Item No 05:-

15/01923/FUL (CT.8358/B)

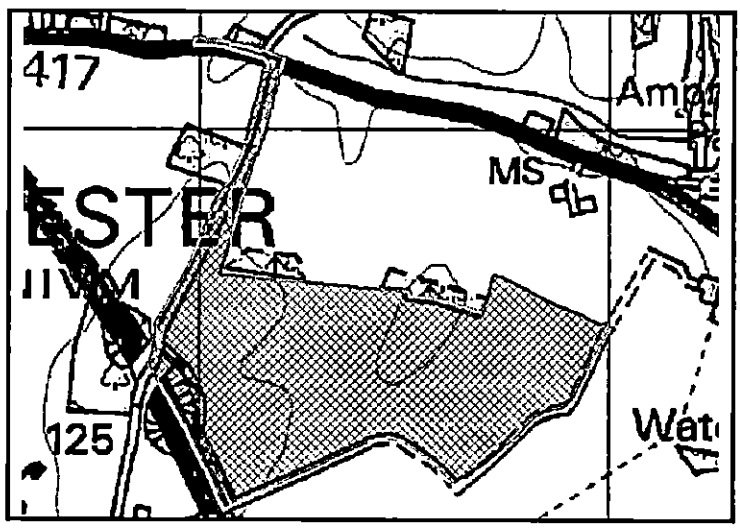
Land Parcel East Of Witpit Lane
Preston
Gloucestershire

Item No 05:-

Proposed development of solar photovoltaic modules including access, temporary construction compound; single and double inverter platforms; transfer station; collecting station; security fencing; CCTV cameras and poles; landscaping; and associated works and infrastructure including underground cable along London Road verge and Witpit Lane verge and related equipment to allow connection to the electricity distribution network at
Land Parcel East Of Witpit Lane
Preston

Full Application 15/01923/FUL (CT.8358/B)	
Applicant:	Big60Million Ltd
Agent:	Savills
Case Officer:	Helen Donnelly
Ward Member(s):	Councillor Shaun Parsons
Committee Date:	9th September 2015

Site Plan



RECOMMENDATION: DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO PERMIT SUBJECT TO THE COMMENTS OF HISTORIC ENGLAND

Main Issues:

(a) Landscape
(b) Heritage Assets (Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings)
(c) Heritage Assets (Archaeology)
(d) Trees
(e) Biodiversity
(f) Highways
(g) Noise
(h) Glint and Glare
(i) Flood Risk

Reasons for Referral:

The application has been referred to the Planning Committee for determination at the request of the Ward Member, Councillor Shaun Parsons for the following reasons "Firstly [the] size and secondly loss of amenity. In brief the planning officers have had to rely on the applicants grading of the land, which he rated as grade 3b to 4. (Where possible the assessment of the quality of the land is made by DEFRA). There is some indication that the land may be of somewhat better quality than the grading given to it by the applicant; local residents tell me that land has been used to grow crops for many years, including this year. It will also be noted that the government have indicated a tightening of the guidelines. I am therefore of the opinion that there needs to be an independent assessment of the quality of the soil here, and that no decision should be taken until such an assessment is available".

1. Site Description:

The application site is located in open countryside, approximately 300m to the north-east of the village of Preston, 600m to the south-west of Ampney Crucis, 1.9km to the south-west of Ampney St Peter and 1.2km to the west of Cirencester.

The application site is accessed from and located to the east of Witpit Lane. This is a single width, unclassified road which connects Preston to the A417. Witpit Lane bridges the A417(T), a dual carriageway and trunk road which lies to the south of the application site.

There are two Public Rights of Way (PROW) in close proximity to the application site. Along the southern boundary, lies a bridleway and to the east lies the Roman Way Long Distance Path. This is a triangular route, following Roman roads through Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Hampshire.

The application site comprises five medium to large sized arable fields, covering approximately 40.99 hectares.

The 15.5MW solar array at Crucis Park Farm lies approximately 1.5km to the north of the application site.

The nearest residential properties are Ampney Manor (formerly Quarry House) approximately 250m to the north of the site boundary, Waterton Bungalow approximately 330m to the north-west, The Garden House 335m to the east and residential dwellings at St Augustine Farm approximately 490m to the south.

2. Relevant Planning History:

N/A

3. Planning Policies:

LPR02 Renewable Energy
LPR05 Pollution and Safety
LPR09 Biodiversity, Geology and Geomorphology
LPR10 Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
LPR38 Accessibility to & within New Development
LPR39 Parking Provision
LPR42 Cotswold Design Code
LPR46 Privacy & Gardens in Residential Development
LPR45 Landscaping in New Development
NPPF National Planning Policy Framework

4. Observations of Consultees:

Biodiversity Officer: The views of the Biodiversity Officer are incorporated within the Officers Assessment.

Conservation Officer: The views of the Conservation Officer are incorporated within the Officers Assessment.

Cotswold Conservation Board: "The site is referred to within the application as lying approximately 1.64 km outside the nationally protected landscape of the Cotswolds AONB. Given the scale of the development and proximity to the AONB there is potential for harmful effects on the setting of the AONB. However, the Board agrees with the comments made within the application that due to the distance from the AONB boundary, topography and the nature of the mature woodland and hedge planting between the AONB and this site, the level of visibility to/from the AONB of this site is minimal. There will be a change in the landscape from an agricultural use to the industrialising impact of a very large solar farm, outside the AONB. However, given the context of the site, it will not as such result in any material harm to those seeking to enjoy the Cotswolds AONB within the nationally protected landscape and the development will not have a material impact on the setting of the Cotswolds AONB, or result in any of the significant adverse impacts as identified within the Cotswolds' AONB Position Statement on Setting".

County Archaeology Officer: "I note that this planning application is supported by reports on a geophysical survey (Stratascan, report dated September 2014) and a programme of archaeological trial-trenching (Cotswold Archaeology, report dated March 2015). These investigations revealed a previously unknown and extensive later prehistoric field system located in the easternmost two land parcels of the proposed development area. The work therefore confirmed that significant archaeological remains are present within the proposed development area, and I therefore have a concern that ground works and intrusions required for this development may have an adverse impact on such remains. I advise that I have no objection in principle to the proposed development. However, I recommend that the prehistoric field system within the two easternmost fields of the application site should be protected from any adverse ground impacts. Therefore, I recommend that the applicant should attempt to minimize the ground impact of the proposed development in the two easternmost field as far as is possible, by employing designs for array supports and cable runs which are conducive to the preservation of the archaeological remains. I recommend, therefore, that a condition is attached to any planning permission which may be granted for this scheme in order to secure the minimization of ground impacts upon the archaeological remains"

County Highways Officer: Comments attached in full.

Drainage Engineer: No objection subject to conditions.

Environment Agency: The application has a low environmental risk and ant EA are no longer statutory consultees in relation to surface water drainage.

Environmental Health Officer: No objection subject to conditions regarding the hours of construction and decommission, and noise limits during those works and at the site boundary.

Highways England: "The main consideration for Highways England is the impact of any development on the operation and highway safety of the A417 which borders the site. It is noted that part of the western boundary of the development site follows the alignment of the A417. Although the A417 is in a cutting at this location, the level difference varies between 4m and 1m from north to south. Currently the site is bordered by a wide grassed verge, an established hedge, a fence and a bridleway track. It is noted that applicants state when viewed from a distance, the solar farms thin film and frameless PV modules have a lake like appearance and the glare from the solar arrays is similar to a lake. In order to reduce the risk of glint and glare, the applicants propose to maintain all existing hedgerows at a minimum height of 3 m and also install a 2m high wire mesh perimeter security fence. Highways England are satisfied that the proposed measures should minimise any risk of glint and glare on the A417 and conditioned so that the hedgerows are maintained at a minimum height of 3m to maintain highway safety. Therefore, we recommend that a condition to retain this hedgerow at a minimum height of 3m in the interest of highway safety is maintained."

Historic England: "The application is supported by an extensive set of documentation which include an archaeological evaluation, Heritage Impact Assessment and a chapter on Cultural Heritage within the Environmental Report. These documents assess a 1km zone around the proposed development site which takes into account the Preston and Ampney Circus Conservation Area and a number of listed buildings, including the highly graded churches of these villages. These documents are thorough and provide an appropriate understanding of the potential impact that the scheme may have on the views throughout the identified zone. Having visited the site we agree that the impact from the areas identified are limited and will not cause adverse harm to the heritage assets in the area, however, we are concerned that the size of the zone assessed is too small given the size of the development site and the extent of longer visibility acknowledged in the Wider Landscape Context and Zone of Theoretical Visibility(ZTV). By limiting assessment to a 1km area the potential impact of the development on the conservation area at Ampney St Peter has not been assessed. In particular views from the public footpaths along the northern boundary of the conservation area. We would therefore recommend that the assessment is extended to take into account the Ampney St Peter Conservation Areas and the impacts of the proposal considered prior to any approval being granted. Along with the Conservation Area, any buildings that may also be impacted by the development should also be including the Church of St Peter, Grade II* in order to fulfil the requirements of Paragraph 128 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)".

Landscape Officer: The views of the Landscape Officer are incorporated within the Officers Assessment.

Lead Local Flood Authority (GCC): No objection.

Natural England: No objection in relation to the AONB and nationally and internationally designated sites. Natural England provide Standing Advice regarding protected species

5. View of Town/Parish Council:

Preston Parish Council have made the following comments: "Preston Parish Council supports the development of solar renewable energy and welcomes the opportunity to work with Belectric to increase supply to the national grid. However, Preston Parish Council objects to this proposal on the grounds of size. The proposed 94-acre site will dominate the small community of Preston and destroy the open view from the bridleway and the Witpit Lane Bridge. The proposal is alien and urbanising; it does not fit well in the rural landscape and does not conserve or enhance it. This rural view is a valuable asset to local residents, visitors and walkers and the loss of this amenity is a significant material consideration. The Parish Council wishes to see a reduction in the overall size of the application by removing the area parallel to the bridleway, equating to half of the first field. This amendment together with significant planting would result in the proposal being less

visible from the Witpit Lane Bridge and the bridleway. In addition, there is considerable local concern regarding the cumulative impact created by an existing solar farm in close proximity in the adjoining Parish of Ampney Crucis together with plans for another 2 such farms within a 5-mile radius. However, if CDC is minded to approve the application, Preston Parish Council requests that the following issues be conditional on any planning approval and to be agreed with the Parish Council o A transport plan to cover the building phase and include - a mobile wheel washer to be on site for vehicles leaving the site; A417 London Road to be kept clean throughout the working day; all road and verge damage (especially on Witpit Lane and A417 London Road) to be repaired at the expense of the developer; no heavy vehicles to use the road through the Village; working hours to be restricted to a reasonable time and enforced. Landscaping of the site including screening to protect the view from Witpit Lane Bridge and the bridleway. Details of Security, Lighting and Fencing. Details of any battery storage to be used in the future. Decommissioning Method and Funding Furthermore, the Parish Council requests that CDC gives a view on the scale of solar development across the District that it considers would be detrimental to the landscape as there are currently no guidelines but an increasing number of solar farm planning applications".

Neighbouring Parishes:

Ampney Crucis Parish Council has made the following comments: "Whilst the site falls within the boundary of Preston Parish Council and will mainly impact members of the Preston village community, there are wider district issues as well as implications for a number of residents of the Parish of Ampney Crucis who live in properties adjacent to, or close to the proposed development site. Those residents will no doubt register their concerns in due course, but on behalf of Ampney Crucis Parish Council, I would additionally like to register our comments regarding this proposed development as below. When considering this application, we would ask that any decision by the Planning Committee to approve the application be subject to conditions that secure the following assurances that:

a) visual and recreational amenity will not be adversely impacted and access to existing public footpaths and rights of way will be preserved, not just for residents, but also for visitors to the District;

b) appropriate natural screening of the Solar Farm be put in place at a sufficiently early stage in the development, to preserve the essentially rural outlook enjoyed by local residents and users of adjacent roads, including visitors to the South Cotswolds, and that screening will continue to be maintained throughout the development phase of the project until naturally well-established;

c) limitations will be placed on construction operations, such that noise and construction traffic will be limited to the working week, and then to reasonable hours that do not adversely impact local residents;

d) following expiry of the tenure of the proposed Solar Farm, the land will be returned to a condition suitable for agricultural use, and that the site will not be designated "brown-field" for future development purposes.

