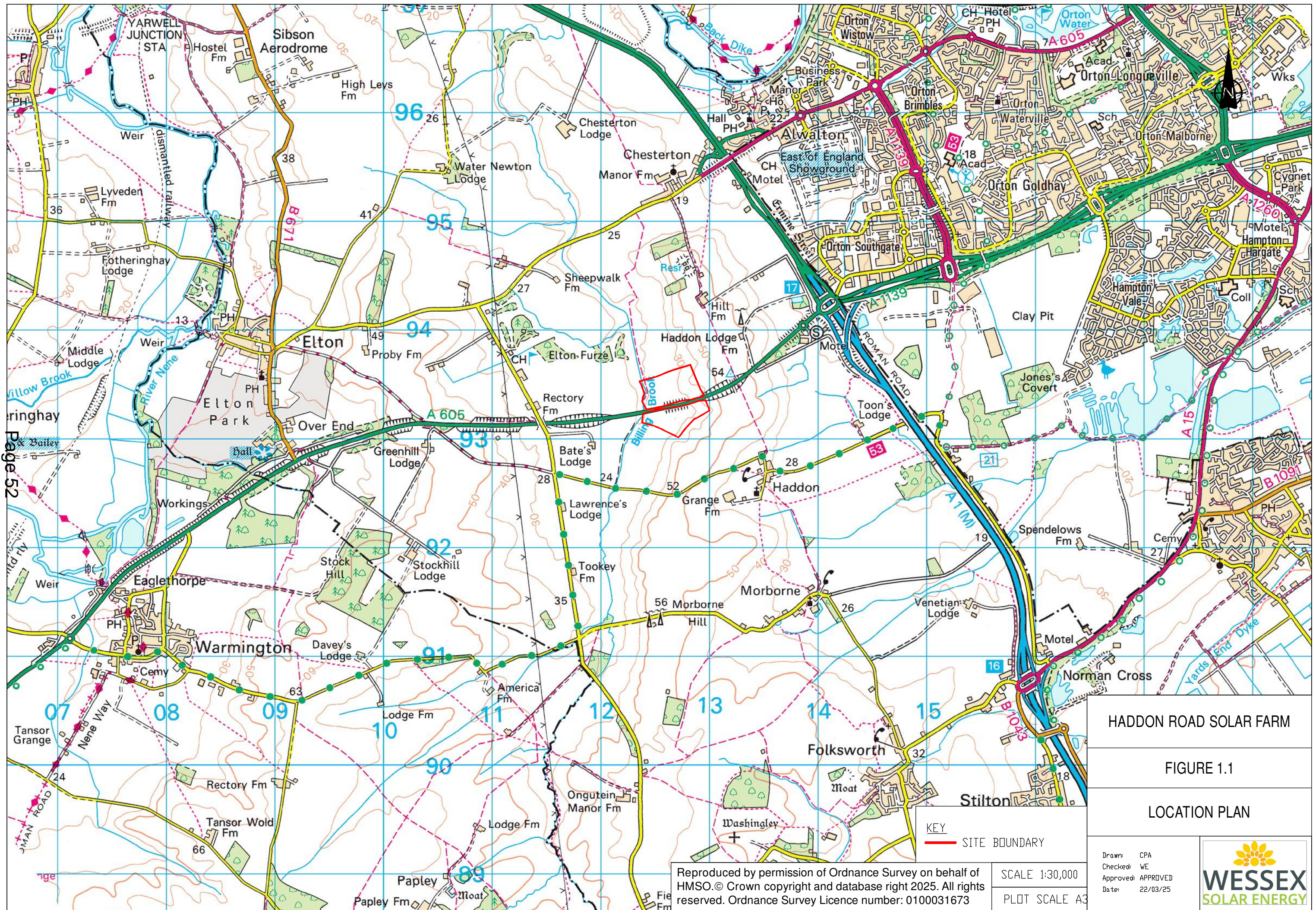
Should you have any queries or require any further information relating to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Parish Clerk, Elton Parish Council

11 July 2025





Page 52

HADDON ROAD SOLAR FARM

FIGURE 1.1

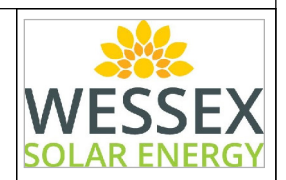
LOCATION PLAN

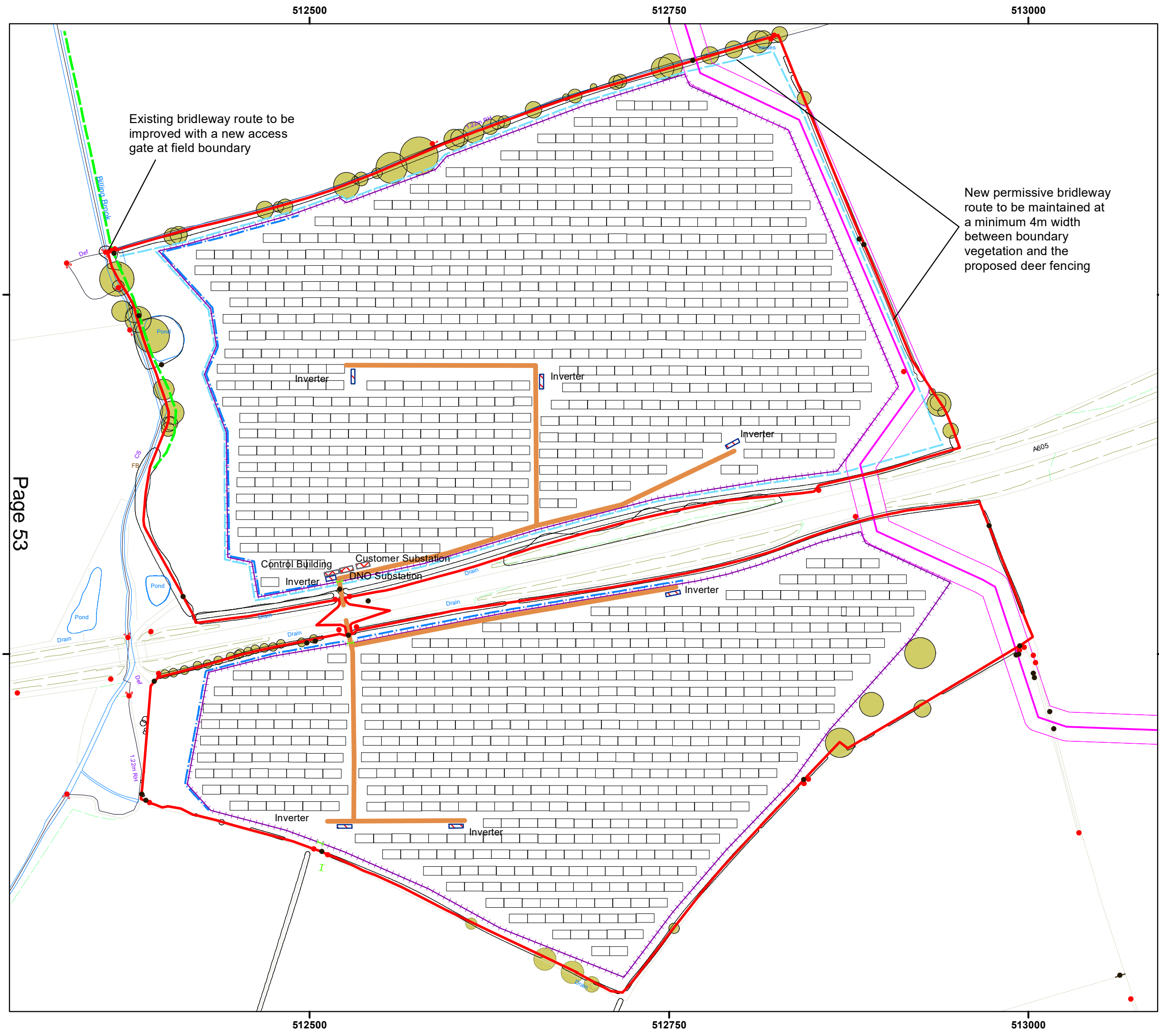
KEY
— SITE BOUNDARY

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. © Crown copyright and database right 2025. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number: 0100031673

SCALE 1:30,000
PLOT SCALE A3

Drawn: CPA
Checked: WE
Approved: APPROVED
Date: 22/03/25





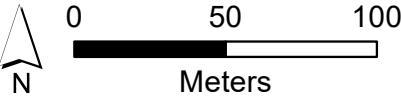
Haddon Road Solar Park

Figure 1.2

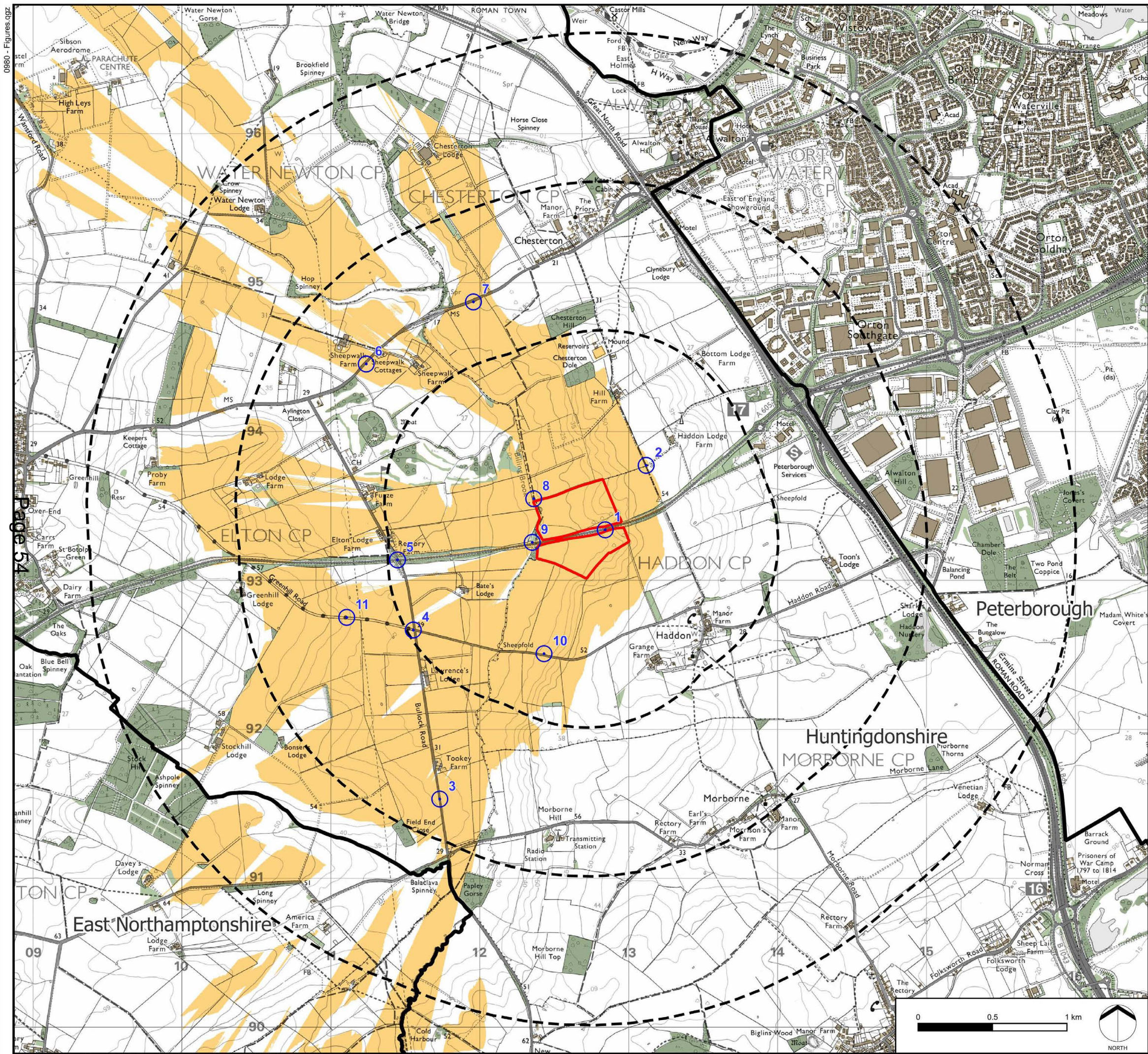
Site Boundary and
Indicative Layout

- KEY**
- Planning Boundary
 - New Access Track
 - New Hedgerow
 - Existing Trees and Vegetation
 - New Fence
 - New Security Gate
 - Existing Ditches and Ponds
 - Proposed New Swales
 - Existing Pipeline Route and Buffer
 - Root Protection Areas of Existing Trees and Hedgerows
 - Existing Bridleway
 - Proposed New Permissive Bridleway (grass)

1:2,500 scale on A3 Paper



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved.
2025 License number 0100031673.



HADDON SOLAR PARK

FIGURE 5.1

Zone of Theoretical Visibility With Screening
Effect of Woodland and Buildings

KEY

- Site Boundary
- Distance Radii from Site (1, 2, and 3km)
- Assessment Viewpoints
- Administrative Boundary
- Existing Buildings (Modelled at 7.5m)
- Existing Woodland (Modelled at 15m)
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility**
 - Panels at 3.5m May Be Visible

FIGURE DATA:

This figure has been based on the following data:

Layout file: D001-obsv-panels-3.5-5km
Terrain data: OSandBuilding-DSM-2022-2
View er's eye height: 2m above ground level
Calculation grid size: 2m

NOTES:

This drawing is based upon computer generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) studies produced using the Viewshed routine in the Visibility Analysis plugin for QGIS.

The areas shown are the maximum theoretical visibility, taking into account topography, principal woodlands and buildings.

A digital surface model (DSM) has been derived from LiDAR DTM height data with the locations of woodland and buildings taken from the OS Open Map Local dataset. Buildings have been modelled with an assumed height of 7.5m and woodland an assumed height of 15m, representing a conservative estimate of average heights within the study area.

The model does not take into account some localised features such as small copses, hedgerows or individual trees and therefore still gives an exaggerated impression of the extent of visibility. The actual extent of visibility on the ground will be less than that suggested by this plan.

The ZTV includes an adjustment that allows for Earth's curvature and light refraction. It is based on a derived DSM and has a 2m² resolution.

Projected Coordinate System: British National Grid

DATE	BY	PAPER	SCALE	QA	REV
MAR 2025	LF	A3	1:25,000	MT	-



KEY

Site boundary

Proposed PV Panels

Proposed units

Proposed deer fencing

Proposed gate

Proposed access track

Existing Bridleway

Proposed permissive Bridleway

Proposed swale

Existing CLH pipe and 10m buffer

Existing vegetation RPA's

Proposed native tree and scrub planting

Proposed native hedgerow

Gapping up of existing hedgerow (10% of length)

Proposed wildflower seeding to swale (Emorsgate EMBF)

Proposed wildflower grassland (Emorsgate EH1)

Proposed wildflower tussock grassland (Emorsgate EM10)

N

Scale

0 20 40 60 80 100m

GENERAL NOTES

Do not scale from this drawing.
Only work to written dimensions.
Drawing is for planning purposes only not for construction.

All site dimensions shall be verified by the Contractor on site prior to commencing any works.

All contractors should ascertain the location of all underground services/utilities before undertaking any work and conflicts resolved.

It is assumed all work will be carried out by an experienced competent contractor working to an approved method statement.

RESIDUAL DESIGN HAZARDS

This information has been collated as part of the CDM Regulations, and identifies hazards and risks associated with the design proposals

00	21.03.25	First Issue	EW	MT	MT
----	----------	-------------	----	----	----

Rev.	Date	Amendment	Drawn	Chkd.	Appd.
------	------	-----------	-------	-------	-------



Planning, Landscape & Environment
an **RSK** company

Fourways House, Tel: +44 (0)330 002 1780
57 Hilton Street, Email: info@stephenson-halliday.com
Manchester, Web: www.stephenson-halliday.com
M1 2EJ.

Client

Wessex Solar

Project Title

Haddon Solar Park

Drawing Title

Landscape Mitigation Plan

Drawn	Date	Checked	Date	Approved	Date
EW	19.03.25	MT	21.03.25	MT	21.03.25

Scale	Orig Size	Status
1:2000	A2	PLANNING

Drawing No.	Rev.
0980-SHRSK-XX-XX-DR-L-1000	00

File Path
0980.05.04.01

Specification						
Native Hedgerow Mix 1 - Dry Open Areas						
Number	Species	Specification	Pot Size	Height	Density	Percentage Contribution
328 -	Acer campestre	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	20%
328 -	Corylus avellana	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	20%
328 -	Crataegus monogyna	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	20%
328 -	Crataegus oxyacantha	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	20%
166 -	Ilex aquifolium	C	2L		0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	10%
87 -	Prunus spinosa	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	5%
22 -	Sambucus nigra	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	1%
70 -	Ulmus glabra	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	4%
Total :1657 -						

Specification						
Native Hedgerow Mix 2 - Damp Open Areas						
Number	Species	Specification	Pot Size	Height	Density	Percentage Contribution
68 -	Acer campestre	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	5%
198 -	Cornus sanguinea	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	15%
392 -	Crataegus monogyna	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	30%
328 -	Crataegus oxyacantha	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	25%
30 -	Prunus serrulata	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	2%
133 -	Salix caprea	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	10%
133 -	Salix cinerea	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	10%
42 -	Sambucus nigra	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	3%
Total :1324 -						

Specification						
Native Hedgerow Mix 3 - Shady Areas						
Number	Species	Specification	Pot Size	Height	Density	Percentage Contribution
84 -	Cornus sanguinea	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	10%
246 -	Crataegus monogyna	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	30%
166 -	Crataegus oxyacantha	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	20%
84 -	Fagus sylvatica	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	10%
84 -	Ilex aquifolium	C	2L		0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	10%
84 -	Prunus spinosa	BR		40-60cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	10%
84 -	Ulmus glabra	BR		60-80cm	0.3Ctr Double Staggered at 0.3m offset	10%
Total :832 -						

Scrub Understorey Mix					
Number	Species	Specification	Height	Density	Percentage Contribution
314 -	Corylus avellana	BR	60-80cm	0.25m ²	20%
472 -	Crataegus monogyna	BR	60-80cm	0.25m ²	30%
158 -	Malus sylvestris	BR	60-80cm	0.25m ²	10%
472 -	Prunus spinosa	BR	60-80cm	0.25m ²	30%
158 -	Rosa canina	BR	60-80cm	0.25m ²	10%
Total :1574 -					

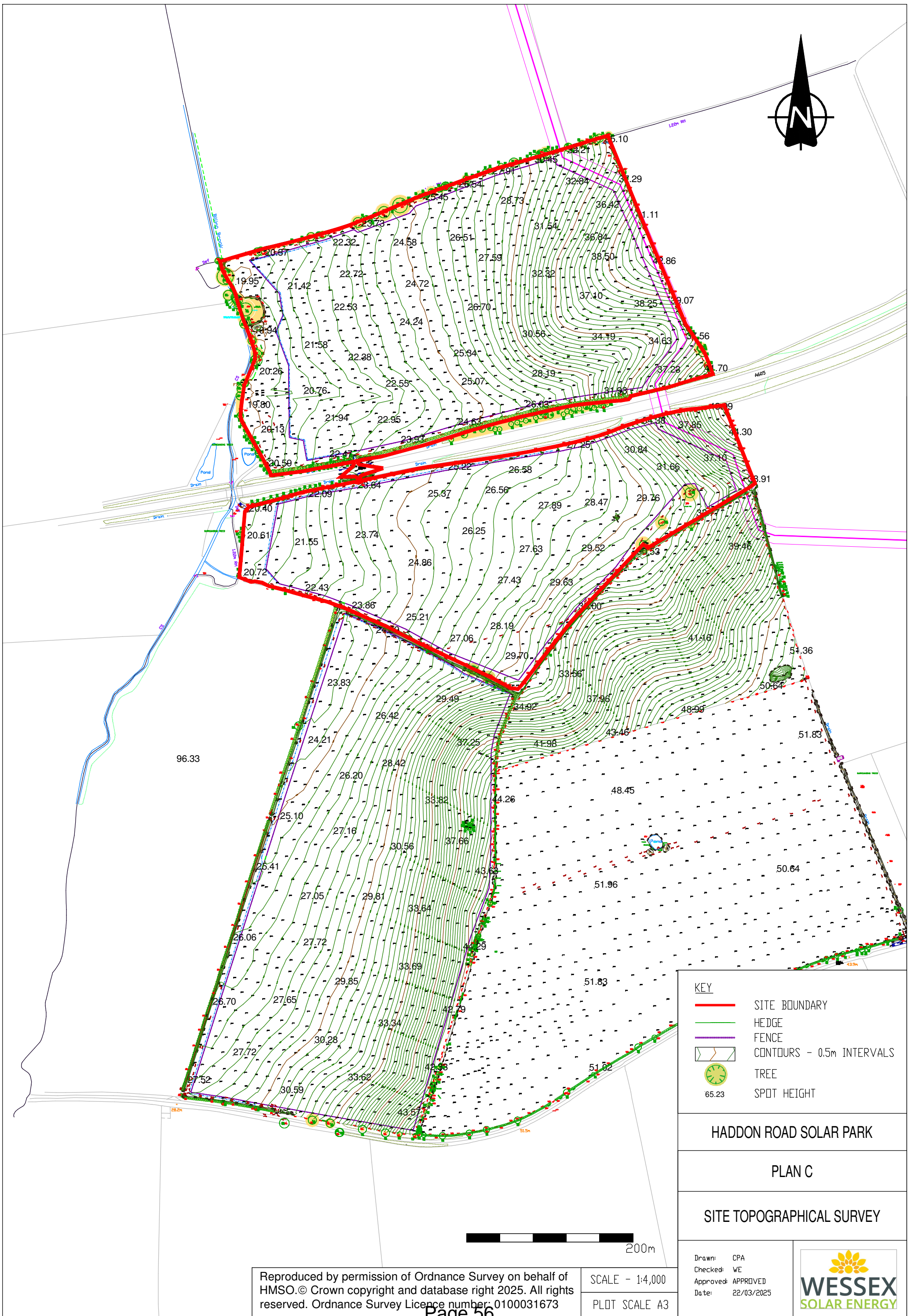
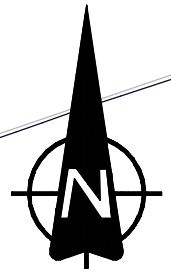
Tree Mix				
Number	Species	Specification	Girth	Density
394 -	Acer campestre	RB	12-14cm	0.125m ²
197 -	Betula pendula	RB	12-14cm	0.125m ²
197 -	Betula pubescens	RB	12-14cm	0.125m ²
Total :788 -				

