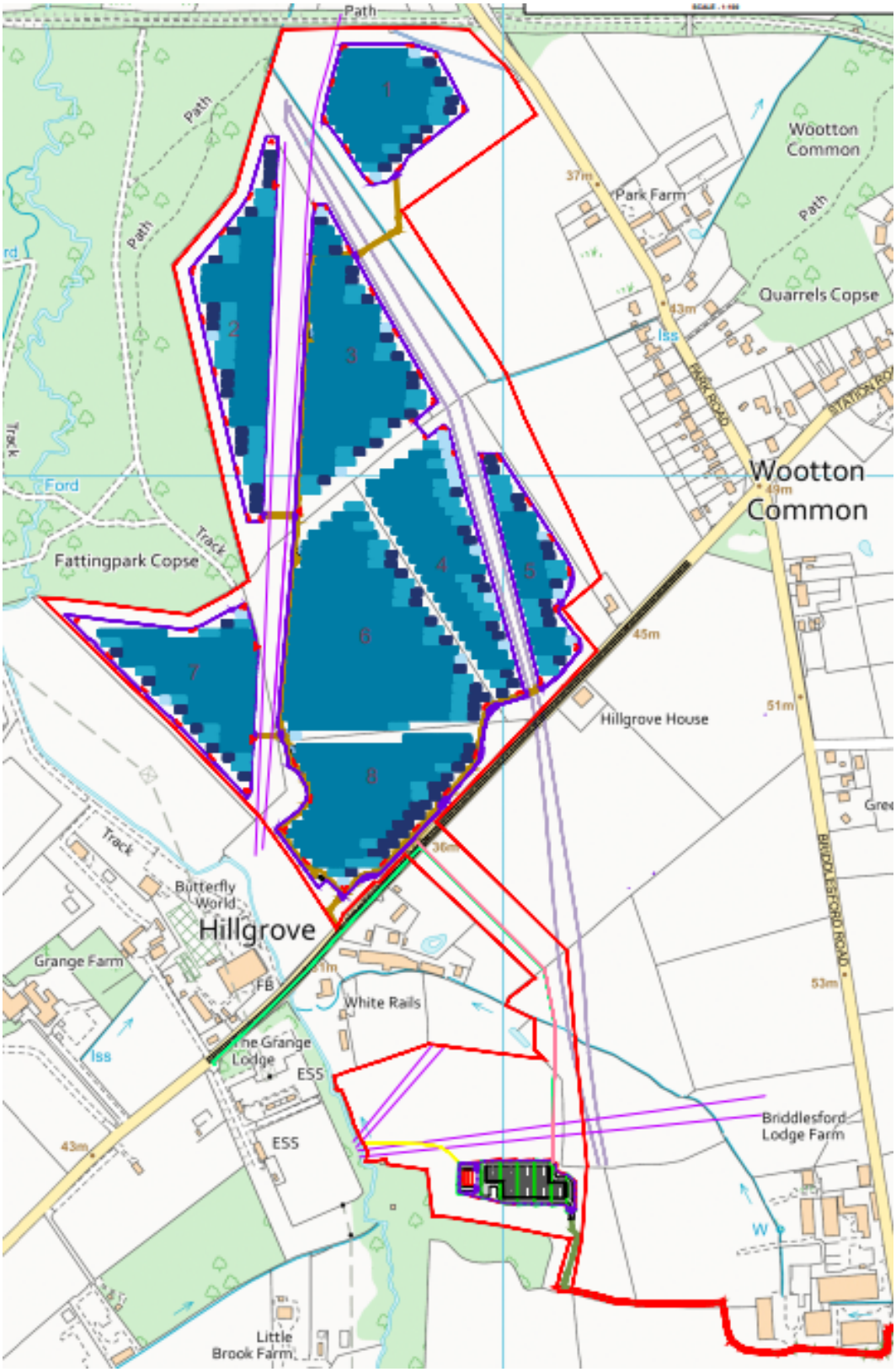
Purpose: For Decision

Planning Committee Report

Report of	STRATEGIC MANAGER FOR PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY
Date	**5 September 2023**
Application Reference	22/01585/FUL
Application type	Full
Application Description	Proposed renewable energy park - consisting of ground mounted solar arrays, battery energy storage system, substation building, ancillary infrastructure, means of access and associated landscaping.
Site address	Land to the northwest of Whiterails Road/west of Park Road and land to the southeast of Whiterails Road/west of Briddlesford Road, Wootton, Newport, Isle of Wight
Parish	Wootton
Ward Councillor	Currently vacant
Applicant	Sunny Oak Renewable Energy Park Ltd
Planning Officer	Ann Braid

Reason for Planning Committee consideration	The development is of genuine island wide significance and raises marginal and difficult policy issues.

Recommendation	Conditional permission subject to Legal Agreement



Main considerations

- Principle
- Loss of agricultural land
- The impact on the character of the area
- The impact on neighbouring residential properties
- The impact of the development upon trees

- Impact of the development on ecological interests
- Highway consideration
- Rights of Way
- Drainage and surface water run-off

1 Recommendation

1.1 Conditional permission subject to planning conditions covering the following matters:

- Landscaping
- Construction Environment Management Plan
- Drainage and flood measures
- Temporary consent
- Archaeology
- Right of way

1.2 The permission would also be subject to a planning obligation securing a contribution towards enhancements to the local Rights of Way network and the provision of a permissive path through the site to link to these.

