

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Land West of Boxted.

On behalf of RES Ltd.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of RES Ltd. It concerns an application for planning permission for a solar farm, at Land west of Boxted, Suffolk.
- 1.2 The site is located on the valley sides to the south of the River Glem, (as shown on a plan at **Appendix 2**).
- 1.3 This LVA considers possible effects of the proposed development upon landscape features, landscape character and visual amenity.
- 1.4 This assessment has been guided by the assessment criteria set out in **Appendix 1**. It should be noted that all of the landscape and visual effects stated within assessments such as this are considered adverse unless stated otherwise. It should also be noted that all effects are considered direct, long-term but non-permanent unless otherwise stated.
- 1.5 The assessment has been prepared through a desk study analysis of the site and its policy context to gain an appreciation of the landscape and visual context of the site, which have subsequently been used to inform mitigation recommendations. The Landscape proposals are illustrated in the Landscape Masterplan at **Appendix 11** which conveys the landscape strategy for the site.



2. Methodology

2.1 This LVA has been undertaken in accordance with the principles of best practice, as outlined in published guidance documents listed in the reference section of this report, notably the third edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (GLVIA3), (Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

2.2 The methodology and assessment criteria for the assessment have been developed in accordance with the principles established in this best practice document. It should be acknowledged that GLVIA3 establishes guidelines, not a specific methodology. The preface to GLVIA3 states:

2.3 *'This edition concentrates on principles and processes. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic 'recipe' that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand.'*

2.4 The approach set out below and in detail in the Assessment Criteria at **Appendix 1** has therefore been developed specifically for this assessment to ensure that the methodology is fit for purpose.

Distinction between Landscape and Visual Effects

2.5 In accordance with GLVIA3, landscape and visual effects are assessed separately, although the procedure for assessing each of these is closely linked. A clear distinction has been drawn between landscape and visual effects as described below:

- Landscape effects relate to the effects of the indicative proposals on the physical and perceptual characteristics of the landscape and its resulting character and quality; and
- Visual effects relate to the effects on specific views experienced by visual receptors and on visual amenity more generally.

Landscape and Visual Assessment Process

2.6 The assessment of landscape effects follows a recognised process set out below:



- Identify the baseline landscape resource (i.e. Individual landscape elements and a thorough understanding of landscape character both at a local scale and a wider scale) and its value;
- Evaluate the sensitivity of the landscape resource to the type of development proposed;
- Develop mitigation proposals / measures iteratively throughout the development process in order to avoid, reduce and ameliorate potential adverse landscape impacts and to maximise the beneficial landscape impacts of the development;
- Identify predicted landscape impacts of the development;
- Evaluate the magnitude of change to the baseline landscape resource; and
- Assess the level of residual effect of the development on the landscape.

2.7 The assessment of visual effects follows a similar process as set out below:

- Identify the geographical area within which views of the development are possible through field work;
- Identify potential visual receptors for the development (i.e. Groups of people who would have views of the development);
- Describe the nature of the baseline views towards the development for each receptor group, usually illustrated by a photograph;
- Evaluate the sensitivity of the visual receptor groups;
- Develop mitigation proposals / measures iteratively throughout the development process in order to avoid, reduce and ameliorate potential adverse visual impacts and to maximise the beneficial visual impacts of the development;
- Identify predicted visual impacts of the development on receptor groups;
- Evaluate the magnitude of change in the view of representative visual receptor groups; and
- Assess the level of residual effects on the views from representative receptor groups and on overall visual amenity.



Types of Landscape and Visual Impacts Considered and Duration

- 2.8 The LVA assesses both the long term effects of the development and the temporary effects associated with its construction.
- 2.9 Consideration has been given to seasonal variations in the visibility of the development and these are described where necessary.
- 2.10 Both beneficial and adverse effects are identified in the assessment and reported as appropriate. Where effects are described as 'neutral' this is where beneficial effects are deemed to balance the adverse effects. The adverse and beneficial effects are communicated in each case so that the judgement is clear.
- 2.11 As part of the proposed development, new native woodland, tree and hedgerow planting would be introduced. Newly planted vegetation takes a number of years to mature and average growth rates have been taken into consideration in this assessment. The effectiveness of vegetation would improve over time (both in terms of integrating the development into the surrounding landscape and in providing visual screening) and this needs to be considered appropriately.
- 2.12 Therefore, permanent landscape and visual impacts of the project are assessed both in the winter of year 1 (the year in which the development is completed) and also at year 7 (7 years after completion of the development). In this second scenario it is assumed that vegetation planted as part of the development will have established and exhibit a degree of maturity.

Assumptions and Limitations of Assessment

Assessed Proposal

- 2.13 The project proposals have been developed iteratively in conjunction with the production of the LVA with the intention of incorporating mitigation into the project from the outset. The effects identified and described as part of this LVA are based on the landscape proposals shown a plan at **Appendix 11**.

Baseline Information

- 2.14 The baseline landscape resource and visual receptors were identified in part through a desk-based study of Ordnance Survey mapping, published landscape character studies, relevant



planning policies, interrogation of aerial photography, the SZTV, as well as photographs taken and observations made during site work.

- 2.15 Access during site visits was restricted to publicly accessible locations or land within the ownership of the site landowner. No access was possible to private properties and therefore, assumptions have been made regarding the view from private properties. These assumptions have been based on an understanding of the properties and features present within the wider landscape gained during the site visit from publicly accessible locations. Assumptions are guided by professional experience and judgement.
- 2.16 A photographic record of views toward the site and its local context is provided in **Appendix 10**, with the photographic locations illustrated on a plan at **Appendix 9**.
- 2.17 Photography contained in the Photographic Record at **Appendix 10** was taken during winter months during 2023 where views are therefore least impeded by trees or vegetation which would be in leaf during summer months. It is winter visibility which is considered in the assessment of landscape and visual effects within this LVA and which are considered to be worst-case effects.



3. Description of the Site

- 3.1 The site comprises six agricultural fields, (in a combination of full and part fields with hedgerows frequently occurring along the field boundaries and most incorporate trees within the hedgerows. There are some pockets of woodland immediately beyond the site boundary, including Park Wood and Lownage Wood from west to east along the southern boundary, and Dripping Pan Wood beyond the northern boundary. The existing access is from Braggon's Hill Lane on the south eastern boundary of the site.
- 3.2 The site is also in proximity to a number of farms. This includes Moorhouse Farm to the north of the site, Street Farm on the eastern side of the B1066 to the east of the site, Hall Farm, on the southern side of Braggon's Hill Road to the south of the site, and Lodge Farm, to the north west of the site.
- 3.3 The topography of the site is sloping, with a high point towards the west of the site at approximately 88m AOD and to the north of Park Wood, with a downwards slope to the north and east of the site at approximately 45m AOD as illustrated at **Appendix 3**.



4. Designations and Policy Context

The Site and Surrounding Area

4.1 The application site is located within the administrative boundary of Babergh District Council (BDC). This section highlights the national and local policies, and designations of relevance to landscape and **Appendix 2** illustrates a number of environmental and landscape designations within the study area.

Landscape Designations

4.2 The site does not lie within a nationally or regionally designated landscape. It is currently located within the Stour Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA) local designation. However, the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan no longer includes an SLA Policy and that there would therefore be no additional policy protection to the area should the plan be adopted. This is noted further below in the context of the current adopted Local Plan Babergh Local Plan saved Policies (2006) Policy CRO4 'Special Landscape Areas'.

4.3 There are a number of Listed Buildings within proximity to the site. The closest of these are the Grade II Listed 'WATER HALL' (List UID: 277866), approximately 33 m to the east of the site, Grade II listed 'MOORHOUSE FARM' (List UID: 1485365), a Grade II Listed '3 AND 4, THE STREET' (List UID: 277869) and Grade II Listed 'THATCHED COTTAGES' (List UID: 277867), approximately 135 m and 174 m to the east of the site respectively, Grade II Listed 'STREET FARM COTTAGE' (List UID: 277868) and Grade II Listed 'STREET HOUSE' (List UID: 494809), approximately 176 m and 199 m respectively. Beyond this, there are a number of other Listed Buildings in close proximity to the site. These include Grade II Listed 'HILL HOUSE' (List UID: 277860) and Grade I Listed 'CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS' (List UID: 277859), to the south of the site. Slightly further to the east of these are 3 Listed Buildings associated with Boxted Hall, including Grade II Listed 'STABLES AT BOXTED HALL' (List UID: 277863), Grade II* Listed 'BOXTED HALL' (List UID: 277862) and Grade II Listed 'GARDEN WALL AND PAVILIONS TO BOXTED HALL' (List UID: 277864). There are several Conservation Areas within the study area. This includes Hartest Conservation Area, approximately 1.4 km from the north eastern boundary of the site, Glemsford Conservation Area, approximately 2.04 km from the southern boundary of the site, and Long Melford Conservation Area, approximately 4.22 km from the south eastern boundary of the site.

4.4 There are a series of ancient and semi-natural woodlands adjoining the site, including Park Wood and Lownage Wood along the southern boundary. Beyond this, there is 'Longley Wood' to the



west of the site, approximately 344 m from the western boundary and 'Oak Grove' to the south of the site, approximately 291 m from the southern boundary. There is also an ancient replanted woodland, 'Rochester Wood' to the east of the site, approximately 305 m from the eastern boundary.

- 4.5 There are a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the study area. The closest includes 4 fragments of woodland 'Cavendish Woods SSSI' to the south west of the site, approximately 2.22 km from the site boundary, 'Kentwell Woods SSSI' to the south east of the site, approximately 2.02 km from the site boundary, and 'Frithy and Chadacre Woods SSSI' to the north east of the site, approximately 2.3 km from the site boundary.
- 4.6 The nearest Public Right of Way (PRoW), a footpath of approximately 300 m length, is located along the outer edge of the boundary to the south east of the site, which is also part of a narrow country lane called Braggon's Hill. The PRoW provides a route from the centre of Boxted, where the B1066 passes through, and the byway open to all traffic (BOAT) to the west. This byway continues from Braggon's Hill lane along the southern boundary of the site, up to Tittle Hall Cottages, and is approximately 890 m long. The byway leads into a road used as a public footpath as it passes through Tittle Hall Cottages briefly, and is approximately 89 m long. This route then continues away from the south western boundary of the site as a footpath, providing a route to Fenstead End, and is approximately 930 m long. There is also a network of footpaths across the agricultural fields to the south of the site, and a network of footpaths across agricultural fields to the north of the site. Mapping of local PRoW is available online as an interactive resource, however a copy of the Boxted Definitive Map is contained at **Appendix 4**.