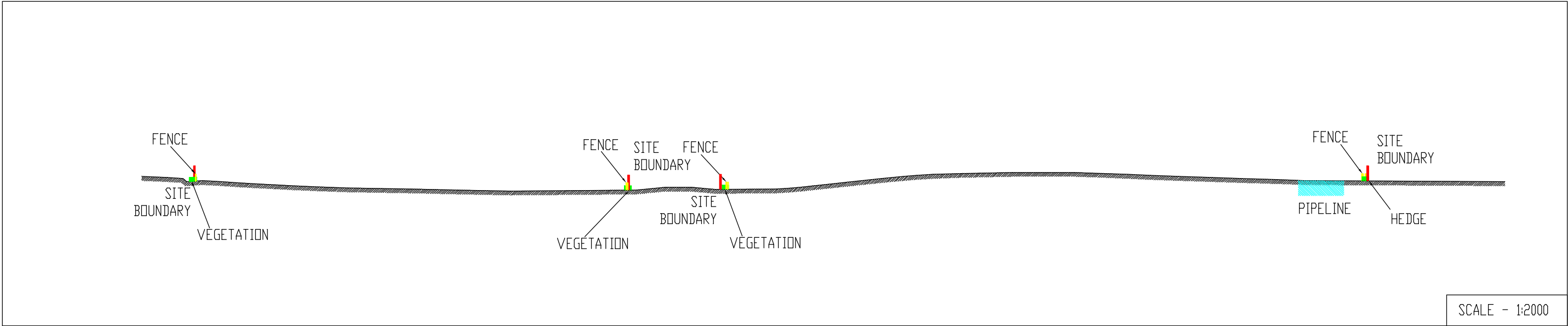
Wildflower seeding

Wildflower grassland (20.5Ha) Emorsgate EH1 sown at 40kg/Ha

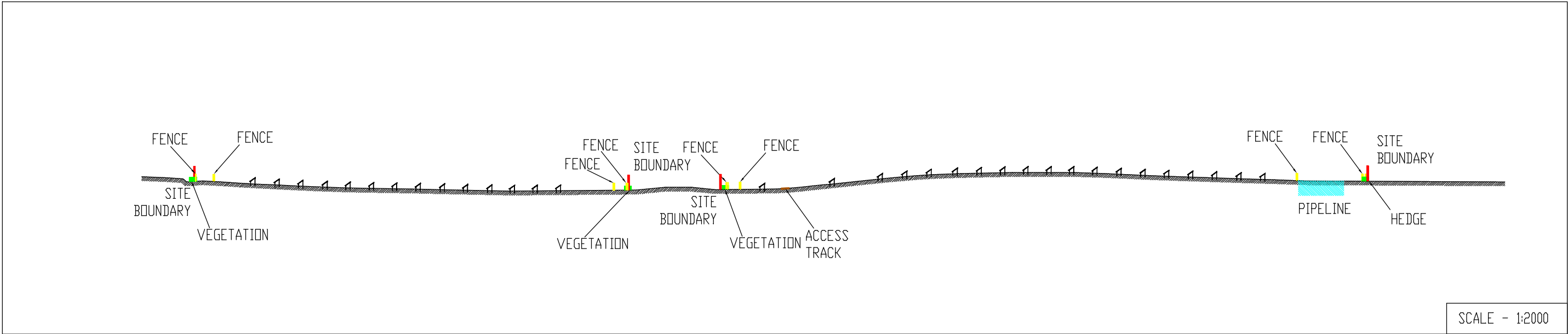
Wildflower tussock grassland (4.9Ha) Emorsgate EM10 sown at 40kg/Ha

Wildflower to swales (1693m²) Emorsgate EMBF sown at 1.5g/m²

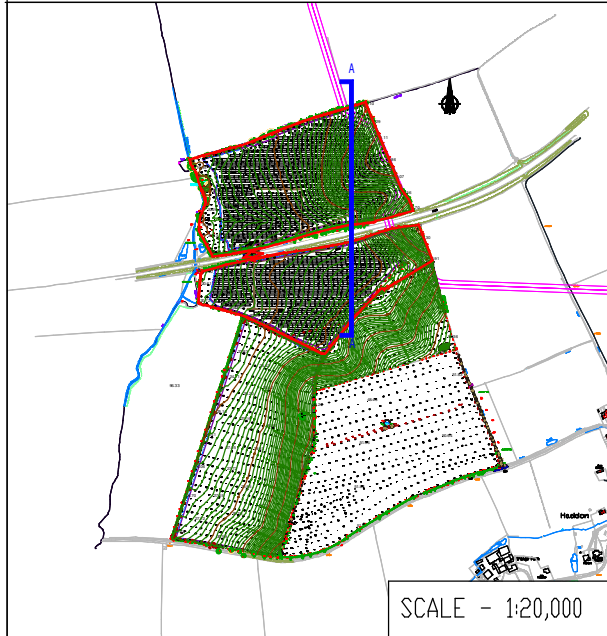




Existing Site Elevation on A-A



Proposed Site Elevation on A-A

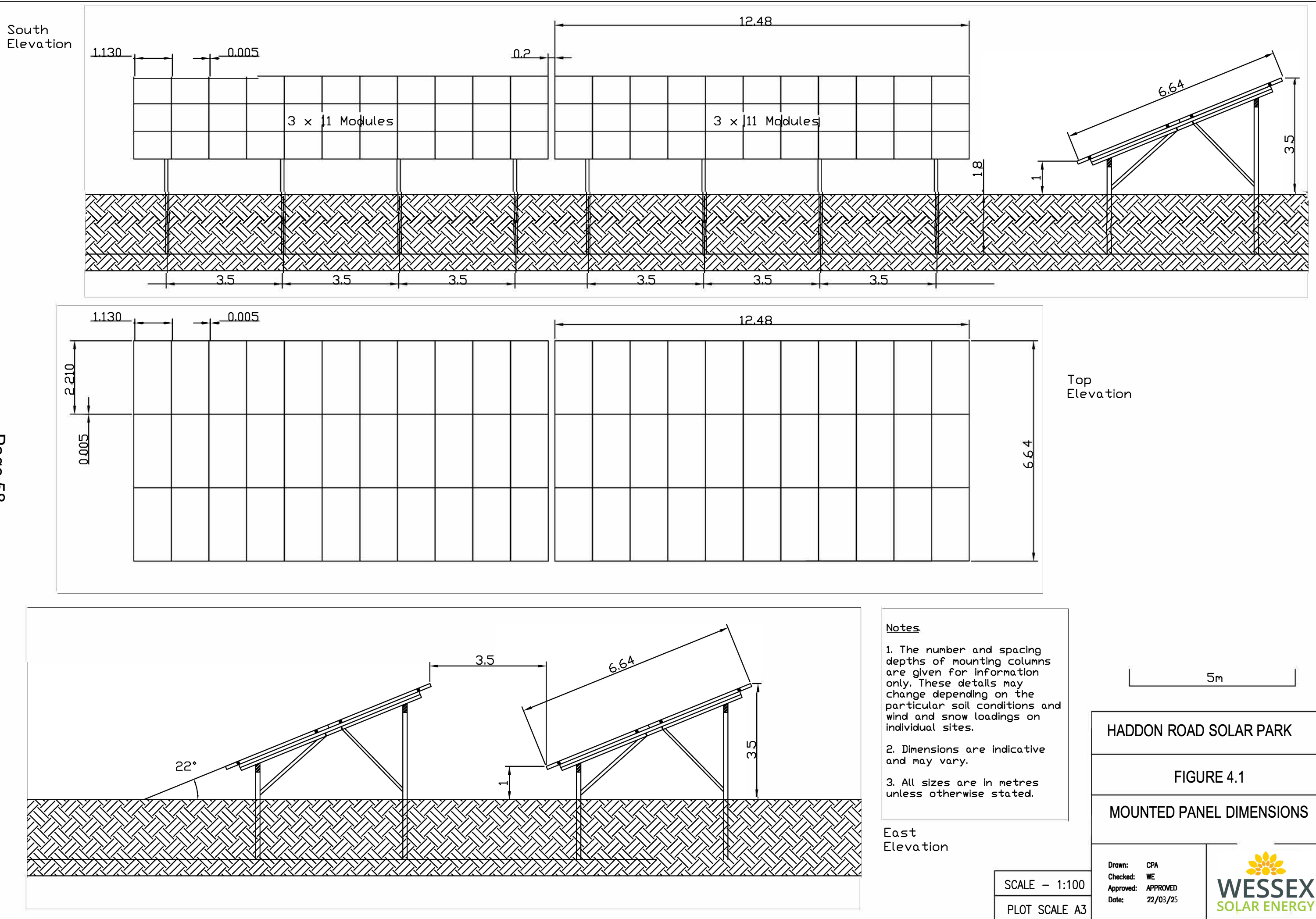


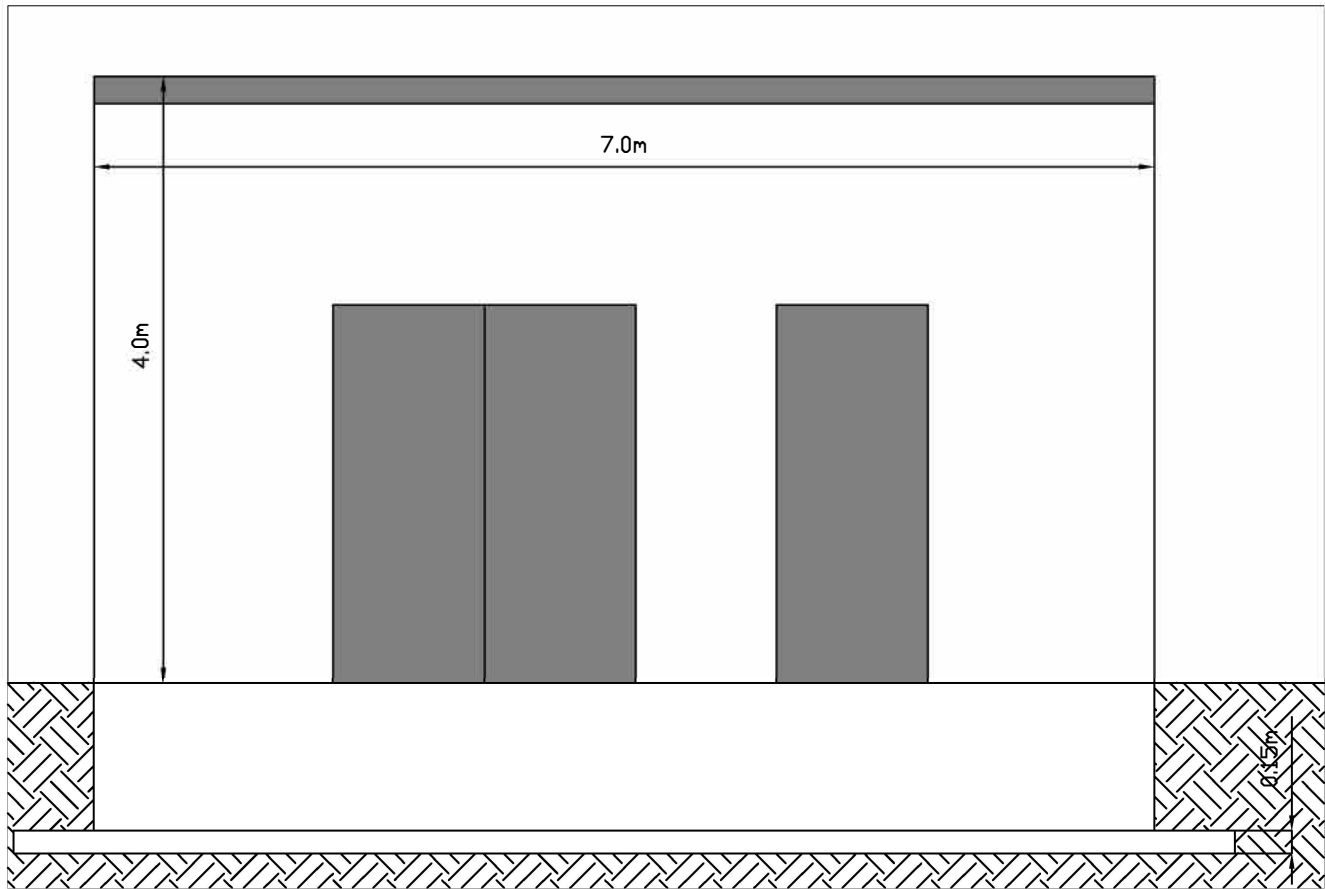
KEY	
	SITE BOUNDARY
	VEGETATION
	FENCE
	ACCESS TRACK
	PIPELINE LOCATION

HADDON ROAD SOLAR PARK	
PLAN B	
EXISTING AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS	
Drawn: CPA Checked: WSE Approved: APPROVED Date: 24/03/25 RevA: 09/04/25	

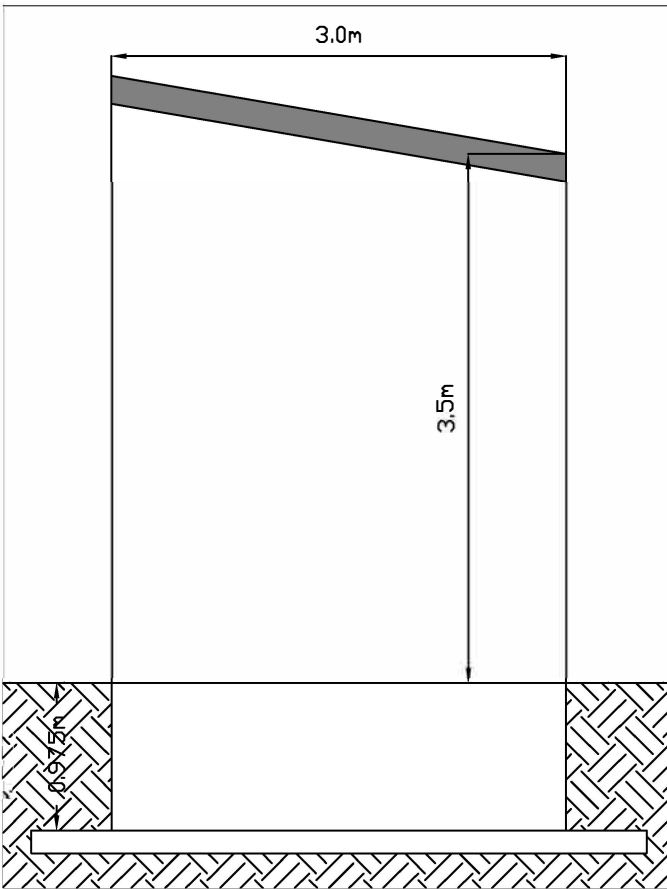
Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO.© Crown copyright and database right 2025. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number: 0100031673

PLOT SCALE A3

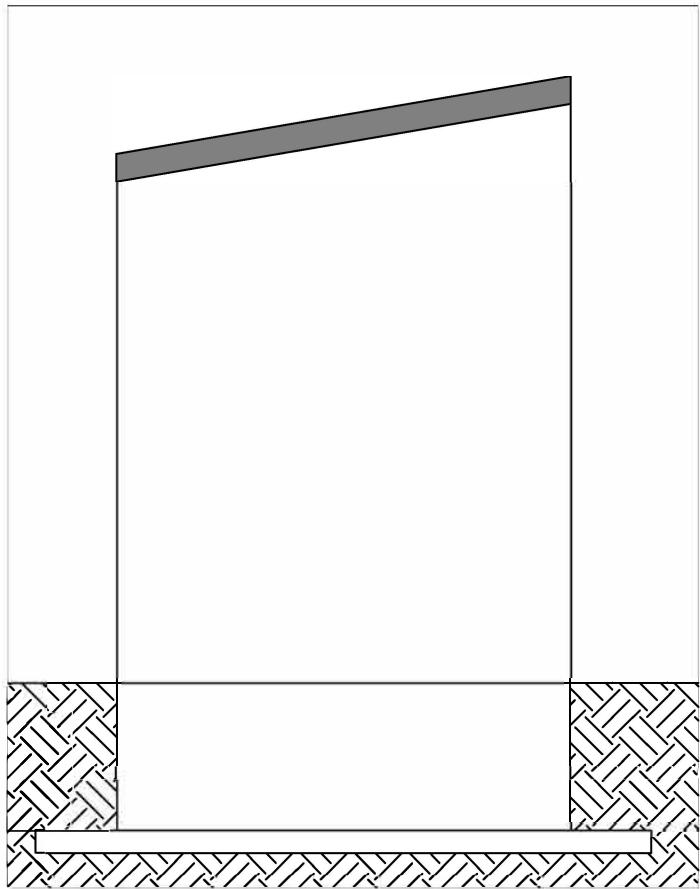




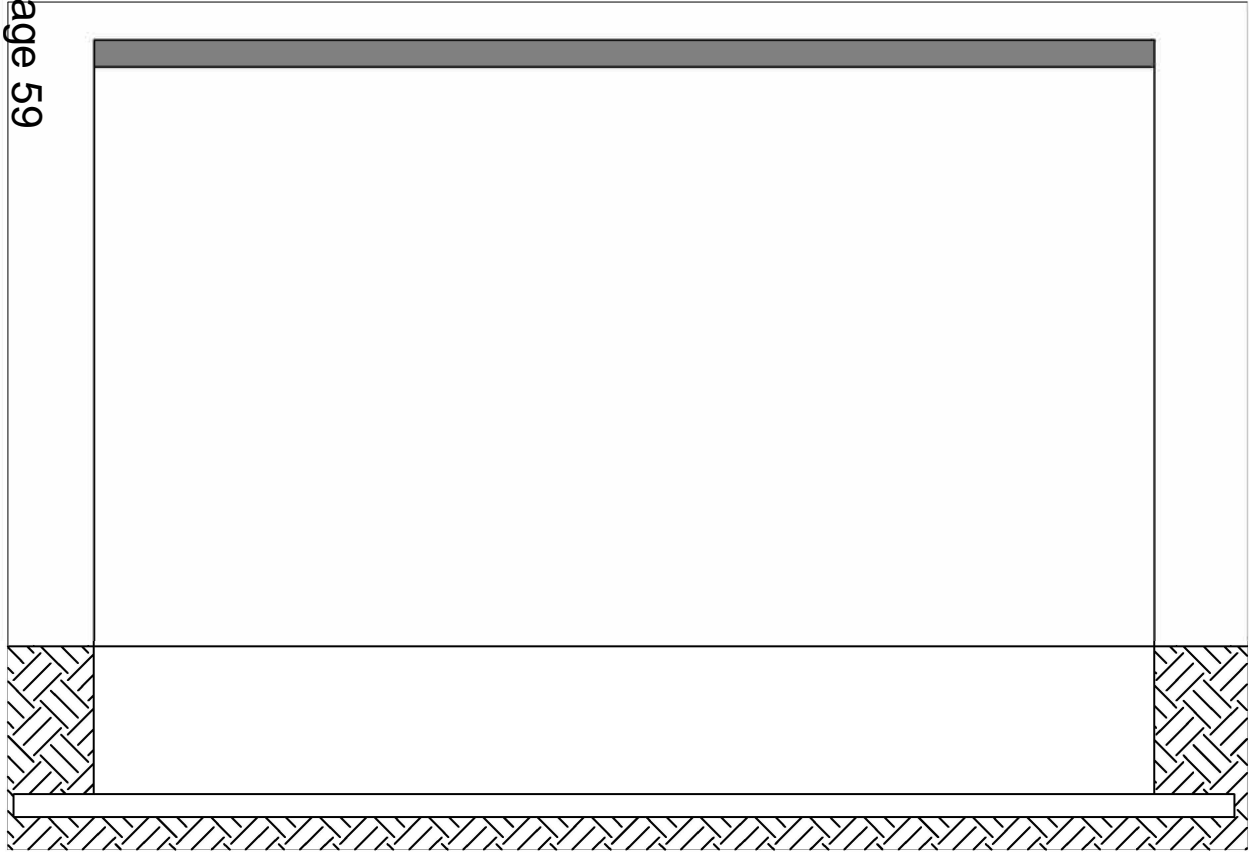
FRONT ELEVATION



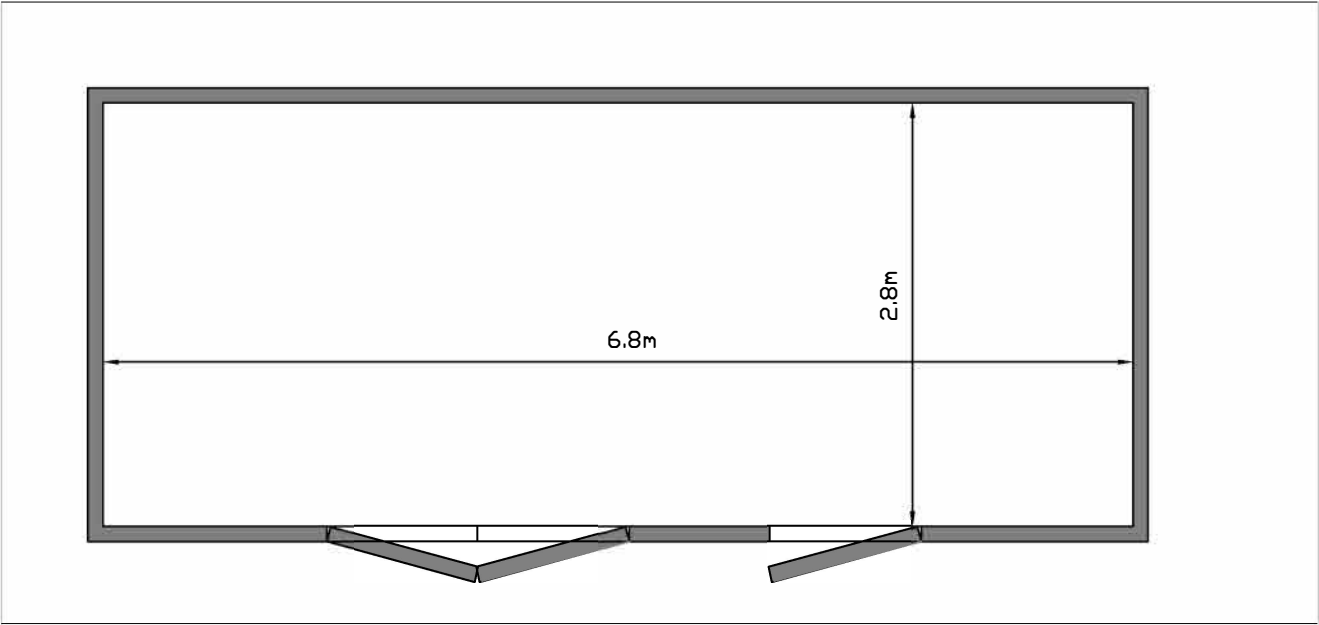
SIDE ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION



BACK ELEVATION



PLAN VIEW



SCALE 1:50

PLOT SCALE A3

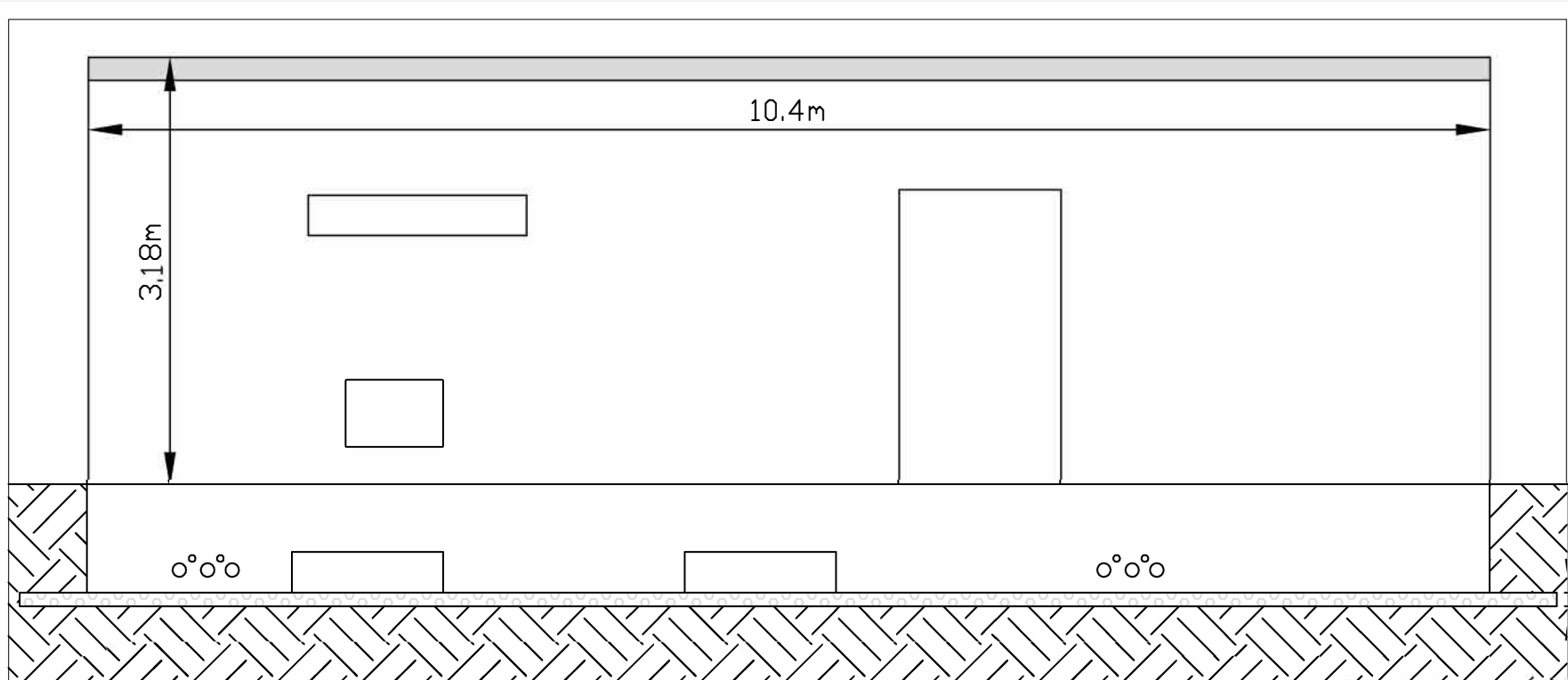
HADDON ROAD SOLAR PARK

FIGURE 4.2B

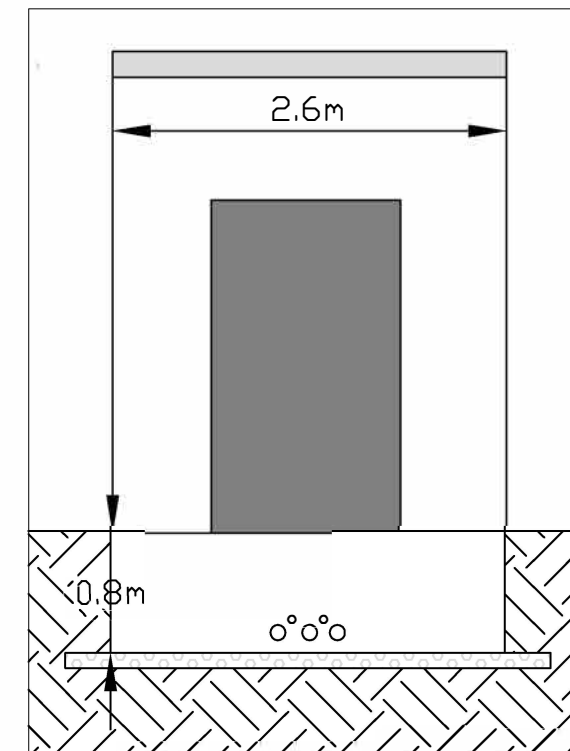
CONTROL BUILDING

Drawn: CPA
Checked: WE
Approved: APPROVED
Date: 22/03/25

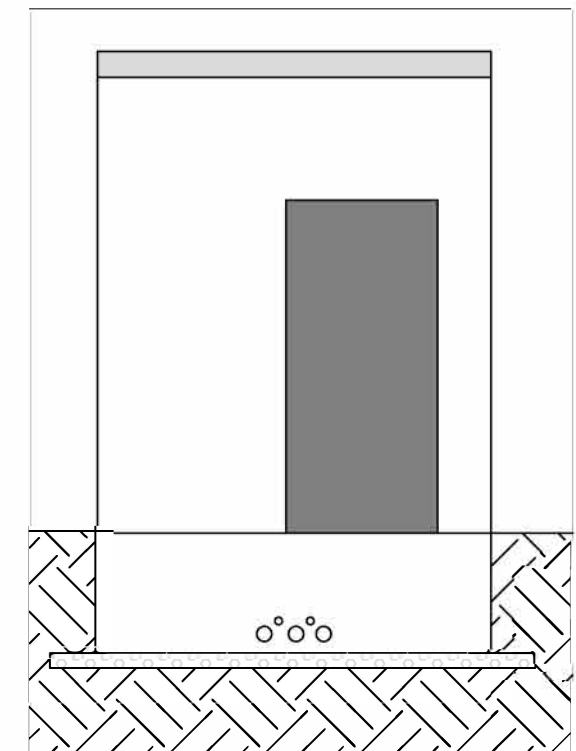




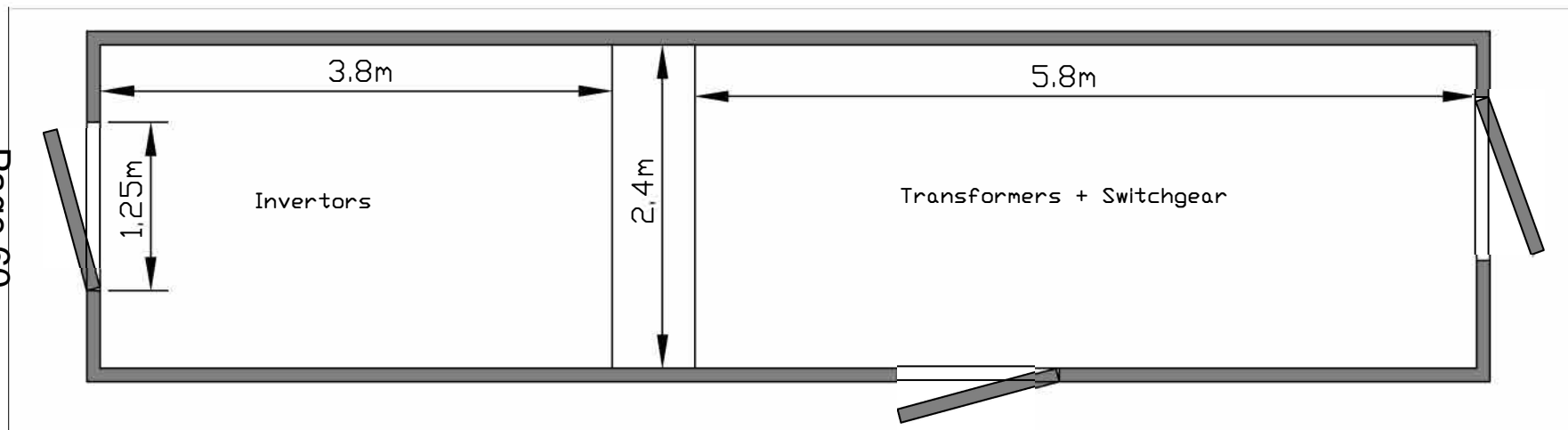
FRONT ELEVATION



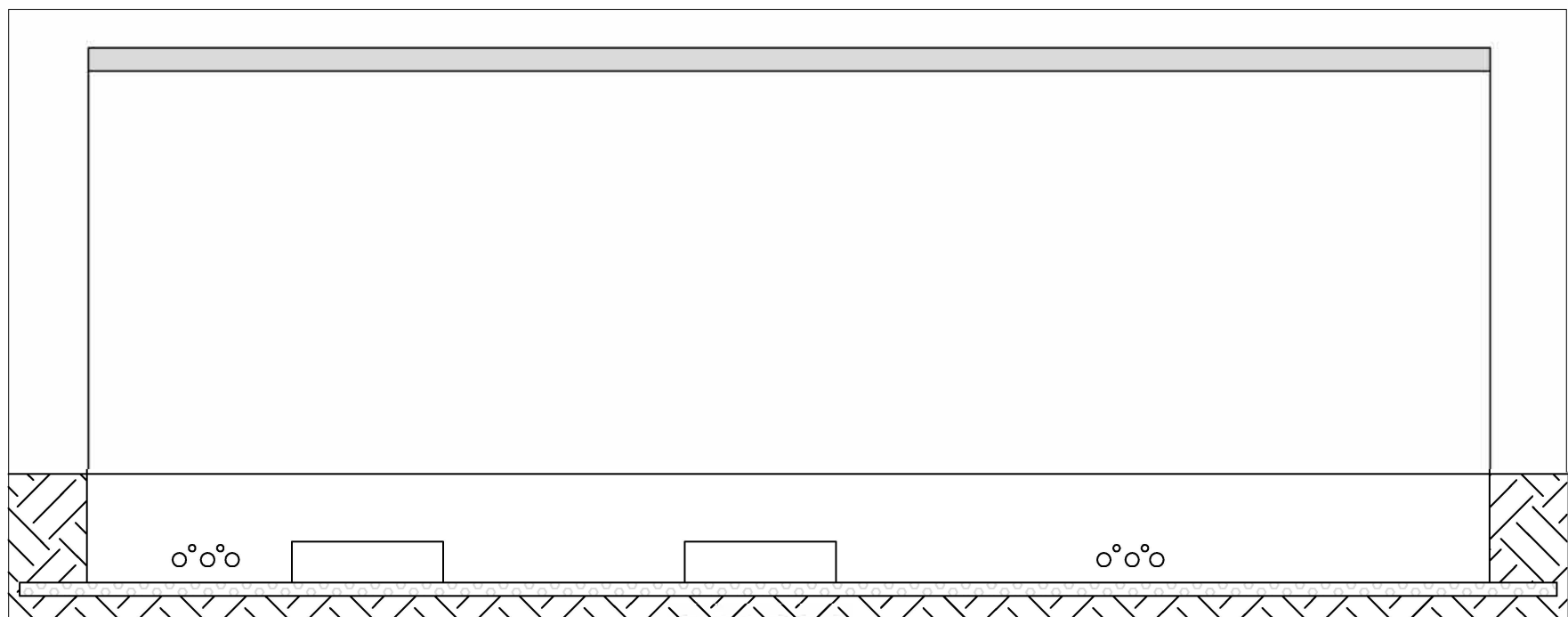
SIDE ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION



PLAN VIEW



BACK ELEVATION

2m

SCALE 1:50

PLOT SCALE A3

HADDON ROAD SOLAR PARK

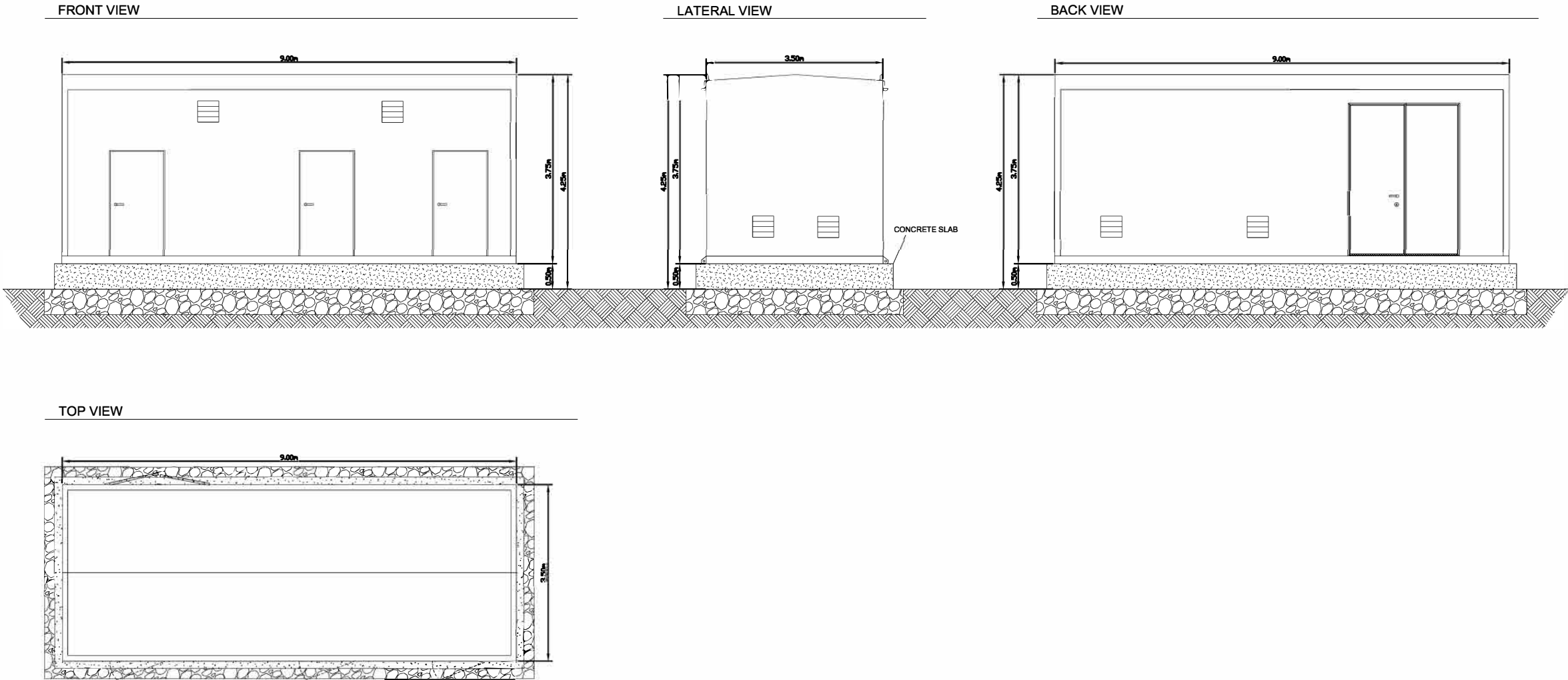
FIGURE 4.2A

INVERTER CABIN

Drawn: CPA
Checked: WE
Approved: APPROVED
Date: 22/03/25



DNO/CUSTOMER SUBSTATION



HADDON ROAD SOLAR PARK

FIGURE 4.7

DNO/CUSTOMER
SUBSTATION

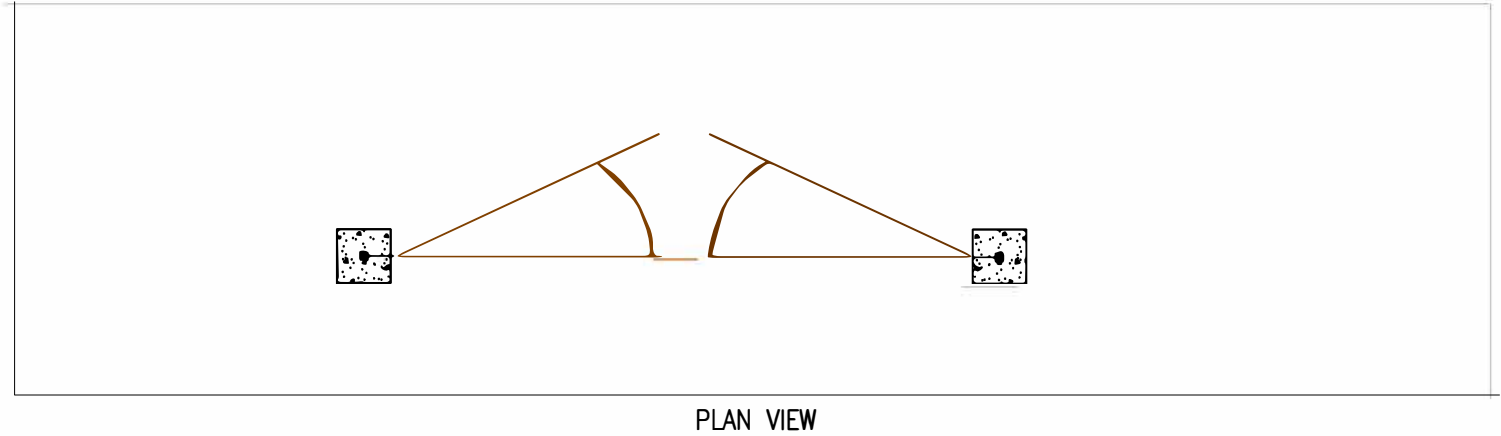
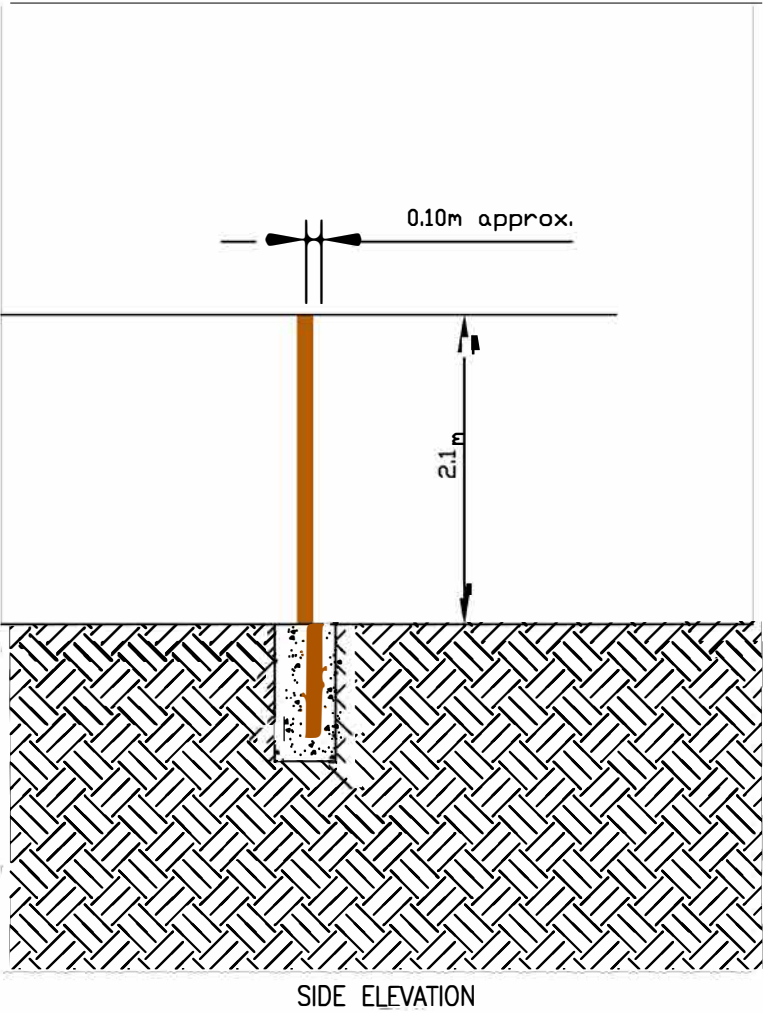
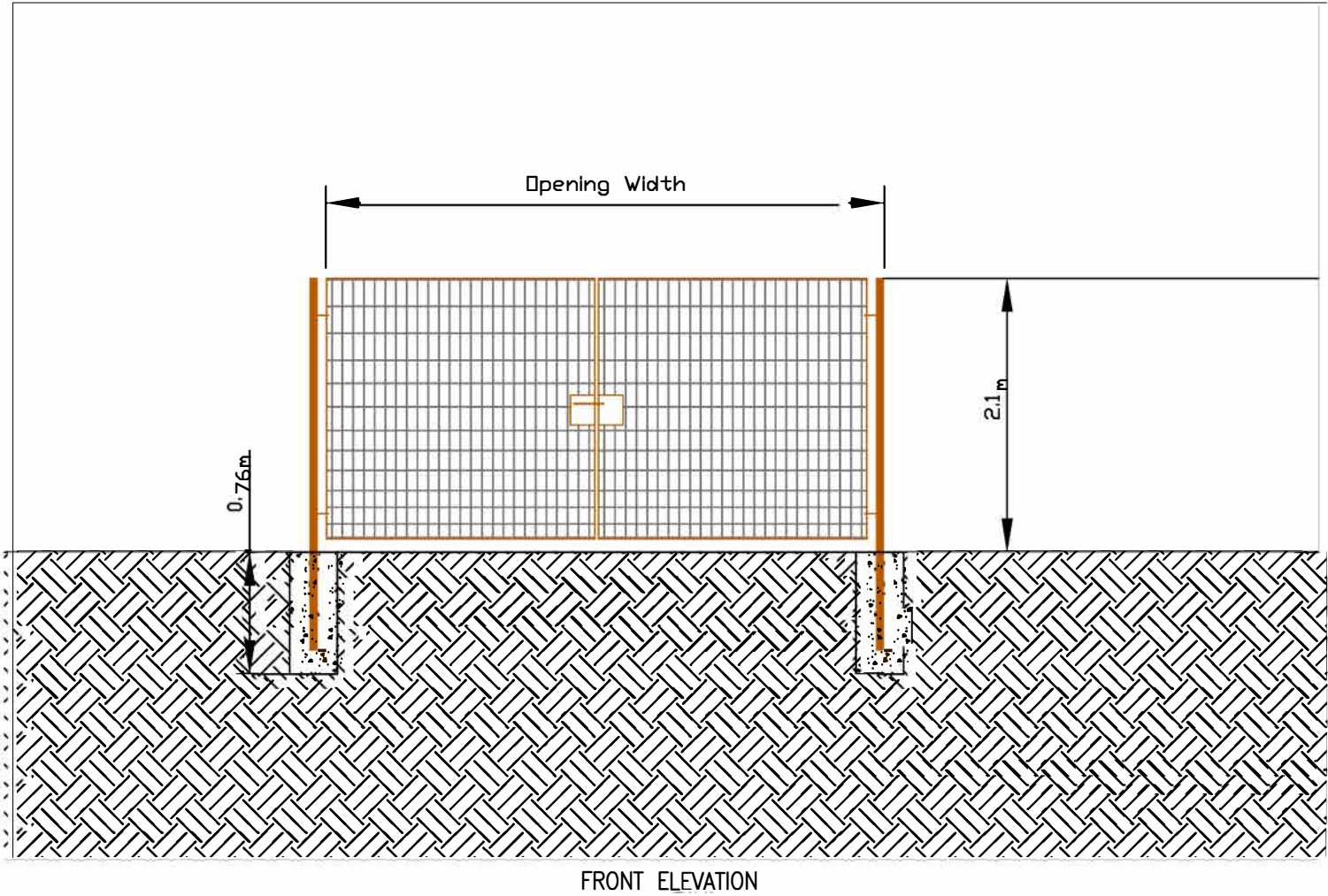
Drawn: CPA
Checked: WE
Approved: APPROVED
Date: 22/03/25



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of
HMSO.© Crown copyright and database right 2024. All rights
reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number: 0100031673

SCALE - 1:100

PLOT SCALE A3



Notes
1. All sizes are in metres unless otherwise stated.