2 Location and Site Characteristics

2.1 The application site covers an area of 32.5 hectares. The site would be in two sections, on either side of Whiterails Road. Solar panels would be sited on 27.2 hectares of agricultural land to the north of the road, and a compound for battery storage would be located within 5.3 hectares of agricultural land to the south. Access to the northern sector would be from the southern end of Whiterails Road opposite the business park, and access to the storage units would be from Briddlesford Road, close to Briddlesford Farm.

2.2 The site is located approximately 100 metres from the built-up area of Wootton, within an area that has a predominantly rural agricultural character. The roads around and across the site are busy through routes without pavements. Field boundaries are generally relatively low-level hedgerows and there are wide views across the landscape from the highway.

2.3 The site itself has been used for grazing by the dairy farm and occasionally cut for silage. The site slopes gently up from the bottom of Whiterails Road towards the east. It is divided by existing hedgerows and there are also mature trees in some of the hedgerows, in the centre of the site and to the north and west.

2.4 To the west lies Fattingpark Copse, an area of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and, south of this, Butterfly World. There is an existing 12.4 hectare solar park on Grange Farm, 100 metres to the west of the application site.

3 Details of Application

3.1 Full Planning Permission is sought for a renewable energy park, which would be capable of generating up to 20MW, consisting of ground mounted solar arrays, battery energy storage system, substation building, ancillary infrastructure, means of access and associated landscaping. Associated infrastructure would include panel frames and anchors, temporary compounds, string inverters, transformers,

substation, access tracks, cabling and conduits, CCTV, and security fencing.

3.2 The panels would be arranged in rows along an east-west axis, with their slopes facing south. Each row of panels would be 7.1 metres wide and the longest row, in sector 6, would be 210 metres. Panels would stand no more than 3 metres above ground level. The base of panels would be positioned 0.9 metres above ground level. The proposed frames would include aluminium supports driven into the ground, except in the vicinity of the gas main, when panels would be supported on concrete pads.

3.3 Four transformer units are proposed along the western boundary of sectors 3, 6 and 8 and these would be housed in 3 metres by 1.5 metre cabinets, 2.6 metres high. A single customer container would be located close to the access, next to the southernmost panels, and this container would measure 6.1 metres by 2.4 metres and would be a height of 3 metres.

3.4 On the southern part of the proposed park would be battery storage units, which would be located in a compound measuring 120 metres by 45 metres located 230 metres west of Briddlesford Lodge Farm, within 5.3 hectares of agricultural land. The compound would enclose eight groups of five containers. Each group of containers would comprise one large container measuring 12 metres by 2.4 metres and four smaller containers, two measuring 3.7 metres by 2.4 metres and two measuring 6 metres by 2.4 metres. They would be arranged on a series of terraces sloping down towards the west, where a 10 metre by 17 metre Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) substation building would be located. This building would have a ridge height of 6 metres. The containers would be enclosed on three sides by a 4 metre high acoustic fence and the remainder of the boundary would be a metal palisade fence. The perimeter of the site would be landscaped with a belt of scrub, interspersed with native trees. It is also proposed to landscape the battery storage unit.

4 Relevant History

4.1 None relevant to this application.

5 Development Plan Policy

National Planning Policy

5.1 At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. The application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
ii. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against policies in the NPPF

taken as a whole.

5.2 The following sections of the NPPF are considered to be directly relevant to this planning application:

Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
Section 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.
Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

In particular, paragraph 148 of the NPPF states the planning system should '*support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure*.' In paragraph 158 the NPPF advises that '*When determining applications for renewable energy, Local Planning Authorities should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable*.'

Local Planning Policy

5.3 The Island Plan Core Strategy identifies the application site as being located in the wider rural area. The following policies are considered to be relevant to this application:

SP1 - Spatial Strategy
SP5 - Environment
SP6- Renewables
SP7 - Travel
DM2 - Design Quality for New Development
DM11 - Historic and Built Environment
DM12 - Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity
DM13 - Green Infrastructure
DM14 - Flood Risk
DM16 - Renewables
DM17 - Sustainable Travel
DM21 - Utility Infrastructure Requirements
DM22 - Developer Contributions

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and other guidance

5.4 In arriving at the recommendation in this report officers have given due regard to the following documents:

- East Wight Landscape Character Assessment, 2012
- Mission Zero: Climate and Environment Strategy 2021-2040 (Isle of Wight Council, September 2021)
- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)
- Powering Up Britain (HM Government, March 2023)

6. Consultee and Third Party Comments

Internal Consultees

6.1 The Island Roads Highway Engineer has raised no objection, subject to conditions to cover access onto Whiterails Road and Briddlesford Road, parking and a construction management plan.

6.2 The Council's Ecology Officer has raised no objection subject to condition to secure ecological mitigation and enhancements.

6.3 The Council's Rights of Way Officer has outlined that there is an opportunity to secure a right of way across the site, improving off road footpath and cycle links. The preferred route would be along the electricity line wayleave, south from the railway line footpath to Whiterails Road, and from there across the southern part of the site to Briddlesford Farm Shop and Café and link up with Little Town Lane.

6.4 The Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection subject to conditions relating to the control of noise emissions.

6.5 The Council's Tree Officer has requested additional information relating to planting, that would be required by condition.

6.6 The Council's Planning Drainage and Flood Risk Management Officer has recommended measures to control surface water run-off to Palmers Brook which have been provided.

6.7 The Council's Archaeologist has outlined that the area south of Whiterails Road is of archaeological interest but raises no objection subject to conditions to secure a programme of archaeological works.

6.8 Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue have outlined that the proposed development would be required to comply with Building and Access Regulations.