In addition, Ampney Crucis Parish Council also wishes to register concern at the proximity of the proposed Preston site to the new and now operational solar farm at Crucis Park.

Questions continue to arise about the density of this kind of development in the South Cotswolds and we assume that CDC will be mindful of the likelihood of similar future applications elsewhere in the CDC area when determining this application".

Cirencester Town Council: supports the application and has commented that "Though this planning application is in the adjoining parish, Cirencester Town Council had no objection and welcomed the renewable energy site. The chairman asked for a note to be made regarding some form of community payback from the Feed-in Tariff".

Siddington Parish Council: "Whilst Siddington is only a neighbouring parish and therefore only allowed to comment on this application, members felt so strongly about this proposal that they have registered an objection. The council is unanimous in its support of Preston Parish Council mainly on the grounds of size and loss of amenity. The site is out of all proportion to a small village community and will undoubtedly dominate it. Open views over a rural landscape - a crucial asset to local residents - will be destroyed. Other solar farms are springing up close to

Cirencester and in the apparent absence of any national guidelines, it now important that CDC examines in detail the long term effect of these changes on the landscape".

6. Other Representations:

Twenty nine letters of objection have been received including a letter from the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the British Horse Society. The summary of the issues is as follows:

i) The size of the development will dwarf Preston;
ii) Out of keeping with the location;
iii) Recent and growing sentiment against solar farm development;
iv) Harm to wide open views to hills beyond;
v) Proposal would destroy the experience of a rural landscape;
vi) Proposal will change the countryside into an industrial zone;
vii) Development will spoil the enjoyment of an old Roman rural footpath;
viii) Users of the bridleway will be sandwiched between the A419 and the development;
ix) Visual damage caused by the development would outweigh its benefits;
x) Views of the site underestimated in LVIA;
xi) Proximity to Crucis Park solar farm;
xii) Saturation of solar farms in the District;
xiii) Landscaping will take many years to mature and screen development;
xiv) Application site is productive agricultural land;
xv) Neighbouring agricultural land is productive;
xvi) There is an ever decreasing belt of agricultural land between Cirencester and Preston;
xvii) Open boundary to the east of Preston needs to be retained;
xviii) Development will not benefit the local economy;
xix) Wildlife will be displaced;
xx) Unknown hazards associated with a fire at the site;
xxi) More suitable site elsewhere in the district for solar PV;
xxii) Impact on archaeology;
xxiii) Solar glare;
xxiv) CCTV cameras would invade privacy of residential dwellings;
xxv) Additional visual impact of security fencing and cameras;
xxvi) Noise from invertors and impact on Ampney Manor;
xxvii) Unattractive appearance and hazards of abandoned solar arrays;
xxviii) Guarantees required for site restoration;
xxix) Impact on tourism;
xxx) Impact of construction traffic on narrow roads and verges;
xxxi) Thorough EIA not undertaken;
xxxii) Inaccurate documentation;
xxiii) Opportunity to re-route bridleway around the north and eastern sides of the site;
xxiv) Hazards during the construction period;
xxv) Security gates should not impinge upon access to bridleway;
xxvi) Existing inner fence boundary of the bridleway should be removed or resited to the north-east to give the bridleway a full 5 metres in width

Thirty four letters of support have been received. The summary of the issues is as follows:

i) Minimal impact to the environment;
ii) Not intrusive;
iii) Development will help to reduce carbon emissions;
iv) Increase to biodiversity richness of the area;
v) Land quality is poor;
vi) Reduction in farming traffic and noise;
vii) Less of a visual impact than wind power;
viii) Every community must take action on climate change;
ix) Site is bordered by a dual carriageway and not overlooked by villages;
x) Community benefits;

xi) Business rates would provide economic benefit;
xii) Bridleway is already compromised by noise and view of the A149/417;
xiii) Entire site would not be seen from public points of view;
xiv) Reduction in agricultural chemicals that would be sprayed on the land;
xv) Unlike residential development, the proposal would not place any burden on infrastructure;
xvi) Minimal disturbance/aesthetic impact;

One letter has been submitted as "General Observation". The summary of the issue is as follows:

i) Screening needs to be sufficiently high to screen panels;
ii) CCTV cameras should be located behind mature trees;

7. Applicant's Supporting Information:

Arboricultural Impact Assessment
Archaeological Evaluation
Construction method statement
Construction traffic and management plan
Decommissioning Statement
Environmental Report (including Landscape and Visual Assessment, Ecological Assessment and Cultural Heritage Assessment)
Flood Risk Assessment (including Drainage Strategy)
Habitat Management Plan
Heritage Impact Assessment
Module Replacement Methodology
Site selection and Justification Report
Soils and agricultural use and quality report
Statement of Community Involvement

8. Officer's Assessment:

Introduction

The application is for the installation of an array of solar photovoltaics (pv) panels and associated structures.

The solar array would cover approximately 25% of the application site. The solar array would be capable of generating up to 23.38MW of electricity. According to the application submission, this output is the equivalent to the annual electricity requirements of 6,724 average homes which would save approximately 9,984 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum.

The solar panels and associated support framework (i.e the array) would be arranged in rows, 3.5m to 6.5m apart. The maximum height of the array would be 2.5m, sloping with an angle of 15 degrees down to a height of 0.85m above ground level. The solar arrays would not follow the contours of the land but would be fixed relative to each other and where the ground level is uneven, these heights would increase by approximately 0.2m.

The application includes a number of associated structures required to facilitate the generation and exportation of electricity from the site. Invertors are required to transfer the direct current generated by the panels into alternating current which can be fed into the local electricity grid. There would be nine double invertor platforms and one single invertor platform; each invertor platform also includes a transformer. The platforms are designed to allow the air to flow above and below the equipment, with gravel below the platform to allow for drainage.

The other structures on site would include a transfer station at the north-western corner of the site and two collecting stations. These structures would be owned by the Distribution Network Operator (i.e the electricity company).

There would be three storage containers towards the north-west corner of the site to house spare components, batteries and land management equipment. There would also be three auxiliary transformers to utilise electricity from the panels to run equipment such as the monitoring equipment and seven sensors to monitor wind and irradiation.

The meter box, storage containers and transfer station would be moss green in colour, as would the security fence that would enclose the application site. The fence would be a 2 m high wire-mesh fence.

An access track is proposed along the western boundary of the site and along the central part of the site. The western access track would allow the Distribution Network Operator to access the transfer station which would be outside of the security fencing. It is proposed that the tracks would be 4 m wide, excavated to a depth of 0.3m. The tracks would be finished in a permeable granular material and the choice of material will be secured by condition.

There would be no external lighting used on site except during the estimated 16 week construction period. This lighting would consist of four diesel powered mobile lighting towers. A temporary construction compound is proposed to the west of the site, close to the access from Witpit Lane. Site facilities and a wheel wash facility would be located in the compound.

The completed development would be monitored by close circuit television cameras (CCTV). The application initially proposed two options for the location of CCTV cameras and following consultation with a neighbouring resident, one of the two options was decided upon by the applicant. It is proposed to install 39 CCTV cameras installed on 3.5m poles along the perimeter fencing. There would be day/night cameras and thermal cameras. The poles would be the same colour as the perimeter fencing and each pole would be 0.12m thick. The cameras would provide coverage along the boundary and would not face away from the site.

With the array in place, there is the potential for the application site to be used for the grazing of sheep.

The solar array and associated equipment is expected to be on site for a period of 25 years in accordance with the applicant's arrangement with the landowner and would be removed from site following the cessation of its use. The land would be restored to agricultural use.

A screening opinion was submitted to this Council last year (reference 14/02178/SCR) and it was determined that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would not be required. A second screening opinion (14/00246/SCR) was submitted for the site as now proposed and again it was determined that an EIA would not be required. These decisions can be viewed on the Council's website via the Public Access system.

Provision of Renewable Energy

The Government is committed to reducing carbon emissions and sees renewable energy as a means of moving the UK's power supply away from carbon based sources. The Climate Change Act 2008 sets a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 and reductions in C02 emissions of 20% by 2020 against a 1990 base. The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan produced in July 2009 aims to cut UK emissions by 34% by 2020 and by at least 80% by 2050. It also seeks to secure around 30% of UK electricity from renewable sources by 2020.

National planning policy guidance set out in Section 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reinforces the Government's in principle support of renewable energy projects. One of the core planning principles of the NPPF is that planning should "support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate" and "encourage the use of renewable resources".

Paragraph 93 of the aforementioned document states that "Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development".

Paragraph 97 of the NPPF states that "to help the use and supply of renewable and low energy, local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources".

Paragraph 98 goes on to state that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should; i) not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and also recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse emissions and; ii) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

Cotswold District Local Plan Policy 2: Renewable Energy also states that proposals for renewable energy installations will be permitted provided that the proposed development does not, by its visual impact, significantly harm the character or appearance of the Cotswolds AONB, Special Landscape Areas, historic landscapes, archaeological sites, or have an adverse noise, amenity or ecological impact and is justified in terms of national energy policies.

It is evident that the above development plan policy broadly accords with the aspirations of the NPPF and, in accordance with Paragraph 215 of the NPPF, can therefore still be given weight when determining this application.

Site Allocation and Justification

In March 2015, a Ministerial Statement regarding solar energy was issued. It stated that the particular factors relating to large scale ground mounted solar farms include ".... making effective use of previously developed land and, where a proposal involves agricultural land, being quite clear this is necessary and that poorer quality land is to be used in preference to land of a higher quality". The statement went on to advise that "...we [the Government] want it to be clear that any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence".

Paragraph 13 of the National Planning Policy Guidance provides further guidance regarding the suitability of sites for solar array and states that "...Particular factors a local planning authority will need to consider include encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays".

The definition of best and most versatile agricultural land is set out within the NPPF; it is land that is grade 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification. The classification system is not based on the productivity of land for a particular crop but on the versatility of cropping options. The best and most versatile agricultural land would be capable of growing high value vegetable crops such as potatoes. Land in lower grades such as subgrade 3b and grade 4 may be capable of supporting consistent good yields of combinable cereal or oilseed crops but not the greater range of crops expected of land in the best and most versatile category

As part of the Local Plan process, the Council holds some information from Natural England regarding the classification of agricultural land across the District and for the application site, the land is classified as Grade 3. However this information from Natural England is described as "Provisional" ; it is a general designation and is not based upon specific soil testing at the application site

The application has been accompanied by much more detailed assessment of the soil quality of the site. This has identified that the application site comprises Grade 3b land (34%) and Grade 4 land (66%). The application therefore is not required to include a site selection and justification report because the application site is not higher grade agricultural land. However, such a report has been submitted to explain the reasoning behind the selection of the application site.

When selecting a site for solar array, there are many factors for the applicant to consider and one of the most important from an operational perspective is the proximity of the site to a connection to the National Grid. In this instance, the applicant has secured a connection to the 33kV distribution line between the Northleach and Cirencester substations. On the basis of the output of the development, it was established that the maximum, viable cable run to the grid connection would be 8.11km. Using this distance as a radius from the grid connection, it was identified that there were limited options for the re-use of brownfield land/building roofs due to the much lower outputs that would be generated and the complication if multiple land/building owners.

The site selection process discounted areas within the AONB and considered the topography of the site and the proximity to heritage assets and biodiversity.