European Landscape Convention

- 4.7 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. The convention promotes landscape protection, management and planning, as well as European co-operation on landscape issues. Signed by the UK Government in February 2006, the ELC became binding from March 2007. It applies to all landscapes, towns and villages, as well as open countryside; the coast and inland areas; and ordinary or even degraded landscapes, as well as those that are afforded protection.
- 4.8 The Government has stated that it considers the UK to be compliant with the ELC's requirements and in effect the principal requirements of the ELC are already enshrined in the



existing suite of national policies and guidance on the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

- 4.9 The ELC defines landscape as: *'An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.'* (Council of Europe 2000).
- 4.10 It is important to recognise that the ELC does not require the preservation of all landscapes although landscape protection is one of the core themes of the convention. Equally important though is the requirement to manage and plan future landscape change.
- 4.11 The ELC highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes. The analysis of landscape and visual matters in this LVA read in context with appropriate national and local policy will enable decisions to be made with due regard to landscape character as promoted by the ELC.

National Planning Policy

- 4.12 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was last updated by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in September 2023. This document sets out a general presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11) and guides the Local Planning Authorities in the production of Local Plans and in decision making.
- 4.13 In Section 14, the NPPF sets out its support for renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure, with subsequent paragraphs setting out how this can be achieved.
- 4.14 Section 15 of the NPPF addresses 'conserving and enhancing the natural environment' stating that policies and decisions should contribute to this by *"(a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (noting that this should be commensurate with a statutory status or identified quality identified in a development plan)"* and also *"(b) recognising the 'intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'"*.
- 4.15 The site lies within a landscape identified as forming part of a Special Landscape Area. The landscape value of the site and its local landscape is discussed further in Section 6.

Local Planning Policy

- 4.16 The current adopted Local Plan is the Babergh Local Plan 2011–2031 Core Strategy (BLP) that was adopted at Full Council on Tuesday 25th February 2014. This document currently comprises



the document against which any current proposals will be assessed alongside the Babergh Local Plan (2006).

4.17 Within the BLP the site is within a Special Landscape Area, (SLA) which is indicated in the Proposals Map. The policies for the SLAs area include CRO4 'Special Landscape Areas,' and CRO5 'Utilities in SLAs'.

4.18 A new joint local plan is currently in preparation, the Joint Local Plan will replace the current Local Plan for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils. The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan no longer includes an SLA Policy and that there would therefore be no additional policy protection to the area should the plan be adopted.

Policy CRO4 – Special Landscape Areas

4.19 This policy sets out that:

'Development proposals in Special Landscape Areas will only be permitted where they:

- *maintain or enhance the special landscape qualities of the area, identified in the relevant landscape appraisal; and*
- *Are designed and sited so as to harmonise with the landscape setting'.*

Policy CRO5 – Utilities in SLA's

4.20 This policy sets out that:

'In considering proposals by statutory undertakers and utility providers for buildings and other installations in Special Landscape Areas, particular regard will be paid to siting, design and landscaping. Major utilities and powerlines will be permitted only where it can be demonstrated that they do not have a significant detrimental effect on the landscape characteristics of the Special Landscape Area'.

4.21 Where development is permitted the Local Plan notes that the provisions of Policy CRO1 Landscape Quality will be rigorously applied.

4.22 Other policies within the BLP of relevance to landscape and visual issues are summarised below.



Policy EN04 – Species and Biodiversity Action Plan

4.23 This policy sets out that:

'All development proposals must provide for the protection and, wherever possible, the retention, of existing semi-natural features on the site, including rivers, streams, ponds, marshes, woodlands, hedgerows, trees, features of geological interest, and also including wildlife corridors and green wedges.'

Policy EN06 – Habitat Creation

4.24 This policy sets out that:

'If development is proposed, the scope for habitat creation for wildlife will be actively sought. If new habitats are created, measures will be put in place to ensure suitable management and if appropriate, public access in perpetuity. The targets included in the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan will be taken into account.'

Policy EN10 – Renewable Energy

4.25 This policy sets out that:

'Planning permission will be granted for development proposals for renewable energy generation, subject to there being no unacceptable impact on the local environment in terms of noise; smell; visual intrusion; residential amenity; relationship to adjoining uses; landscape characteristics; biodiversity; cultural heritage; public rights of way; the water environment; public safety; the treatment of waste products; and highway and access considerations.'

Policy CNO3 – Maintaining Local Distinctiveness

4.26 This policy sets out that:

'Development leading to the loss of important open space, visually important gaps in the street scene or recreational facilities within towns and villages will not be permitted.'

Policy CRO8 – Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

4.27 This policy sets out that:



'Where development proposals affect hedgerows of amenity or landscape significance, planning permission will only be granted where:

- *hedgerows are retained in full, or*
- *suitable mitigation such as replacement planting and management programmes are proposed.'*



5. Proposed Development

5.1 The proposal is for a solar (PV) farm on land at Boxted Solar Farm, Land west of Boxted. The development would have the capacity of up to 20MW of renewable energy.

5.2 The description of development is as follows:

"Construction and Operation of a solar farm with all associated works, equipment, necessary infrastructure and biodiversity net gains."

5.3 The solar farm would consist of solar PV panels on metal arrays arranged in rows, allowing for boundary landscaping, perimeter fencing and site access, as detailed on the submitted Infrastructure Layout (Figure 4 – Drawing Number O4806-RES-LAY-DR-PT-004 Rev 2). The arrays are spaced a minimum of 2 meters apart (subject to topography) to avoid any shadowing effect from one panel to another. Construction of the development is anticipated to take 6 months. The development will have an operational life of 40 years, after which time it will be decommissioned, the equipment will be removed and the land restored to its original condition with landscape mitigation retained on site. Decommissioning is anticipated to take 12 months.

5.4 The following features are anticipated to be included as part of the proposed solar development:

- The installation of fixed-tilt, bi-facial^[1], ground mounted solar arrays running from east to west across the site (Figure 8 – Drawing Number O4806-RES-SOL-DR-PT-001 Rev 1). The solar arrays will be maximum 3.5m in height including varying ground clearance according to topography and module configuration, to allow for dual purpose renewable energy generation and agricultural sheep grazing. The solar panels will be angled at approximately 10–30° to the horizontal, in order to capture maximum radiation. Furthermore, the solar panels will have a non-reflective surface, which will increase the proportion of radiation absorbed, removing the risk of unwanted reflection and glare;
- Invertors/transformer units which will convert the Direct Current (DC) into an Alternating Current (AC) which is compatible with the Local Distribution Network and National Grid;
- Battery Storage Units;

^[1] Bi-facial solar panels are able to generate power from the reflected and diffuse light on the rear-side of the panels as well as from direct and diffuse light reaching the top of the panels (as opposed to mono-facial panels which have only one side of solar cells collecting light). The use of bi-facial panels means that there is potential to produce more electricity in less space.



- Client/DNO substation;
- Grid connection to the existing overhead powerlines within the site;
- Internal access tracks, to allow for the construction and maintenance of the solar panels;
- As the proposed solar farm will require little maintenance, the site will be unmanned. In order to protect the installation, an unobtrusive deer fence will be installed around the perimeter of the site. CCTV cameras with infra-red lighting will be installed, where required, on the perimeter fence. These will be inward facing towards the solar farm;
- Additional landscaping including hedgerow planting and improved biodiversity management.
- Limited waste will be produced and almost all elements are recyclable; and
- The operational lifetime of the proposed development is 40 years and, being reversible on decommissioning, is therefore considered to be a temporary project.

5.5 The inclusion of battery energy storage units as part of the proposed solar farm is to help increase the flexibility and generation opportunities for Boxted Solar Farm.

5.6 It is proposed to include 2 x battery storage containers measuring a total of 12.1m x 2.4m x 2.9m (length x width x height) at each inverter location. Each inverter location will include the following equipment (locations as shown on Figure 4 – Drawing Number O4806-RES-LAY-DR-PT-004 Rev 2 and example of inverter/battery storage compound shown on Figure 12 – O4806-RES-SOL-DR-PT-002 Rev 2):

- Hardstanding (for set down);
- 1 x inverter which includes: inverter and busplus cabinet, and transformer. Each inverter is approx. 3m width x 5m length x 3m height (see Figure 13 – Drawing No O4806-RES-SOL-DR-PT-003);
- 4 x DC Converter cabinets measuring approximately 1.2m width x 1.8m length x 2.3m height (see Figure 15 – Drawing No O4806-RES-SUB-DR-PT-001); and
- 2 x battery storage containers (with heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) units) attached at the short end. The total measurement of the container units is approx. 2.4m width x 12.1m length x 2.9m height. (See Figure 14 – Drawing No O4806-RES-BAT-DR-RT-001 Rev 1)

5.7 The battery containers are typically modified ISO-style shipping containers set on concrete foundations, with HVAC units. The containers are generally finished in a shade of white or grey.

5.8 The point of connection is located towards the centre of the site. Cabling will run from the



inverter stations to the 33kV substation, where the electricity will be exported to the existing overhead line to the distribution networks via a Point of Connection (PoC) mast.

- 5.9 Care has been taken to retain existing trees and hedgerows where possible: to retain the character of the local area: to maintain existing visual buffers; and to maintain biodiversity.

Opportunities for Mitigation

- 5.10 The landscape proposals, as shown on the figure at **Appendix 11**, show new blocks of woodland on the northern boundaries to provide robust containment, gapping up of existing hedgerows and introduction of additional hedgerow trees to break local views from adjacent lanes and footpaths. Existing hedgerows would also be subject to amended maintenance regimes and would be allowed to grow taller to provide additional enclosure. Consideration has also been given to the location of the battery energy storage units within the site in order to reduce their potential impact. Generally speaking however, the limited height of the units when compared to the panels is such that they represent only a minimal extent of the impacts and are often screened from view entirely by the adjacent panels. Landscape mitigation proposals include:

- Offsetting from the existing field boundaries and hedgerow to avoid impact on the root protection areas. A generous buffer has been incorporated to allow for maintenance.
- Hedgerow along the southern boundary of the site to be infilled wherever necessary with proposed native hedgerow species to ensure dense coverage along boundary length. Hedgerow to be managed to a minimum of 4m height.
- Extensive planting of native hedgerow trees across the site to reflect existing landscape features and strengthen historical field boundaries.
- Creation of new woodland blocks throughout the northern edges of the site to reflect existing landscape character; selected standard trees to be scattered throughout the proposed woodland mixes to add height and structure at implementation.