External Consultees

6.9 The Environment Agency originally objected, but their concerns have been overcome by an addendum to the Flood Risk Assessment. Compliance with the submitted FRA should be secured by condition.

6.10 Southern Water have outlined that there is a sewer in the vicinity of the development which will need to be taken into account. No soakaways, swales, ponds or watercourses, or water containing or conveying features should be located within 5 metres of the line of the sewer.

6.11 Southern Gas networks have raised no objection provided SGN's access and right of way is protected.

6.12 Natural England have confirmed that sufficient information has been provided regarding the impact of the proposal on protected species namely bats. There should be a buffer zone around the ancient woodland and the development should not result in the loss to agriculture of the best and most versatile land.

6.13 Forestry Commission have raised concerns about the effect of surface water run-

off on the Ancient Woodland to the west.

Parish/Town Council Comments

6.14 Wootton Bridge Parish Council have commented that they support renewable energy however have material planning concerns about this planning application which are as follows:

1. Lack of an acceptable flood risk assessment (FRA) as per the objection from the Environment Agency

2. Concerns raised by the Hampshire and IOW Fire Rescue Service with regards to the battery energy storage system and the implications of a fire there

3. The lack of a plan in regards to the ongoing management of the biodiversity gain

4. The parish council express surprise that the IOW council did not request an EIA even though this could become the biggest solar farm on the IOW if agreed

Third Party Representations

6.15 19 letters of support have been received raising comments that can be summarised as follows:

- Environmentally sound, sustainable
- Supports energy independence
- Reduces bills
- Battery storage is to be supported
- Poor quality land
- No adverse visual impact
- Support diversification
- No noise or nuisance
- Contributes to net zero
- Reduce reliance on fossil fuels
- Essential to the future

6.16 24 letters of objection have been received raising concerns that can be summarised as follows:

- Visual impact
- Noise
- Flooding
- Impact on ancient woodland
- Loss of agricultural land
- Fire risk
- Highway impacts
- Glint and glare impacts
- Overlooking
- Manufacture of panels causes pollution
- Loss of biodiversity
- Need food not power

- No local benefit
- Wasteful technology
- Should include a public Right of Way
- Red squirrels are a protected species and should be considered in any tree felling

6.17 The National Farmers Union have commented that they support that application as part of the net zero ambition for the agricultural sector, stating that renewables form an important part of diversification.

6.18 Wootton Against Solar Power have provided a statement of objection raising concerns that are categorised under the following sections:

- Cumulative impact
- Landscape
- Land use and soils
- Heritage
- Flood and water management
- Biodiversity
- Transport, rights of way and security
- Glint and glare
- No binding return on investment
- No decommissioning details
- Potential for accident and disaster

6.19 Cycle Wight have expressed that the application represents an opportunity to provide additional walking and cycling routes.

7 Evaluation

Principle

7.1 The proposed development seeks consent for a 20MW solar farm with battery storage. According to the applicant's information, the amount of power that could be produced would be equivalent to the needs of up to 5100 homes and it has been estimated that this would save approximately 9,200 tonnes of carbon annually. Paragraph 152 of the National Planning Policy Framework advises that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

7.2 Paragraph 158 goes on to state:

'When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a

valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and

b) *approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.'*

7.3 The Island Plan Core Strategy Policy SP6 (Renewables) recognises the need for large scale, grid-connected renewable energy schemes, setting a target of 100MW which has not yet been met. The policy sets out that large scale photovoltaic schemes should be located outside the AONB, on land that is not categorised as best and most versatile agricultural land and outside of designed environmental assets.

7.4 There is an acceptance that solar technology is a valuable source of renewable energy that can contribute to the Council's aim of reducing the current reliance on fossil fuels and instead, become self-sufficient in renewable sources. Policy DM16 (Renewables) states that the Council will in principle support proposals for renewable sources of energy, subject to information relating to landscape character.

7.5 Whilst the Core Strategy has a target of 100MW (not yet met), the council's Climate and Environment Strategy "Mission Zero" considers 220-300MW would be required for the Island to become self-sufficient in renewable energy production. The Island currently has an installed capacity of 90MW, and the current solar projects being considered (including this proposal) are important to meet the Island's renewable energy production and net zero targets, with one advantage of solar farms being that they can be installed and operational within a relatively short timeframe.

7.6 In 2019 the Island declared a climate emergency. This declaration led to the draft of the Mission Zero Climate and Environment Strategy (2021-2040) to meet the challenge of climate change by achieving net zero carbon emissions.

7.7 The current proposal to generate 20MW would make a significant contribution to local renewable energy generation. Therefore, officers consider that the proposal can be supported in principle and that great weight can be afforded to the benefits of the proposal in terms of increased solar energy generation. The proposal would assist in tackling climate change, while assisting with self-sufficiency in terms of renewable and low carbon energy generation, and energy security, affordability, and reliability, and the economic benefits associated with construction and the ongoing servicing of the proposed solar farm.

7.8 Although the proposed development is larger than others that have been permitted, the rate at which renewable energy needs to be adopted is speeding up and there are specific benefits relating to the proposed development which distinguish it from other similar renewable energy schemes. The site is close to an existing electricity substation, which is an optimal location. The proposal also includes battery storage which would modulate the rate of export to the grid. The site is not within the AONB and is not constrained by other designations. The development would comply with Policy DM6 and advice in the NPPF.

7.9 Officers attribute great weight to the contribution that would be made by this proposal to meeting the Council's policy objectives with regard to sustainable energy production and its stated aims in respect of the climate emergency.