The suitability of the site for a solar array development in terms of local and national planning policies will be explored within the following sections.

(a) Landscape

1. How Landscape Impact is Assessed

The impact of a development upon a landscape is assessed in terms of the impact upon the character of a landscape and the visual impact of the development. They are separate but interlinked components both of which are assessed in accordance with a widely used criteria based methodology known as a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

The specific sensitivity of landscape character to change is assessed through a combination of the susceptibility of the landscape to change in relation to a development and the value of the landscape. The value of a landscape is non-monetary and refers to a number of factors including landscape designation/protection, scenic quality and recreation value.

The classification of landscape sensitivity is often classified as very high, high, medium low or very low. A landscape with very high landscape sensitivity, for example, would have a strong landscape structure and many distinct characteristics worthy of conservation. It would be very susceptible to change. A landscape with a very low landscape sensitivity, and most probably, but not always, of a low value would contain landscape features that would not be susceptible to change; there would be a high probability that mitigation could be used to integrate the proposed development into the landscape and even enhance the landscape.

The landscape sensitivity is then assessed against the magnitude of the change that would result from a development and is predicted by considering the anticipated loss or disruption to character forming landscape elements (e.g landform, tree planting, buildings etc). Magnitude is categorised as being very large, large, medium small or very small. A very large magnitude would typically involve large scale changes and/or numerous changes to the important landscape characteristics. A very small magnitude would typically result in small scale changes to unimportant landscape characteristics such that the changes would be barely distinguishable.

The significance of the impact of a development on landscape in terms of character is therefore a function of the sensitivity of the landscape, the magnitude of the change and the nature of the effect (positive, negative or neutral). The significance is often defined as substantial, major, moderate, minor and negligible.

The significance of the visual effect of a development is determined by assessing the sensitivity of receptors (people) against the visual magnitude of the change. Receptor sensitivity relates to the locations from which the proposed development would be visible and are categorised as being very high, high, medium, low or very low. For example, the occupier of residential properties and users of PROWs would have high and medium receptor sensitivity respectively whereas industrial facilities and people in their workplace would have a low receptor sensitivity. The visual sensitivity of a place can also be influenced by the number of people likely to be present and the duration of time that a view is likely to be experienced.

The visual magnitude of change can be categorised as very large, large, medium, small, very small or negligible. An example of a very large magnitude would include a dramatic change to an existing view or a development that would form the dominant elements within an overall view. A negligible magnitude would be a development of which only a small part would be discernible and/or is at such a distance that no change to the exiting view can be appreciated.

The significance of the visual effects of a development is determined by an assessment of the receptor sensitivity set against the magnitude of change. As with the impact on landscape character, it can be assessed as being substantial, major, moderate, minor or negligible.

It is therefore not simply a case of a development being considered to be unacceptable because it is visible within a landscape. In general terms 'Significant' impacts are those in the Substantial, major and major/moderate categories, but even these need not necessarily result in a recommendation of refusal, as they can be either: positive, neutral or adverse. The Landscape Consultant must weigh up the scale of impacts and whether adverse impacts can be mitigated before drawing a conclusion as to the overall significance before mitigation and with mature mitigation.

2. The Impact of the Proposed Development

Turning to the relevant planning policies, paragraph 17 of the NPPF states that planning should recognise the 'intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and support thriving rural communities within it.' Paragraph 109 states that the planning system should protect and enhance valued landscapes.

Cotswold District Local Plan Policy 42 states that 'development should be environmentally sustainable and designed in a manner that respects the character, appearance and local distinctiveness of Cotswold District with regard to style, setting, harmony, streetscene, proportion, simplicity, materials and craftsmanship.'

The application site lies within the Cotswolds National Character Areas as defined by Natural England but not within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The boundary of the AONB lies approximately 1.5km to the north.

Within the Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessments published in 2006, the application site is described as being within the Dip Slope Lowland Landscape Character type and within The Ampneys landscape character area. The landscape characteristics of the application site are typical of the surrounding landscape; they include undulating arable farmland, predominately intact hedgerows, remnant hedgerow trees and woodland/tree belts.

The application site has a relatively flat topography with only slight undulations across the area. There are hedgerows along the southern boundary and the boundary with Witpit Lane and along field boundaries. To the north of the application site, two woodland blocks form dominant features at the top of a minor valley, where the land drops to the north. The vegetation is deciduous which potentially allows more extensive views of the site during the winter months.

The application has been accompanied by a LVIA and the methodology of that assessment is considered to be acceptable.

The landscape character of the application site has been assessed to be of medium value and when assessed against the magnitude of the proposed change, it is considered that the landscape would have a medium sensitivity to the change that would arise from this development. This is in part due to the nature of the solar array; they would consist of low level structures and their consistency would not alter the overall landscape framework with hedgerows and field patterns remaining. Furthermore, the development would not be permanent and would be fully reversible. There would be a notable effect on the open field landscape character of the site in the first year following the completion of the development, but as planting establishes and matures, the visual impact of this effect would lessen.

The most significant views of the development would be from the bridleway to the south and the Roman Way PROW to the west. There would also be views from some of the dwellings to the north and north-west of the of the application site, although these views would be largely distant views and from The Garden House, the views would be limited to views from first floor windows only and into the back of the site.

The Roman Way PROW is approximately 200m to the east and south-west of the application site. At the northern section, users of this PROW experience a pleasant rural setting with views towards the application site as the land gradually rises. As this PROW moves further south, views of the application site are restricted by hedgerows. The PROW connects with the bridleway, and along the southern section of the PROW and along the bridleway itself, the experience of the landscape is affected by the presence of the A417(T).

There would be views of the solar array from Witpit Lane but it is considered that the sensitivity of this receptor would be low, given that users of the lane are primarily in a car and pass the site quickly whilst en route to a destination.

The bridleway continues to the south-west of the application site, before heading in an easterly direction past St Augustine Farm. The development would be fully screened in the summer and heavily filtered in the winter and the effect of the development would be minor it would not be notable.

The landform and absence of any high points in the visual envelope means that potential long views of the site, including from the AONB and the A417 would be limited and are considered to be of no significance.

It has been assessed that the PROWs adjacent to the site (i.e the receptors) have a high/medium sensitivity to visual change. This is because users of these routes are using them for leisure activities which are largely dependent upon the enjoyment of the countryside. Furthermore, the Roman Way is a strategic PROW. When assessed against the visual magnitude of change, it is considered that there would be a major/moderate adverse significant impact. Although this impact may seem substantial, it is considered that the significance of the impact can be reduced by suitable mitigation measures and again, it is also of relevance that the development is temporary and reversible. Furthermore, for the majority of the length of the PROW, the development would not be visible.

Officers are also mindful that recent appeal decisions (e.g. Ridgeway National Trail at Wroughton Airfield APP/U3935/V/14/2216792) which have indicated that the presence of views of high sensitivity from strategic rights of way is not an overriding factor that necessarily leads to the dismissal of an appeal.

Preston Parish Council have requested a reduction in the size of the site adjacent to Witpit Lane. The applicant is aware of this request but has retained the site area as initially proposed. Officers consider that despite the close proximity to the bridleway, the A417 (T) is the dominating detracting feature and as such it is considered that the landscape sensitivity of this part of the site is low to medium. A landscaping scheme would filter views of the site from the bridleway and Witpit Lane and therefore the inclusion of this part of the application site is not considered to warrant a refusal reason.

3. Landscaping

During the course of the application, a revised landscaping scheme was submitted to reduce the visual impact of the development from the bridleway and the PROW.

The landscaping scheme proposes native hedgerow planting and enhancement. A mixed native hedgerow is proposed alongside the bridleway comprising small hedgerow trees (approximately 40-60 cm high at planting), with light standard (6 - 8cm girth) Field Maple and Hawthorn trees planted along its length to give immediate filtering of views. A mixed native hedgerow will be planted at northern boundary of the site with feathered whip (150-175cm) Field Maple and Hawthorn trees added to give immediate impact. The hedgerow planting will be outside of the security fencing.

A small woodland are would be planted within the temporary compound area, comprising of native tree species (e.g Hazel, Hawthorn, Holly, beech blackthorn etc) 80-100 cm in height (feathered whips). There would be tree planting at the western boundary adjacent to Witpit Lane comprising of similar sized specimens.

Based on Forestry Commission data, the applicant has advised that by year 5, the key native species feathered whips should have reached the following heights: Beech: 2.3-2.5m; Field Maple: 3.45m-3.6m; Hawthorn 2.65m-3.65m
By year 20, heights are expected to be: Beech: 9.8-10m; Field Maple: 13-14m; Hawthorn 9.65-10m

As set out above, there will be larger tree stock planted initially to provide coverage earlier on in the life of the development, and the smaller stock would catch up in height. The planting and maintenance of the landscaping scheme for the lifetime of the development will be secured by a Landscape Maintenance Plan. The solar array would have a maximum height of 3.5m and as the site is largely flat, the mitigating effects of the planting would be noticeable within 5 years.

4. Impact on AONB and Cumulative Impact

There would be extremely limited intervisibility between the application site and the AONB due to the landform and the presence of mature tree cover. There would be an isolated views of the rear of the site along the B4425 (Bibury Road) to the north of Norcote, but there would be no notable effects upon the landscape character of the AONB.

There would be distant views of the Crucis Park farm solar array and the application site from the bridleway, but there would not be a harmful cumulative impact due the distance between the two sites and the very limited intervisibility.

The proposed development is large in scale, and will be visible from public viewpoints and will have an impact upon the landscape character. However, it has been assessed that there will be no substantial/major impacts on landscape character or in terms of the visual effects and the extensive landscaping proposed will reduce the significance of the impact.

5. Conclusion on Landscape Impact

The development would be visible within the landscape but the significance of the visual impact would be reduced with a comprehensive scheme of hedgerow and tree planting. The development would not have a significant impact upon the character of the landscape and the change to the landscape would not be permanent and would be totally reversible.

Officers considered that the impact of the development would not outweigh the strong support for the provision of renewable energy as set out within national and local guidance and the application is considered to accord with section 11 of the NPPF and Local Plan Policies 2 and 42.

(b) Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas)

In addition to the impact upon the landscape, the potential impact upon the setting of heritage assets within the locality needs to be assessed. The relevant heritage assets in this instance are the Conservation Areas of Ampney Crucis, Ampney St Peter and Preston.

The nearest listed buildings are a barn at Waterton and Waterton Farmhouse approximately 370 metres and 390 metres respectively to the north-west and a listed barn at St Augustine Farm approximately 480m to the east. These buildings are all Grade 2 listed buildings. The Church of St Peter is a Grade 2* building located 2.49km to the east in close proximity to other Grade 2 buildings.

Paragraph 128 of the NPPF advises that "In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance".

Paragraph 132 advises that "When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting".

The application has been accompanied by a Heritage Impact Assessment. It initially focused upon the impact of the development on the Conservation Area of Ampney Crucis and at the request of Historic England, the assessment was expanded to include the conservation area of Ampney St Peter and the parish church.

A full assessment of the impact upon the Conservation Area of Preston was not undertaken as it was considered that, although in relatively close proximity to the site, the link between the village and the site context was severed with the construction of the A417 (T). The solar array development would not be visible from within the boundary of the Preston Conservation Area.

From the Ampney Crucis Conservation Area views of the development would be limited by the topography, mature trees within the village envelope and by existing development. The Conservation Area is inward looking and the development would not affect key views.

Similarly, views from the Ampney St Peter Conservation Area would be limited by topography and landscape features including an established wooded belt along the course of Ampney Brook. This Conservation Area is also inward looking as it is focused around the main roads that run through the village and the development would not affect key views.

Within the Ampney St Peter Conservation Area, towards the northern edge of the village lies St Peters Church. Views of the development would be fully screened during the summer months and the potential for winter visibility would to be minimal, but more likely none-existent, due to local topography.