HADDON ROAD SOLAR PARK

FIGURE 4.6

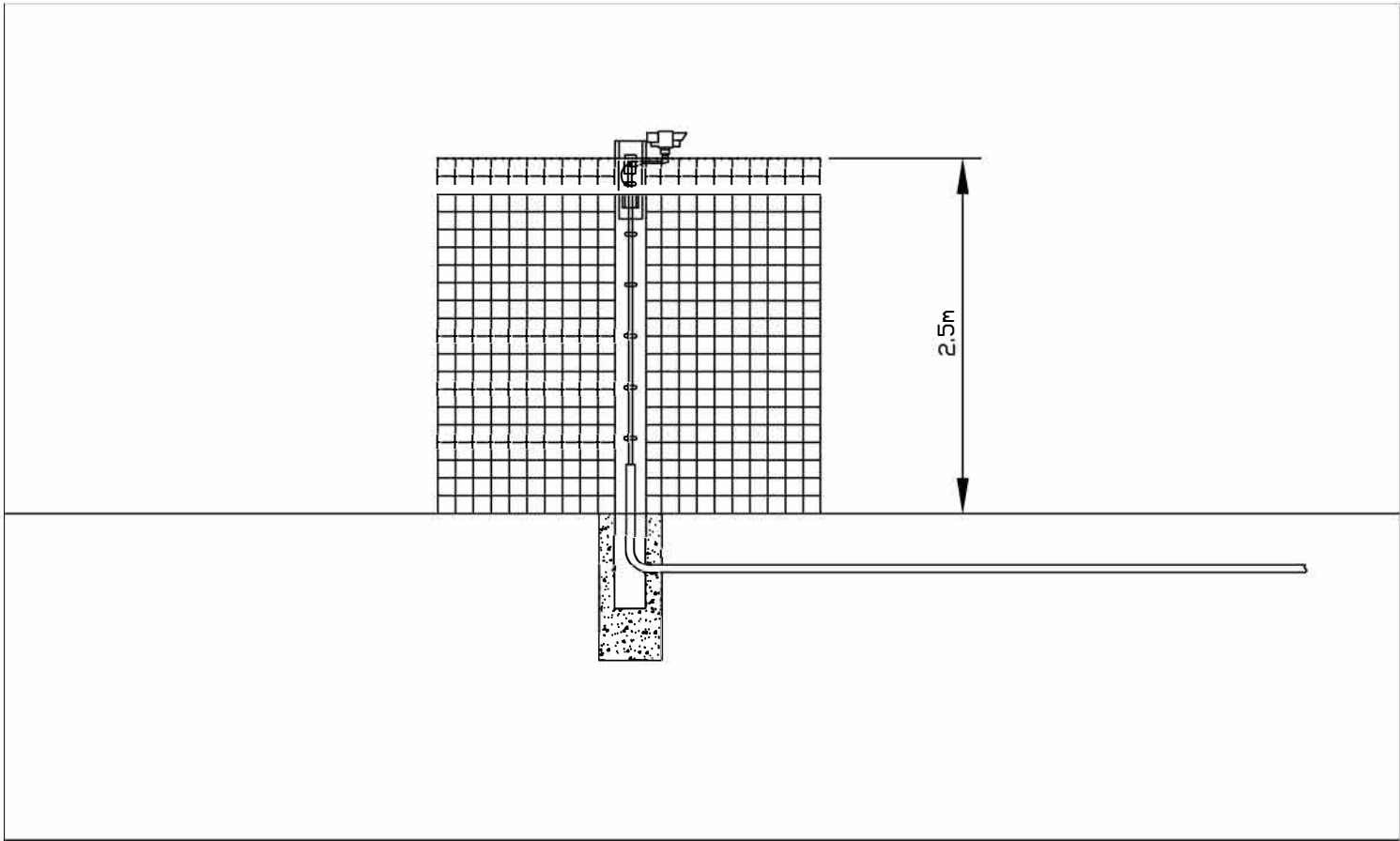
INDICATIVE SECURITY
GATE DETAILS

Drawn: CPA
Checked: WE
Approved: APPROVED
Date: 22/03/25

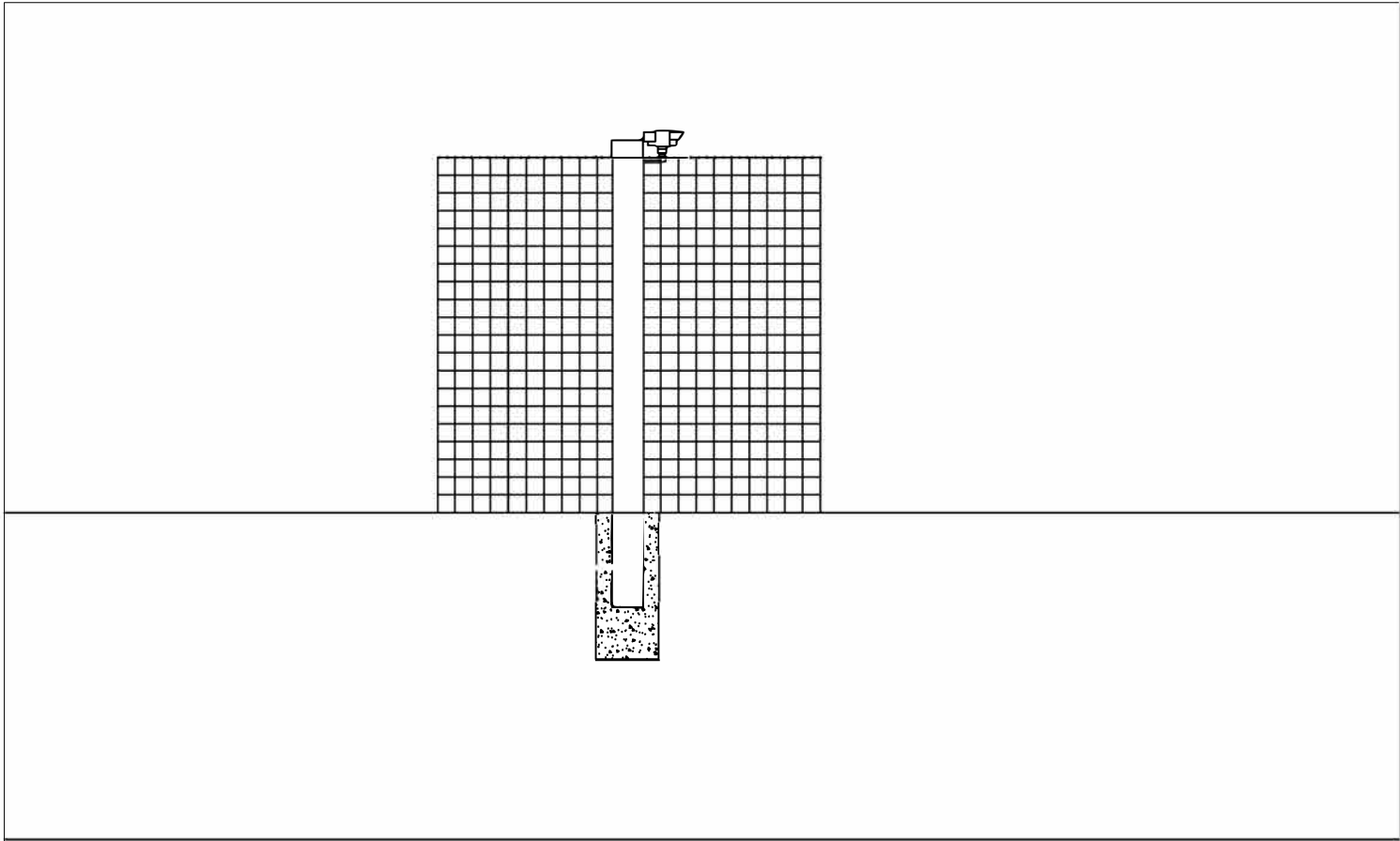


SCALE 1:50

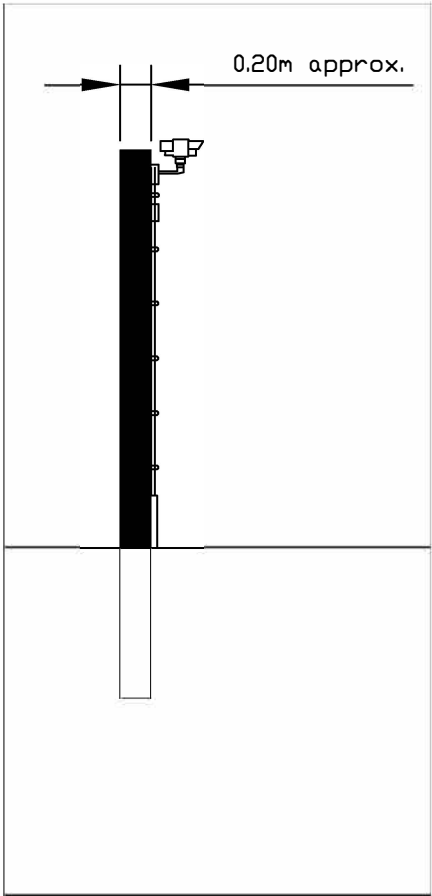
PLOT SCALE A3



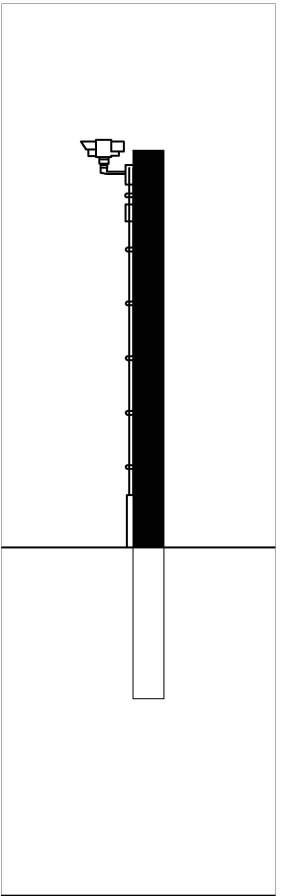
FRONT ELEVATION



BACK ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION



Notes

1. All sizes are in metres unless otherwise stated.

HADDON ROAD SOLAR PARK

FIGURE 4.5

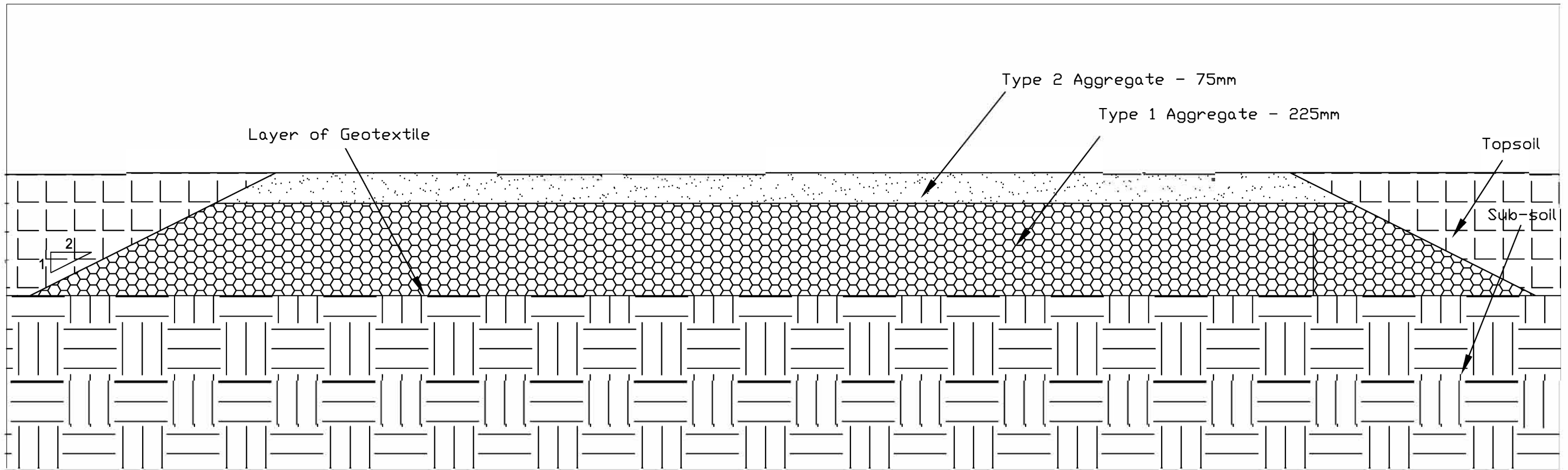
INDICATIVE SECURITY CAMERA
DETAILS

Drawn: CPA
Checked: WE
Approved: APPROVED
Date: 22/03/25

SCALE 1:50

PLOT SCALE A3





Notes

1. 300mm of Topsoil will be stripped to found the road on suitable subsoil.
2. All dimensions are approximate and may vary following detailed design.



HADDON ROAD SOLAR PARK

FIGURE 4.3

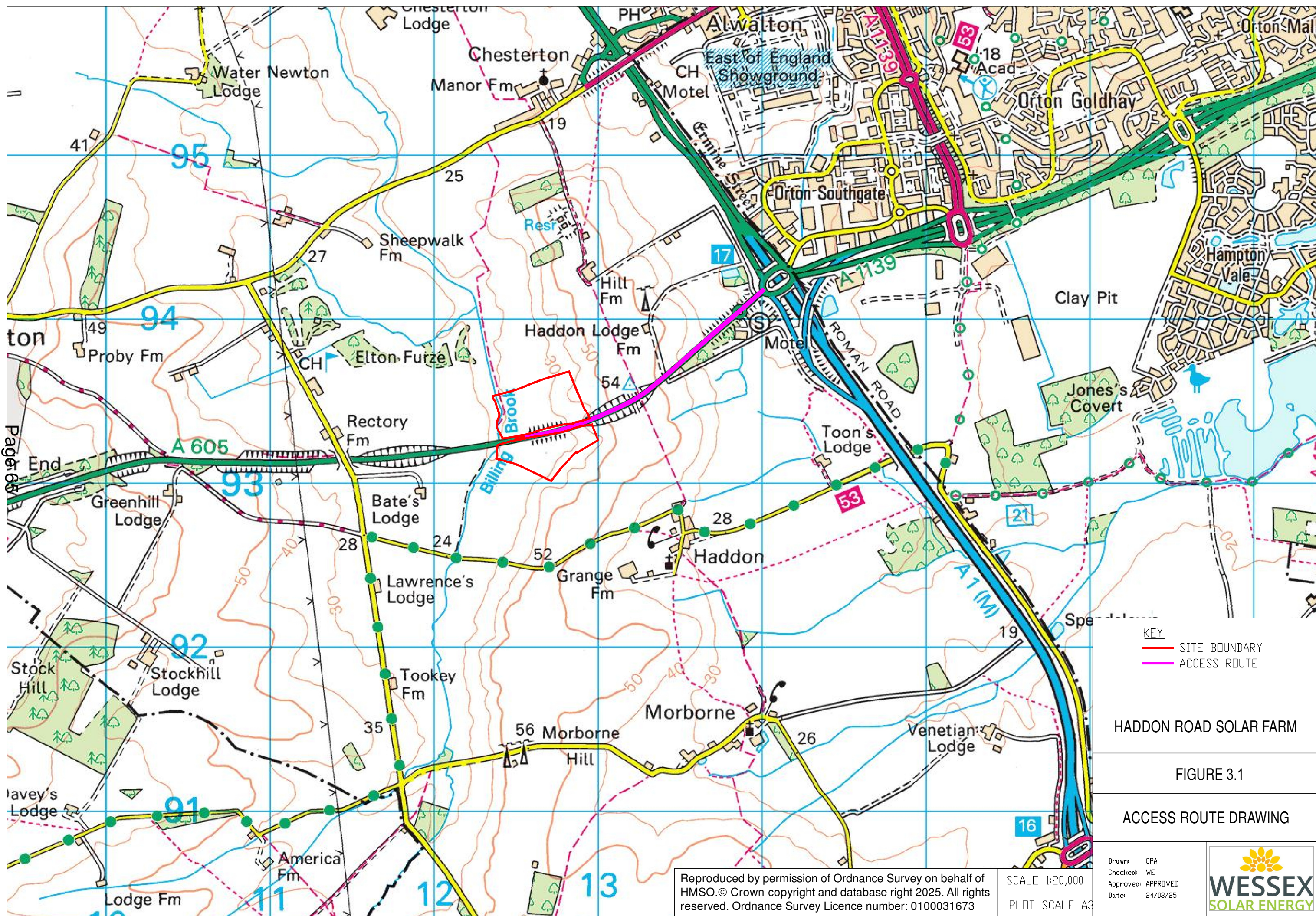
INDICATIVE ACCESS TRACK
CROSS -SECTION

Drawn: CPA
Checked: WE
Approved: APPROVED
Date: 22/03/25



SCALE 1:10

PLOT SCALE A3



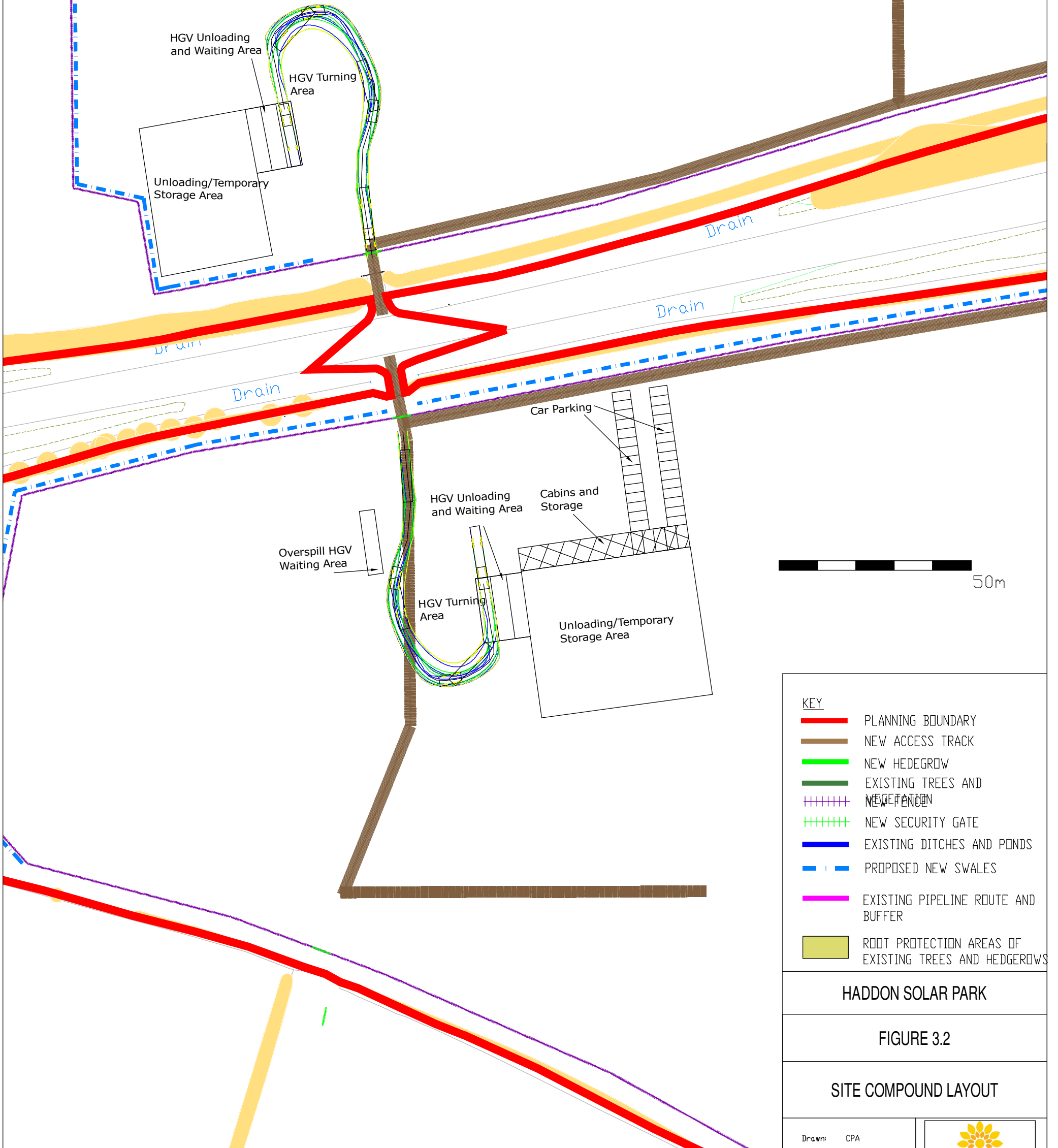
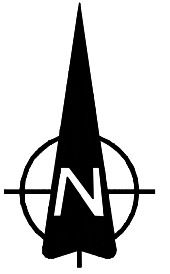
KEY

- SITE BOUNDARY
- ACCESS ROUTE

HADDON ROAD SOLAR FARM

FIGURE 3.1

ACCESS ROUTE DRAWING



KEY	
	PLANNING BOUNDARY
	NEW ACCESS TRACK
	NEW HEDEGROW
	EXISTING TREES AND VEGETATION
	NEW FENCE
	NEW SECURITY GATE
	EXISTING DITCHES AND PONDS
	PROPOSED NEW SWALES
	EXISTING PIPELINE ROUTE AND BUFFER
	ROOT PROTECTION AREAS OF EXISTING TREES AND HEDGEROWS

HADDON SOLAR PARK

FIGURE 3.2

SITE COMPOUND LAYOUT

Drawn: CPA
Checked: WE
Approved: APPROVED
Date: 22/03/25
RevA: 09/04/25



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO.© Crown copyright and database right 2025. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number: 0100031673

SCALE - 1:1,000
PLOT SCALE A3

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 18th AUGUST 2025

Case No: 25/00596/FUL

Proposal: Erection of four dwellings and associated works

Location: Land Adjacent 31 Luke Street, Eynesbury

Applicant: AWJ Usher & Sons Ltd

Grid Ref: 518419 259610

Date of Registration: 27.03.2025

Parish: St Neots

RECOMMENDATION - REFUSE

This application is referred to the Development Management Committee (DMC) as the officer's recommendation is contrary to that of the Town Council

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 1.1 The application site is located within the built-up area of St. Neots. The site is also located within the St. Neots Conservation Area. The plot is an irregular shaped parcel of land with a narrow frontage to Luke Street and was previously a market garden with an existing access from Luke Street that is shared with the access to the adjacent Sandy Court residential development. The site is entirely surrounded by existing residential development.
- 1.2 The site is generally flat and lies within Flood Zone 1 on the Environment Agency Maps for Flooding and as designated within the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024. There are no other designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the site.
- 1.3 This application seeks approval for the erection of four bungalows (one three-bedroom and three four-bedroom) on land adjacent to No. 31 Luke Street, Eynesbury.
- 1.4 There has been extensive planning history on the site, most notably, an appeal for non-determination that was dismissed and planning permission refused for the erection of six bungalows and associated works (23/01164/FUL), a refusal of planning permission for the erection of six dwellings (22/01642/FUL) and a refusal of planning permission for seven dwellings (21/00212/FUL) that was subsequently dismissed at appeal.