Loss of agricultural land

7.10 Central Government is seeking large scale deployment of solar across the UK mainly on brownfield, industrial and low/medium grade agricultural land. This reflects the need to balance protection of the environment and higher quality agricultural land with the need for solar deployment on a large scale to meet both Government's and the Island's ambitious targets to meet net zero. The NPPF (paragraph 174) states planning decisions should recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land, with Footnote 58 adding that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of higher quality. BMV is considered to be land that falls within Grade 1 – 3a.

7.11 The Government's planning practice guidance (PPG) for renewable and low carbon energy states that planning has an important role in the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in locations where the local environmental impact is acceptable. It states that where a proposal involves greenfield land, the local planning authority should consider 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. It continues that solar farms are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use.

7.12 Paragraph 5.216 of the Core Strategy explains that the Council is very aware of the need to balance the provision of medium and large-scale renewable energy schemes against their impacts on to and from designated landscapes of the Island with the AONB covering over half of the Island. The Core Strategy adds at paragraph 5.217 that the Council needs to take a pragmatic and proportional approach and will apply a spatial approach which for solar photovoltaics is that development should be located outside of the AONB and avoiding identified grades 1-3a agricultural land (see paragraph 5.219). Having regard to this, officers consider that, by necessity, solar would have to be located on agricultural land, albeit poorer quality land.

7.13 The applicants have commissioned a detailed agricultural assessment for the land, which indicates that the land falls within Grade 3b. This is borne out by the fact that it has been used by the farmer for grazing and animal feed crops. The site is not the best quality farmland and has not been used for food crops. Given the sustainability benefits that the proposal would provide and the agricultural land classification and the fact that the land could be used for grazing, it is considered that the loss of the land for fully productive farming purposes would not compromise other sustainability objectives or the Island's economy.

7.14 Officers attach minimal negative weight to the loss of the agricultural land in

question, which is not best and most versatile agricultural land. The development would be temporary, albeit for forty years and the land would be available thereafter for agricultural use, potentially in better condition than it is today.

Impact on the character of the area

7.15 The proposed development would be visible in the landscape from certain vantage points. The open, undeveloped character of the countryside locality would be altered by the development. Currently in agricultural use, the site is typical of the wider rural area and is formed by medium sized fields enclosed by well-established, clipped hedges and areas of woodland. There are also several large trees within the site. As a result, the introduction of banks of solar panels and associated infrastructure would alter the character of the landscape by introducing development of an industrial character into a locality which is largely devoid of development. While the proposed development would alter the character of the site, given the sustainability benefits of the solar park, a key issue is whether the development would be readily visible and appear intrusive in the landscape.

7.16 The proposed solar PV arrays would be restricted to a maximum height of 3m and would follow the topography of the sloping site. The arrays would not be positioned close to the boundaries of the site and mitigation would be in the form of additional boundary planting, and the retention of trees and hedges within the site, except where access is required.

7.17 The application has been supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which considers the current landscape character and evaluates the impact on the proposed development on views from a variety of locations.

7.18 The East Wight Landscape Character Assessment (2015) (EWLCA) identifies the site as being within the Northern Clay Pasture Lane (PL3) landscape character type. PL3 is identified as large landscape character area to the north-west of the East Wight and is described as a “rolling landscape gradually sloping towards the northern coastline with small and medium sized fields often irregular in shape but in some areas more linear in pattern and enclosed by mature hedgerows with hedgerow trees”.

7.19 The key characteristics are outlined as being:

- Rolling pastoral landscape with small copses, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Field trees are a feature of the east of the area around Hardingshute, Nunwell and Upton.
- Historic farmsteads are located throughout the area.
- The designed landscape and historic buildings at Nunwell contribute strongly to the character of that part of the area.
- Ancient woodland areas.
- Nature conservation value of woodland and grassland areas within the area and wetland areas on its edges.
- Scheduled monuments, a number of which are currently at risk.

7.20 It is these features that are considered to be of particular importance to the

character of the area. Although the proposed development would see panels installed within the pastoral landscape the other features would not be impacted by the proposed development which would not result in the loss of significant hedgerow or trees, or the field patterns, historic farmsteads, Ancient woodland area, historic buildings or scheduled monuments.

7.21 As part of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Zone of Theoretical Visual Influence (ZTV) modelling has been undertaken. This has modelled the potential visibility of the of the development having regard to terrain, but not the potential screening effect of buildings or vegetation. Based on the ZTV ten viewpoints were identified as locations to assess in respect of the potential visual effects of the proposed development. There were:

VP	GP	Location (inc distance to nearest built element and direction of view)	Receptor
1	1	Whiterails Road, 50m, to the southwest	Motorist, cyclist, bus user
2		Whiterails Road, 50m, to the northeast	Motorist, cyclist, (and nearby private residences), visitor to the Butterfly World tourist attraction
3	2	Staplers Road, 430m, to the northeast	Motorist, cyclist, bus user, visitor to the Butterfly World tourist attraction
4		Staplers Road, 900m, to the northeast	Motorist, cyclist, bus user, visitor to the Monkey Haven tourist attraction
5	3	Park Road, 130m, to southwest	Motorist, cyclist, (and nearby private residences)
6	4	Newport - Wootton cycleway, public right of way N214, 40m, to south	Cyclist, horse rider, runner, local walker, leisure walker
7	5	Alverstone Road, 1.4km, to south	Motorist, cyclist
8	6	Public right of way N116, 1.2km, to northeast	Local walker, leisure walker
9	7	Bridlesford Road, 320m, to west	Motorist, cyclist, bus user, visitor to the Briddlesford Farm
10	8	Bridlesford Road, 980m, to north	Motorist, cyclist, egde of the AONB

VP = Representative viewpoint location.
GP = Visual receptor group (viewpoints representing a similar visual experience).
Distances shown from edge of application boundary.