6. Landscape Baseline and Effects

- 6.1 The assessment of Landscape Effects deals with the changes to the landscape as a resource. Different combinations of the physical, natural and cultural components (including aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects) of the landscape and their spatial distribution create the distinctive character of landscapes in different places.
- 6.2 Effects are considered in relation to both landscape features and landscape character during construction, at Year 1 and at Year 7 and beyond. The sensitivity of landscape features is a function of both their susceptibility and value, as discussed further in the Assessment Criteria at Appendix 1. A summary of landscape effects is included in **Table 1**.

Landscape Features

Landform and Topography

- 6.3 The site is irregular in shape, approximately 1 km in extent at its widest point, north west to south east, and approximately 790 m wide north east to south west. The site is located on the sloping ground of the southern valley side of the River Glem, with a high point of 90 m AOD to the west of the site, north of Park Wood. Locally there is a downwards slope to the north and east of the site to a level of approximately 45 m AOD, where the landform falls in the direction of the River Glem. The landform rises to the north of the river to a level of 85 m at Millhill Farm, approximately 1.2km from the site, and to a high point of 100 m at St Margaret's Church in Somerton, approximately 1.93 km from the site. The landform also rises to the north east of the river, to a high point of 99 m AOD at Lord's Farm in Hartest Village, approximately 1.93 km from the site. The landform also rises to the west of the site, up to a high point of 98 m near Moat Farm, approximately 540 m from the site. To the south, the landform is gently undulating, with a series of streams carving through the landscape. The local topography can be seen in the figure at **Appendix 3**.
- 6.4 Overall, the susceptibility of the landform and topography of the site is judged to be medium and its value is judged to be medium. Therefore, the sensitivity is judged to be no more than medium. There would be limited changes to the landform of the site to accommodate the associated structures, including fencing and CCTV. The solar panels would not require any foundations, with the metal frame being driven into the ground, (usually to between 2m and 2.5m depending on ground conditions). There would be largely no change to the topography of the



site. The magnitude of change therefore is considered to be no greater than low, which would result in no more than Minor Adverse levels of effects during all periods, which would be non-permanent.

Land Use, Buildings, and Infrastructure

- 6.5 There are no properties or built form within the site. The site consists of six agricultural fields, (in part or in full) currently in arable production with hedgerow boundaries and trees within the hedgerows. There are two areas of woodland along the southern boundary of the site, and another area of woodland along part of the northern boundary. Part of the eastern boundary of the site, bordering the lane 'Braggon's Hill' is well furnished with existing mature vegetation. A track runs along part of the north eastern boundary of the site, leading to Moorhouse Farm. There are no public rights of way within the site, the lane Baggins Hill forming the eastern site boundary has a footpath running parallel to the lane within the field to the east, (reference footpath 11). Braggons Hill continues to the south west as a public byway (reference byway 7).
- 6.6 Although the site as a group of arable fields is greenfield, it is typical of the surrounding agricultural landscape. The susceptibility is judged to be medium, and the value is judged to be medium. Overall, therefore the land use of the site is considered to have a medium sensitivity to the proposed development. The proposals would represent an inevitable change to the current land use from agricultural fields to an operational solar farm with additional ancillary infrastructure and grazed pasture. As such, the magnitude of change is assessed as medium to high, resulting in a Moderate to Major Adverse level of effect during all periods.

Vegetation

- 6.7 The site consists of 6 agricultural fields, (in part or full), mostly bounded by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. The track along part of the northern boundary, heading west from Braggon's Hill, is an open boundary to the south, edged by vegetation to the north. There is also a more open boundary between the site and the track along part of the south eastern boundary, heading south west from Braggon's Hill where the hedgerow is low cut. There are blocks of woodland around the boundaries of the site, including Park Wood and Lownage Wood on the south western boundary, and Dripping Pan Wood along the northern boundary. Park Wood and Lownage Wood are identified on the figure at **Appendix 2** as being ancient woodland. There is also tree planting separating the land at Moorhouse Farm with the site beyond the northern boundary, and trees along the River Glem beyond the north eastern boundary. The separately submitted Tree Survey



provides detail on the tree and hedgerow resource within and adjoining the site.

Trees

- 6.8 The Tree Survey records 34 individual trees, 8 tree groups and 3 woodlands. The pattern of trees within the site is typical of the surrounding landscape with trees which, in the main are limited to the field boundaries. Some parts of the site boundaries are formed by the edges of ancient woodland.
- 6.9 Overall, the susceptibility of the tree resource at the site is judged to be high and the value is judged to be high. It is therefore deemed that the tree resource within the site would have a high sensitivity.
- 6.10 During construction, trees and woodland within and surrounding the immediate site would be protected. An offset of at least 15m is built into the layout from the edges of the ancient woodland sections, with the exception of one location where an existing well-used farm access and existing gap in the hedgerow is to be utilised. This is not anticipated to result in any significant arboricultural impacts due to the historic usage of this area of the site and this matter is addressed further in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, provided separately as part of the planning application submission. A very low magnitude of change is predicted during construction as a consequence of the Proposed Development, resulting in a No Effect at construction and Year 1. The landscape proposals incorporate a tree planting strategy within the site. This will increase the tree resource and provide a new generation of trees within this part of the landscape. The effect at Year 7, as young trees start to establish, will be Minor, beneficial but which would continue to increase over the lifetime of the development and in perpetuity.

Hedgerows

- 6.11 The pattern of hedgerows within the site is typical of the surrounding landscape. The Tree Survey records 25 hedgerows of moderate or low quality.
- 6.12 Although the site features hedgerows which form field boundaries some of these are absent in some sections. Overall, the susceptibility of the hedgerow resource at the site is judged to be medium and the value is judged to be high. It is therefore deemed that the hedgerow resource within the site would have a medium-high sensitivity.



- 6.13 During construction hedgerows within and surrounding the immediate site would be protected. Some limited loss of existing hedgerows could occur to allow for widening of the existing gaps for the access tracks, where proposed fencing is indicated within them, however this would be minimised wherever possible. A low magnitude of change is predicted during construction as a consequence of the small potential amount of hedgerow loss, resulting in a Moderate Adverse level of effect during construction.
- 6.14 At Year 1, all proposed mitigation planting illustrated on the plan at **Appendix 11** would be in place, albeit that it would be yet to mature. As a result, a very low magnitude of change would occur at Year 1, resulting in a Minor Beneficial level of effect. At year 7 the proposed planting would be establishing resulting in a medium magnitude of change and a Moderate beneficial effect on hedgerows.

Public Rights of Way

- 6.15 There is a network of Public Rights of Way within the wider study area, including several leading to Boxted. The closest, as noted above lies beyond the eastern boundary and the narrow country lane called Braggon's Hill. The byway continues from Braggon's Hill lane along the southern eastern boundary of the site, to Tittle Hall Cottages, for a short section it becomes restricted byway reference 7. The byway leads into a public footpath (reference footpath 15) as it passes past Tittle Hall Cottages. This continues away from the south western boundary of the site, providing a route to Fenstead End. There is also a network of footpaths across the agricultural fields to the south of the site, and a network of footpaths across agricultural fields to the north west of the site.
- 6.16 No diversions of any PRoW are required to facilitate the proposed scheme. With a high susceptibility, value and sensitivity combined with no magnitude of change there would be no physical degree of effect on the public right of way as a resource and facility.

Watercourses and drainage

- 6.17 Located to the south of the River Glem in the valley bottom to the north, there are no tributaries, watercourses or drainage features within the site and therefore there would be no effects on watercourses or drainage features as a result of the proposed development.



Landscape Character

6.18 This section provides an overview of the landscape character of the site and its locality. It provides an indication of the sensitivity of the landscape character to the proposed development and the resulting effects which would arise from the development proposals. The sensitivity of landscape character areas is a function of both susceptibility and value, as discussed further in the Assessment Criteria at **Appendix 1**.

National Landscape Character Assessment

6.19 The site falls within National Character Area 86 South Suffolk (NCA 86) and North Essex Clayland. The Key Characteristics of NCA 86 are as follows:

- *An undulating chalky boulder clay plateau is dissected by numerous river valleys, giving a topography of gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrower upper parts.*
- *Fragments of chalk give many of the soils a calcareous character, which also influences the character of the semi-natural vegetation cover.*
- *South-east-flowing streams and rivers drain the clay plateau. Watercourses wind slowly across flood plains, supporting wet, fen-type habitats; grazing marsh; and blocks of cricket-bat willows, poplars and old willow pollards. Navigation locks are present on some rivers.*
- *Lowland wood pasture and ancient woodlands support the dormouse and a rich diversity of flowering plants on the clay plateau. Large, often ancient hedgerows link woods and copses, forming wooded skylines.*
- *The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving. Field margins support corn bunting, cornflower and brown hare.*
- *Roman sites, medieval monasteries and castles and ancient woodlands contribute to a rich archaeology. Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates and Second World War airfields dot the landscape, forming historical resources. There is a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, parishes and small settlements around 'tyes' (commons) or strip greens and isolated hamlets. The NCA features a*



concentration of isolated moated farmsteads and numerous well-preserved medieval towns and large villages.