With regard to other listed buildings, it is considered that the development would not result in harm to the setting of the listed buildings at Waterton .The development would be fully screened from the listed barn at St Augustine Farm in the summer by tree belts, and heavily filtered in the winter. It is considered that the potential minor effect upon receptors of the view of the site from the barn, would not impact upon its setting due to the distance involved.

The closest Registered Park and Garden to the application site is Barnsley Park, approximately 4.1km to the north-east. Views of the application site from the Park would be screened by tree cover through the park and woodland areas.

The Council's Conservation Officer and Historic England on the whole have agreed with the findings of the Heritage Impact Assessment and it is considered by Officers that the proposed development would accord with section 12 of the NPPF and would not result in harm to the setting of any heritage assets. However, at the time of writing this report, the comments of Historic England in relation to the impact upon the conservation area of Ampney St Peter and St Peter's church are awaited and Members will be updated at the meeting.

(c) Heritage Assets (Archaeology)

Paragraph 128 of the NPPF advises that "... Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation".

An archaeological evaluation based upon geophysical data and trenching work was submitted with the application. These investigations revealed a previously unknown and extensive later prehistoric field system located towards the eastern side of the application site.

The County Archaeology Officer expressed concerns that ground works and intrusions required for this development may have an adverse impact on the archaeological remains in this part of the site. In light of these concerns, the County Archaeology Officer has recommended that the array supports and cable runs are designed to minimise the impact on archaeological remains. These designs will be required by a condition to be approved by the Local Planning Authority before their installation.

It is considered that with the aforementioned condition, the impact of the development upon archaeological remains would be mitigated and as such the proposed development is considered to accord with section 12 of the NPPF.

(d) Trees

There are no trees within the application site that are covered by a Tree Preservation Order. To enable the connection from the development to the national grid, there would have to be the removal of some trees in the small pocket of woodland to the north of the A417. The trees are not considered to be of any great individual merit and are part of a wider grouping that would remain. Several trees are under the existing power lines in any event and would need to be repeatedly topped in the future.

The proposed routing of the connection cable along the south side of A417 runs near several trees. Again, it is considered that the trees are not of great quality or individual merit and the trench is, in any event, sufficient distance from the trees to avoid significant roots and under the existing roadside ditch as it runs past the trees. The trees are unlikely to be harmed.

There are several copses comprised of young trees located within and adjoining the site and there is a potential future long term conflict with some of the panels as a result of shading if the trees in the copses are allowed to grow to full maturity. The importance of these copses as tree groups is not of overriding importance and it is expected that they can be retained and managed to a reasonable height in the future. The copses and new plantings may be valuable as part of the landscaping of the site but they are best managed as part of a wider landscape management plan.

Conditions will be required for tree protection fencing and an arboricultural method statement to ensure the protection of existing trees during the construction phase. With these conditions, the proposed development would not have a harmful impact upon existing trees and the retention of existing trees will be secured through the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan. The application is considered by Officers to accord with Local Plan Policy 10.

(e) Biodiversity

The application site does not form part of any statutory or non-statutory designated wildlife sites. The nearest designated site is Barnsley Warren Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) approximately 3.9km to the north-east of the application site.

The current ecological value of the application site is considered to be low as all five fields are in arable production. The applicant's ecological assessment did not record any protected or notable species. However, the small blocks woodlands and the surrounding field boundaries offer greater value for wildlife and habitat connectivity to the wider landscape.

The application includes details of biodiversity enhancements to be secured within a Habitat Management Plan. These include native planting (as described within the landscape section of this report) which would not only be a gain for wildlife but would help to connect the boundary habitats to the wider countryside. The perimeter of the site, between the perimeter fence would be seeded with a floristically diverse meadow mix and the main body of the site, within the perimeter fence, will be seeded with a mix containing a 5% wildflower element. These mixes would attract a wider array and number of insects and wildlife than the existing agricultural use.

There would be gaps of approximately 20cm in the bottom of the security fencing in parts where the fencing would be adjacent to blocks of woodland to allow for the movement of badgers and small mammals. There would also be bird and bat roost boxes installed along the security fencing.

The use of lighting whilst an intrusion for wildlife, would be limited to the working compound, and would be for a short period during construction and would be removed afterwards. Therefore the impact would be minimal.

The development would result in ecological enhancements and the proposed mitigation would reduce impacts to biodiversity. Officers consider that the application would accord with section 9 of the NPPF and Local Plan Policy 9.

(f) Highways

The main impact of the development in terms of highway safety will be during the construction phase when Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) will need to travel along Witpit Lane to enter the site.

Further information was requested during the course of the application and a meeting was held on site between the applicant, the County Highways Officer and the Local Highway Manager. Revised plans and information were submitted to address concerns including visibility between passing places and at the A417/Witpit Lane junction, two-way vehicle passing at passing places along Witpit Lane, traffic management measures and an off-site holding area for construction traffic to the site.

The County Highways Officer has raised no objection to the application, subject to conditions and the full response of the County Highways Officer has been attached as an appendix to this report.

Officers consider that the application accords with section 4 of the NPPF and Local Plan Policies 38 & 39.

(g) Noise

The potential source of noise from the development, once in operation, would arise from the invertors. They are not sited close to residential properties. The closest distance between a dwelling and an invertor would be 320m to the south-west of the boundary of the curtilage of Ampney House and approximately 380m to the south-west of the dwelling itself. The invertors will only work when the panels are generating electricity.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has not objected to the application subject to conditions regarding the hours of construction and noise emanating from the site during construction, operation and decommissioning. This includes a condition limiting the noise at the boundary of the nearest sensitive receptor (i.e Ampney House) in accordance with the World Health Organisation Noise Guidelines (1999). These guidelines state that to protect the majority of people from being seriously annoyed during the daytime and evening, the outdoor sound level should not exceed 55dB LAeq (16 hour) on balconies, terraces and in outdoor living areas.

Subject to these conditions, it is considered that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable level of noise that would result in harm to the amenities of nearby residents. The application is therefore considered to accord with Local Plan Policy 5 and the NPPF.

(h) Glint and Glare

Solar panels are constructed of glass and there is the potential that they could be susceptible to glint and glare. Glint is defined as a momentary flash of bright light and glare is a continuous source of bright light.

The solar panels to be used within the development would be frameless with dark blue and light-absorbing modules. The glass within the panels would have a low iron content to aid daylight absorption and therefore reduce reflectivity. It is estimated that this glass would reflect less than 9% of sunlight, whereas normal glass reflects around 17%. The absence of a frame woudl also reduce glint and glare. It is in the applicant's interest to ensure that the panels do not reflect too much sunlight as this would impact upon their efficiency.

Glint would occur when direct sunlight reaches the solar panels and would not occur when there are clouds, fog and mist. The existing and proposed planting would also provide screening.

Highways England were consulted due to the proximity of the A417 (T), a trunk road. They have not objected to the proposal subject to a condition requiring hedgerows to be maintained to a certain height to prevent glint and glare affecting drivers on this road.

(i) Flooding/Drainage

The application site lies within Flood Zone 1 which is the zone with the lowest risk of flooding as defined by the Environment Agency. The site lies on a primary and secondary aquifer and the application site is known to be affected by a significant area of surface water flood risk.

The Environment Agency no longer comments on matters regarding surface water drainage. Instead, the responsibility lies with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) which is Gloucestershire County Council. The application has also been reviewed by the Council's Drainage Engineer.

The LLFA requested the submission of more information during the course of the application, and following its submission, no objection has been raised.
The drainage strategy for the site would entail the creation of swale features running parallel to the site contours within downslope areas of the site. They would intercept and distribute flows, create storage, attenuate runoff and promote infiltration across the site. The SuDS scheme proposed would effectively reduce the runoff rate to less than the undeveloped (current) runoff rates because of the increased storage areas.

The cessation of agricultural activities will reduce soil compaction and the proposed planting of meadow type vegetation will assist in reducing the flow of surface water across the site.

It has been demonstrated that the development would not increase flood risk on or off the site and would have no impact on watercourses. Officers consider that the application accords with section 10 of the NPPF.

Other

There are no financial contributions sought from the development as the associated impacts can be mitigated for by conditions and the development would not result in an impact upon infrastructure.

The applicant offers local residents the options to buy shares in the development and the applicant, has offered to pay a financial contribution to Preston Parish Council. This will be £125 per MW of installed capacity for every year of permitted operation. This would be paid to Preston Parish Council as a one-off sum within 90 days of the solar farm having been commissioned. The contribution will be secured by a Unilateral Undertaking.

While the above are beneficial to the local community, they are not considerations of the planning application. The availability of Government grants is also not a consideration of the planning application.

9. Conclusion:

The NPPF describes sustainable development as having three roles; social, economic and environmental. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF advises that "These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent". Paragraph 14 advises that there is presumption in favour of sustainable development.

It is recognised that the development would result in some impact upon the character of the landscape and would have some visual impact. However, it is considered that these impacts would not be significant and they could be adequately mitigated. for. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the development would not result in harm to heritage assets or biodiversity and would provide enhancements to biodiversity. The development would not result in increased flood risk, unacceptable noise and would not compromise highway safety.

There is clearly a need to provide renewable energy and this has both social and environmental benefits in terms of reducing emissions of carbon dioxide. It is considered that the limited landscape impacts would not outweigh the benefits that would arise.

The proposed development is considered to be sustainable development and subject to the final responses of Historic England, is considered to accord with the NPPF and Local Plan Policies 5, 9, 10, 38, 39, 42, 45 and 46.

10. Proposed conditions:

The development shall be started by 3 years from the date of this decision notice.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The development hereby approved shall be implemented in accordance with the following drawing number(s):
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P01_SLP_Rev D (Site Location Plan)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P02_SP_Rev F (Site Layout Plan)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P04_DI_Rev C (Double Invertors)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P05_SI_Rev B (Single Invertors)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P03_CC_Rev E (Temporary Construction Compound Layout Plan)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P06_SA_Rev B (Solar Array Cross Section)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P07_TS_Rev B (DNO Transfer Station)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P08_CS_Rev B (Collecting Station)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P09_CT_Rev B (Cable Trenching)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P10_FGE_Rev C (Fence and Gate Elevations)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P11_CS_Rev C (Storage Container)

Cirencester_Solar Farm_P12_PC_Rev F (Communication Box and Antenna)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P13_PE_Rev E (Padon Camera)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P14_DNO_Rev E (DNO Access Track)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P15_MB_Rev E (Meter Box)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P16_AT_Rev E (Aux Transformer)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P17_Sensors_Rev F (Sensors)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P21_RDC MN Sensors_Rev C (RDC Sensors)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P23_POC_Rev G (Cable Route)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P24_POC Poles_Rev C (Timber Poles)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P08_CS_Rev B (Collecting Station)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P03_CC_Rev E (Temporary Construction Compound Layout Plan)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P18_Opt1-CCTV_Rev B (Option 1 CCTV)
Cirencester_Solar Farm_P19_3.5m-CCTV_Rev D (3.5m CCTV Pole)
Figure 4.13 Rev M (Landscape Mitigation Plan with additional planting)

Reason: For purposes of clarity and for the avoidance of doubt, in accordance with paragraphs 203 and 206 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Within six months of the cessation of their use for electricity generating purposes the solar modules together with any supporting apparatus, mountings, cabling, foundations, inverters, platforms, collecting stations; transfer station, fencing and other associated equipment shall be removed from the land and the land restored to agricultural use or to a condition to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The decommissioning process shall be undertaken in accordance with the Decommissioning Method Statement dated 19.03.2015.

Reason: To ensure that the landscape is restored to a condition appropriate for its location in the open countryside in accordance with Local Plan Policy 42.