7.22 With regard to closer viewpoints, the main views into the site would be from points along Whiterails Road, from the northern end of Park Road and from a 250 metre stretch of the cycle path along the old railway line to the north of the site. There would also be views from the northern end of Briddlesford Road, and from this point it is possible to see the existing Grange Farm solar park in the distance.

7.23 From the north-eastern end of Whiterails Road (viewpoint 1), the panels would be visible down the hill from a point just southwest of a residential property called Knollwood, which is located on the northern side of Whiterails Road. From this point, the sides of the panels would be visible with their supporting frames. The landscaped strip would be wider at this end, particularly at the point nearest the field gate, where the hedges that cross the site converge. At this point the landscaped area would be at its widest (39 metres) and would comprise native scrub and new specimen trees. This significance of effect on this viewpoint is therefore considered to be moderate adverse but would reduce as landscape planting matures.

7.24 From the southern end of the site, on Whiterails Road looking north-east

(viewpoint 2), the solar panel arrays would be visible up the slope. From this point the faces of the panels would be visible, and the closest panels would be 20 metres from the road boundary, with the fencing 12 metres from the boundary. Without mitigation, the alteration to the character of the countryside through the urbanising development, would lead to adverse visual impact, acknowledging that from Whiterails Road the development would mainly be seen by passengers in moving traffic. In mitigation, this boundary would be planted along its length. Instant screening would be provided by an evergreen hedge. The existing roadside hedgerow would be allowed to grow to 3 metres and would be maintained and reinforced. The landscaped area along Whiterails Road would consist of a strip of between 5 metres and 39 metres in width and would be planted with native scrub planting which would eventually be maintained at a height of 2.5 metres. Inside this, the evergreen hedging would be planted, and this is proposed to be removed once the native species have established. This significance of effect on this viewpoint is therefore considered to be moderate adverse but would reduce as the landscape planting along the boundary matures.

7.25 Viewpoints 3 and 4 are taken from the south-west of the site, at different points along Whiterails Road (below viewpoint 2). Viewpoint 3 looking towards the smaller element of the site, while viewpoint 4 being a longer view. The impact from these viewpoints would be minimised due to the distances. From viewpoint 4 the glimpses are possible of the adjacent Grange Farm solar park, which gives a representation of the likely visibility of impact of the proposed development. Officers are satisfied that from this distance the proposed development would not have a harmful visual impact. This significance of effect on this viewpoint is therefore considered to be minimal adverse.

7.26 From Park Road (viewpoints 5 and 6), the most visible part of the development would be sector 1, which would be sited at the northern end of the development, in the field bounded to the east by Park Road and to the north by the public right of way. This sector would be 54 metres from the road. From Park Road, the faces and sides of the arrays would be visible behind a row of trees and would be set against the backdrop of the trees and hedgerow alongside the public right of way. A belt of new native scrub planting would be located to the north of the site, which would help to obscure views of the panels from locations along Park Road. An entirely new mixed native hedgerow would be planted next to the existing tree belt located to the north of the site, which would be reinforced with extra planting. This significance of effect on this viewpoint is therefore considered to be minimal adverse.

7.27 Viewpoint 7 is taken from Alverstone Road to the north, at a distance of approximately 1.4km from the site. Having regard to the distance from the site, the receptor being road users and the hedgerow boundaries to the road, the proposed development would not be visually harmful from this location. The significance of effect on this viewpoint is therefore considered to be neutral.

7.28 Viewpoint 8 is taken from the south-west of the site at a distance of 1.2km from Public Right of Way N116. Powerlines are dominant within this view, with the site being in the background of this. The presence of hedgerows, trees and a woodland restrict views over the wider landscape. It is only further south towards Staplers where the footpath is sufficiently elevated over the woodland, but due to the distances involved the visual impact would be minimal. This significance of

effect on this viewpoint is therefore considered to be minimal adverse.

7.29 With regard to the battery storage units, the main vantage point would be from Briddlesford Road to the east (viewpoint 9 and 10). The storage units would be sited on terraces which would step down from east to west. The installation would be visible as a compound with 53 linear metres of palisade fencing, and behind this, 30 metres of 4 metre high acoustic fencing. The compound would be sited behind an existing hedgerow which would be allowed to grow. Some native trees would be planted to the north of the compound to continue an existing tree and hedge line, which crosses the field from the farm to the site. The containers would not be visible from the east, as they would be screened by the fencing, and the full height of the fencing would also be obscured by the slope of the land and the development would be set against a backdrop of trees. Because of the fall of the land, the substation building would not be visible from this direction as it would be located on the lowest part of the site, behind the containers and the fencing. The site is 400 metres from the road and the installation would have no more visual impact in the landscape than a large agricultural building. This significance of effect on this viewpoint is therefore considered by officers to be minimal adverse.

7.30 The submitted information has summarised changes that would be seen to the landscape during the construction phase. These would include:

- loss of open farmland,
- removal of sections of hedgerows to facilitate access,
- creating access and maintenance tracks,
- excavations associated with the laying of underground cables,
- site fencing to protect retained boundary trees and hedges,
- stockpiles and material storage areas,
- mobile construction plant, such as diggers, lifts and lorries,
- site compounds, protective hoardings and signage,
- a wheel washing facility,
- the presence of partially constructed solar panels and other infrastructure,
- increase in movement of plant and other traffic, and
- the planting of the temporary evergreen hedge.