- *Larger 20th-century development has taken place to the south and east around Chelmsford, Ipswich and the new towns of Harlow and Stevenage.*
- *Traditional timber-frame, often elaborate buildings with exposed timbers, colour-washed render, pargeting and steeply pitched roofs with pegtiles or long straw thatch. Sometimes they have been refronted with Georgian red brick or Victorian cream-coloured bricks ('Suffolk whites'). Clay lump is often used in cottages and farm buildings.*
- *Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows. Transport infrastructure includes the A14, A12, M11 and Stansted Airport.*
- *A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area's archetypal lowland English countryside.*

6.20 This national level assessment gives a broad impression of a region and provides a useful contextual overview of the character of the wider landscape. However, the proposed development is not considered to have the potential to result in any perceptible effects on landscape character at this national scale and to remain proportionate to the small scale of the site in relation to the NCA, focus is placed upon the local landscape character.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

6.21 The Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment (SLCA) locates the majority of the site within the 'Undulating Ancient Farmland' Landscape Character Type (LCT) and parts of the site to the north west and north east are within the 'Rolling Valley Farmlands' LCT. In the wider context of the landscape, the Rolling Valley Farmlands LCT follows the edges of the River Glem, and the Undulating Ancient Farmland LCT extends across a large area of generally agricultural fields away from the immediate influence of the river corridor. The location of the site in relation to these LCAs is shown at **Appendix 5**.

6.22 The key features for LCT 'Undulating Ancient Farmland' are set out in the SLCA and summarised as follows:

- *Undulating arable landscape*



- *Field pattern generally a random ancient pattern with occasional areas of regular fields associated with former mediaeval deer parks*
- *Oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees*
- *Substantial open areas created for airfields and by post WWII agricultural improvement*
- *Dispersed settlement pattern of loosely clustered villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads*
- *Villages often associated with greens or former greens*
- *Rich stock of mediaeval and Tudor timber-framed and brick buildings and moated sites*
- *A large scale landscape with long undulating open views trees, either in hedges or in woods, are always a prominent feature*
- *In the undulating landscape, crop production, especially oilseeds can be visually prominent*

6.23 The key features for LCA 'Rolling Valley Farmlands' are set out in the SLCA and summarised as follows:

- *Gentle valley sides with some complex and steep slopes*
- *Deep well drained loamy soils*
- *Organic pattern of fields smaller than on the plateaux*
- *Distinct areas of regular field patterns*
- *A scattering of landscape parks*
- *Small ancient woodlands on the valley fringes*
- *Sunken lanes*
- *Towns and villages with distinctive mediaeval cores and late mediaeval churches*
- *Industrial activity and manufacture, continuing in the Gipping valley*
- *Large, often moated, houses*

*Effects on LCT Undulating Ancient Farmland*

- 6.24 The site area is largely typical of the landscape character of the Undulating Ancient Farmland character type. The land is part of an undulating arable farmland landscape. The field pattern is generally irregular with dispersed surrounding settlement largely consisting of small hamlets, clustered villages and isolated farmsteads. It is part of a generally large scale landscape with open views punctuated with hedgerow trees and blocks of woodland.
- 6.25 The susceptibility of this part of the Undulating Ancient Farmland character type is considered to be medium, on the basis of it being a group of arable fields divided and connected by a network of hedgerows and woodland blocks. In terms of value, this section of the LCT is currently covered by the local Special Landscape Areas designation, (Policies CRO4 and CRO5 of the Local Plan), albeit that the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan no longer includes an SLA Policy and that there would therefore be no additional policy protection to the area should the plan be adopted. The part of the SLA within which the site is located form part of the River Glem catchment which, in turn, forms part of the landscape beyond the boundaries of the Dedham Vale and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site does not therefore lie within the AONB, but the landscape has been considered as part of an Additional Project Area (APA) associated with the AONB. The landscape within the SLA forms a small part of the Stour Valley Project Area and which can best be seen at Figure 1 of **Appendix 8**.
- 6.26 There are no listed buildings or identified historical or ecological interests directly associated with the site, albeit that some lie within close proximity to the site boundary. Whilst it lies within an area of locally identified value and contains elements of value in the form of existing trees and hedgerows and the ancient woodland bordering the site, the site is not accessible for recreation and is of a nature which is not rare in the local landscape. On balance therefore it is judged that the landscape value of the site is high. Overall as an area of arable farmland typical in its context with many other comparable fields in the wider landscape, with a medium susceptibility and a high value the character of Undulating Ancient Farmland character type is therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to the proposed development.
- 6.27 Due to the scale of the proposed development within this LCT, the proposals would introduce a notable feature into a predominantly agricultural landscape which would change the physical and perceptual attributes of the site itself but would have a limited influence on the wider local landscape. All of the key characteristics identified within the LCT would remain and prevail



beyond the site itself with the scheme in place, with the exception of the arable use function, which in itself does not require planning permission.

6.28 Furthermore, the field pattern, hedgerows and hedgerow trees and the grain of the landscape would all remain in place. The site would still be in agricultural use just not so obvious given the solar panels and associated infrastructure. There would be no net loss of any features other than the current arable land use, the only difference is that the solar panels would be introduced along with the other infrastructure within the framework of the fields.

6.29 However, due to the proximity of local lanes and footpaths, views of the development would be available, notwithstanding the introduction of further planting. In character terms, beyond the site and its immediate environs, there would be a limited material change to the physical and experiential characteristics of the landscape. Indeed, the effects upon this landscape character area closest to the site would be highly limited considering the local valley landscape and topography, whereby the influence upon the LCA would not extend beyond the immediate south of the site due to the local topography which has a very limited influence beyond the southern site boundary.

6.30 There would be an indirect influence upon the character area where this occurs on the opposite side of the Glem Valley to the north and north east and whereby a part of landform would incorporate a solar development where no such similar development is present within the local landscape.

6.31 Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would give rise to a medium to low magnitude of change upon those limited parts of the wider character area from which it would be visible during construction, Year 1 and at Year 7, which would result in a Moderate to Major/Moderate Adverse level of effect.

Effects on LCT Rolling Valley Farmlands

6.32 The very northern edges of the site area fall into the Rolling Valley Farmlands landscape character area due largely to the lower relative topography of these sections. Landscape character is generally a transition between one character area and another and not usually reflective of a fixed boundary. In this case the remainder and large part of the fields that fall within the rolling Valley Farmlands continue within the Undulating Ancient Farmland. Separation of these fields in both cases is provided on the northern edge by hedgerows where in both cases the land transitions into grassland beyond the site boundaries which is potentially more



reflective of the Valley Meadowlands Landscape Character Type to the north, see the figure at **Appendix 5**. Notwithstanding this transition and the relatively thin banding of the character areas within the river corridor, the site area also reflects some of the characteristics of the Rolling Valley Farmlands. The valley sides are gentle, with deep well drained loamy soils with small ancient woodlands on the valley fringes and large often moated houses, for example Moat Farm to the west of the site boundary.

- 6.33 The susceptibility of this part of the Rolling Valley Farmlands character type is considered to be medium, on the basis of it being as above a group of arable fields divided and connected by a network of hedgerows and woodland blocks. In terms of value, again this section of the LCT is covered by the local Special Landscape Areas designation, associated with the River Glem catchment. On balance therefore it is judged that the landscape value of this portion of the site is high. Overall, as an area of arable farmland typical in its context with many other comparable fields in the wider landscape, with a medium susceptibility and a high value the character of the Rolling Valley Farmlands character type is therefore also considered to be of high sensitivity to the proposed development.
- 6.34 Due to the scale of the proposed development, the proposals would introduce a notable feature into a predominantly agricultural landscape which would change the physical and perceptual attributes of the site itself but would have a limited influence on the wider local landscape and this LCT. Therefore, it is predicted that the proposed development would give rise to a low magnitude of change upon the wider character area during construction and at Year 1, which would result in a Moderate/Minor Adverse level of effect at construction and Year 1.
- 6.35 The landscape proposals incorporate areas of woodland at the northern, lower, parts of the site where the site lies within and at the transition between the upper valley sides of the Undulating Ancient Farmland LCT and the lower Rolling Farmlands LCT. This aims to provide future reinforcement of the 'Small ancient woodlands on the valley fringes' characteristic of this LCT. At Year 7 the young woodland would be in early establishment and would bring about a very low magnitude of change, but one which becomes Minor beneficial, and would continue to increase its beneficial effect over the lifetime of the Proposed Development and in perpetuity.

Landscape Character of the Site and Immediate Surroundings

- 6.36 The site itself is characterised by its sloping topography overlain by the arable fields, generally divided and edged by hedgerows and in parts blocks of woodland. The susceptibility of the



landscape of the site itself to a development of the type proposed is considered to be medium to high, on the basis that the site is currently a series of typical undeveloped arable fields. In terms of the value of the site, it lies within an area covered by a local landscape designation. There are no Listed Buildings or identified historical or ecological interests with which it is directly associated. Whilst it contains some elements of value, in the form of the existing trees and hedgerows, it is not accessible for recreation and is of a nature which is not rare in the local landscape. On balance therefore it is judged that the landscape value of the site is medium/high. Overall, as an area of agricultural land typical in its context with many other comparable fields in the wider landscape, with a medium susceptibility and a medium/high value, the character of the site is therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to the proposed development.

- 6.37 The proposals would introduce a notable feature into an area of arable fields within a wider agricultural landscape which would change the physical and perceptual attributes of the site itself. Therefore, it is predicted that the proposed development would give rise to a high magnitude of change upon the character of the site area and immediate surrounds during construction and at Year 7, which would result in a Major Adverse level of effect.

Valued Landscape

- 6.38 The site and its wider landscape are located within an area currently identified as a Special Landscape Area (SLA) within the BLP, albeit that the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan no longer includes an SLA Policy and that there would therefore be no additional policy protection to the area should the plan be adopted. For clarity, the site and its wider landscape is currently considered to be a valued landscape as described at paragraph 174 of the NPPF by virtue of this local designation.