Within three months of the first use of the solar panels hereby approved the temporary construction compound shall be removed, its use ceased and the land restored to agricultural use or to a condition to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: The compound is considered not to represent an appropriate permanent form of development in the open countryside and permission is granted solely to meet the needs of the development during its construction phase in the interests of highway safety and to preserve the character and appearance of the landscape in accordance with Local Plan Policies 38 and 42.

The entire landscaping scheme as shown on the Landscape Mitigation Plan with Additional Planting (ref Figure 4.13 Rev M) shall be completed by the end of the planting season immediately following the completion of the development or the site being brought into use, whichever is the sooner.

Reason: To ensure that the landscaping is carried out and to enable the planting to begin to become established at the earliest stage practical and thereby achieving the objective of Cotswold District Local Plan Policy 45.

Any trees or plants shown on the approved landscaping scheme to be planted or retained which die, are removed, are damaged or become diseased, or grassed areas which become eroded or damaged following the completion of the approved landscaping scheme and until the site is decommissioned, shall be replaced by the end of the next planting season. Replacement trees and plants shall be of the same size and species as those lost, unless the Local Planning Authority approves alternatives in writing.

Reason: To ensure that the planting becomes established and thereby achieves the objective of Cotswold District Local Plan Policy 45.

The development shall be undertaken in accordance with Habitat Management Plan produced by avian ecology Version 2 dated 29.07.2015. All of the proposed mitigation and enhancements must be installed before the development in brought into use and permanently retained thereafter

Reason: To ensure that badgers, birds and bats, and their habitats are protected in accordance with the Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and amended and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Local Plan Policy 9 and in order for the Local Planning Authority to comply with part 3 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

The perimeter hedgerow bordering the A417 (dual carriageway) to the west of the site shall be maintained at a minimum height of 3 metres.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety to reduce glint and glare.

Prior to any site works taking place, a detailed arboricultural method statement and Tree Protection Plan shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing. The method statement and tree protection plan shall be in accordance with the guidance in BS 5837:2012 "Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. Recommendations" and shall include details of:

-A pre - commencement site meeting with an appointed arboricultural consultant, the site manager and any contractors carrying out works within the root protection areas of the retained trees. The Local Planning authority is to be given 5 working days notice of the meeting so that they can send a representative to attend
-Details of arboricultural supervision during construction works and how the tree protection measures will be monitored by the site manager
-The timing of all tree protection measures
-Details of tree protection fencing and excluded activities
-Details of any underground services within the root protection areas of the retained trees and how they will be installed along with appropriate arboricultural supervision

Reason: To safeguard the retained/protected tree(s) in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies 10 and 45.

No external lighting shall be installed within the application site unless otherwise than during the construction phase.

Reason: To prevent light pollution in accordance in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policy 5.

Before the development is brought into use, the drainage strategy as set out within the Flood Risk Assessment incorporating Drainage Strategy reference number J-4944-CFM-V1 and dated 17.07.2015 shall be completed in full. The drainage strategy shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details for the operational lifespan of the development and until all equipment and associated structures have been removed.

Reason: To prevent the risk of surface water flooding in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Within the two easternmost land parcels of the application site, (ie, the area containing the prehistoric field system) the type and depth of the array supports and any cable trenches shall be approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of the development'.

Reason: To make provision for the conservation of significant archaeological remains, in accordance with paragraph 129 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The following construction times shall be observed:
07:30 - 18:00 Monday to Friday
08:00 - 14:00 Saturdays
No working on Sundays or bank holidays

Reason: To protect the amenity of the locality, especially for people living and/or working nearby, in accordance with Cotswold District Council Plan Policy 5 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The noise emissions during construction and decommissioning periods of the development shall not exceed a LAeqT noise level of 65 dB 1-metre from the façade of any occupied residential dwelling, in accordance with BS 5228-1:2009.

Reason: To protect the amenity of the locality, especially for people living and/or working nearby, in accordance with Cotswold District Council Plan Policy 5 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The level of noise emitted from the site shall not exceed 55dB LAeq at any time, as measured on the boundary of the nearest sensitive receptor in accordance with the WHO figure contained in BS8233/2014.

Reason: To protect the amenity of the locality, especially for people living and/or working nearby, in accordance with Cotswold District Council Plan Policy 5 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Prior to the commencement of construction works, the highway mitigation as proposed in the Construction Traffic Management Plan August 2015 1401-57/CTMP/01/REV E, shall be implemented in all respects and shall be maintained for the duration of construction works thereafter.

Reason: To reduce the potential impact on the public highway in accordance with Paragraphs 32 and 35 of the NPPF.

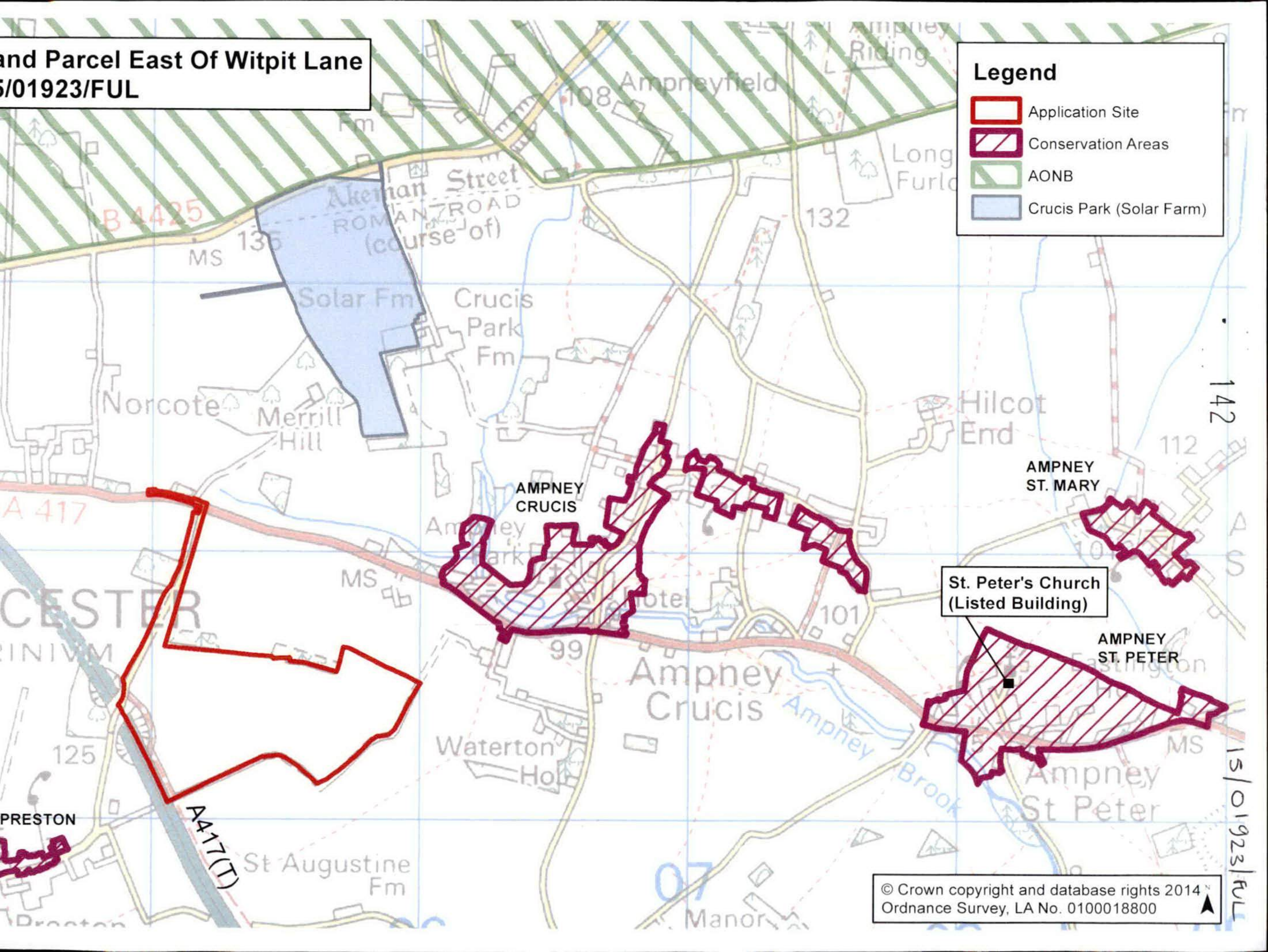
Prior to the commencement of construction works vehicular parking, turning, loading/unloading facilities, wheel washing and on site construction activities shall be provided in accordance with the submitted plan 'Cirencester Solar Farm_P03_CC_RevE' with reference to the Construction Method Statement those facilities shall be maintained available for those purposes during the construction period.

Reason: To ensure that a safe, suitable and secure means of access for all people that minimises the conflict between traffic and cyclists and pedestrians is provided in accordance with Paragraphs 32 and 35 of the NPPF.

Informatives:

The proposed development will involve works to be carried out on the public highway and the Applicant/Developer is required to enter into a legally binding Highway Works Agreement (including an appropriate bond) with the County Council before commencing those works. Street Works will need to approve the proposed traffic management. The site is traversed by a public right of way and this permission does not authorise additional use by motor vehicles, or obstruction, or diversion.

Please note, any conditions attached to this permission that require the written approval of the Local Planning Authority will have to be part of an application for approval of details reserved by condition (see 1APP forms on Council's website). A fee will be necessary for each application related to a planning permission. However, all of the conditions can be covered by one application, or on an individual basis.