7.31 Upon completion, the proposed development would generate a number of reversible, medium-term changes to the landscape and visual amenity. The principal activities that are considered by officers to have an impact on the fabric, quality and character of the landscape upon completion are outlined as:

- the loss of agricultural land,
- the introduction of panels, fencing, transformers and other mechanical and electrical infrastructure, including CCTV poles and cameras,
- the creation of access tracks and highway access junctions onto Whiterails Road,
- the introduction of a new evergreen hedgerow,
- the creation of areas of new native scrub, hedge-planting and tree-planting, and
- the establishment of extensive areas of natural grassland.

7.32 As well as the potential impact of the physical presence of the panels and associated infrastructure, the effect of glint and glare in the locality from the development is examined in the submitted Glint and Glare Assessment. This

report analyses a 1km study area around the site for ground-based receptors and a 30km area around the site for aviation receptors. The report concludes that with mitigation there would be no impacts on road, rail or air receptors and low impacts on three residential properties (see impact on neighbours, below).

7.33 As acknowledged above, the proposed development would result in a visual change to the character of the area from certain viewpoints to the extent that the proposed development would result in some landscape and visual impact that, if unmitigated, would result in harm to the landscape character. Mitigation measures have been proposed, which are intended to minimise the impacts that has been identified and strengthen the landscape character of the site and surroundings. These measures are set out below:

- Existing hedgerows would undergo an enhanced maintenance regime to (a) improve their structure and habitat potential (clipped to an A-shape), (b) increase their overall height over time, and (c) improve their species diversity and fill gaps (by planting mixed native species). Certain hedgerows which have been identified as key landscape/woodland corridors would be supplemented with additional hedgerow and/or scrub plantings as a thicker hedgerow belt. Figure 13 of the Landscape Appraisal report provides additional details.

- Locally native tree specimens would be planted at irregular spacings within or immediately alongside the existing hedgerows, in keeping with the existing landscape character. Again, Figure 13 in the Landscape Appraisal report provides additional details on this point.

- From the outset and during the construction stage, alongside Whiterails Road and following the north-eastern edge of the site, an evergreen laurel hedge would be planted at 2m in height to obscure views of the panels and fencing. This would be a temporary measure, which would be managed back once the proposed new belt of native scrub planting has reached a sufficient height, and Figure 14 of the Landscape Appraisal report provides more information.

- A similar belt of new native scrub planting would be located to the north of the site, which would help to obscure views of the panels from locations along Park Road.

- An entirely new mixed native hedgerow would be planted next to the existing tree belt located to the north of the site, connecting with Park Road and shorter sections planted to plug gaps in the existing hedgerows where access is no longer required. Another new mixed native hedgerow would be planted alongside the location of the BESS and substation.

- The existing and proposed hedgerows and scrub vegetation would be maintained at around 3 metres in height.

- A 15 metre natural landscape corridor would be provided alongside the Fattingpark Copse Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) to the north and west of the site, as well as to the area of woodland to the south of the proposed substation. This buffer would be planted with native scrub and

seeded with wild grassland.

- Wild grassland would be seeded over the entire extent of the site (including beneath the panels but not along the access tracks).

7.34 Officers are satisfied that these mitigation measure would be sufficient to ensure that the visual impacts of the proposed development, although resulting in change to the landscape character, this harm would not be significant.

7.35 Each compound would be enclosed by a 1.8 metre fence with CCTV cameras at ten metre intervals, each at a height of 2 metres above ground. The level of security is standard for solar farms. Whilst the fence and cameras would initially have some visual impact, they would be screened from vantage points outside the site by the instant hedging and even more so once planting has become established.

7.36 Officers consider that the development would comply with policies DM2 and DM12. Without mitigation, officers would attach significant weight to the visual impact of the development in the locality and the wider landscape. The proposed mitigation measures would reduce this adverse impact. Officers consider the adverse impact once mitigating planting has sufficiently matured, to be moderate, as the measures are comprehensive and, if secured in full by condition, would be effective in screening the development in the wider locality.

7.37 The proposed development would result in a change to the visual character of the area, especially from close viewpoints passing the site. These impacts would be mitigated by additional planting and other measures set out above to minimise the harm resulting from the change. Officers are satisfied that subject to conditions requiring the mitigation to be undertaken and maintained and the temporary and reversable nature of the impacts, that the proposed development would not result in an unacceptable impact on the landscape character. It is however considered that the development would have a moderate negative impact on the character of the area.

Impact on neighbouring residential properties

7.38 There are residential properties from which the proposed development would be highly visible. The closest are: Knollwood, Hillgrove House, Benham (opposite the lay-by, on the southern side of Whiterails Road) and Grange Farm to the west of Butterfly World

7.39 Knollwood is located directly on the south-eastern boundary of the site and represents the closest residential property to the proposed development. Despite the proximity to the site boundary the panels themselves would be more than 40 metres from the house. There are secondary first floor windows in the side elevation of the property, and while the panels would be visible from first floor rear windows, they would not extend across the rear of the house. The impact upon this property would be changed as a result of the development, but existing views to the east and south would be retained. There would be a moderate adverse impact on the residential amenity of this property.

7.40 The arrays would be 30 metres from Hillgrove, which is sited on the southern side

of Whiterails Road, opposite the substantive part of the site. The development would be visible from the upper floor of this property and the outlook from the front of the house would be changed. The open rural aspect would be lost, but the impact would be softened by the mitigating landscape planting, which would comprise the existing roadside hedge, the proposed scrub belt, and individual trees which would be planted within the landscape strip opposite the house. The view from the front of this property would be changed, but officers consider that the impact of the development would not be oppressive, and the outlook from the rear would not be altered as a result of the proposal, and there would be a moderate adverse impact on the residential amenity of this property.