Table 1 - Summary of Landscape Effects

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Landscape Features				
Landform and topography	Medium	Construction	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 7	Low	Minor adverse
Land use, buildings and infrastructure.	Medium	Construction	Medium to High	Moderate to Major adverse
		Year 1	Medium to High	Moderate to Major adverse
		Year 7	Medium to High	Moderate to Major adverse
Trees	High	Construction	Very low	Minor adverse/No Effect
		Year 1	Very low	No effect/Minor beneficial
		Year 7	Medium	Moderate beneficial
Hedgerows	Medium - High	Construction	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor beneficial
		Year 7	Medium	Moderate beneficial
Public Rights of Way	High	Construction	Very low	No effect
		Year 1	Very low	No effect
		Year 7	Very low	No effect
Watercourses and drainage	Medium - High	Construction	Very low	No effect
		Year 1	Very low	No effect
		Year 7	Very low	No effect



Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Landscape Character				
LCT Undulating Ancient Farmland	High	Construction	Medium to Low	Moderate to Major/Moderate Adverse
		Year 1	Medium to Low	Moderate to Major/Moderate Adverse
		Year 7	Medium to Low	Moderate to Major/Moderate Adverse
LCT Rolling Farmlands	High	Construction	Low	Moderate/Minor Adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate/Minor Adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor Beneficial
The site and immediate surrounds	High	Construction	High	Major Adverse
		Year 1	High	Major Adverse
		Year 7	High	Major Adverse

Landscape Features and Character - Conclusion

- 6.39 The Arboricultural Impact Assessment concludes that the proposed development would ‘not result in the complete removal of any significant trees, tree groups, or hedgerows’. Those elements of the site which make the greatest, positive contribution to the localised or wider landscape setting are the woodlands, hedgerow trees and hedgerows and those are proposed to be retained, protected, and supplemented.
- 6.40 There would be inevitable effects upon the land use of the site and these are assessed to be Moderate to Major adverse. It is not considered that there would be any greater than a minor adverse effect upon landform and topography, vegetation and no effect upon PRoW or watercourses/drainage.



6.41 The effects of the proposed development upon landscape character would be major adverse for the character of the site itself and moderate to major/moderate adverse upon those limited parts of the wider Undulating Ancient Farmland LCT from which it would be visible, during construction, Year 1 and Year 7. Effects upon the Rolling Farmlands LCT are moderate/minor adverse at construction and Year 1, reducing to minor beneficial from Year 7. The effects upon the wider landscape are localised to areas in proximity to the site itself, although with some influence upon the character of the Undulating Ancient Farmlands which continue to the north of the Glem Valley.



7. Visual Effects

- 7.1 An assessment of visual effects considers the potential for changes in views and visual amenity. The aim is to establish the area in which the development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected, and the nature of the views and visual amenity (meaning the overall quality and pleasantness to a view).
- 7.2 Effects are considered during construction, at Year 1 and at Year 7 and beyond. New planting takes a number of years to mature and average growth rates have been taken into consideration. The effectiveness of the vegetation both in terms of integrating the development into the surrounding landscape and in providing visual screening would improve over time and needs to be considered appropriately. A summary of visual effects is included in **Table 2**.
- 7.3 A photographic record is included in **Appendix 10** with the viewpoint locations shown on the ZTV at **Appendix 9**.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 7.4 The Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (**Appendix 9**) identifies the potential locations from which the development may be visible. The Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (SZTV) has been produced using Digital Terrain Modelling (DTM) and LIDAR data. Existing built development (8m tall) and larger blocks of woodland have also been modelled (15m tall) to take account of the screening effect that these would provide. However, the screening effect provided by smaller blocks of woodland and hedgerows/hedgerow trees, particularly those surrounding the site, have not been taken into account, and consequently the actual extent of the area from which the proposed development is visible is likely to be much smaller.
- 7.5 The SZTV has been run at a height of 3.5m across the site for the elements which form the Proposed Development.

Views from Residential Receptors

- 7.6 All residential receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity unless stated otherwise, however it is important to consider that whilst there may arise a high degree of change to the views of residents, it is well established that in planning terms, there is no right to a view.



7.7 Based upon a review of the SZTV (**Appendix 9**) and from site work, there are a number of residential receptors for whom, either by virtue of distance, local topography or vegetative screening, no greater than a negligible effect is anticipated. In particular for these reasons, residential receptors located beyond 2km are not assessed in more detail.

7.8 Residential receptors for which there is potential for visibility of the proposed development within the site are as follows:

Moorhouse Farm

7.9 Moorhouse Farm lies to the north of the site. The dwelling (which is a Listed Building) is located to the south of its driveway with the outbuildings to the north. The vegetation which surrounds the property consists of tree and woodland block planting which will filter existing views towards the site, particularly in the summer months. Nonetheless there is some potential for views from the south facing aspects of the property and its surrounding curtilage.

7.10 Viewpoint 1 represents views at the entrance to the driveway leading to Moorhouse Farm. The boundary of the driveway is presently undefined by a hedgerow or fenceline, and views will be available from the driveway into the north eastern parts of the site and the land within the eastern parts of the site as it rises to the south. There would be a high magnitude of change to views from the driveway to the property at construction and Year 1. The landscape proposals, however, incorporate a woodland belt to the south of the driveway and which will have become well established at Year 7 offering effective filtering of views into the site during winter months. It is acknowledged, however, that this will remain an apparent change to existing open views from parts of the driveway, albeit it that the views of woodland may be perceived to be a more positive change than that of the solar development beyond. The effects at construction and Year 1 are **major adverse**. The magnitude of change reduces to medium, whereby new woodland reinforces the existing characteristics to the north of the driveway, with an effect of **moderate adverse**.

7.11 It is predicted that there would be a medium magnitude of change to the view from the dwelling itself during the construction phase, reducing to a low magnitude of change by year 7. This will result in a **moderate** effect for these residents during construction and Year 1, reducing to **moderate/minor** by year 7.



Groups of properties around Townsend Farm

- 7.12 The group of properties around Townsend Farm lie to the north east of the site, to the north and south of the B1066 and on land which is generally sloping (between 60m and 55m AOD) towards a small watercourse to their east. The properties to the north of the B1066 have some vegetation screening within their curtilage. The properties to the south of the B1066 have limited vegetation screening to their south-western boundary. There is some potential for views from the western and east-facing aspects of the properties and their surrounding curtilage. Viewpoint 7 (**Appendix 10**) represents views close to the properties around Townsend Farm, albeit that the viewpoint is located slightly further south and from a location where there is a more open aspect towards the site, such that views from the properties would be likely to be more limited.
- 7.13 It is predicted that there would however be no more than a medium magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **moderate** effect for these residents during construction, Year 1 and Year 7.

Properties at Boxted

- 7.14 The settlement of Boxted lies to the north east of the site, with properties concentrated along the B1066. Due to vegetation on the western edge of the B1066, this would restrict views towards the site, with the potential for filtered views. It is predicted that there would however be no more than a low magnitude of change to the views from these properties during the construction phase and Year 1, reducing to a very low impact by year 7. This will result in a **moderate/minor** effect for these residents during construction, reducing to **minor** by year 7.

Properties around Hall Farm and Carnalfield Grove

- 7.15 The group of properties around Hall Farm and Carnalfield Grove lie to the east of the site. There are some trees around Hall Farm, but where there is potential for filtered views towards the site through the vegetation. It is considered that there would however be no more than a low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase and Year 1, reducing to a very low impact by year 7. This will result in a **moderate/minor** effect for these residents during construction and Year 1, reducing to **minor** by year 7.



Tittle Hall Cottages

- 7.16 The group of properties lies to the south of the site. There is limited vegetation surrounding the properties. The properties front and rear facades don't face towards the site. The rising landform and intervening existing woodland and tree planting would limit visibility of the site. Viewpoint 4 (**Appendix 10**) represents views close to Tittle Hall Cottages.
- 7.17 It is considered that there would, however, be no more than a very low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **minor** effect for these residents during construction, Year 1 and Year 7.

Properties to the north of Townsend Farm, north of the B1066

- 7.18 The group of properties to the north of Townsend Farm, north of the B1066 are located approximately 825m to the north of the site, at approximately 75mAOD. There is limited vegetation to the south of the properties. There is some potential for views from the southern facing aspects of the properties and their surrounding curtilage due to their relatively elevated position on the valley side. Viewpoint 10 (**Appendices 10 and 12**) represents views close to these properties.
- 7.19 It is anticipated that there would be a medium magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase and Year 1, reducing to a medium/low impact by year 7. This will result in a **moderate** effect for these residents during construction and Year 1 and **moderate/minor** at Year 7.

Somerton Hall and Eaton Cottages

- 7.20 The group of properties at Somerton Hall and Eaton Cottages are located approximately 680m to the north of the site at approximately 50mAOD. The properties are situated on the minor road which links the B1066 to the east and along a minor road which then connects northwards to the village of Somerton. There is little vegetation within the curtilage of these properties. There is however intervening vegetation and woodland blocks within the intervening landscape. Viewpoint 6 (**Appendix 10**) represents views close to these properties.
- 7.21 It is predicted that there would however be no more than a low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase and Year 1, reducing to low/very low by year 7. This will result in a **moderate** effect for these residents during construction and Year 1,



reducing to **minor beneficial** effect by year 7 as a result of the establishment of the proposed woodland mix planting along the northern site boundary which reinforces the wooded character within the lower valley landscape and which forms part of views.

Properties at Fishers

7.22 There are number of properties which are located to the south west of the site close to the property of Fishers. The unnamed property to the north of Fishers has mature shelterbelt screening to its north and western edges. Due to orientation of the property, there would be very limited views towards the site. The two properties at Fishers also have some vegetation to all boundaries. This is combination of screening from vegetation and the orientation of the properties which limit visibility in the direction of the site. Viewpoint 5 (**Appendix 10**) represents views from these properties.

7.23 It is predicted that there would however be no more than a very low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **minor effect** for these residents during construction, Year 1 and Year 7.

Truckett's Hall

7.24 Truckett's Farm lies approximately 800m to the southwest of the site. The northern, eastern, and southern boundaries to the curtilage of the property are surrounded by a mature hedgerows and trees. There is, however, the potential for filtered views towards the site, especially in the winter months.

7.25 It is anticipated that there would, however, be no more than a very low magnitude of change to the views from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **minor** effect for these residents during construction, Year 1 and Year 7.

Braggon's Farm

7.26 Braggon's Farm lies approximately 1km to the south east of the site. There is hedgerow and tree planting around the curtilage of the property. There is potential for filtered views towards the site where there are gaps within the vegetation.

7.27 It is predicted that there would however be no more than a very low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **No effect** for these residents during construction, Year 1 and Year 7.



Somerton

- 7.28 The settlement of Somerton lies approximately 1.6km to the north of site at approximately 95mAOD. There is vegetation to the south of these properties and intervening woodland with the surrounding landscape that lies between Somerton and the site. Viewpoint 11 (**Appendices 10 and 12**) represents views from a similar elevation to these properties.
- 7.29 It is anticipated that there would, however, be no more than a very low magnitude of change to the views from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **minor/No effect** effect for these residents during construction, Year 1 and Year 7.