- 1.5 This application has been accompanied by:
- A Planning, Design and Access (Inc Heritage) Statement;
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Report;
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal;
- 1.6 Amended plans have been submitted during the course of the application in an attempt to address the comments of Urban Design. Further plans were also submitted to try to address the concerns of both the Conservation Officer and Urban Design regarding the amount of hardsurfacing, however, these have not been accepted and have not been formally consulted upon.
- 1.7 Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'
- 2.2 The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
- delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
 - building a strong, competitive economy;
 - achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
 - conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment
- 2.3 Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website [National Guidance](#)

3. PLANNING POLICIES

- 3.1 Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)

LP1: Amount of Development
LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP5: Flood Risk
LP6: Waste Water Management
LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation

LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP25: Housing Mix
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerow
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings
LP37: Ground Contamination

3.2 St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 – adopted February 2016

A3: Design
PT1: Sustainable Modes of Transport
PL2: Parking
P4: Sustainable Drainage Systems

3.3 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

- Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017)
- Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
- Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2017)
- LDF Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
- Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)
- St Neots Conservation Area Character Assessment (2006)

Local policies are viewable at <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk>

3.4 The National Design Guide (2021):

- C1 - Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
- I1 - Respond to existing local character and identity
- I2 - Well-designed, high quality and attractive
- B2 - Appropriate building types and forms
- M3 - Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
- N3 - Support rich and varied biodiversity
- H1 - Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
- H2 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces
- H3 - Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities.

For full details visit the government website

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 23/01164/FUL - Erection of six bungalows and associated works – Non-determination appeal dismissed and planning permission refused.
- 4.2 22/01642/FUL - Erection of six dwellings and associated works – Disposed of.
- 4.3 21/00212/FUL – Erection of seven dwellings and associated works – Refused then appeal dismissed.
- 4.4 20/01378/FUL – Erection of seven dwellings and associated works – Refused.
- 4.5 19/01238/FUL - Erection of Eight Dwellings - 1 x Farmhouse, 2 x Bungalows and 5 x Cottages, Car Barn and associated access and landscaping works – Refused.
- 4.6 17/02681/FUL - Erection of eight dwellings; 1 x farmhouse, 1 x cottage, 1 x detached barn & 5 x sub-divided barn style properties, detached car barn and associated access and landscaping works – Refused then appeal dismissed.
- 4.7 16/01313/FUL - Clearance of existing remaining Market Garden structures to allow erection of nine dwellings (5 houses, 2 bungalows & 2 coach houses) and associated works – Refused then appeal dismissed.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 St Neots Town Council – Support the proposal, noting it is in keeping with the locality and minimum impacts on neighbours.
- 5.2 Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Authority – No objections to the proposal. The site access is the same as that submitted for previous applications which the Highway Authority had no objections to. Internal parking and turning have been provided and look to be adequate. Accordingly recommend conditions on any planning permission granted.
- 5.3 Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology – No objections to the proposal, subject to the imposition of a condition on any planning permission granted. Due to the archaeological potential of the site a further programme of investigation and recording is required in order to provide more information regarding the presence or absence, and condition, of surviving archaeological remains within the development area, and to establish the need for archaeological mitigation of the development as necessary.

- 5.4 Huntingdonshire District Council Conservation Officer – Object. The proposed development will result in harm to the special architectural and historic interest of this part of the St Neots Conservation Area.

The proposals do not have regard to the preservation and enhancement of the St Neots Conservation Area, and is therefore not in accordance with ss. 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and policy LP 34 of the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan.

In line with the contents of paras 215 of the NPPF, the development will result in harm that falls in the category of less than substantial harm.

Further comments received on amended plans:- the amendments are minor and relate only to issues raised by Urban Design, advice therefore stands.

- 5.5 Huntingdonshire District Council Urban Design Officer – The revised scheme presents a notable improvement over previous iterations, particularly in reducing the number of units and enhancing the size and usability of private amenity spaces. The courtyard arrangement has potential to create a more coherent and less cramped layout. However, there remain a number of design and layout concerns that should be addressed:

In particular, amendments are required to:

- Improve the site entrance experience and reduce the perceived enclosure caused by the Plot 1 car port;
- Enhance landscaping opportunities and reduce the visual dominance of hard surfacing;
- Prevent direct overlooking from Plot 3 onto neighbouring gardens;
- Confirm boundary treatments and improve access and surveillance arrangements for Plot 4.

Subject to satisfactory revisions and the use of appropriately worded conditions to secure detailed materials, boundary treatments, and hard and soft landscaping, the proposal could be supported in design terms.

Further comments received on amended plans:-

- The central courtyard remains dominated by hard standing with limited opportunities for planting and is considered to conflict with earlier Inspectors concerns. The reduction of car parking provision for Plot 1 (a 4-bed property) is likely to displace further car parking to the courtyard which would further limit opportunities for soft landscaping.
- The amendments to overcome overlooking impacts to the rear garden of No. 47 are supported.

- Previous comments requiring details of the boundary treatment to the east of Plot 4 and enhancement to the northern elevation of Plot 1 to break up areas of unmitigated cladding have not been addressed.
 - As submitted the scheme is considered contrary to Local Plan Policy LP11, LP12 parts a, c, m and LP17.
- 5.6 Huntingdonshire District Council Environmental Health Officer – No objections to the proposal, subject to the imposition of conditions on any planning permission granted. Records show that the site previously held allotments and/or a small holding. A land contamination strategy (and if necessary a remediation strategy) is therefore recommended proper to the commencement of development. Also recommend a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) be submitted in order to protect the very close residential neighbours from noise, vibration, light and air pollution etc during construction works.
- 5.7 Huntingdonshire District Council Arboricultural Officer –No objections conditional to a plan showing protective fencing around root protection areas.
- 5.8 Cadent Gas – No objections, informative note required.

6. REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 During the course of the application, three letters of objection were received by neighbouring residential properties. The concerns raised have been summarised below:
- Cramped form of development;
 - Negative impact on the Conservation Area;
 - Impact on neighbouring properties amenities (overlooking, noise and disturbance);
 - Highway safety (increased traffic and parking issues);
 - Flood risk;
 - Ground contamination; and
 - Impact on trees and wildlife.

7. ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.
- 7.2 As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any

other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as “the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area”.

- 7.3 In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan (relevant to this application) consists of:
- Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
 - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
 - St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029
- 7.4 The statutory term ‘material considerations’ has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: *Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor* [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.
- 7.5 The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- The Principle of Development
 - Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets
 - Residential Amenity
 - Highway Safety, Access and parking provision
 - Flood Risk and Surface Water
 - Biodiversity
 - Impact on Trees
 - Accessible and Adaptable Homes
 - Water Efficiency
 - Developer Contributions

The Principle of Development

Housing Land Supply

- 7.6 NPPF paragraph 78 requires the Council to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years’ worth of housing against our housing requirement. A substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements was introduced on 12th December 2024 in the revised NPPF and associated NPPG (the standard method).
- 7.7 As Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036 is now over 5 years old it is necessary to demonstrate a five year housing land supply

(5YHLS) based on the housing requirement set using the standard method. NPPF paragraph 78 also requires provision of a buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. As Huntingdonshire has successfully exceeded the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test a 5% buffer is required here. The 5 year housing land requirement including a 5% buffer is 5,501 homes. The current 5YHLS is 3.88 years' supply.

- 7.8 As a result of this, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the tilted balance'. While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.

Location and suitability of the site

- 7.9 Policy LP2 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (the Local Plan) sets out the overarching development strategy for Huntingdonshire through the plan period. The main objectives are:
- Concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities;
 - Direct substantial new development to two strategic expansion locations of sufficient scale to form successful, functioning new communities
 - Provide opportunities for communities to achieve local development aspirations for housing, employment, commercial or community related schemes
 - Support a thriving rural economy;
 - Protect the character of existing settlements and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the surrounding countryside;
 - Conserve and enhance the historic environment; and
 - Provide complementary green infrastructure enhancement and provision to balance recreational and biodiversity needs and to support climate change adaptation.
- 7.10 Policy LP2 directs approximately a quarter of the objectively assessed need for housing (together with a limited amount of employment growth) to sites dispersed across the Key Service Centres and Small Settlements in order to support the vitality of these communities and provide flexibility and diversity in the housing supply. In addition, rural exception, small and windfall sites will be permitted on sites which are in conformity with other policies of the plan, thereby providing further flexibility in the housing supply.

- 7.11 Policy LP2 is within the Development Strategy chapter of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, and is therefore considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications for residential development. Notwithstanding this, weight should still be given to Policy LP2 given that it directs development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities which is consistent with the NPPF.
- 7.12 The site is located within the built-up area of Eaton Socon, which is located within the St Neots Spatial Planning Area as defined by the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. As such, Policy LP7 (Spatial Planning Areas) is considered relevant in this instance. Policy LP7 of the adopted Local Plan states that a proposal for housing development on a site which is additional to those allocated in the Local Plan will be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area.
- 7.13 Given the proposal seeks approval for the erection of four residential dwellings within the built-up area of St Neots, the development is therefore considered to be situated in an appropriate location and acceptable in accordance with LP7 of the Local Plan.
- 7.14 NPPF Para 84 states: Planning decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside. NPPF Para 110 states: The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.
- 7.15 It is considered that the development would have access to services and facilities within St Neots, and also the means to access larger settlements such as the market town of St Neots through sustainable modes of transport. The development would therefore not result in the development of isolated homes in either the edge of settlement or countryside, nor would the future occupiers have an over-reliance on the private motor vehicle as other options are available in the settlement.
- 7.16 It is determined therefore that the site is considered to be sustainable for the amount of development hereby proposed.

Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets

- 7.17 The Local Planning Authority is required to ensure that with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 at Section 72. This is also reflected in Policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 7.18 Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new development will be expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape. This is also reflected in Policy LP10 and LP33 of the adopted Local Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 7.19 The proposal seeks approval for the erection of four dwellings on land adjacent to No. 31 Luke Street. The site is located within the St Neots Conservation Area.
- 7.20 There have been a number of previous applications on this site as outlined in the planning history section of this report. The most recent of which 23/01164/FUL, which was an appeal against non-determination, was dismissed as the Inspector concluded that there would be significant harm arising to the character and appearance of the area and adverse effects on the significance of a designated heritage asset.
- 7.21 Paragraphs 3 and 4 of the previous Planning Inspectorate's report following the refusal of 21/00212/FUL (Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/21/3282319) stated that for the purposes of this application site, the significance of the Conservation Area is, in part, derived from the presence of a more open building pattern and provides a less developed character which reflects the former, more rural, setting of Eynesbury. Although Luke Street is part of an irregular network of streets, the pattern of development is clearly defined with buildings that face the highway in a linear form.
- 7.22 The proposed development comprises four, one-and-a-half storey dwellings arranged around a central courtyard. Ridge heights are a maximum of 6.75m, with Plots 1 and 2 (4-bed units) enclosing the southern side, and Plots 3 (4-bed) and 4 (3-bed) enclosing the northern side. Plots 1, 2 and 3 include attached car ports with reduced ridge heights of 4.79m, enclosing the courtyard's eastern and western edges. Plot 4 features on-plot tandem parking adjacent to the access from Luke Street. The proposed dwellings would be constructed with a buff brickwork, black weatherboarding

and red pan tiles – specific details of finishing materials have not been provided as part of this application and would be conditioned.

- 7.23 The overall architectural approach and visual appearance (including the finishing materials) of the proposed dwellings are considered to be acceptable in principle as they would be consistent with a contemporary barn-style appearance. However, the proposal would include a large number of rooflights on each dwelling that would create a cluttered visual composition and this along with the enhancement to the northern elevation of Plot 1 to break up areas of unmitigated cladding would still need to be addressed to make the proposal acceptable.
- 7.24 The reduction in unit numbers from six to four and the shift to a courtyard layout are supported. However, whilst on the surface this may appear to be a reduction in the scale of the development, it is considered that the site has just been reconfigured. The previously refused application sought approval for 14 bedrooms across six separate units, ten surface parking bays and three visitor spaces. The current application seeks approval for 15 bedrooms across four separate units with eight car parking bays (5 within garages) and no visitor parking spaces. The current proposal would therefore represent an intensification of the site from the previously refused applications, which have each in turn been refused on grounds of over intensification.
- 7.25 It is also considered that the central courtyard remains dominated by hardsurfacing with limited planting. This continues to conflict with previous reasons for refusal and Inspectorate concerns regarding visual amenity and landscape integration. The Inspectors in each appeal have raised similar concerns regarding the quantum of development resulting in a cramped layout alongside the amount of hard surfacing and corresponding lack of space for soft landscaping. Further concerns related to the lack of harmony with the prevailing linear development pattern and long verdant gardens within this part of the St Neots conservation area.
- 7.26 Para 10 of the most recent appeal decision (Appeal Ref APP/H0520/W/23/3333921) stated that the proposal would retain a number of elements previously found to be harmful. 'The layout would still be dominated by hard surfaced areas for vehicle access and parking through the centre of the site. In particular the parking and turning arrangements to the rear appear convoluted and prone to indiscriminate parking that would cause potential cluttered environment dominated by parked cars.'
- 7.27 Para 12 and 13 go on to state that 'The layout would differ significantly from the established pattern of linear housing in front of and to the rear of the site and the extensive use of hardstanding would jar with the generous verdant gardens of the properties on Luke Street. Although there would be limited visibility of the

dwelling from the public realm on Luke Street, the cramped layout and extent of hard surfacing and parking on the site would be readily visible from the upper floors of several surrounding properties. It would form a conspicuous development that would fail to respect the prevailing characteristics of the surrounding built form or positively reference the historic use of the site or its longstanding open character. ‘

- 7.28 The Inspector therefore concluded that the development was cramped and out of character with the surrounding area, with excessive hardsurfacing, minimal landscaping, and a layout that lacked visual harmony. It failed to respect the historic, verdant pattern of development and caused less than substantial harm to the significance of the St Neots Conservation Area, contrary to Policies LP11, LP12, LP34 and the NPPF.
- 7.29 Whilst this proposal sees a more cohesive design, it is considered that it still represents a cramped form of development, and the layout will still be dominated by hard surfacing. The development will also still differ significantly from the established historic pattern of linear housing surrounding the site. It is therefore considered that the proposal does not overcome the Inspector's previous concerns, and the proposal will still form a conspicuous development that would fail to respect the prevailing characteristics of the surrounding built form or positively reference the historic use of the site.
- 7.30 The application originally proposed a double carport to Plot 1, located adjacent to the site entrance, which led to a reduction in soft landscaping from the previously refused planning application (23/01164/FUL) and contributed to a sense of enclosure and a poor vista – reflecting previous concerns raised by the Inspectorate in appeal reference APP/H0250/W/21/3282319.
- 7.31 Amended plans submitted during the course of the application have changed the double car port to a single car port. Whilst this allows for enhanced landscaping to the north of the dwelling and greater separation from the site entrance, no amendments have been made to break up the unmitigated weatherboard elevation of the car port visible from the site entrance. It would also result in Plot 1 having only one parking space, displacing additional parking to the courtyard which is discussed in further detail below.
- 7.32 Notwithstanding the amendments following the previously refused planning application, the Council's Conservation Officer has concluded that the proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the St Neots Conservation Area due to the proposal resulting in a cramped contrived development that fails to respect the prevailing characteristics of the surrounding built form.

- 7.33 It is acknowledged that backland development exists nearby, most notably that immediately next to the site at Sandy Court. However, Sandy Court and also Pawley Court a short distance away, still provides more landscaping to the front of the dwellings to offset the hard surfaced areas and prominence of parking areas.
- 7.34 Overall, it is not considered that the amended scheme has addressed the previous reasons for the refusal and the concerns raised by the Planning Inspectorate in relation to its overall design and impact on the St Neots Conservation Area.

Residential Amenity

- 7.35 Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.
- 7.36 Previous iterations of the proposal have raised concerns regarding impacts on neighbouring properties amenities, however, the associated appeal decision for 21/00212/FUL concluded that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on neighbouring properties amenities. The most recent decision, 23/01164/FUL, which was an appeal against non-determination, was dismissed and whilst the residential amenities of neighbouring properties were not considered to be adversely affected, the Inspector concluded in his report (APP/H0520/W/23/3333921) that the proposal would fail to provide a satisfactory standard of accommodation for future occupants in terms of the private external space to plots 1, 3 and 4.
- 7.37 In this application, the proposed dwellings and car ports are sited closer to the western boundary than the previously refused application (23/01162/FUL). Plot 3 and its attached car port are positioned approximately 3.4m and 2m, respectively, from the boundary with No. 47 Luke Street (compared to 4.4m-5.8m previously). However, the reduction in building height and the length of No. 47's garden are considered sufficient to mitigate any overbearing impacts.
- 7.38 Despite this, Huntingdonshire's Urban Design Officer initially expressed concern that the first-floor rear-facing windows serving bedrooms 3 and 4 to Plot 3 would result in overlooking impacts on the private rear amenity space of No. 47 Luke Street. Accordingly amended plans have been received during the course of the application which show that the first-floor windows to bedroom 3 and 4 in Plot 3 have been replaced with obscure glazed fixed pane (non-opening) windows and rooflights introduced on the north and south elevations. This is considered to address the previous concerns with regard to overlooking and loss of amenity.

- 7.39 In regard to amenity of the future occupiers, the layout, orientation and fenestration positioning will ensure privacy of all properties is maintained to a good level in accordance with planning policy. It is also considered that each property would now include a suitably sized amenity space for future owners/occupiers with the depths of rear gardens ranging from 9.75m to 11.15m. In addition Plot 2 benefits from access to a long triangular section of the site extending behind Nos. 47–65 Luke Street.
- 7.40 As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on residential amenity and therefore accords with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard.

Highway Safety, access and Parking Provision

- 7.41 Policies LP16 and LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates access for emergency vehicles and service vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles. Policy PT2 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan states that all development proposals which include an element of residential development must provide adequate space for vehicle parking to meet the expected needs of residents and visitors.
- 7.42 The applicant has submitted access details which indicate visibility splays for the combining of access for the subject site and adjoining plot (Sandy Court). Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highways Authority have reviewed the proposals and advise they have no objections to the proposed development subject to conditions.
- 7.43 With regard to car parking the amendments submitted during the course of the application retain the study for Plot 1 but change the double car port to a single car port. Whilst this allows for enhanced landscaping to the north of the dwelling and greater separation from the site entrance it would result in Plot 1 having only one parking space, displacing additional parking to the courtyard. The provision of 1 parking space for a large 4-bed family dwelling is considered insufficient, particularly given the other 4-bed Plots 2 and 3 and the 3-bed Plot 4 each have 2 parking spaces. No tracking plans have been submitted to demonstrate the turning space requirements and this would be beneficial to ascertain the parking and turning space available.
- 7.44 Notwithstanding this, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that adequate off-street car parking provision could be provided with sufficient turning space to ensure that vehicles can enter the public highway in a forward gear.

- 7.45 Policy LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017) seeks the provision of secure and covered cycle parking on the basis of 1 space per bedroom. The proposed development would provide policy compliant cycle parking provision and plans and elevations of the proposed cycle stores have been submitted and would be secured by condition if planning permission were to be granted.
- 7.46 It is also worth noting that the Planning Inspectorate concluded in the most recent appeal decision (Ref: APP/H0520/W/21/3282319) that the proposed development is unlikely to have an adverse effect upon matters including highway safety.
- 7.47 Therefore, subject to appropriate conditions the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and therefore accords with Policy LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard.

Flood Risk and Surface Water

- 7.48 The site is at the lowest risk of flooding according to the Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024 and Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning (Flood Zone 1) and the proposal is for minor development. Accordingly the sequential and exceptions tests for flooding nor the submission of a flood risk assessment are considered necessary in this instance in accordance with the NPPF and NPPG.
- 7.49 It is proposed to manage surface water from the proposed development through the use of soakaways with the disposal of foul sewage via the mains sewer. The proposed methods are considered to be acceptable in this instance, and officers are satisfied that full details of the surface and foul water drainage can be secured as part of building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements in this instance.
- 7.50 Overall, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on both flood risk and surface water and therefore accords with Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policy P4 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard.

Biodiversity

- 7.51 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on

biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.