and Parcel East Of Witpit Lane
5/01923/FUL
Legend
Application Site
Conservation Areas
AONB
Crucis Park (Solar Farm)
AMPNEY CRUCIS
AMPNEY ST. MARY
AMPNEY ST. PETER
St. Peter's Church (Listed Building)
PRESTON
Akeman Street
ROMAN ROAD (course of)
Solar Fm
Crucis Park Fm
Norcote
Merrill Hill
Hilcot End
Ampney Crucis
Waterton Ho
Ampney St Peter
Ampney Brook
St Augustine Fm
A417(T)
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142
15/01923/FUL
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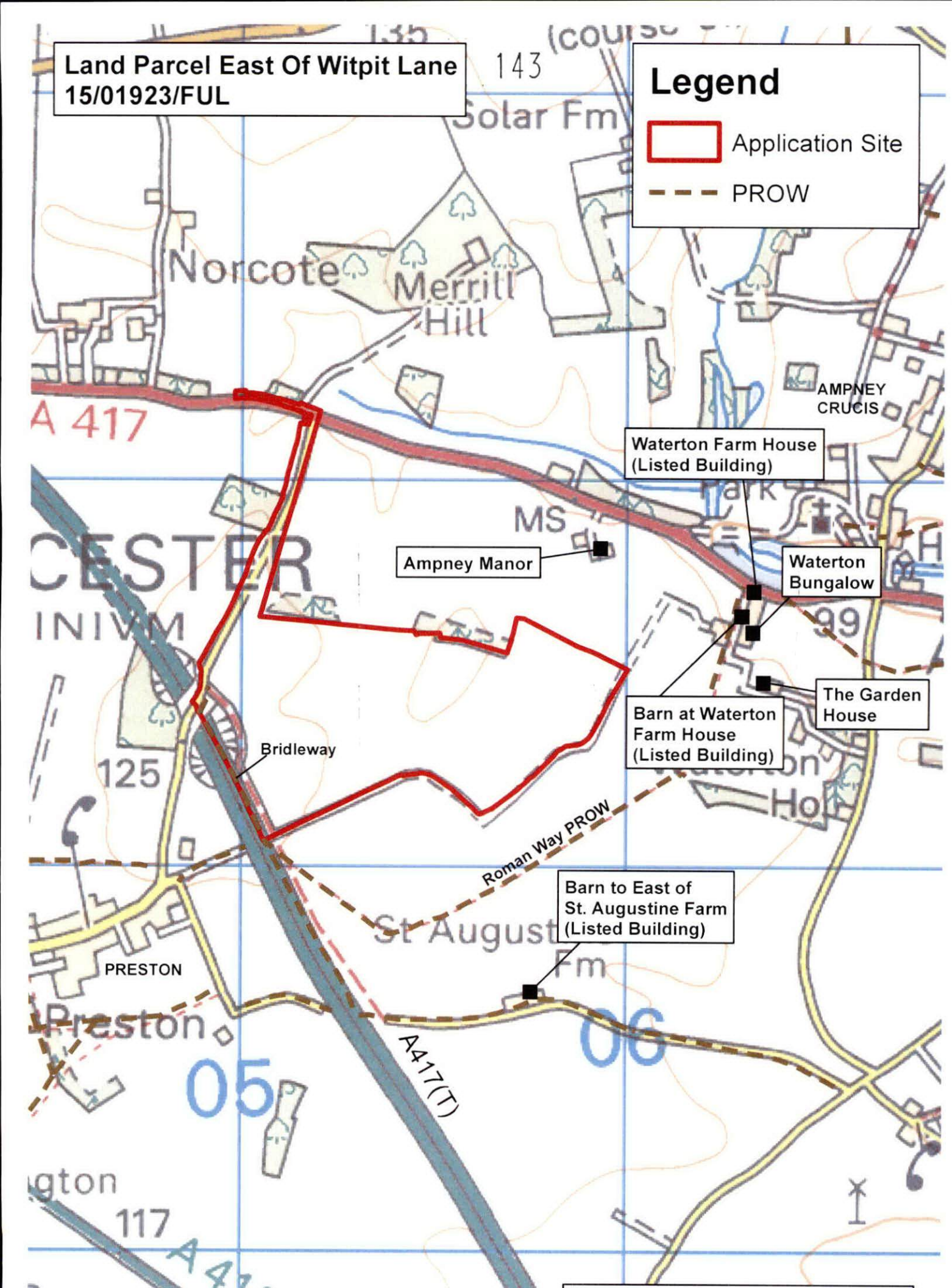
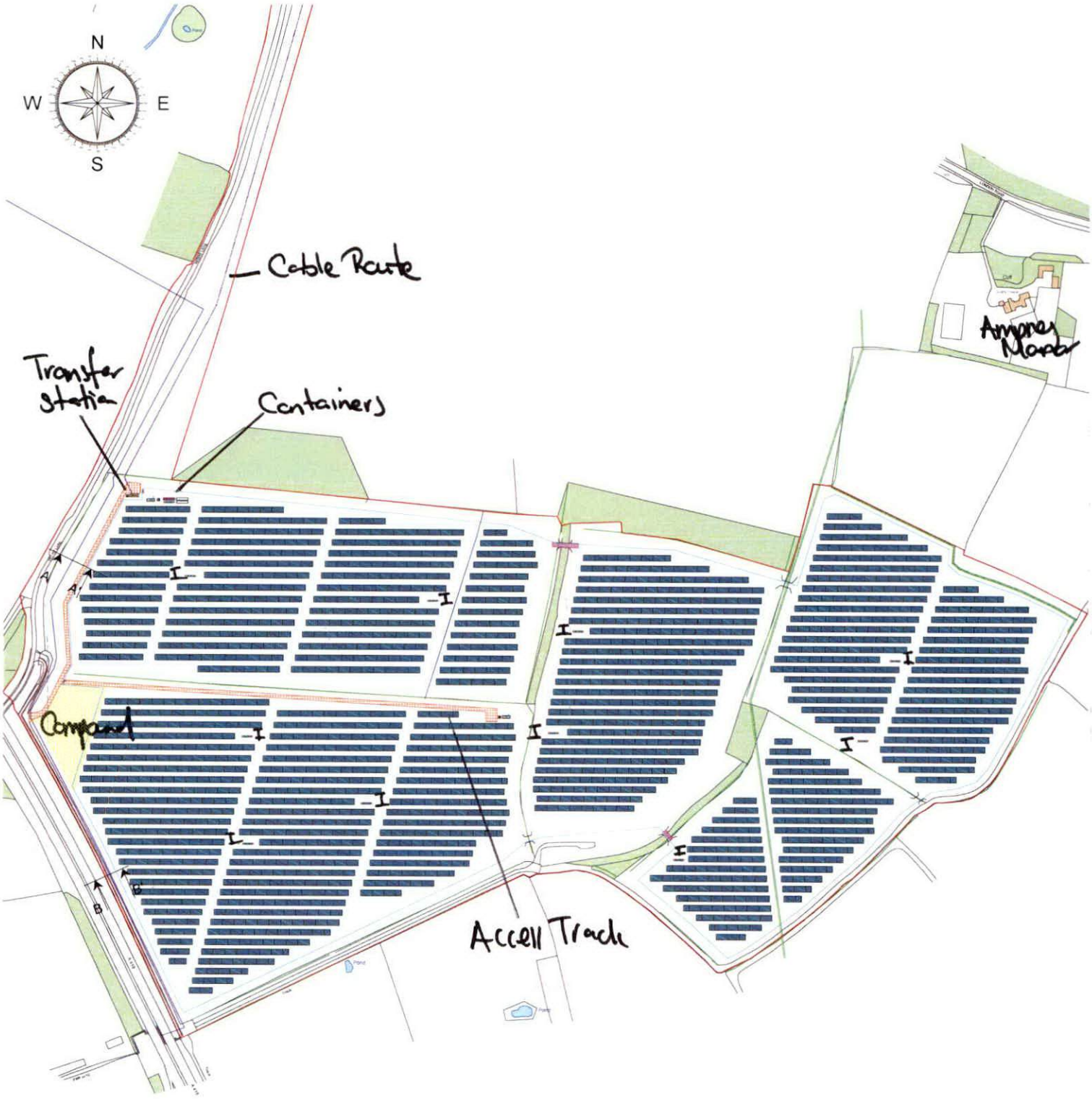

Land Parcel East Of Witpit Lane
15/01923/FUL
Legend
Application Site
PROW
Norcote
Merrill Hill
Solar Fm
A 417
AMPNEY CRUCIS
Waterton Farm House (Listed Building)
Ampney Manor
Waterton Bungalow
The Garden House
Barn at Waterton Farm House (Listed Building)
Bridleway
Roman Way PROW
Barn to East of St. Augustine Farm (Listed Building)
PRESTON
Preston
A417(T)
143
125
117
05
06



I = Inverter Platform

Site Layout

Legend:

- Existing Mature Woodland
- Indicative Hedgerow Restoration - Not Yet Planted
- Existing Mature Hedgerow
- Traditional Pasture Mixture*1
- Site Security Fence - 2m high
- Proposed Track (within solar farm)
- Bridleway
- Water Pipe
- Long Distance Public Footpath
- Area B
- Wildflower Meadow
- Proposed Woodland

GENERAL NOTES
Base map, site survey and solar plan layout supplied by Belectric. All Dimensions to be checked on site and not scaled from this drawing. All services to be checked on site and not scaled from this drawing. This drawing is not for construction and is for planning only.

PLANTING NOTES
1. Plant in groups of 3-5 of same species
2. The southern boundary of Hedgerow 1 adjacent to the boundary fence will be maintained with hand-held equipment if required

*1 – traditional pasture grassland under panels with floristically enhanced meadow in strips between panels

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Common Name	Botanical Name	Height (cm)	Type	% Mix	Plant Numbers
Hedgerow 1 (315m long). Triple stagger (0.5m centre spacing)				Nos./m	6.0
Field Maple	Acer campestre	150-175	Feathered tree	20	378
Dogwood	Cornus sanguinea	60-80	1+1 Feathered w hip	10	189
Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna	60-80	1+1 Feathered w hip	30	567
Hazel	Corylus avellana	60-80	1+1 Feathered w hip	20	378
Privet	Ligustrum vulgare	60-80	1+1 Feathered w hip	10	189
Holly	Ilex aquifolium	30-40	3Lt pot	10	189
				Total	1,890
Hedgerow 1 - standard trees (as shown)					
Field Maple	Acer campestre	200-250	Br-Light Standard		11
Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna	200-250	Br-Light Standard		12

Common Name	Botanical Name	Height (cm)	Type	% Mix	Plant Numbers
Hedgerow 2 (288m). Double stagger (0.33m centre spacing)				Nos./m	6.0
Field Maple	Acer campestre	40-60	1+0 w hip	20	345
Dogwood	Cornus sanguinea	40-60	1+0 w hip	10	173
Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna	40-60	1+0 w hip	30	519
Hazel	Corylus avellana	40-60	1+0 w hip	20	345
Privet	Ligustrum vulgare	40-60	1+0 w hip	10	173
Holly	Ilex aquifolium	40-60	3Lt pot	10	173
				Total	1,728

Common Name	Botanical Name	Height (cm)	Type	% Mix	Plant Numbers
Hedgerow 2: small hedgerow trees				Nos	29.0
Field Maple	Acer campestre	150-175	Feathered tree	50	14
Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna	150-175	Feathered tree	50	15
				Total	29

Hedgerow infill (32m estimate across Site). Double stagger (0.33m centre spacing)				Nos./m	6.0
Field Maple	Acer campestre	40-60	1+0 w hip	20	38
Dogwood	Cornus sanguinea	40-60	1+0 w hip	10	19
Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna	40-60	1+0 w hip	30	58
Hazel	Corylus avellana	40-60	1+0 w hip	20	38
Privet	Ligustrum vulgare	40-60	1+0 w hip	10	19
Holly	Ilex aquifolium	40-60	3Lt pot	10	19
				Total	193

Common Name	Botanical Name	Height (cm)	Type	% Mix	Plant Numbers
Treebelt 1 (1,121m2). 3m centre spacing - informal grid				No/m2	0.111
Field Maple	Acer campestre	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	30	38
Hornbeam	Carpinus betulus	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	5	6
Beech	Fagus sylvatica	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	20	24
Crab Apple	Malus sylvestris	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	10	12
Oak	Quercus robur	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	30	38
Wild Cherry	Prunus avium	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	5	6
				Total	125

Common Name	Botanical Name	Height (cm)	Type	% Mix	Plant Numbers
Treebelt 2 (1,750m2). 3m centre spacing - informal grid				No/m2	0.111
Field Maple	Acer campestre	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	30	58
Hornbeam	Carpinus betulus	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	5	9
Beech	Fagus sylvatica	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	20	38
Crab Apple	Malus sylvestris	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	10	19
Oak	Quercus robur	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	30	58
Wild Cherry	Prunus avium	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	5	9
				Total	189

Common Name	Botanical Name	Height (cm)	Type	% Mix	Plant Numbers
Woodland 1 (983m2). Shrub edge 5m wide - plants at 1.5m centre spacing				No/m2	0.444
Dogwood	Cornus sanguinea	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	15	66
Hazel	Corylus avellana	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	20	88
Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	20	88
Spindle	Euonymus europaeus	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	5	22
Privet	Ligustrum vulgare	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	10	44
Blackthorn	Prunus spinosa	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	10	44
Dog Rose	Rosa canina agg	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	5	22
Guelder Rose	Viburnum opulus	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	5	22
Wayfaring Tree	Viburnum lantana	80 - 100	1+2 Feathered w hip	5	22
Holly	Ilex aquifolium	40-60	3Lt pot	5	22
				Total	438

Common Name	Botanical Name	Size (cm)	Type	% Mix	Plant Numbers
Woodland 1 (1,419m2). Tree core - plants at 3m centre spacing				No/m2	0.111
Field Maple	Acer campestre	125-150	0/1/1 Feathered w hip	30	47
Hornbeam	Carpinus betulus	125-150	0/1/1 Feathered w hip	5	8
Beech	Fagus sylvatica	125-150	0/1/1 Feathered w hip	20	32
Crab Apple	Malus sylvestris	125-150	0/1/1 Feathered w hip	10	16
Oak	Quercus robur	125-150	0/1/1 Feathered w hip	30	47
Wild Cherry	Prunus avium	125-150	0/1/1 Feathered w hip	5	8
				Total	158

Final Revision	Date	Description	By	Chk

Consultant:
Crestwood Environmental Ltd
Units 1 and 2
Nightingale Place
Pendeford Business Park
Wolverhampton WV9 5HF

Tel: 01902 824037

info@crestwoodenvironmental.co.uk
http://www.crestwoodenvironmental.co.uk/

Client: BELECTRIC®

Site: **CIRCENCESTER SOLAR FARM**

Drawing Title: **Landscape Mitigation Plan with additional planting**

Date	Scale	Paper Size
28 Jul 2015	1:2,500	A2 (594×420MM)

Drawn By	Checked By	Status	Final Revision
XL	NF	FINAL	M

CAD Ref	Drawing No
CE-WP0753-DW04m - FINAL	Figure 4.13

Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

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Highways Development Management
Shire Hall
Gloucester
GL1 2TH

Helen Donnelly
Cotswold District Council
Trinity Road
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 1PX

Please ask for: Mark Sweet

Our Ref: C/2015/034197 Your Ref: 15/01923/FUL Date: 26 August 2015

Dear Helen Donnelly,

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
HIGHWAY RECOMMENDATION

LOCATION: Land Parcel East Of Witpit Lane Preston Gloucestershire
PROPOSED: Proposed development of solar photovoltaic modules including access, temporary construction compound; single and double inverter platforms; transfer station; collecting station; security fencing; CCTV cameras and poles; landscaping; and associated works and infrastructure including underground cable along London Road verge and Witpit Lane verge and related equipment to allow connection to the electricity distribution network

This response is based on the following amended information:

Construction Traffic Management Plan August 2015 1401-57/CTMP/01/REV E received on the 24th August 2015.