Properties at Mile End and Millhill Farm

- 7.30 The properties are situated on Somerton Road, approximately 1.3km to the north of the site at an elevation of approximately 85mAOD. There is some vegetation surrounding the properties. There would be views towards the site, due to the elevated position.
- 7.31 It is anticipated that there would however be no more than a low/very low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **minor** effect for these residents during construction. Year 1 and Year 7.

Properties at Hartest

- 7.32 The properties are situated approximately 1-1.5km to the north east of site. The settlement is fairly well screening by vegetation to the western and southern boundaries and the local valley topography which can be seen by the variation in ZTV coverage (**Appendix 9**). There would be limited views of the site from the majority of the properties within Hartest.
- 7.33 It is anticipated that there would however be no more than a very low magnitude of change to views from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **minor** effect for these residents during construction, Year 1 and Year 7.

Properties around Hill Farm, Hartest Hill and Cawstons Farm

- 7.34 There are a number of properties around Hill Farm, Hartest Hill and Cawstones Farm which lie approximately 1.5km to the north east of the site. The majority of the properties have some vegetation screening to their southern boundaries. However, there is potential for filtered views towards the site where vegetation screening is limited.



7.35 It is predicted that there would however be no more than a medium/low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **moderate/minor** effect for these residents during construction, Year 1 and Year 7.

Properties at Brickhouse Farm

7.36 There are a number of properties at Brickhouse Farm which lie approximately 1.1km and at 65mAOD to the north east of the site. The majority of the properties have some vegetation screening to the southern and western boundaries of their properties. However, there is potential for filtered, oblique views towards the site where vegetation screening is limited.

7.37 It is predicted that there would however be worst-case very low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **minor** effect for these residents during construction, Year 1 and by Year 7.

Giffords Farm and Dales Farm

7.38 There are a number of properties around Giffords Farm and Dales Farm which lies approximately 1.7km to the east of the site. The majority of the properties have some vegetation screening to the southern and western boundaries or out buildings limiting views towards the site. However, there is potential for filtered views where vegetation or intervening buildings are not present.

7.39 It is predicted that there would however be no more than a very low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **minor** effect for these residents.

Properties near Park Farm

7.40 There are a number of properties near to Park Farm which lies approximately 1.1km to the south east of the site. Due to extensive vegetation screening and intervening vegetation and orientation of the properties there would be limited or no views of the site.

7.41 It is anticipated that there would be no more than a very low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during all phases. This will result in **No effect** for these residents during all phases.



Coopwell Farm

7.42 There are two properties at Coopwell Farm which lies approximately 1.5km to the south east of the site. The properties are set back and surrounding by tree planting to the north, east, south and west of the property. There would be limited or no views of the site due to the vegetation and orientation of the properties.

7.43 It is anticipated that there would be no more than a very low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during all phases. This will result in **No effect** for these residents during all phases.

Properties close to Hill Farm and Millhill Farm

7.44 There are several properties close to Hill Farm and Millhill Farm which lie more than 1.5km to the south of the site. There is some vegetation, although limited in parts. There are likely to be filtered views towards the site from some of the properties.

7.45 It is anticipated that there would be no more than a very low magnitude of change to the view from these properties during all phases. This will result in **No effect** for these residents during all phases.

Views from Public Rights of Way

7.46 Key PRow from where there is potential for visibility of proposed development within the site are as follows:

- Boxted Footpath 11 – From the settlement of Boxted to Hall Farm, (represented by viewpoint 1 in the vicinity of the route).
- Boxted Byway (Open to all traffic) 7 & Restricted byway 7X- From north of Home Farm Cottages on Braggons Hill (Lane) to north of Tittle Hall Cottages, (represented by viewpoint 2).
- Boxted Footpath 15 – From South west of the property Cockles off lane to Tittle Hall Cottages, (represented by viewpoints 4&5).
- Somerton Footpath 7 – From Lane west of Somerton Hall to Somerton, (represented by Viewpoint 8).
- Somerton Footpaths 10 and 17 – From Somerton Hall to west of Mile End, (represented by viewpoint 9.)



- Hartest Footpath 10 – From Roger's Lane (Track) to the B1066 south west of Hartest, (represented by viewpoint 10).
- Hartest Footpath 15 – From Hartest to Hartest Hill, (represented by viewpoint 12).
- Shimpling Bridleway 1 – From Gifford's Farm and Dales Farm, (represented by viewpoint 14).
- Glemsford Restricted Byway 25 from Millhill Farm to Pits (disused), (represented by viewpoint 15).

7.47 Although the SZTV indicates theoretical visibility from other locations within the study area, site work concluded that, the combination of additional vegetation within the intervening landscape and the distance from the site, the proposed changes would be indistinct, if at all visible. The assessment focusses upon those routes where there would be potential for greater than a negligible effect to be assessed.

Boxted Footpath 11

7.48 This footpath is approximately 500m long and is located within the field to the east of Braggon's Hill (Lane), which runs adjacent to the south eastern boundary. Views from the top of the lane near to the northern extents of the footpath are represented by viewpoint 1 (Appendix 10). The footpath runs from the settlement of Boxted to Hall Farm. The footpath is accessed to the north from the lane via some steps and runs adjacent to a field hedgerow separating the footpath from the lane. The hedgerow is generally continuous in the upper sections adjacent to the footpath and additional vegetation lies along the site boundary on the western site of the lane. Approximately 350m from the north the route turns south eastwards away from the site boundaries. Particularly open views of the site area are available where the vegetation adjacent to the footpath and the lane become more sparse. Users of this footpath are considered to be of **high sensitivity**.

7.49 Filtered views of the proposal would be available from this route in the northern sections running parallel to the site boundaries through the intervening double boundary hedges particularly in winter views when the vegetation is devoid of leaves. Where the route changes direction in the southern sections, walkers traveling north westwards would gain views towards the site area. These would gradually increase when walking from the south east from Hall Farm. Views of the panels would be interrupted by intervening vegetation but a short section of this is open on the corner of the lane to allow access into the site. The mitigation proposals include additional hedgerow planting along the site boundary adjacent to the lane.



7.50 The magnitude of change is anticipated to be medium to high at construction and Year 1. The effect is anticipated to be **major – major/moderate adverse**. At Year 7, as proposed planting establishes along the site's northern boundary, the magnitude of change is considered to reduce to medium, and the resulting effect to be **major/moderate adverse**.

Boxted Byway (Open to All Traffic) 7 and Restricted byway 7X

7.51 The northern section of these byways runs in part adjacent to the site boundary for a distance of approximately 400m from the corner of Braggon's Hill (lane), they then continue south westwards away from the site boundary for a further approximately 450m to the north of Tittle Hall Cottages. The view from the southern corner of the site boundary is illustrated in viewpoint 2 (**Appendices 10 and 12**). A low close cropped field boundary hedgerow with occasional trees runs along the northern edge of the track adjacent to the site boundary. Beyond the site boundary to the south west the hedgerow continues to the north of the track apart from a break to allow access into the adjacent field to the north. From the site boundary open views are available over the extents of the intervening field forming part of the site area from a gap in the hedgerow vegetation. Users of this byway are considered to be of **high sensitivity**.

7.52 Views of the scheme would be gained from along this route particularly from the northern sections immediately adjacent to the site boundary and from the gap in the field boundary illustrated by viewpoint 2 and the photomontage for viewpoint 2, see **Appendix 12** Along the south western sections of the route views would be slightly more limited by the intervening vegetation of Lownage Wood and the adjacent hedgerow to the south east. The mitigation proposals shown on the landscape masterplan at **Appendix 11** show that the gap would be filled with a section of new hedgerow. The existing hedgerows would also be allowed to grow to 4m in height.

7.53 The magnitude of change is anticipated to be **medium** to **high** at construction and Year 1 depending on what section of the route the receptor is traveling along. The effect is anticipated to be a worst-case **major – major/moderate adverse** during winter months. At Year 7, as proposed planting establishes in the gap along the site's south eastern boundary and the existing hedgerows grow to 4m, the magnitude of change is considered to reduce to **medium**, and the resulting effect to be **major/moderate adverse** as a worst-case during winter months.

*Boxted Footpath 15*

- 7.54 This footpath is located to the south west of the site continuing westwards from byway 7X between Tittle Hill Cottages to the east and the property Cockles to the west where it joins the lane at Fishers. Views from this footpath are represented by viewpoints 4 and 5 (**Appendix 10**). The footpath runs along a farm track which provides access to Tittle Hill Cottages to the east. Hedgerow vegetation lines the northern side of the track along the majority of the route. Longley Wood lies to the north with Park Wood and Lownage Wood on the boundaries of the site area providing further intervening vegetation. Users of this footpath are considered to be of **high sensitivity**.
- 7.55 Potential views of the proposed scheme are limited by intervening vegetation as illustrated in the viewpoint photography. Some very limited views may be available of the southern edge of the proposed scheme through gaps in the intervening vegetation and in the winter months. The mitigation proposals include additional hedgerow trees on the boundaries and the maintenance of existing hedgerows at 4m.
- 7.56 The magnitude of change is anticipated to be low at construction and Year 1 for receptors using this route. The effect is anticipated to be a worst-case **moderate/minor adverse**. At Year 7, as the additional trees and infill hedgerow planting establish along the site's south western boundary and the existing hedgerows are managed at 4m, the magnitude of change is considered to reduce to **very low**, and the resulting effect to be **minor adverse**.

Somerton Footpath 7

- 7.57 This footpath is located to the north west of the site area and runs in an approximately north south direction from the west of Somerton Hall to the settlement of Somerton to the north. The southern most section of the route lies approximately 600m from the north western site boundary. Viewpoint 8 (**Appendix 10**) is taken from approximately halfway along the route as the ground climbs towards the 90m contour. The route follows the field edges, switching in section to the east and west of the hedge lines passing a small section of woodland. As illustrated by viewpoint 8, open views of the surrounding landscape and the opposite valley side are gained from the route and particularly the elevated sections where they are not obscured by intervening local vegetation. The mitigation proposals on the western and north western boundaries include new individual trees and new blocks of woodland planting. Users of this footpath are considered to be of **high sensitivity**.