7.41 Benham is located 37 metres southeast of the southern corner of the site and 58 metres from the nearest panels. The principal elevation of this property faces Whiterails Road and the property has a generous front garden. Outlook from this property would change, but in the opinion of officers the panels would be sufficiently far from the house as to not appear oppressive and therefore it is considered that the development would have a minimal adverse impact on residential amenity of this property.

7.42 Grange Farm is located more than 180 metres form the south-eastern boundary of the site. The buildings associated with Butterfly World are located between the house and the solar panels. The distance is such that officers consider that the development would not have any undue adverse impacts on their residential amenity.

7.43 The development would be located 180 metres from the rear boundaries of properties in Park Road. Having regard to the topography of the land which falls away to the west, officers consider there would not be a significant visual impact when viewed from these properties.

7.44 The application has been accompanied by a Glint and Glare Assessment. Glint is a fleeting flash of light, and glare is less intense but lasts for longer. With regard to residential amenity, within the zone that could potentially be affected, 50 residential properties were analysed in detail. The assessment states that without mitigation the solar panels would result in a high glare impact at nine residential properties and on 5 roads. Once the mitigation has established there would be no impacts on road and rail users or aviation and the report indicates that there would remain low impacts on three properties, Knollwood and Hillgrove House in Whiterails Road, and Bracklesham, which is sited on the northern side of Park Road. Officers consider this to be acceptable in the overall context of the development, as low impacts are those experienced for less than 20 hours a year or for up to 20 minutes at a time. This is considered acceptable, although it is acknowledged that the mitigation would take at least five years to come to full effect. In the meantime, the laurel hedgerows are intended to provide an element of mitigation until the native hedgerows are sufficiently mature.

7.45 Solar panels and BESS facilities are not considered to be inherently noisy. However various electrical components, such as inverters and transformers, can emit low levels of noise along with ventilation/cooling systems. This noise impact should be given consideration, but Environmental Health are satisfied that such noise is likely to be below a level considered to be of nuisance, subject to conditions relating to the potential noise from the BESS.

7.46 The nature of solar farms is such that electricity is only generated during daylight hours. This may extend into early mornings (before 07:00 hours) and evenings (after 19:00 hours) during the summer months, but the noise associated with this element of the scheme has been assessed and would not result in any sleep disturbance. The BESS aspect of the development would operate according to demand and therefore could operate at any time during the day or night, when background noise levels are lower. The scheme therefore incorporates an acoustic fence along the southern and part of the eastern boundary of the BESS compound.

7.47 The submitted noise report sets out the elements of the development that would be sources of noise. The report states that the solar farm would include 98 string inverters. The main source of noise would be the active cooling system. During the hours of darkness, the string inverters are not expected to operate. Inverters are mounted to the rear of the solar panels, with several panels feeding one inverter unit. Therefore, the solar panels to a certain extent screen noise from the inverters. The orientation of the panels results in most screening for locations to the south and less other directions.

7.48 There would be five transformers across the site. The string inverters and solar transformers would not be operating at the most sensitive period of the night when people are trying to get to sleep, nor during the quietest period of the night. The noise assessment indicates that even during daylight hours the noise from the solar farm would be largely contained within the area of the solar panels themselves, with very little noise past the site boundary.

7.49 It would be necessary to install acoustic barriers at the BESS site to attenuate noise to Little Brook Farm to the south-west and Briddlesford Lodge to the east. The noise report recommends that the barrier must be 4 metres high above local ground level and should be of a solid design. This barrier has been included in the design for the BESS site. Whilst noise is greater from the BESS site the receptor positions are at a greater distance, and with the barrier, low absolute noise limits have been calculated even with the BESS operating at 100% which is not expected to be typical.

7.50 It has been confirmed by the Council's Environment Health Officer that the proposed development, if sound attenuation measures are secured by condition, would result in noise being in the region of the lowest observed adverse effect level, and there would be no significant adverse impact. The assessment is based upon typical plant noise levels in calculations, because the specification for the proposed equipment has not been finalised. A condition is recommended in order to ensure the noise levels at nearby noise sensitive property falls within acceptable levels.

7.51 Officers consider that the development would comply with policy DM2 and attach moderate weight to the impacts on neighbouring occupiers, through the change in outlook from their properties. Impacts would be mitigated by landscaping but would remain for those properties closest to the development. As regards noise implications, with appropriate mitigation minimal weight would be attached to the impact of noise.

<u>Highway Consideration</u>

7.52 The Highway Engineer from Island Roads has assessed the proposed access to the northern sector of the site from Whiterails Road and, has confirmed that it would not comply with the adopted standards for visibility. However, as traffic generation is likely to be less than the approved agricultural use, once the development is operational, the access is considered by officers to be acceptable.

7.53 Vehicle access to the BESS would be via an existing access from Briddlesford Road just south of Bluebells Café which currently provides access to barns at Briddlesford Lodge Farm. Visibility from this access complies with the visibility splay standards and therefore no objection is raised to its use.

7.54 Four car parking spaces are proposed for the BESS site. It is generally recognised that once solar park developments are completed the level of traffic generated by maintenance vehicles would be low. It is not expected that car parking issues on the adjoining highway network would occur as a result of this proposal. Impacts on the highway network during construction have been considered within a submitted Access Consideration Report. These would form the basis of a construction management plan which may be secured by condition.