- 7.52 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been submitted and identifies no significant ecological constraints within the site. The report concludes that the proposed development will not impact any protected species. The Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the recommendations set out in the submitted PEA are appropriate and satisfactory and recommend planning conditions securing the recommendations are annexed to any planning permission.
- 7.53 As well as the above (and separate from the requirements of LP30) as of the 2nd April 2024 qualifying new development is subject to Biodiversity Net Gain legislation pursuant to the Environment Act 2021. This means that a 10% statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is required, following the hierarchy of onsite provision; mixture of on-site and off-site provision; and the last resort of statutory biodiversity credits unless it can be demonstrated that the development would be exempt.
- 7.54 A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has been submitted with the application which confirms that the baseline habitat value of the site is 0.42 units and the post development habitat value of the site is 0.28 units. This results in a net loss for low distinctive habitats of 34.08%. Accordingly a total of 0.19 off-site units will be required in order for the proposal to achieve a 10% net gain in habitat units as set out in the Environment Act (2021). A Biodiversity Net Gain Management Plan including recommendations for the implementation, management and monitoring of the site for at least 30 years is also required. Therefore it is considered that off-site area habitat units to meet the deficit should be conditioned for purchase prior to development commencing along with the submission of the required management plan.
- 7.55 Overall, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied with the findings of the submitted PEA and BNG Assessment and as such the proposal accords with Local Plan Policy LP30 and the NPPF (2024) subject to the imposition of conditions.

Impact on Trees

- 7.56 Policy LP31 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that the potential for adverse impacts on trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows has been investigated and that a proposal will only be supported where it seeks to conserve and enhance any existing tree, woodland, hedge or

hedgerow of value that would be affected by the proposed development.

- 7.57 The Arboricultural Officer has been consulted on the proposal and has confirmed that there are very few trees on site worthy of consideration, however, the main areas of concerns are the protection of trees under outside ownership. The proposal does not currently indicate the protective measures to be used to avoid damage to the Root Protection Areas (RPA's) of adjoining trees. Accordingly a condition should be imposed to secure a Tree Protection Plan showing protective fencing around the RPA's.
- 7.58 Therefore, notwithstanding the required condition, the proposals are considered to accord with Policy LP31 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings

- 7.59 Policy LP25 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 states that proposal for new housing will be supported where they meet the optional Building regulation requirement M4(2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings' unless it can be demonstrated that site specific factors make this impractical or unviable.
- 7.60 To ensure that the development can meet these standards a condition would be imposed on any permission that may be granted in this regard in accordance with Policy LP25 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Water Efficiency

- 7.61 Policy LP12 (j) of the Local Plan to 2036 states that new dwellings must comply with the optional Building Regulation requirement for water efficiency set out in Approved Document G of the Building Regulations. A condition will be attached to any consent to ensure compliance with the above, in accordance with Policy LP12 (j) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Developer Obligations

Bins

- 7.62 Part H of the Developer Contributions SPD (2011) requires a payment towards refuse bins for new residential development. A Unilateral Undertaking Form in respect of wheeled bins has been received by the Local Planning Authority dated 26th March 2025. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with Policy LP4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the Developers Contributions SPD (2011).

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 7.63 The development will be CIL liable in accordance with the Council's adopted charging schedule; CIL payments will cover footpaths and access, health, community facilities, libraries and lifelong learning and education.

Other

Archaeology

- 7.64 Records indicate that this site lies in an area of very high archaeological potential, situated to the south of 13th Century Saint Mary's Church.
- 7.65 Due to the archaeological potential of the site a further programme of investigation and recording is therefore required in order to provide more information regarding the presence or absence, and condition, of surviving archaeological remains within the development area, and the establish the need for archaeological mitigation of the development as necessary.
- 7.66 Accordingly Archaeology have requested a condition requiring a programme of historic building recording in advance of any demolition or alteration taking place. This is considered reasonable and necessary should planning permission be granted.

Contamination

- 7.67 Records show that this site was previously allotments and/or a small holding. Accordingly, Huntingdonshire's Environmental Health Officer has been consulted and has advised that if minded to approve the application, conditions should be imposed requiring a land contamination assessment, and if necessary a remediation strategy, prior to the commencement of development. Such conditions are considered reasonable and necessary should planning permission be granted.

Conclusion

- 7.68 The presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the tilted balance'. While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are

considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.

7.69 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.70 A revised NPPF was published in December 2024, introducing a substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements. This has resulted in the Council being unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply (5YHLS). While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.

7.71 As a result of this, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the tilted balance'.

7.72 NPPF para 11 states:

'Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For decision-taking this means:

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance (7) provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

7 Foot note 7 states: The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated*

as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.'

- 7.73 As outlined in the report, there is a strong reason for refusal in relation to designated heritage assets. Therefore, there is a reason to not move forward to test d (ii) as per above and thus the 'titled balance' is disengaged.
- 7.74 Less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area has been identified. Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 7.75 While it is recognised that the site constitutes previously developed land and there would be benefits to bringing it back into use, the public benefits of the erection of four, private residential dwellings in this instance are not considered to outweigh the previously identified harm that would arise from the proposal.
- 7.76 Overall, the proposed development is considered to be of a poor design by virtue of its cramped form of development, quantum of hardsurfacing within the site, site layout and lack of soft landscaping that would result in harm to the character and appearance of the site and less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the St Neots Conservation Area. The public benefits of the proposal are not considered to outweigh the identified harm. As such, the proposed development is considered to be contrary to Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies LP11, LP12, LP14 and LP34 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard.
- 7.77 Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is concluded that the proposed development is contrary to policy and not acceptable. There are no overriding material considerations that indicate that permission should be granted in this instance. Therefore, it is recommended that the application be refused.

8. RECOMMENDATION - REFUSE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:-

1. The site sits within the St Neots Conservation Area. The development would appear unduly cramped, due to the lack of

space around the buildings, which with the undue dominance of hard landscaping for vehicles and a lack of space for adequate soft landscaping would result in a poor quality development which would detract from the appearance of the site, the special character and appearance of the St Neots Conservation Area and surrounding area. The proposal does not conserve or enhance the historic environment or respond positively to its context or appear to draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings or contribute positively to the area's character and identify or successfully integrate with adjoining buildings and spaces.

The harm to the designated heritage asset would be less than substantial as set out in the NPPF and therefore the harm has to be weighed against the public benefits but the limited public benefit of the development that include the tidying of the site, the provision of additional market dwellings and the employment opportunities associated with the construction, would not outweigh the harm caused.

As such, the proposal is considered to be contrary to Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, and Section 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Enquires about this report to **Lewis Tomlinson, Principle Planning Improvement Support Officer**

lewis.tomlinson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Schedule of Planning Applications –8th April 2025

No.	Reference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes
-----	-----------	-------------	---------------	-------

The following application/s are for listed building consent

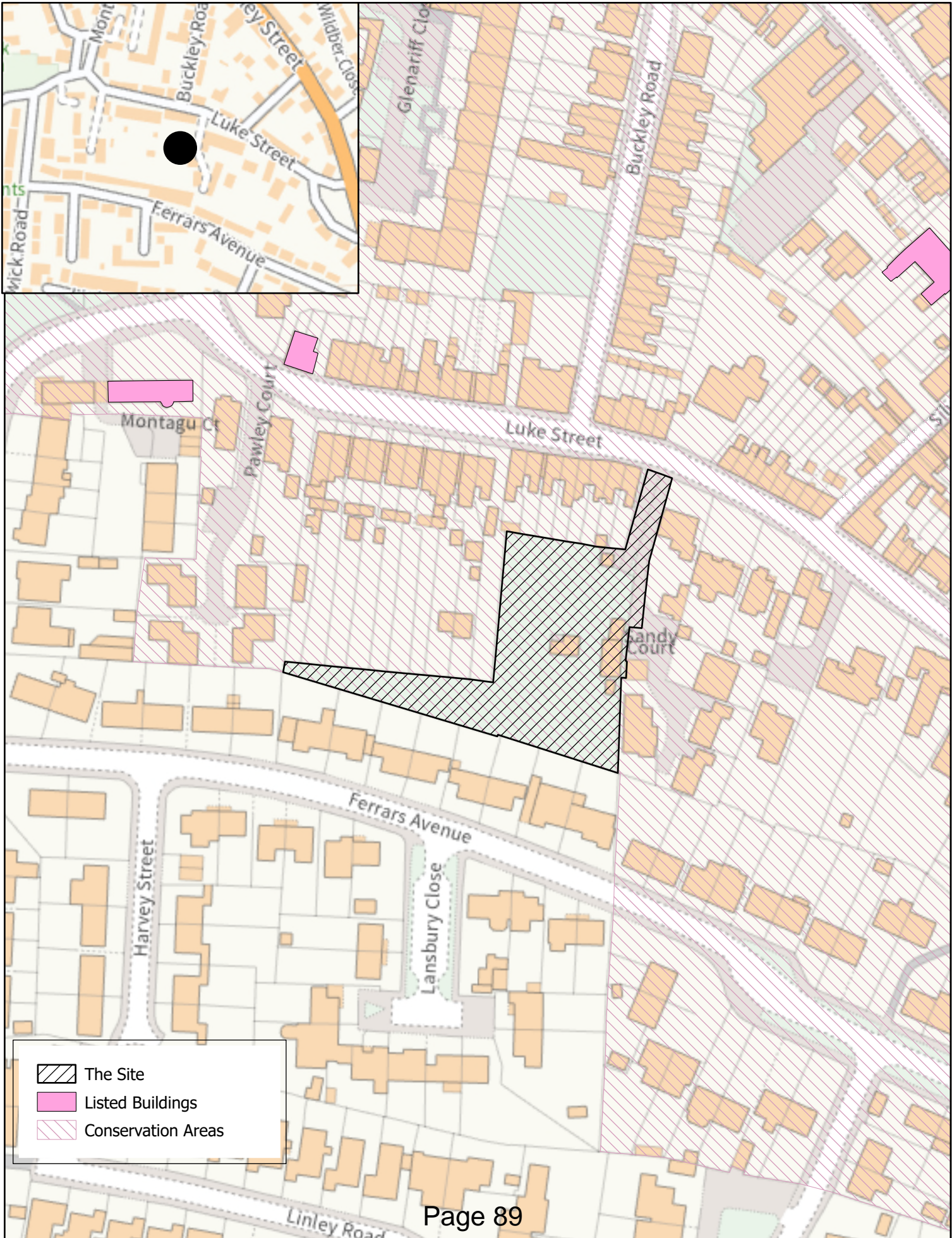
--	--	--	--	--

The following application/s are in a conservation area



S3	25/00596/FUL	AWJ Usher & Sons Ltd Land Adjacent 31 Luke Street Eynesbury Erection of four dwellings and associated works	SUPPORT	In keeping with locality. Minimum impact on neighbours.
----	--------------	---	---------	--



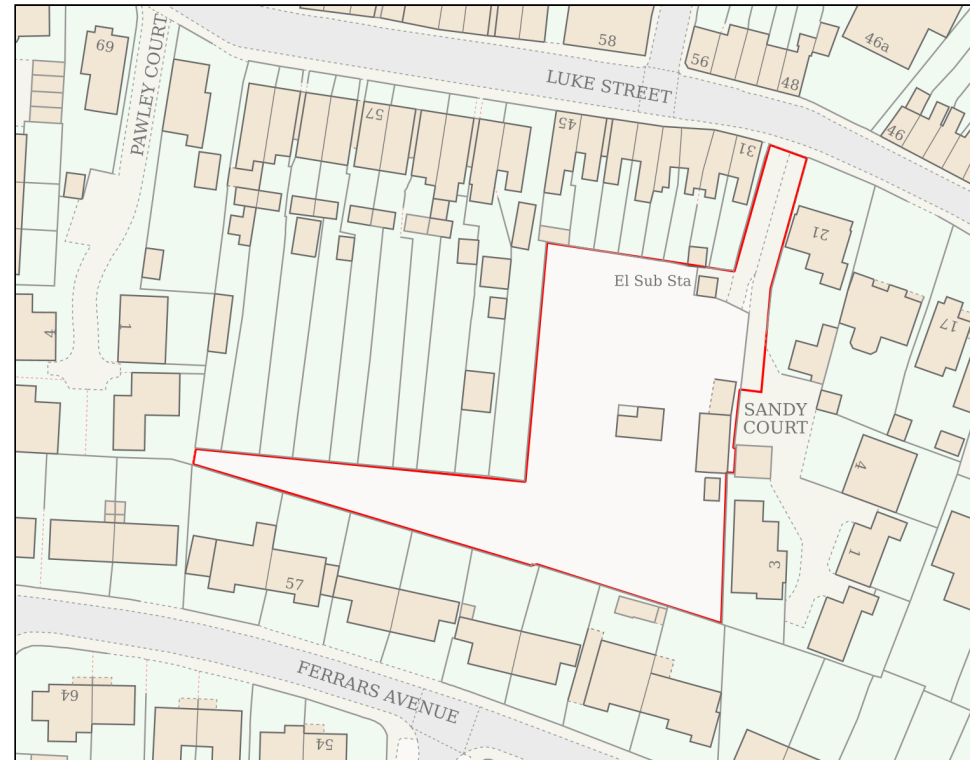


Location Plan

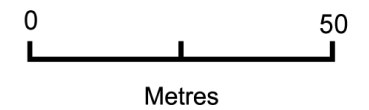
Site Address: Easting: 518417 Northing: 259608


Date Produced: 27-Mar-2025

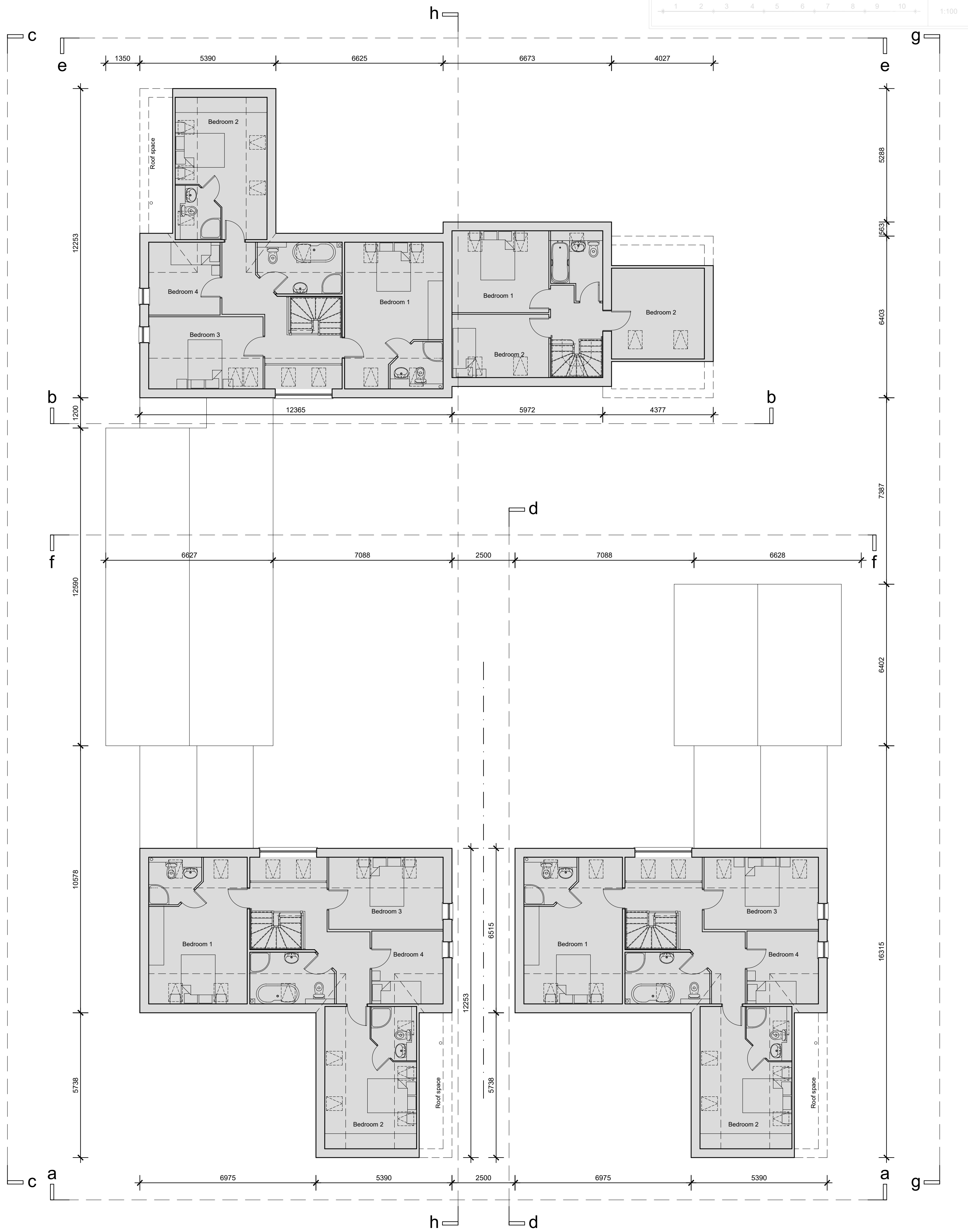
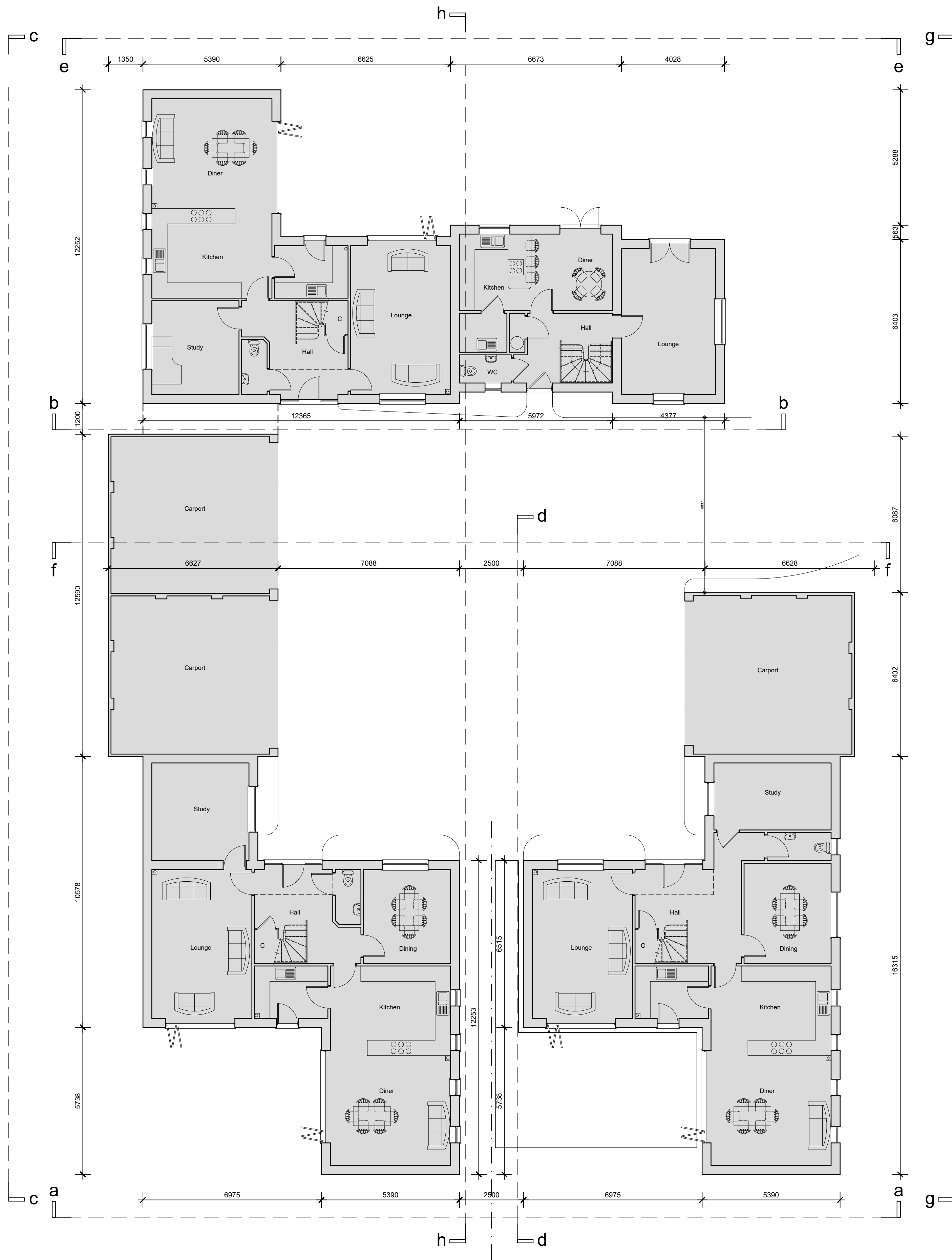
Scale: 1:1250 @A4