7.58 Views would be gained across the valley towards the proposals, principally towards the more westerly fields. The Proposed Development in the west of the site is, however, constrained to more elevated, flatter parts of the site (within the south) and whereby the Proposed Development may only be seen as a shallow introduction where the most northerly panels may appear visible. These would, however, form a relatively discrete element within a wider view. The magnitude of change is anticipated to be low at construction and Year 1 for receptors using this route. The effect is anticipated to be **moderate/minor adverse**. At Year 7, whilst the proposed planting will be establishing along the site's western and north western boundary and the boundary hedgerows are managed at 4m, the magnitude of change is considered to reduce to very low due to the relative elevation of the site and route on the opposite valley side, and the resulting effect to be **minor adverse**.

Somerton Footpath 10 and Hartest Footpath 17

7.59 These two footpaths are located to the south of Somerton, footpath 10 extends out of the north of the farm buildings at Somerton Hall along a track adjacent to a linear woodland lining a watercourse to the west, approximately 150m along the track the route turns to the east to pass to the south of a strip of rectangular woodland. At the eastern end of the woodland the route section changes to footpath 17 where it changes direction on a right angle to run north south to the lane to the west of Mile End. Viewpoint 9 (**Appendix 10**) is taken from the southern edge of the rectangular woodland of footpath 10. Views from this route in the sections of higher elevation beyond the farm buildings at Somerton Hall include open views of the opposite valley side.

7.60 Similar to Somerton Footpath 7 but located slightly further to the east and at a slightly more elevated position in the landscape views are available for a part of Footpath 10, oblique to the direction of travel, across the valley towards the site, again, towards the more westerly fields. The Proposed Development in the west of the site is, however, constrained to more elevated, flatter parts of the site (within the south) and whereby the Proposed Development may only be seen as a relatively shallow introduction where the most northerly panels may appear visible. The magnitude of change is anticipated to be medium at construction and Year 1 for receptors using this part of routes as a worst-case. The effect is anticipated to be **moderate adverse**. At Year 7, whilst the proposed planting will be establishing along the site's western and north western boundary and the boundary hedgerows are managed at 4m, the magnitude of change is considered to reduce to low, and the resulting effect to be **moderate/minor adverse**.

*Hartest Footpath 10*

7.61 This footpath runs in an approximately east west direction between Roger's Lane (Track) to the west and the B1066 south of Hartest. The route climbs from both the east and the west to a highpoint above the property Mill House/The Old Steam Mill. Viewpoint and photomontage 10 (**Appendices 10 and 12**) are taken from a location just north west of the property. The footpath follows the edge of the field boundaries switching to the north and south of the hedge line along the route. Open mid range views over the opposite side of the valley are available from the footpath where not obscured by intervening vegetation. Users of this footpath are considered to be of **high sensitivity**.

7.62 As indicated in the photomontage medium range views of the proposal would be available from some sections of this route and whereby parts of the site located to the east of Moorfield Farm would be most visible. The magnitude of change is anticipated to be **medium** at construction, Year 1 and year 7 for receptors using this route. The effect is anticipated to be **moderate/major adverse**.

Hartest Footpath 15

7.63 This footpath runs from the south east of the settlement of Hartest to Hartest Hill to the east to the north east of the site area. From the west the route leaves a small block of woodland on the edge of the village and follows the southern edge of a field boundary with the boundary hedgerow to the north. Approximately 300m to the east the route turns southwards for approximately 200m before turning sharply north east to join Shimpling Road. The eastern section runs to the north of intervening garden and field boundary vegetation, which significantly limits views towards the site area approximately 1.5km to the south west. Views from along this route are represented by viewpoint 12 and photomontage 12 at **Appendix 12**. This viewpoint is taken from the mid-section of the route. Existing views are partially restricted towards the site area by a ridge of intervening landform created by a tributary of the River Glem which cuts a second local valley from the settlement southwards to join the river. Users of this footpath are considered to be of **high sensitivity**.

7.64 As indicated in the photomontage medium range views of the proposal would be available from some sections of this route. The magnitude of change is anticipated to be **medium** at construction, Year 1 and year 7 for receptors using this route. The effect is anticipated to be **moderate/major adverse**.



Shimpling Bridleway 1

- 7.65 This bridleway is located approximately 1km to the east of the site. The route runs westwards (when travelling towards the site) from west of Gifford's and Dales Farm to the east at the approximately 95m contour, along a track opposite the driveway to Boxted Park in the valley bottom, down the valley side to the B1066. The track runs to the south of field boundary hedgerows, views over the intervening hedgerows are represented by viewpoint 14 (Appendix 10).
- 7.66 There are few opportunities for views towards the site from the route. Those which exist, are where gaps in field hedgerows allow, such as that of viewpoint 14. Where available, the more elevated parts of the site appear as a narrow swathe of the distant landscape.
- 7.67 The magnitude of change is anticipated to be, as a worst-case, low at construction, Year 1 and year 7 for receptors using this route. The effect is anticipated to be **minor adverse**.

Glemsford restricted Byway 25

- 7.68 This byway is located approximately 1.5km south of the site forming part of a collection of several public rights of way to the north of the settlement of Glemsford. Byway 25 forms a mid section of routes connecting into Fern Hill to the north west and east. The track climbs from a stream to the north west up to Millhill Farm to the south east. Viewpoint 15 photograph (Appendix 10) is taken from the high ground to the north west of the farm. The woodland to the south west of the site can be seen from this route but no clear views are available into the site.
- 7.69 The magnitude of change at all time periods is very low and the effect is No effect due to intervening landform and distance from the site.

Views from the Local Road Network

- 7.70 Key roads from where there is potential for visibility of proposed development within the site are as follows:
- Braggons Hill Lane (represented by viewpoints 1 and 3);
 - Lane between Somerton, Somerton Hall and west of Boxted, (represented by viewpoint 6);
 - B1066 between Hartest, Boxted and Stanstead, (represented by viewpoint 7);
 - Lane between Somerton and Hartest, (represented by viewpoint 11);



- Lane between Hartest and Gatefields Farm, (represented by viewpoint 13).

Braggons Hill Lane

7.71 Braggons Hill Lane runs from the B1066 and heads in a south westerly and then a southerly direction towards Fern Hill. Braggons Hill Lane for a short section runs along the eastern boundary of the site. There is some mature existing vegetation consisting of hedgerow with trees along the eastern boundary which limits visibility of the site, however there are gaps in the vegetation in the south eastern boundary of the site. The section of Braggons Hill Lane between Holy Trinity Church and the bend in the road to the south eastern part of the site has visibility towards the site. Viewpoints 1 and 3 (**Appendix 10**) illustrate nearby views close to Braggons Hill Lane.

7.72 The sensitivity of road users on Braggons Hill Lane is assessed as medium as its also likely to be used for recreational purposes. It is considered that there would, however, be no more than a medium magnitude of change to the view from this road during the construction phase, Year 1 and Year 7. This will result in a **moderate** effect for the road users during all phases.

Lane between Somerton, Somerton Hall and west of Boxted

7.73 The lane between Somerton, Somerton Hall (viewpoint 6) and west of Boxted runs to the north of the site. It connects with the B1066 to the east (viewpoint 7) and with the settlement of Hawkedon to the north west. The road winds through the landscape in a north westerly, south easterly direction. The road is lined with hedgerows and trees in part with other sections more open. There would be section of open views and more filtered views depending on where the road user is and the intervening vegetation within the landscape, however, for much of its route the road follows the lower valley close to the River Glem.

7.74 The sensitivity of road users on the lane between Somerton, Somerton Hall and west of Boxted is assessed as medium as its also likely to be used for recreational purposes. It is predicted that there would however be no more than a medium magnitude of change to the view from a short section of the road close to the B1066 during all phases. This will result in a **moderate** effect for road users during all phases.

7.75 Much of the route would have limited opportunities for views beyond the intervening landscape along the River Glem. The majority of the route would have a low/very low magnitude of change



for all phases. This will result in a **minor** effect for road users during construction and Year 1, reducing to **minor beneficial/No effect** by year 7.

B1066 between Hartest, Boxted and Stanstead

7.76 The B1066 travels in a predominantly in a north to south direction passing through the settlements of Hartest, in the north, Boxted and Stanstead to the south. The B1066 winds through the landscape and is often lined with hedgerows and trees, with areas of woodland. Intervening woodland between the B1066 and the site further limits visibility of the site. As the landform rises from Boxted to Hartest there are elevated more open views towards the site. Viewpoint 7 (Appendix 10 and 12) represents a view from close to the B1066.

7.77 The sensitivity of road users on the lane between B1066 is assessed as medium as its also likely to be used for recreational purposes. It is predicted that there would however be no more than a medium magnitude of change to the view from this road during all phases, although it is noted that for much of the route where there is potential visibility, views are very enclosed. This will result in a worst-case **moderate** effect for road users during all phases.

Somerton Road

7.78 Somerton Road connects Somerton with Hartest, which runs in a north westerly to a south easterly direction approximately 1.4km north of the site. Somerton Road has limited vegetation on the southern edge, there is the occasional tree and groups of tree planting which tends to be concentrated around properties along the road. This allows open views from the more elevated position in which Somerton Road is situated. Viewpoint 11 (**Appendices 10 and 12**) represents views along Somerton Road.

7.79 The sensitivity of road users of Somerton Road is assessed as medium as its also likely to be used for recreational purposes. It is predicted that there would however be no more than a medium/low magnitude of change to the view from this road during the construction phase and Year 1, however the opportunities for visibility of the site along the length of the road, is occasional. The proposed landscape strategy, which incorporated woodland planting to the northern boundary would be establishing by Year 7 and considered to reduce the magnitude of change to a low impact by year 7. This will result in a worst-case **moderate/minor** effect for road users during construction, reducing to **minor** by year 7.



Shimpling Road

7.80 Shimpling Road is located between Hartest, to the north and Gatesfield Farm to the south. There are open sections where there is limited or no vegetation which offers views towards the site. There are also sections of vegetated edges and tree planting, this tends to be concentrated around properties. The northern part of the road, closer to the settlement of Hartest would have limited or no views as the properties within the Hartest limited views. Viewpoint 13 (**Appendices 10 and 12**) represents a view from Shimpling Road.

7.81 The sensitivity of road users of Shimpling Road is assessed as medium as its also likely to be used for recreational purposes. It is predicted that there would however be no more than a medium/low magnitude of change to the view from this road during all phases. This will result in a **moderate/minor** effect for road users during all phases.