Proposed Development and Site Location

The proposal is for a solar farm with associated construction compound and infrastructure on land east of Witpit Lane bounded by the A419 to the south and located slightly north of Preston. The site is accessed via an existing single lane paved track on the south side of Witpit Lane a class 4 road just after it crosses over the A419.

It is a core principle of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to encourage the use of renewable resources for example, by the development of renewable energy. Low carbon economy also forms part of the 3 strands of sustainable development; and the presumption in favour in the National Planning Policy

Framework is a golden thread and approved without delay unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

The construction traffic management statement states that there will only be a maintenance vehicle expected to be a van approximately once every three months when the site is operational. Therefore the principle of the development is acceptable on transport grounds. The main trip generation and transport impacts will be during the construction phase which has been assessed under the next heading.

Collisions and Public Rights of Way

No collisions are recorded in the vicinity of the site over the last 3 years.

The site access from Witpit Lane is via a track which is a designated PROW (Preston Bridleway 13) and it should be noted that separate approval may be required for access rights or to carry out works. This will require approval from Gloucestershire County Council Public Right of Way section.

Construction Traffic Management Plan

Trip Generation:

The construction traffic management plan states there will be in the region of 765 HGVs (1530 vehicle movements) to the site, with a typical average of 9 deliveries per day for a temporary period of 16 weeks managed outside of peak periods is not considered to be significant.

The management plan also states there be 5-15 staff vehicle movements anticipated each day in either minibuses, private cars or vans, this is again not considered a significant traffic generation for the temporary construction period.

Vehicle Tracking, Traffic Management and Highway Impact:

The latest Construction Traffic Management Plan has been submitted following comments made by the highway authority with traffic management and highway improvements to manage the construction traffic accessing the site and on the highway.

The Construction Traffic Management Plan has provided a vehicle routing plan for construction traffic from different directions using generally main roads avoiding the village of Preston using the A417 and south to the site entrance along Witpit Lane. From the junction of the A417 London Road construction traffic is routed south to via Witpit Lane a typically 4.5m wide road excluding grassed verges and vehicle passing places.

Construction traffic will be required to avoid arriving or departing during peak hour periods of 8:00-9:00am and 5:00-6:00pm to minimise impact on the network.

Construction traffic will be in radio contact with the site compound and required to give advanced notification when they are near the site so vehicles exiting the site can be held whilst approaching vehicles arrive or held at off-site holding points shown in appendix M to manage

two-way movements. Trained banksman will also be employed to manage movements from the site onto the highway.

Temporary traffic lights are included on Witpit Lane either side of the site entrance to hold traffic allowing large construction vehicles exiting the site to manoeuvre combined with some minor widening of the site access track and Witpit Lane.

Highway improvements have also been provided along Witpit Lane and the junction of Witpit Lane with London Road. New and expanded passing places are provided along Witpit Lane from the junction with London Road (A417) to the site with tracking allowing for HGV's to pass general traffic. Visibility at the site from the junction of Witpit Lane onto London Road has also been improved with vegetation cut back and tracked for HGV entry and exit.

Car parking for all anticipated construction staff and visitors will be accommodated on site in the site compound. No parking will be permitted on the adjoining road network.

It should be noted that proposed highway works including passing places on Witpit Lane will require a separate highways works agreement.

Conclusion

The development of renewable energy is encouraged by the National Planning Policy Framework, and form part of the 3 strands of sustainable development. The development will entail a construction phase, and due to the type of development this will entail HGV's movements during that phase. Construction works are not inherently part of the planning process, as it is recognised to a certain extent that with development construction traffic is inevitable. We must ensure that the construction phase is safe both in highway safety and public safety. These aspects of safety are covered by other legislation, i.e. Highways Act, Health and Safety, etc.

Whilst the construction phase will cause inevitable temporary disruption, this is not a planning issue, however local authorities, and stakeholders will need to co-operate to ensure compliance.

Once the construction phase is complete, the vehicle movement's associate with the site will be minimal.

Conditions

A planning condition will be recommended to undertake all of the works included with the construction statement, this being the site access, passing bay works, traffic management plans, visibility improvements etc. The works will be subject to a highway works agreement with GCC and technical approval, therefore the works approved are considered indicative at this stage. The traffic management works will also be approved by Street Works prior to implementation, therefore these works are also approved on an indicative basis.

Recommendation

I recommend that no highway objection be raised subject to the following conditions being attached to any permission granted:

1. Prior to the commencement of construction works, the highway mitigation as proposed in the Construction Traffic Management Plan August 2015 1401-57/CTMP/01/REV E, shall be implemented in all respects and shall be maintained for the duration of construction works thereafter.

Reason: To reduce the potential impact on the public highway in accordance with Paragraphs 32 and 35 of the NPPF.

2. Prior to the commencement of construction works vehicular parking, turning, loading/unloading facilities, wheel washing and on site construction activities shall be provided in accordance with the submitted plan 'Cirencester Solar Farm_P03_CC_RevE' with reference to the Construction Method Statement those facilities shall be maintained available for those purposes during the construction period.

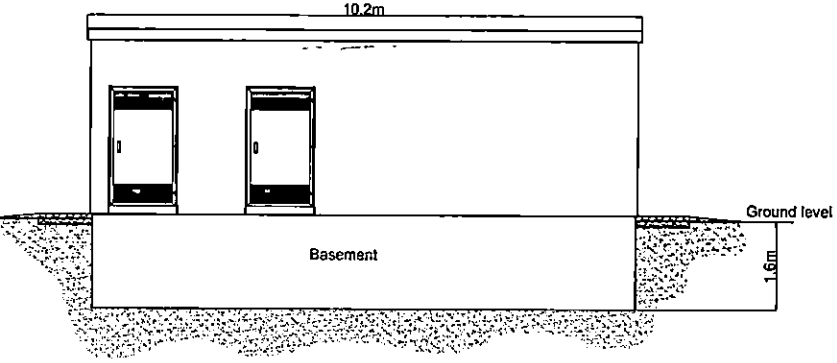
Reason:- To ensure that a safe, suitable and secure means of access for all people that minimises the conflict between traffic and cyclists and pedestrians is provided in accordance with Paragraphs 32 and 35 of the NPPF.

Informatives

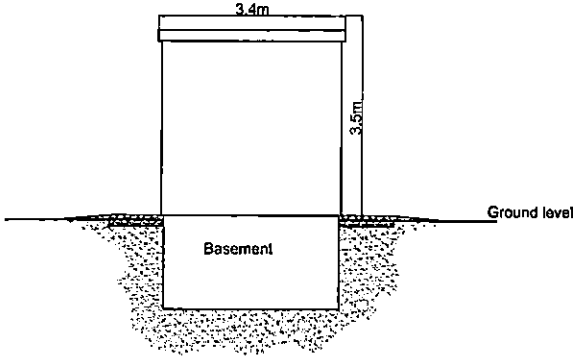
The proposed development will involve works to be carried out on the public highway and the Applicant/Developer is required to enter into a legally binding Highway Works Agreement (including an appropriate bond) with the County Council before commencing those works. Street Works will need to approve the proposed traffic management.

The site is traversed by a public right of way and this permission does not authorise additional use by motor vehicles, or obstruction, or diversion.

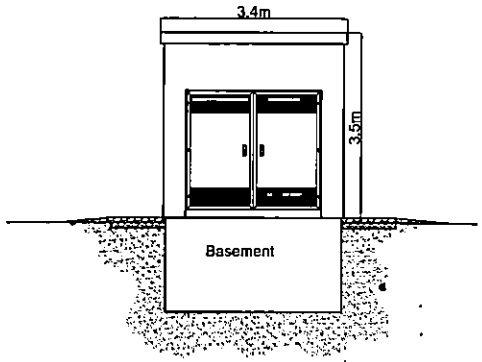
Front Elevation



Side Elevation 2



Side Elevation 1



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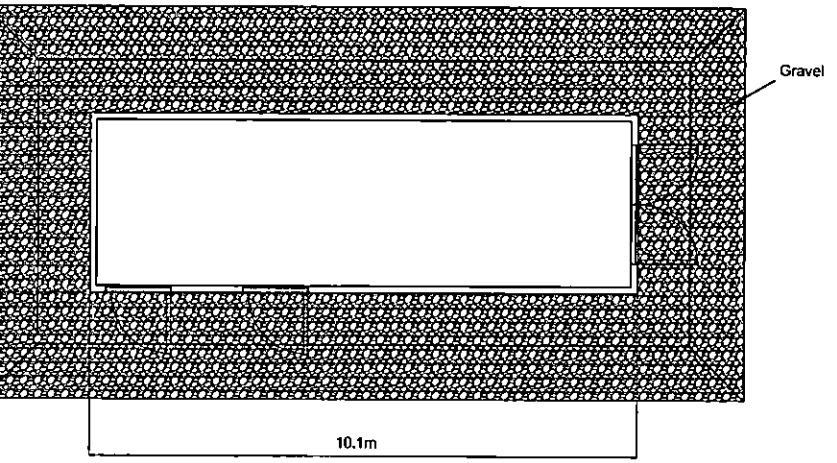
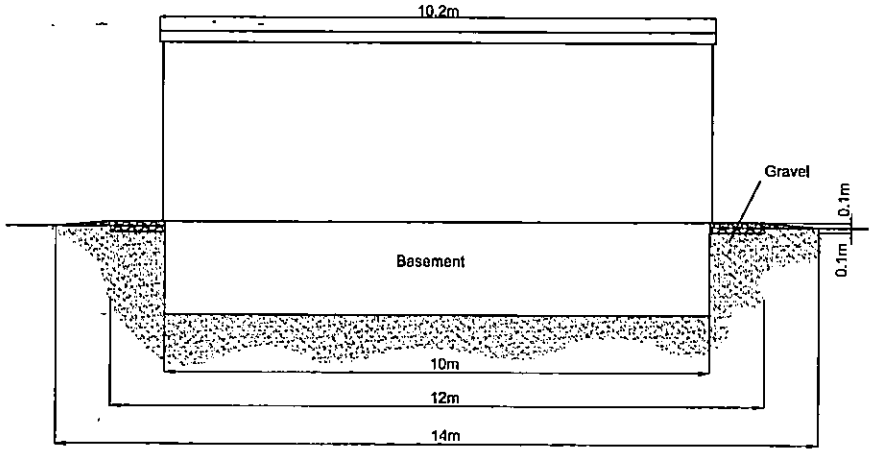