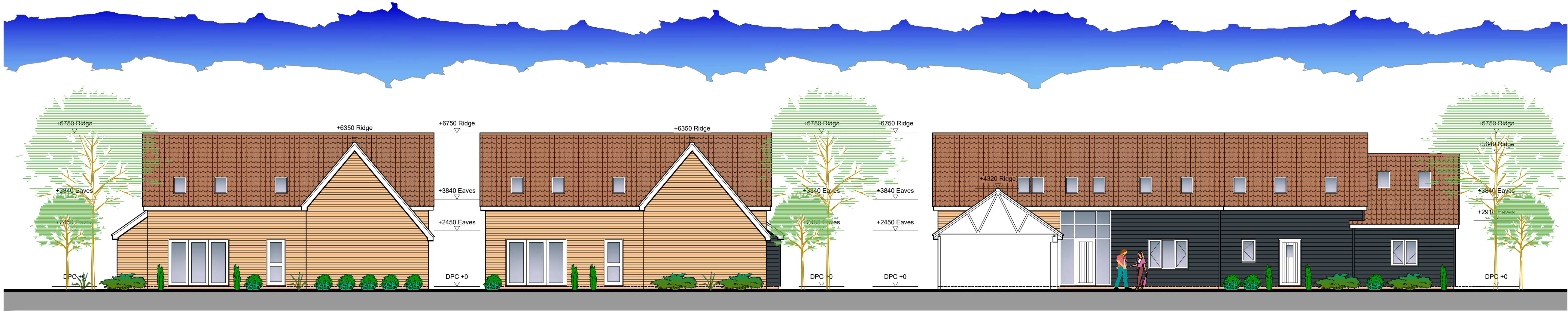


Planning Portal Reference: PP-13892195v1



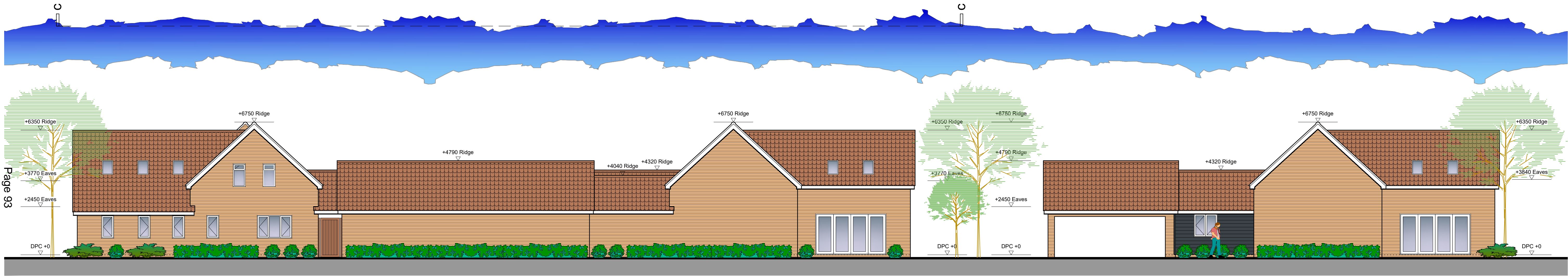
	
Architectural CAD Services	
<p>8 Tennyson Place Eaton Ford St. Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 7LL Tel / Fax: 01480 218440 Email: john@jlgdesign.co.uk</p>	
<p>Project: Proposed Development adj. to Sandy Court, Eynesbury, St Neots, Cambs. PE19 2TW</p>	
<p>Drawing: Site Layout</p>	
<p>Drawn by: JG</p>	
<p>Scale: 1:200; 1:1250</p>	<p>Date: 3.2.25</p>
<p>This drawing should not be scaled other than for planning purposes. All dimensions to be checked on site.</p>	
<p>Drawing no: JLG506/CYD/01</p>	<p>Revision</p>





Elevation a - a

Elevation b - b



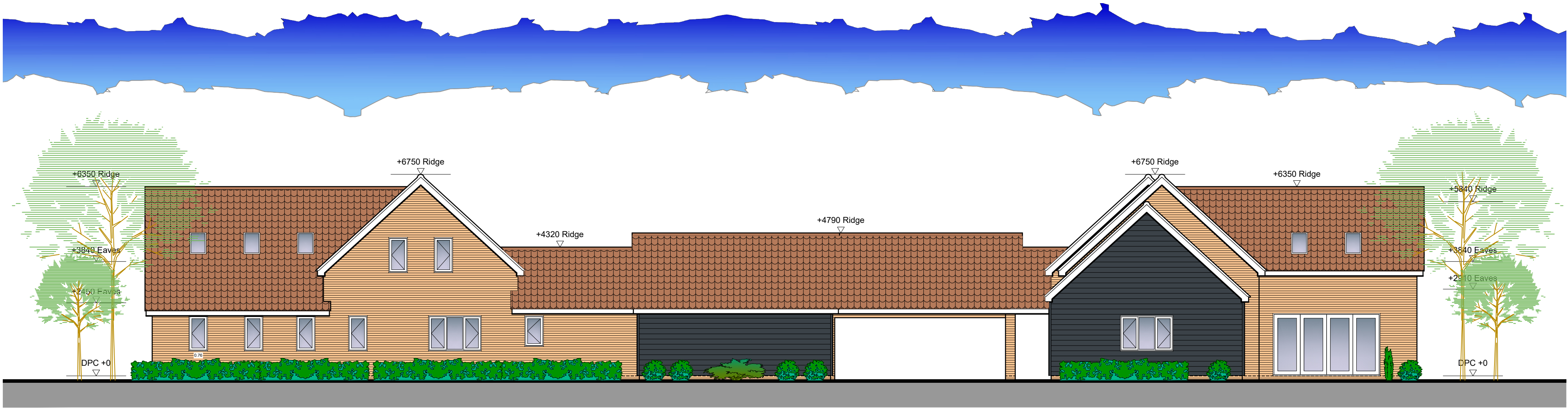
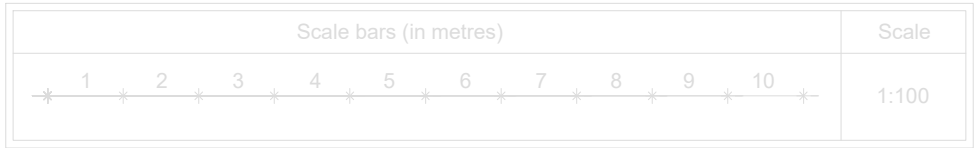
Elevation c - c

Elevation d - d



Elevation e - e

Elevation f - f



Elevation g - g



Elevation h - h

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 8th AUGUST 2025

Case No: 25/00756/FUL

Proposal: Erection of three-bedroom bungalow with garage and associated works (inc new planting and creation of off-street parking and turning to both existing and proposed properties).

Location: Land to the rear of 34-38 Ackerman Street, Eaton Socon

Applicant: AWJ Usher & Sons Ltd

Grid Ref: 517098 258654

Date of Registration: 24.04.2025

Parish: St Neots

RECOMMENDATION - REFUSE

This application is referred to the Development Management Committee (DMC) as the officer's recommendation is contrary to that of the Town Council and the site is within a Conservation Area.

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 1.1 This application seeks approval for the erection of one bungalow with a garage and associated works on land to the rear of Nos 34-38 Ackerman Street, Eaton Socon. The submitted Design and Access Statement indicates that the site has previously been in use as a pub garden but has seen more built development (additional toilets, 'cellar' and stores, smoking shelters etc) with areas of hardstanding.
- 1.2 The application site is within the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan boundary and is located within the St Neots Conservation Area. The application site is also directly south of the Grade II Listed Building of No. 36 Ackerman Street, Eaton Socon.
- 1.3 This application has been accompanied by the following:
 - Planning, Design and Access Statement (including Heritage Statement);
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal;
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Report.
- 1.4 Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'
- 2.2 The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
- delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
 - building a strong, competitive economy;
 - achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
 - conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment
- 2.3 Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website [National Guidance](#)

3. PLANNING POLICIES

- 3.1 Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)
- LP1: Amount of Development
 - LP2: Strategy for Development
 - LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
 - LP5: Flood Risk
 - LP6: Waste Water Management
 - LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
 - LP11: Design Context
 - LP12: Design Implementation
 - LP14: Amenity
 - LP15: Surface Water
 - LP16: Sustainable Travel
 - LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
 - LP21: Town Centre Vitality and Viability
 - LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
 - LP25: Housing Mix
 - LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
 - LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
 - LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings
- 3.2 St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 – adopted February 2016

- Policy A3: Design
- Policy PT1: Sustainable Travel
- Policy PT2: Vehicle Parking Standards for Residential Development
- Policy P4: Flooding
- Policy SS1: Introduction
- Policy SS2: Utilising Historic Buildings
- Policy SS3: Service and Provision

3.3 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

- Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
- Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017)
- Developer Contributions SPD 2011
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
- Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)
- St Neots Conservation Area Character Assessment (2006)

Local policies are viewable at <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk>

3.4 The National Design Guide (2021):

- C1 - Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
- I1 - Respond to existing local character and identity
- I2 - Well-designed, high quality and attractive
- B2 - Appropriate building types and forms
- M3 - Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
- N3 - Support rich and varied biodiversity
- H1 - Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
- H2 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces
- H3 - Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities.

For full details visit the government website

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 24/01165/FUL - Change of use from public house to residential dwelling – Approved – No. 38 Ackerman Street, Eaton Socon.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 St Neots Town Council – Support the proposal noting that it makes efficient use of the site and is a satisfactory proposal in terms of scale and pattern of development.
- 5.2 Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Authority – The proposed development is acceptable, subject to the imposition of conditions on any planning permission granted.
- 5.3 Huntingdonshire District Council Conservation Officer - Objects to the proposed development noting it would cause less than substantial harm to the St Neots Conservation Area and adjacent Listed Building. More detailed comments are included in the main body of the report.
- 5.4 Huntingdonshire District Council Environmental Health Officer – No objections to the proposal with regards to environmental health matters.

6. REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 Four letters of objection were received during the course of the application. The concerns raised have been summarised below:
- Scale and design of the proposed dwelling (overbearing scale);
 - Highway safety concerns (lack of off-street car parking);
 - Location of bin store.

7. ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.
- 7.2 As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".
- 7.3 In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan (relevant to this application) consists of:
- Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
 - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
 - St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029

- 7.4 The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: *Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor* [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.
- 7.5 The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- The Principle of Development
 - Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets
 - Residential Amenity
 - Highway Safety, Access and parking provision
 - Flood Risk and Surface Water
 - Biodiversity
 - Accessible and Adaptable Homes
 - Water Efficiency
 - Developer Obligations

The Principle of Development

Housing Land Supply

- 7.6 NPPF paragraph 78 requires the Council to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against our housing requirement. A substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements was introduced on 12th December 2024 in the revised NPPF and associated NPPG (the standard method).
- 7.7 As Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 is now over 5 years old it is necessary to demonstrate a five year housing land supply (5YHLS) based on the housing requirement set using the standard method. NPPF paragraph 78 also requires provision of a buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. As Huntingdonshire has successfully exceeded the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test a 5% buffer is required here. The 5 year housing land requirement including a 5% buffer is 5,501 homes. The current 5YHLS is 3.88 years' supply.
- 7.8 As a result of this, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the tilted balance'. While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply

and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.

Location and suitability of the site

- 7.9 Policy LP2 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (the Local Plan) sets out the overarching development strategy for Huntingdonshire through the plan period. The main objectives are:
- Concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities;
 - Direct substantial new development to two strategic expansion locations of sufficient scale to form successful, functioning new communities
 - Provide opportunities for communities to achieve local development aspirations for housing, employment, commercial or community related schemes
 - Support a thriving rural economy;
 - Protect the character of existing settlements and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the surrounding countryside;
 - Conserve and enhance the historic environment; and
 - Provide complementary green infrastructure enhancement and provision to balance recreational and biodiversity needs and to support climate change adaptation.
- 7.10 Policy LP2 directs approximately a quarter of the objectively assessed need for housing (together with a limited amount of employment growth) to sites dispersed across the Key Service Centres and Small Settlements in order to support the vitality of these communities and provide flexibility and diversity in the housing supply. In addition, rural exception, small and windfall sites will be permitted on sites which are in conformity with other policies of the plan, thereby providing further flexibility in the housing supply.
- 7.11 Policy LP2 is within the Development Strategy chapter of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, and is therefore considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications for residential development. Notwithstanding this, weight should still be given to Policy LP2 given that it directs development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities which is consistent with the NPPF.
- 7.12 The site is located within the built-up area of Eaton Socon, which is located within the St Neots Spatial Planning Area as defined by the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. As such, Policy LP7 (Spatial Planning Areas) is considered relevant in this

instance. Policy LP7 of the adopted Local Plan states that a proposal for housing development on a site which is additional to those allocated in the Local Plan will be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area.

- 7.13 Given the proposal seeks approval for the erection of 1 residential dwellings within the built-up area of Eaton Socon, the development is therefore considered to be situated in an appropriate location and acceptable in accordance with LP7 of the Local Plan.
- 7.14 NPPF Para 84 states: Planning decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside. NPPF Para 110 states: The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.
- 7.15 It is considered that the development would have access to services and facilities within Eaton Socon, and also the means to access larger settlements such as the market town of St Neots through sustainable modes of transport. The development would therefore not result in the development of isolated homes in either the edge of settlement or countryside, nor would the future occupiers have an over-reliance on the private motor vehicle as other options are available in the settlement.
- 7.16 It is determined therefore that the site is considered to be sustainable for the amount of development hereby proposed.

Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets

- 7.17 The Local Planning Authority is required to ensure that special regard is given to preserving the listed buildings and their settings in relation to Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Local Planning Authority is also required to ensure that with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 at Section 72. This is also reflected in Policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 7.18 Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new development will be

expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape. This is also reflected in Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

- 7.19 This application seeks approval for the erection of a bungalow and associated works on land to the rear of Nos. 34 to 38 Ackerman Street, Eaton Socon. The site is located within the St Neots Conservation Area and is directly to the rear of the Grade II Listed Building of No. 36 Ackerman Street.
- 7.20 The proposed dwelling would be in an 'L' shape, of a hipped roof design and constructed using local facing brick walls and matching roof tiles to those used nearby. The proposed detached garage would be of a gable-end design and constructed of matching materials to the main dwellinghouse. The proposed dwelling would measure 14.8m by 15.5m with an eaves height of 2.49m and a ridge height of 4.41m.
- 7.21 In principle, a hipped roof design dwelling with a gable-end garage is considered to be acceptable, given the varied streetscene and surrounding area, which includes properties and associated buildings of both a gable-end and hipped roof designs. Furthermore, given the mixed finishing materials of properties in the locality, the Local Planning Authority consider that detailed finishing materials to the proposed dwelling could be secured via a suitably worded condition.
- 7.22 Numbers 32, 36 and 38 Ackerman Street are recorded on the 1880 Ordnance Survey map so are all historic buildings which pre-date 1880 and stand within the village of Eaton Socon not far from its historic centre near the Parish Church and village green. Number 38 is a historic public house, formerly The Millers Arms, approved for conversion into a dwellinghouse under 24/01165/FUL.
- 7.23 The St Neots Conservation Area Character Statement describes the streets around the old village green as a complex grain which preserves the rural character. The village centre preserves the elements of its origins as an ancient agricultural settlement which is typified by buildings of a suitable scale to their place in the village hierarchy. It states that such considerations should continue to inform future development decisions and that "further infilling should be resisted if the traditional grain of the historic settlement is to be preserved."
- 7.24 The proposal site is an undeveloped area which was the beer garden of The Millers Arms, 38 Ackerman Street. Ordnance Survey maps of 1900 and 1924 show no buildings on the proposal

site and whilst the Agent has argued that the site has been developed over the years with numerous buildings associated with the public house and beer garden (outside bar, smoking shelter etc) these were predominantly to the rear of the public house along the eastern edge of the application site.

- 7.25 As an area of undeveloped open land, the application site contributes to the setting of the Listed Building at 36 Ackerman Street as an element which allows space around the Listed Building for it to be seen and also seen within the group of historic buildings. The application site is considered to provide a backdrop within which to experience the Listed Building in its historic setting without the intrusion of modern housing. The application site also provides a buffer which creates a physical separation between the historic group of buildings containing the Listed Building and the modern housing estate to the south and east.
- 7.26 The Conservation Officer has been consulted on the application and considers that the proposed introduction of a modern bungalow would not maintain the existing contribution which the application site makes to the setting of the Listed Building. In addition, the scale of the proposed bungalow is large in comparison to the scale of the Listed Building and the existing historic buildings, which lie directly north of the site. The proposed bungalow is also of a standard design which is not considered to be sympathetic to the location nor the relationship of the proposal site with the adjacent Listed Building, the group of historic buildings nor the character of the Conservation Area.
- 7.27 The existing modern housing of Simpkin Close to the south and east of the Listed Building and group of historic buildings on Ackerman Street is laid out in such a way as to respect the space between the modern housing and historic buildings, leaving an area of open ground to the south of the proposal site (in use as an area of single garages serving the modern housing). However, this proposal infills the space adjacent to the Listed Building and the group of historic buildings bringing modern development within a few metres of the buildings and removing the existing open space from the setting of the Listed Building.
- 7.28 The application is also not considered to sustain the significance of the Conservation Area because it proposes the infilling of the site, and this does not maintain the traditional grain of the historic settlement so is contrary to the advice within the Conservation Area Character Statement to resist such infilling. The proposed infilling of the open site is also in conflict with the character of the group of historic buildings as it brings a dwelling into the backlands of the buildings which does not maintain the existing ribbon development pattern of the existing historic buildings nor of the modern housing development.

- 7.29 For these reasons, the proposed development is considered harmful to the significance of the adjacent Listed Building and harmful to the significance of the Conservation Area. The proposal is not considered to preserve the Conservation Area's character or appearance as it does not maintain the historic grouping of buildings along Ackerman Street nor the grain, scale or character of the historic agricultural settlement. The Council's Conservation Officer has therefore concluded that the level of harm in this instance is less than substantial.

Residential Amenity

- 7.30 Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.
- 7.31 The neighbouring properties that are most likely to be impacted upon as a result of the proposed development are Nos 32, 34, 36 and 38 Ackerman Street and No. 54 Simpkin Close.
- 7.32 The proposed dwelling would be approximately 2.55m from the shared boundary (comprising a 1.8m high fence and proposed hedgerow planting) of No 32 Ackerman Street. The proposal will be single storey in height only and with the roof sloping away from the neighbouring property the Local Planning Authority consider there is adequate distance and screening to ensure the proposed dwelling does not result in any detrimental impacts on the rear garden of this neighbouring property.
- 7.33 With regard to 34 and 36, the proposed dwelling would measure a total depth of 15.5m and be approximately 1.9m and 1.5m respectively from the shared boundary which comprises an existing 1.8m high fence that would be retained as part of the proposal. The eaves height of the proposed dwelling would measure 2.49m in height and therefore would exceed that of the boundary fence by approximately 0.69m with the roof sloping away. Whilst No's 34 and 36 both have small outbuildings in the rear garden adjacent to the boundary, given the close proximity, the length and location of the proposed dwelling to the south of the small private rear amenity spaces of Nos. 34 and 36 Ackerman Street, the Local Planning Authority consider that the proposal would result in detrimental overbearing, overshadowing and loss of light impacts on the neighbouring properties amenities.
- 7.34 It is worth noting that whilst the proposed garage would be closer to the shared boundary, it would not result in harm to the neighbouring property of No. 36 Ackerman Street as the eaves height (1.68m) would be lower at the point of the shared boundary and would not exceed the height of the boundary fence.

- 7.35 The proposed detached garage would be approximately 0.6m from the shared boundary of the private rear amenity space of No. 38 Ackerman Street and would measure 6.5m in length, eaves heights of 1.68m and 2.44m and a ridge height of 3.96m. While it is recognised that the proposed garage would extend the length of the private rear amenity space of No. 38, given the off-centre gable with lower leaves height to the north with the boundary treatments to screen the majority of the proposal, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposed garage would not result in significantly detrimental impacts in this instance. Furthermore, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposed dwelling would be an appropriate distance from the shared boundary to No. 38 Ackerman Street.
- 7.36 The proposed dwelling would be approximately 1.5m to the shared boundary with No. 54 Simpkin Road – which comprises an existing 1.8m high fence to be retained, with the roof sloping away. While it is recognised that the proposed dwelling would result in some impacts on the neighbouring properties private rear amenity space, given the single storey scale, distance, the roof sloping away from the boundary, existing boundary treatments and being located north-west of the neighbouring property, any impacts are considered to be negligible.
- 7.37 It is also worth noting that given the single storey height and existing boundary treatments to be retained, the proposal would not result in any detrimental overlooking impacts on any other neighbouring properties amenities.
- 7.38 Furthermore, given the proposed development seeks approval for the erection of one dwelling in a predominantly residential area, and the previous use of the site as a pub beer garden, the proposal is not considered to result in any general noise or disturbance impacts on any neighbouring property.
- 7.39 In regard to amenity of the future occupiers, it is considered that property would include a suitably sized amenity space for future owners/occupiers.
- 7.40 Overall, taking the above factors into consideration and due to the scale and close proximity to the small private rear amenity spaces of Nos. 34 and 36 Ackerman Street, the Local Planning Authority consider that the proposal would result in unacceptable overbearing, overshadowing and loss of light impacts on the neighbouring properties amenities and therefore the proposal is contrary to Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

Highway Safety, access and Parking Provision

- 7.41 Policies LP16 and LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates access for emergency vehicles and service vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.
- 7.42 The proposed dwelling would be accessed via an existing vehicular access point off Ackerman Street. Alongside access to the proposed dwelling, the development would include two off-street car parking spaces for No. 38 Ackerman Street. Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highways Authority have reviewed the proposals and advise that they have no objections to the proposed development subject to conditions. The existing access is therefore considered to be of an acceptable width and would provide appropriate vehicle and pedestrian visibility splays in both directions. A condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to ensure the removal of the existing gate.
- 7.43 The proposed three-bedroom dwelling would include a detached garage for one off-street car parking space with hardsurfacing to the front of the garage for a second car parking space and a secure cycle store to the west of the garage. The proposed off-street car parking and cycle provision are considered to be acceptable and would be secured via a suitably worded condition. It is also worth noting that the proposal would also include two turning heads within the site to ensure that vehicles can enter the public highway in a forward gear.
- 7.44 As such, subject to appropriate conditions, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and therefore accords with Policy LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policies PT1 and PT2 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

Flood Risk and Surface Water

- 7.45 The site is at the lowest risk of flooding according to the Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024 and Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning (Flood Zone 1) and the proposal is for minor development. Accordingly the sequential and exceptions tests for flooding nor the submission of a flood risk assessment are considered necessary in this instance in accordance with the NPPF and NPPG.
- 7.46 It is proposed to manage surface water from the proposed development through the use of soakaways with the disposal of foul sewage via the mains sewer. The proposed methods are considered to be acceptable in this instance, and officers are satisfied that full details of the surface and foul water drainage can

be secured as part of building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements in this instance.

- 7.47 As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on both flood risk and surface water and therefore accords with Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policy P4 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

Biodiversity

- 7.48 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.
- 7.49 This application has been accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) which concludes that the site is of no significant ecological value and no evidence of protected and notable species were recorded. As such, further ecological assessment is concluded to be unnecessary. The Local Planning Authority are satisfied with the submitted PEA and a condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to ensure development is carried out in accordance with the Precautionary Working Methods Statement detailed within the report.
- 7.50 As well as the above (and separate from the requirements of LP30) as of the 2nd April 2024 qualifying new development is subject to Biodiversity Net Gain legislation pursuant to the Environment Act 2021. This means that a 10% statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is required, following the hierarchy of onsite provision; mixture of on-site and off-site provision; and the last resort of statutory biodiversity credits unless it can be demonstrated that the development would be exempt.
- 7.51 The application has been accompanied by a Biodiversity Net Gain Report which concludes that the proposed development would result in a 53.86% net loss in habitat units and a 0.04 gain in hedgerow units. In order to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain, 0.07 habitat units would be required. As this shortfall cannot be delivered on-site, off-site credits for habitats of the same distinctiveness or better within the same broad habitat category type will be required and will be secured via a suitably worded condition on any permission that may be granted

- 7.52 Overall, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied with the findings of the submitted PEA and BNG Assessment and as such the proposal accords with Local Plan Policy LP30 and the NPPF (2024) subject to the imposition of conditions.

Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings

- 7.53 Policy LP25 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 states that proposal for new housing will be supported where they meet the optional Building regulation requirement M4(2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings' unless it can be demonstrated that site specific factors make this impractical or unviable.
- 7.54 To ensure that the development can meet these standards a condition would be imposed on any permission that may be granted in this regard in accordance with Policy LP25 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Water Efficiency

- 7.55 Policy LP12 (j) of the Local Plan to 2036 states that new dwellings must comply with the optional Building Regulation requirement for water efficiency set out in Approved Document G of the Building Regulations. A condition will be attached to any consent to ensure compliance with the above, in accordance with Policy LP12 (j) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Development Obligations

Bins

- 7.56 Part H of the Developer Contributions SPD (2011) requires a payment towards refuse bins for new residential development. A Unilateral Undertaking Form in respect of wheeled bins has been received by the Local Planning Authority dated 30 April 2025. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with Policy LP4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the Developers Contributions SPD (2011).

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 7.57 The development will be CIL liable in accordance with the Council's adopted charging schedule; CIL payments will cover footpaths and access, health, community facilities, libraries and lifelong learning and education.

Conclusion

- 7.58 the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the

provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the titled balance'. While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.

- 7.59 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.60 A revised NPPF was published in December 2024, introducing a substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements. This has resulted in the Council being unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply (5YHLS). While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.
- 7.61 As a result of this, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the titled balance'.
- 7.62 NPPF para 11 states:

'Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.'

For decision-taking this means:

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance (7) provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

7 Foot note 7 states: The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.'*

- 7.63 As outlined in the report, there is a strong reason for refusal in relation to designated heritage assets. Therefore, there is a reason to not move forward to test d (ii) as per above and thus the 'titled balance' is disengaged.
- 7.64 Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 7.65 Given the proposal seeks approval for the erection of one private residential dwelling, the Local Planning Authority do not consider that there would be any public benefits that would outweigh the identified harm in this instance.
- 7.66 By virtue of the scale, design and siting of the proposed dwelling, the proposed development is considered harmful to the significance of the adjacent Listed Building and harmful to the significance of the Conservation Area. The proposal is not considered to preserve the Conservation Area's character or appearance as it does not maintain the historic grouping of buildings along Ackerman Street nor the grain, scale or character of the historic agricultural settlement. Given the nature of the proposed development, any public benefits are considered to be negligible and would not outweigh the identified harm in this instance. The proposal is therefore deemed to be contrary to Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard and planning permission should be refused.
- 7.67 Furthermore, due to the scale and close proximity to the small private rear amenity spaces of Nos. 34 and 36 Ackerman Street, the Local Planning Authority consider that the proposal would result in unacceptable overbearing, overshadowing and loss of light impacts on the neighbouring properties amenities.

- 7.68 Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is concluded that the proposed development is contrary to policy and not acceptable. There are no overriding material considerations that indicate that permission should be granted in this instance. Therefore, it is recommended that the application be refused.

8. RECOMMENDATION - REFUSAL for the following reasons;

1. The site is an area of undeveloped open land to the rear of and associated with the Grade II Listed Building, 36 Ackerman Street and sits within the St Neots Conservation Area. As an area of open land, the application site contributes to the setting of the Listed Building at 36 Ackerman Street as an element which allows space around the Listed Building for it to be seen and also seen within the group of historic buildings. The application site also provides a buffer which creates a physical separation between the historic group of buildings containing the Listed Building and the modern housing estate to the south and east. By virtue of the scale, design and siting of the proposed dwelling, the proposed development is considered harmful to the significance of the adjacent Listed Building and harmful to the significance of the Conservation Area. The proposal is not considered to preserve the Conservation Area's character or appearance as it does not maintain the historic grouping of buildings along Ackerman Street nor the grain, scale or character of the historic agricultural settlement. Given the nature of the proposed development, any public benefits are considered to be negligible and would not outweigh the identified harm in this instance. As such, the proposal is considered to be contrary to Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, and Section 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).
2. The proposed development by virtue of the siting, scale and massing of the proposed dwelling, and close proximity to the small private rear amenity spaces of Nos. 34 and 36 Ackerman Street, would result in overbearing, overshadowing and loss of light impacts to the detriment of the residential amenity of occupiers of No.'s 34 and 36 Ackerman Street. The proposal is therefore considered contrary to Policy LP14 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Enquires about this report to **Lewis Tomlinson, Principle Planning Improvement Support Officer**

lewis.tomlinson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

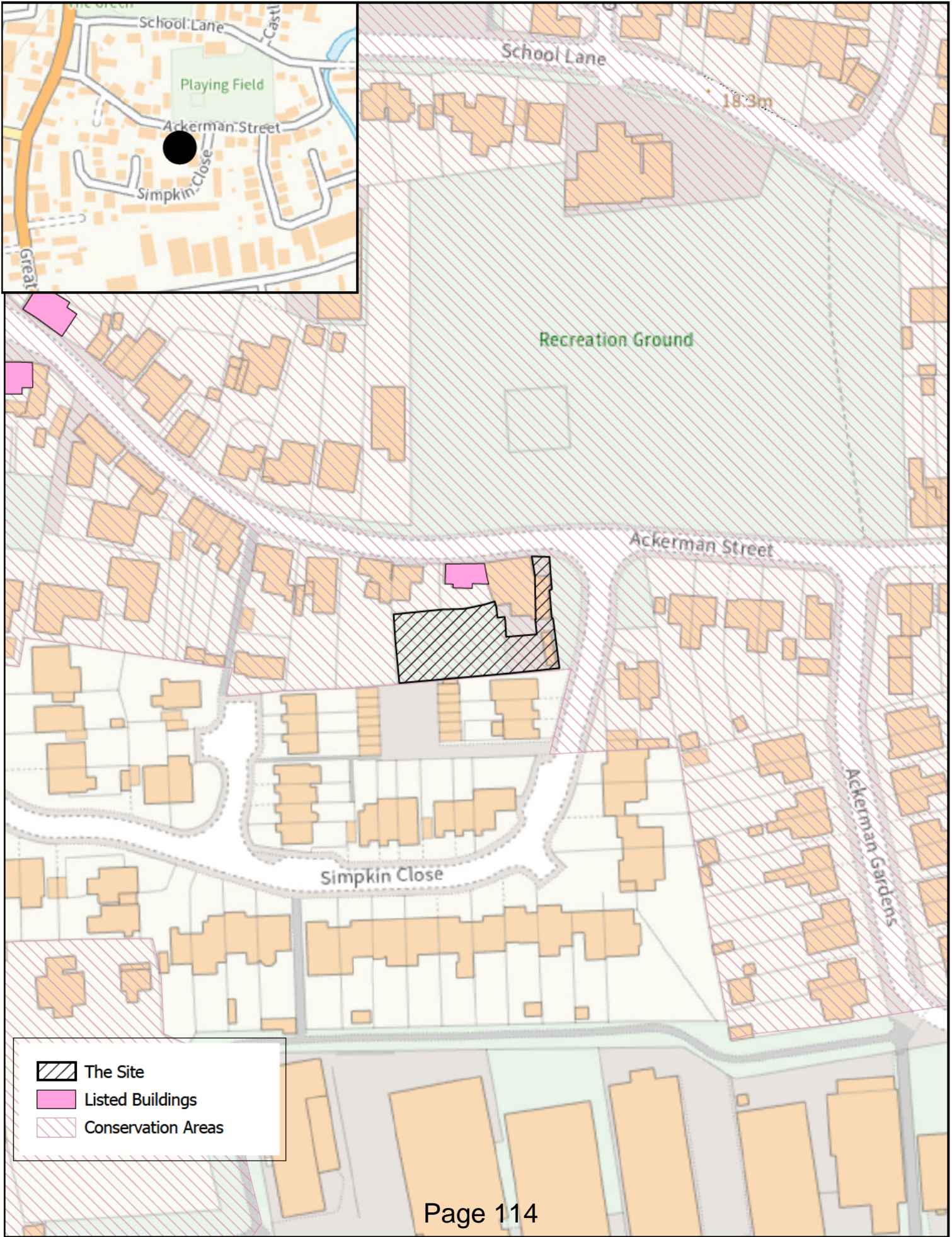
Schedule of Planning Applications – 13th May 2025

No.	Reference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes
-----	-----------	-------------	---------------	-------

The following application/s are in a conservation area

S3	25/00756/FUL	AWJ Usher & Sons Ltd Land Rear Of 34 To 38 Ackerman Street Eaton Socon Erection of three-bedroom bungalow with garage & associated works (inc new planting and creation of off-street parking & turning to both existing and proposed properties)	SUPPORT RS Abstained	Makes efficient use of its site. Satisfactory proposal in terms of scale and pattern of development.
----	--------------	---	---------------------------------------	---

Chairperson

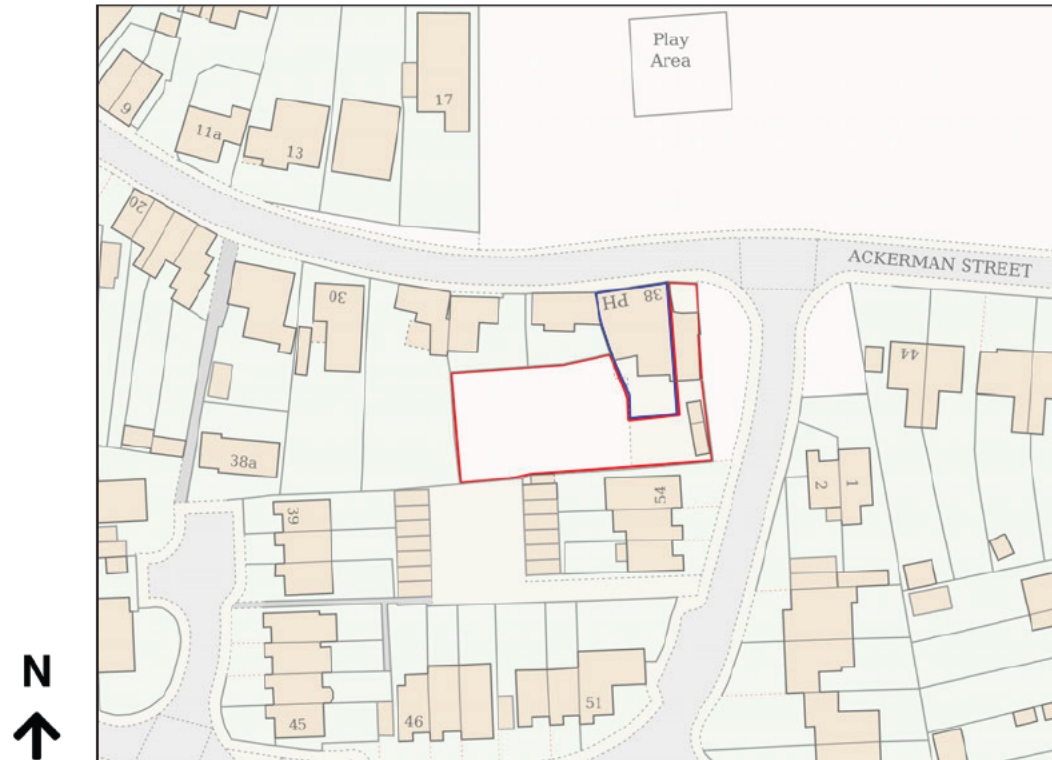


Location Plan

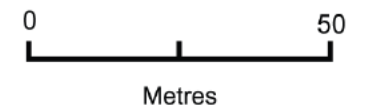
Site Address: 38, Ackerman Street, Eaton Socon, PE19 8HR

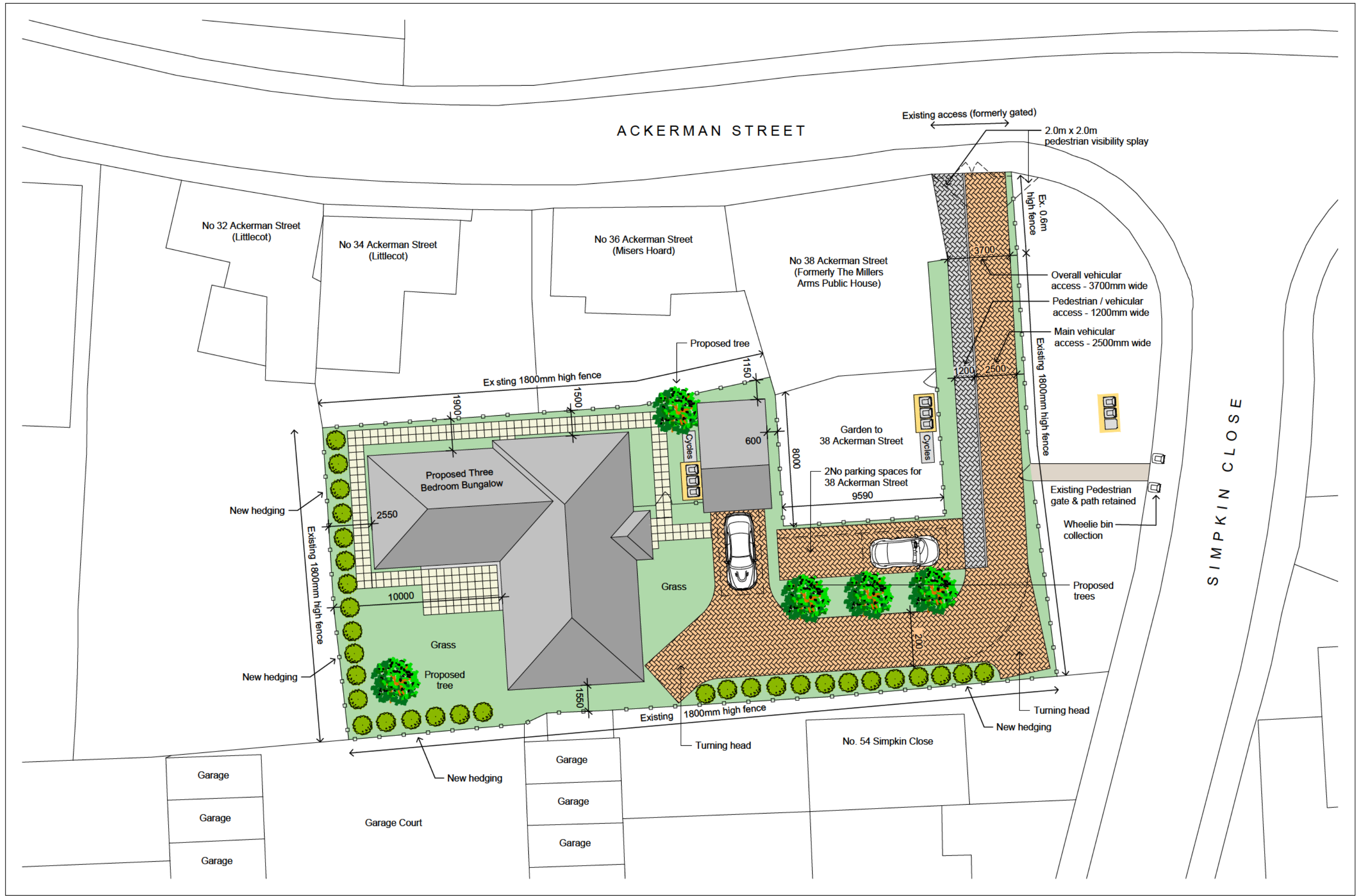
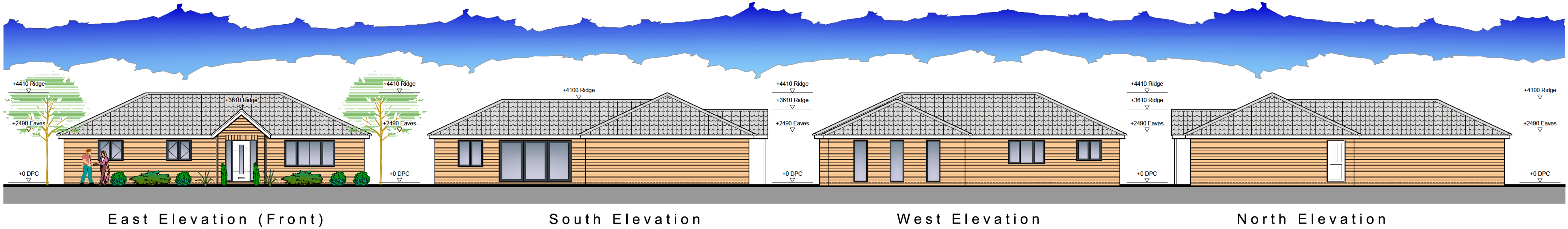
Date Produced: 24-Apr-2025

Scale: 1:1250 @A4



Planning Portal Reference: PP-13965613v1





Site Layout
1:200



Floor Plan



8 Tennyson Place
Eaton Ford
St. Neots
Cambridgeshire
PE19 7LL
Tel / Fax: 01480 218440
Email: john@jlgdesign.co.uk

Project:
Proposed Bungalow rear of
38 Ackerman Street, Eaton
Socon, St Neots. PE19 8HR.

Drawing:
Plans and Elevations

Drawn by:
JG

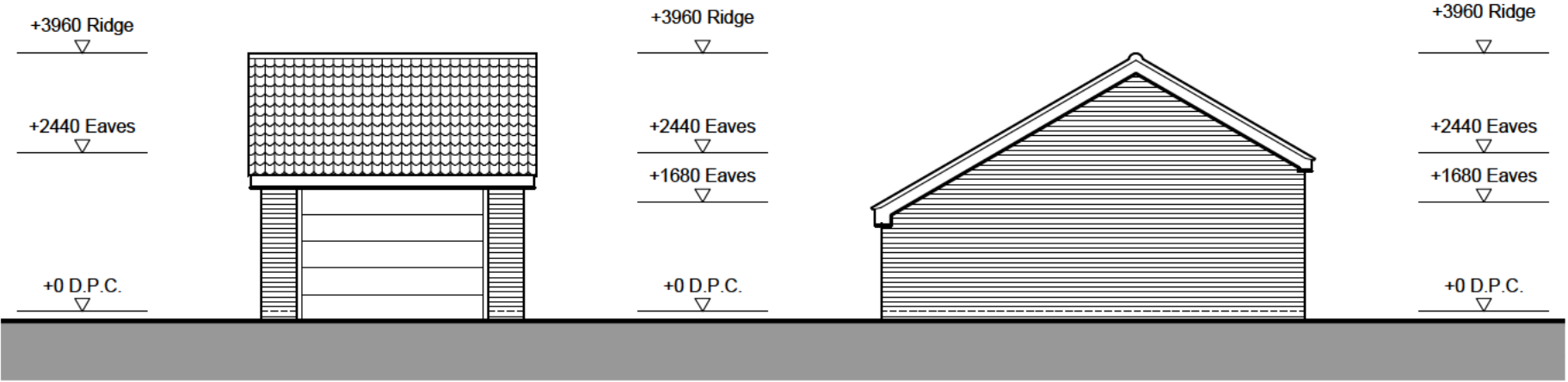
Scale:
1:100;1:200

Date:
4.3.25

This drawing should not be scaled other than for planning
purposes. All dimensions to be checked on site.

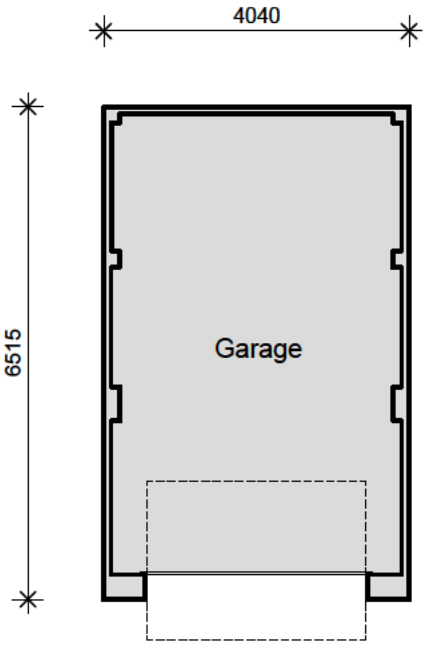
Drawing no:
JLG1002/NB/01

Revision

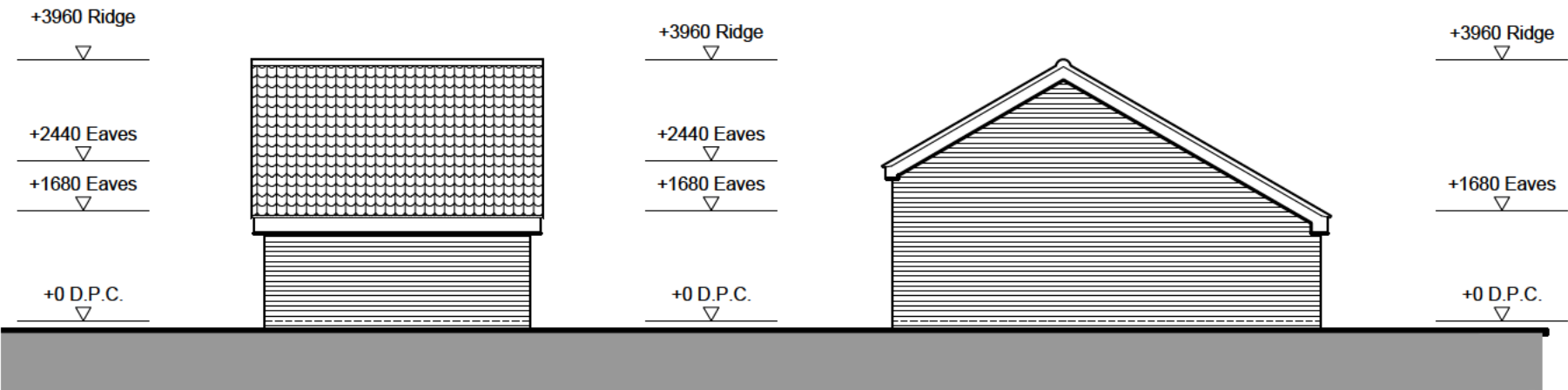


Front Elevation

Side Elevation



Plan



Rear Elevation

Side Elevation



8 Tennyson Place
Eaton Ford
St. Neots
Cambridgeshire
PE19 7LL
Tel / Fax: 01480 218440
Email: john@jlgdesign.co.uk

Project:
Proposed Bungalow rear of
38 Ackerman Street, Eaton
Socon, St Neots. PE19 8HR.

Drawing:
Single Garage

Drawn by:
JG

Scale:
1:100

Date:
8.3.25

This drawing should not be scaled other than for planning
purposes. All dimensions to be checked on site.

Drawing no:
JLG1002/NB/02

Revision

This page is intentionally left blank