Table 2 – Summary of Visual Effects

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change*	Level of Effect*
Residential receptors				
Moorhouse Farm (driveway)	High	Construction	High	Major adverse
		Year 1	High	Major adverse
		Year 7	Medium	Moderate adverse
Moorhouse Farm (dwelling)	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 7	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse
Group of properties around Townsend Farm	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 7	Medium	Moderate adverse



Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change*	Level of Effect*
Properties at Boxted	High	Construction	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor adverse
Properties around Hall Farm and Carnalfield Grove	High	Construction	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor adverse
Tittle Hall Cottages	High	Construction	Very low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Very low	Minor adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor adverse
Properties to the north of Townsend Farm, north of the B1066	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 7	Medium/low	Moderate/minor adverse
Somerton Hall and Eaton Cottages	High	Construction	Low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 7	Low/very low	Minor beneficial



Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change*	Level of Effect*
Properties at Fishers	High	Construction	Very low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Very low	Minor adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor adverse
Truckett's Hall	High	Construction	Very low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Very low	Minor adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor adverse
Braggon's Farm	High	Construction	Very low	No effect
		Year 1	Very low	No effect
		Year 7	Very low	No effect
Somerton	High	Construction	Very low	Minor/No effect
		Year 1	Very low	Minor/No effect
		Year 7	Very low	Minor/No effect
Mile End and Millhill Farm	High	Construction	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 7	Low	Minor adverse
Hartest	High	Construction	Very low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Very low	Minor adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor adverse



Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change*	Level of Effect*
Properties around Hill Farm Hartest Hill and Cawstons Farm	High	Construction	Medium/low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 1	Medium/low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 7	Medium/low	Moderate/minor adverse
Brickhouse Farm	High	Construction	Very low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Very low	Minor adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor adverse
Giffords Farm and Dales Farm	High	Construction	Very low	Minor adverse/No effect
		Year 1	Very low	Minor adverse/No effect
		Year 7	Very low	Minor adverse/No effect
Properties near Park Farm	High	Construction	Very low	No effect
		Year 1	Very low	No effect
		Year 7	Very low	No effect
Coopwell Farm	High	Construction	Very low	No effect
		Year 1	Very low	No effect
		Year 7	Very low	No effect
Properties close to Hill Farm and Millhill Farm	High	Construction	Very low	No effect
		Year 1	Very low	No effect



Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change*	Level of Effect*
		Year 7	Very low	No effect
Recreational receptors				
Boxted Footpath 11	High	Construction	Medium-high	Major-major/moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium-high	Major-major/moderate adverse
		Year 7	Medium	Major/moderate adverse
Boxted Byway (Open to All Traffic) 7 and Restricted byway 7X	High	Construction	Medium to high	Major-major/moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium to high	Major-major/moderate adverse
		Year 7	Medium	Major/moderate adverse
Boxted Footpath 15	High	Construction	Low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor adverse
Somerton Footpath 7	High	Construction	Low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor adverse



Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change*	Level of Effect*
Somerton Footpaths 10 and Hartest Footpath 17	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 7	Low	Moderate/minor adverse
Hartest Footpath 10	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate/major adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate/major adverse
		Year 7	Medium	Moderate/major adverse
Hartest Footpath 15	High	Construction	Medium	Moderate/major adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate/major adverse
		Year 7	Medium	Moderate/major adverse
Shimpling Bridleway 1	High	Construction	Low/very low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low/very low	Minor adverse
		Year 7	Low/very low	Minor adverse
Glemsford Restricted Byway 25	High	Construction	Very low	No effect
		Year 1	Very low	No effect
		Year 7	Very low	No effect



Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change*	Level of Effect*
Road users				
Braggons Hill Lane	Medium	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 7	Medium	Moderate adverse
Lane between Somerton, Somerton Hall and west of Boxted (close to junction with B1066)	Medium	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 7	Medium	Moderate adverse
Lane between Somerton, Somerton Hall and west of Boxted (wider route to the west)	Medium	Construction	Low/very low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low/very low	Minor adverse
		Year 7	Very low	Minor beneficial/No effect
B1066 between Hartest, Boxted and Stanstead	Medium	Construction	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 1	Medium	Moderate adverse
		Year 7	Medium	Moderate adverse
Somerton Road	Medium	Construction	Medium/low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 1	Medium/low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 7	Low	Minor adverse
Shimpling Road	Medium	Construction	Medium/low	Moderate/minor adverse



Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change*	Level of Effect*
		Year 1	Medium/low	Moderate/minor adverse
		Year 7	Medium/low	Moderate/minor adverse

Visual Effects - Conclusion

7.82 A review of overall visual effects at Table 2 demonstrates that those effects are greatest, these occur where receptors are in proximity to the site and where glimpsed views are available through boundary vegetation. Within the wider landscape, due to the position of the site on the north-facing valley side, views towards the site extend from some locations within the south-facing valley side but changes to views from the south are very limited. In these instances, where the greatest effects occur, these are where there are breaks in vegetation, most frequently experienced from mid-level locations on the valley side and to the north-east of the site. From locations further west, the eastern parts of the site become more effectively screened by existing woodland within the lower Glem Valley and in areas surrounding Moorhouse Farm.

7.83 Further to this, as a result of the proposed introduction of new areas of woodland at the northern site boundary, these reinforce the strong woodland characteristic within the local Glem Valley, both mitigating the visual effects of the development and strengthening this characteristic and offering biodiversity benefits in conjunction with other aspects of the landscape proposals associated with the site. In some instances, the effects at Year 7 become beneficial and will continue to increase these benefits over the life of the development and in perpetuity.



8. Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

- 8.1 This report is a Landscape and Visual Appraisal which has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Renewable Energy Solutions Ltd. It concerns an application for planning permission for a proposed solar farm with all associated works, equipment, necessary infrastructure and biodiversity net gains at land west of Boxted, Suffolk.
- 8.2 It considers the site and its surrounding context in both landscape and visual terms, to assess the potential effects of the development proposals upon landscape features, landscape character and visual amenity.
- 8.3 The site comprises six agricultural fields between approximately 88m AOD reducing to approximately 45m AOD to the north east. The land comprises arable farmland with hedgerows frequently occurring along the field boundaries and most incorporate trees within the hedgerows and pockets of Ancient Woodland immediately beyond the site boundary. The existing access is from Braggons Hill Lane on the south eastern site boundary.
- 8.4 The landscape masterplan includes new blocks of woodland on the northern boundaries to provide robust containment, gapping up of existing hedgerows and introduction of additional hedgerow trees to break local views from adjacent lanes and footpaths. Existing hedgerows would also be subject to amended maintenance regimes and would be allowed to grow taller to provide additional enclosure.

Landscape Effects

- 8.5 The site is not covered by any designation at a national or regional level. However, at a local level the site lies fully within a Special Landscape Area as identified within the Babergh Local Plan.
- 8.6 The site and its wider landscape are considered to be a valued landscape as described at paragraph 174 of the NPPF.

Landscape Features

- 8.7 The Arboricultural Impact Assessment concludes that the proposed development would 'not result in the complete removal of any significant trees, tree groups, or hedgerows'. Those



elements of the site which make the greatest, positive contribution to the localised or wider landscape setting are the woodlands, hedgerow trees and hedgerows and those are proposed to be retained, protected, and supplemented.

- 8.8 There would be inevitable effects upon the land use of the site and these are assessed to be Moderate to Major adverse. It is not considered that there would be any greater than a minor adverse effect upon landform and topography, vegetation and no effect upon PRow or watercourses/drainage.
- 8.9 The effects of the proposed development upon landscape character would be major to major adverse for the character of the site itself and moderate to major/moderate adverse upon Undulating Ancient Farmland LCT, within which the majority of the site is located during construction, Year 1 and Year 7. Effects upon the Rolling Farmlands LCT are moderate/minor adverse at construction and Year 1, reducing to minor beneficial from Year 7. The effects upon the wider landscape are localised to areas in proximity to the site itself, although with some influence upon the character of the Undulating Ancient Farmlands which continue to the north of the Glem Valley.

Visual Effects

- 8.10 A review of overall visual effects at Table 2 demonstrates that the greatest effects occur where receptors are in close proximity to the site and where glimpsed views are available through boundary vegetation. Within the wider landscape, due to the position of the site on the north-facing valley side, views towards the site extend from some locations within the south-facing valley side but changes to views from the south are very limited. In these instances, where the greatest effects occur, these are where there are breaks in vegetation, most frequently experienced from mid-level locations on the valley side and to the north-east of the site. From locations further west, the eastern parts of the site become more effectively screened by existing woodland within the lower Glem Valley and in areas surrounding Moorhouse Farm.
- 8.11 Further to this, as a result of the proposed introduction of new areas of woodland at the northern site boundary, these reinforce the strong woodland characteristic within the local Glem Valley, both mitigating the visual effects of the development and strengthening this characteristic and offering biodiversity benefits in conjunction with other aspects of the landscape proposals associated with the site. In some instances, the effects at Year 7 become beneficial and will continue to increase these benefits over the life of the development and in perpetuity.



Conclusion

- 8.12 The proposed development has been designed in a manner which aims to be sympathetic to local character and has appropriate regard to its surrounding landscape setting. It also recognises the site's intrinsic character and that of the wider landscape whilst seeking to maintain local character, retain, protect, and enhance important landscape features and to improve and enhance local biodiversity.
- 8.13 From a landscape and visual perspective, any effects on landscape character and features as a result of the development are confined to locations adjacent to the site itself or within more distant views from the south-facing valley side; the effects of which vary due to the frequency of hedgerows, woodland and vegetation associated with properties.
- 8.14 Therefore, in view of the relatively localised effects identified in this assessment and the mitigation set out, the development can be accommodated without undue harm to landscape and visual amenity, the effects of which should be taken forward into the planning balance.



9. References

9.1 The following documents have been consulted during the preparation of this LVA:

- Babergh Core Strategy (2014) ;
- Babergh Local Plan (2006);
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) – Landscape Institute/ Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013);
- Landscape Institute (June 2013) GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13, LI;
- Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Landscape Institute;
- Natural England National Character Area 861: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland;
- Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment;
- Stour Valley Project Area: Valued Landscape Assessment (March 2020).

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004



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