Proposed Floor Plan

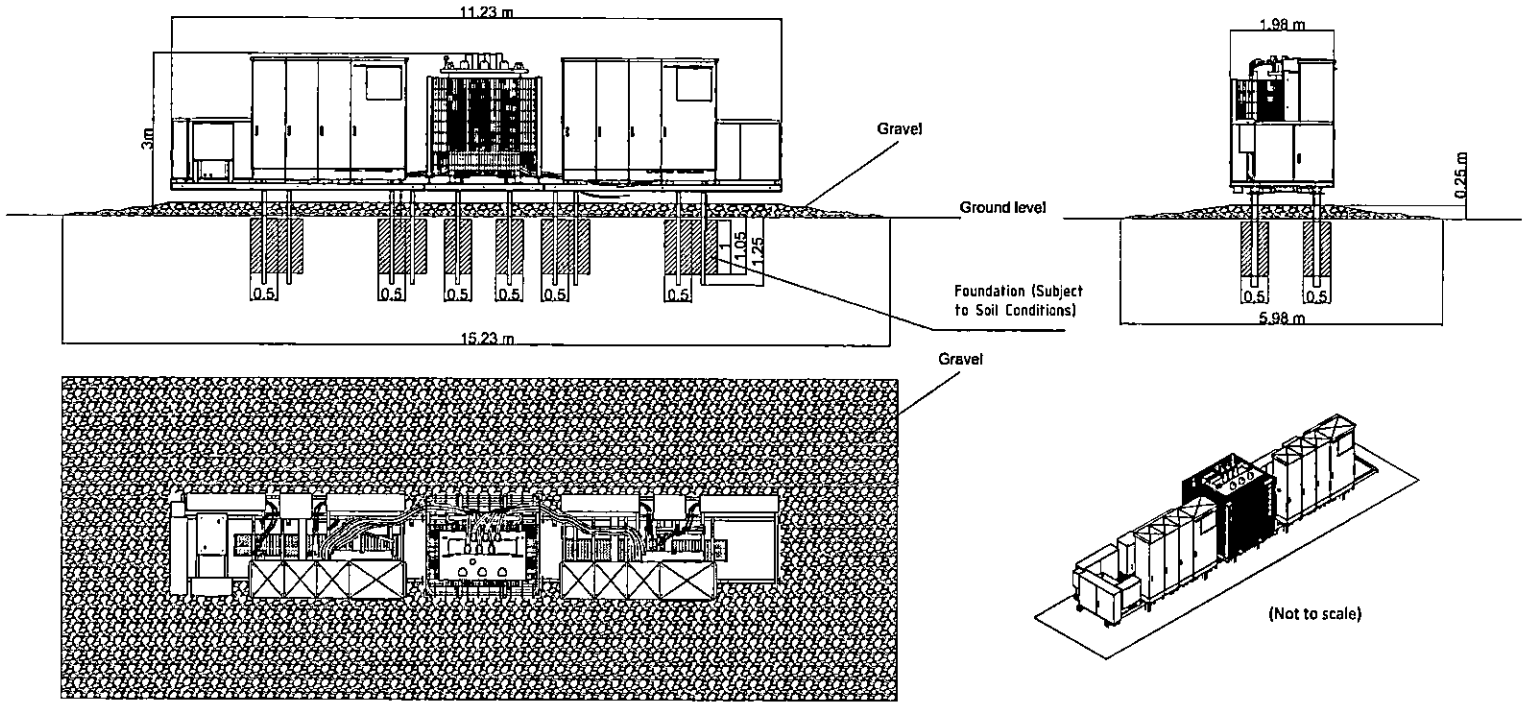


Rear Elevation

Colour of Structure
Moss Green
(RAL 6005)

[redacted]

Transfer Station



Double Inverter Platform

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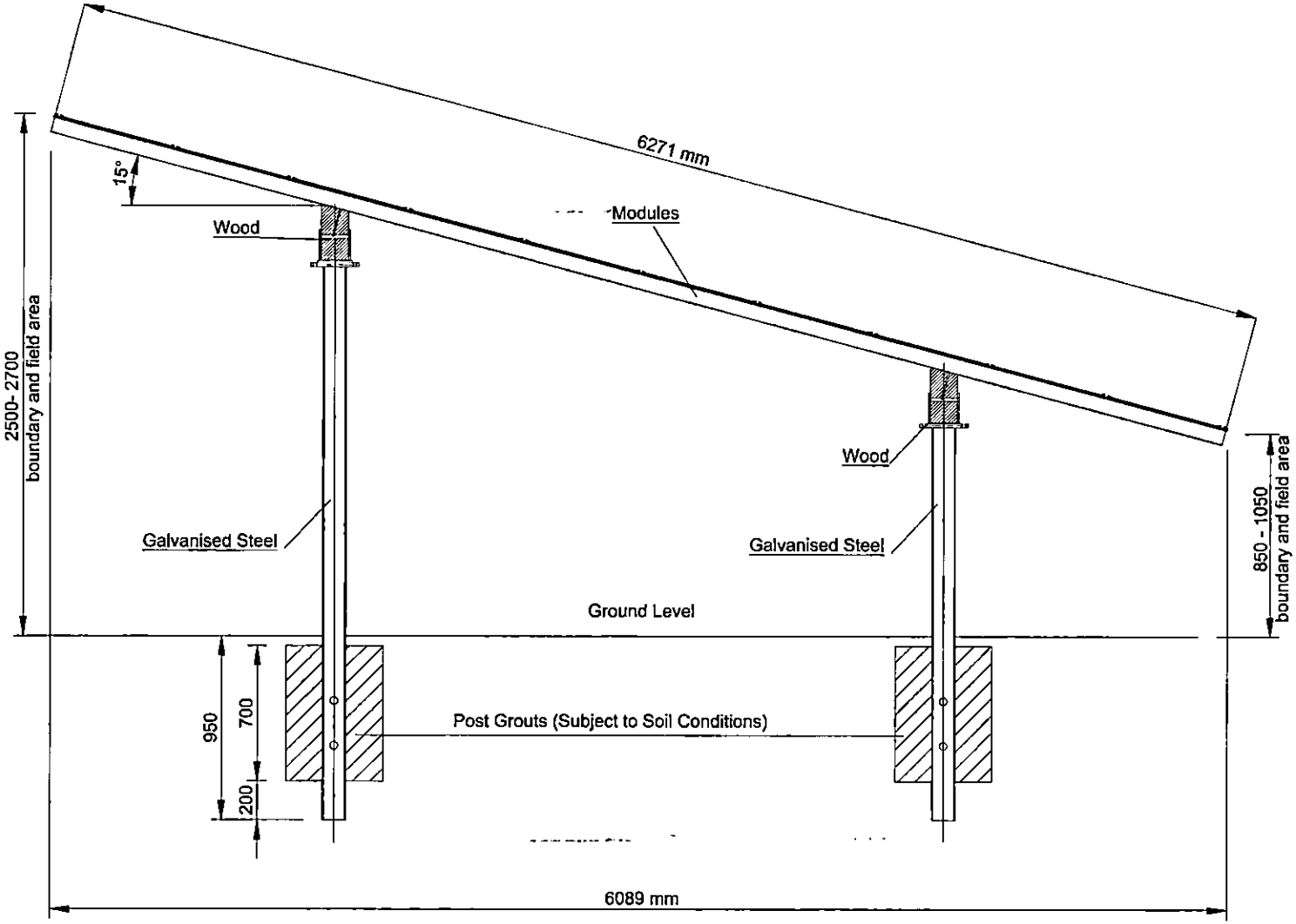
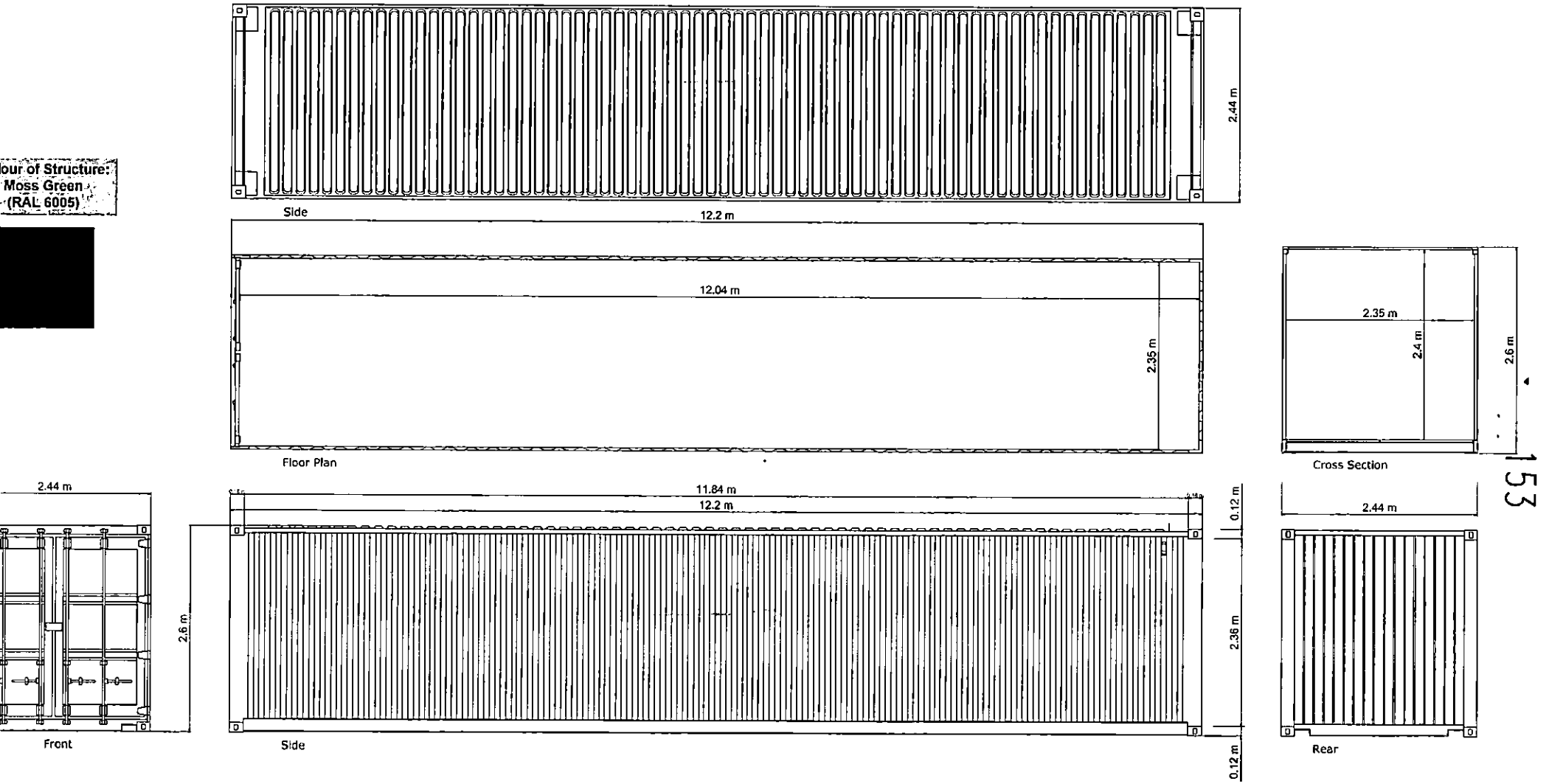


Cross Section of Solar Array



our of Structure:
Moss Green
(RAL 6005)

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Storage Containers