7.55 Subject to implementation of a Construction Management Plan being secured by condition (as recommended), officers consider the proposal would not negatively impact the highway network or result in any unacceptable highway safety impacts, in accordance with policies SP7 and DM2 and the NPPF. Officers consider the highway implications of the proposed development are a neutral factor neither weighing for nor against the proposal.

Rights of Way

7.56 The layout of the proposal includes a permissive path running north-south along the line of the overhead power lines. The path would not be a public right of way but would be available for the lifetime of the development. This would link the cycle path along the former railway line with Whiterails Road.

7.57 The applicant has indicated a willingness to enter into a legal agreement to make a financial contribution to the upkeep of the permissive path and for the improvement of the local footpath network, to which it would provide onwards links and connections. The path and associated contributions are considered to represent a planning gain to which officers attach moderate weight in favour of the development.

Impact of the development on trees

7.58 The proposed layout of the site has been devised to avoid the existing trees to avoid impacts on their root systems and also to ensure the panels would not be shaded. The development would not require the removal of any of the surveyed individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands, although officers acknowledge that there are some fallen, dead and declining trees shown on the arboricultural impact assessment plan, which do not form part of the survey. The development would be within the root protection areas (RPA) of the tree near the Whiterails Road access. However, there is an existing track in this location and the tree report concludes that roots would have grown under the compacted soil, which

would have formed a protective barrier. For this reason, locating a track in this area would have no further impact on the tree in question.

7.59 The site is constrained by the Fattingpark Copse to the west, which is designated Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW). The NPPF states, in paragraph 180, that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists. A buffer zone has been retained to protect the ASNW.

7.60 At the western edge of the development, the nearest fenced compound scales at 15 metres from the ASNW and the nearest panels at 18 metres. Concern has been expressed that the development would have an adverse impact on the woodland, and the Forestry Commission (FC) has recommended five measures that would protect the ASNW. These are, increasing the width of the buffer zone, using native non-invasive species to bolster the woodland, creating an attenuation ditch to reduce impact from run-off, considering a fire break to reduce wildfires if necessary, and avoiding impacts on existing hedgerows.

7.61 Widening the width of the buffer zone is not considered by officers to be necessary in this instance, as the other recommended measures would mitigate potential adverse impacts on the ASNW. The proposed buffer would be the width that is usually recommended by Natural England and FC and would be planted with native species to improve the woodland edge and prevent ingress at a later date. Government guidance sets out that where assessments show other impacts, such as the effect of air pollution or significant increases in traffic, buffer zones may need to be larger. Due to the nature of the scheme and the potential effects it is not considered to be reasonable to require an increased buffer zone in this instance. The planting would consist of semi natural habitats such as woodland, a mix of scrub, grassland wetland and heathland planting using local and native plant species. The concerns relating to surface water run-off, which could have justified an increase buffer have been mitigated in other ways, and are covered in the section on drainage, below.

7.62 The accompanying documents indicate that hedgerow would only be removed where access is required, and otherwise, hedges would be retained and reinforced. 17 hedgerows were surveyed and five found to be important and nine were classified as species rich. These hedgerows would have required removal notices, however, planning permission overrides the need for a Hedgerow Removal Notice application and the Council's tree officer is content that the details supplied are sufficient to show that no more removal would be carried out than would be required to implement the development. The relatively short length of hedgerow that would be lost (some 66 metres, or 1.87% of the total on site) would be mitigated by the gains for biodiversity that would accrue from the proposed strengthening of the remaining hedgerows and additional planting on the site.

7.63 Officers therefore attach minimal weight to the impact on hedgerows and also to tree impacts which may be adequately controlled by the imposition of suitable tree protection conditions.

<u>Impact of the development on ecology</u>

7.64 No part of the site is designated for its ecological interest, but the Briddlesford Copses Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies 1.6 km to the east, and as noted above, Fattingpark Copse Ancient Woodland lies adjacent to the site, to the west. The submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal found that the habitats on site had the potential to provide foraging and commuting opportunities for invertebrates, amphibians, badgers red squirrels hedgehogs, hares, reptiles and dormice as well as nesting opportunities for birds and bats. However, the site has limited potential to support these species in its current state.

7.65 Fattingpark Copse is both a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and an ASNW. As outlined above ASNWs require special protection and Natural England's standing advice recommends a minimum of 15 metre buffer zone between the woodland boundary and the development site. The buffer zone should contribute to wider ecological networks and be considered as green infrastructure. The buffer zone should consist of semi natural habitat such as native scrub and grassland and this has been proposed as part of the application. The proposed habitat would provide foraging and sheltering opportunities for animals including invertebrates, mammals and birds. The buffer would protect the woodland both during construction and through the operational phase. It would also have a positive impact in terms of promoting biodiversity.

Briddlesford Copses SSSI supports a nationally important breeding population of Bechsteins bats, a rare native species. It is the presence of the species that has led to the international designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Copses SSSI/SAC is located 900 metres from the development site and is therefore within the bats' foraging and hunting range. There would be some potential for adverse impacts as a result of the development and these need to be mitigated. The proposed planting scheme would support invertebrate biodiversity and strengthening the wildlife corridors along the hedgerows, and it is considered that this would provide suitable mitigation.

7.66 Moreover, the net gains for biodiversity which have been proposed would exceed the Government's requirements which are to be introduced later this year. Using the Defra Biodiversity Metric calculation tool, the report identifies that the proposed landscaping would result in a net gain of 31% of habitat units and 12.6% for hedgerow units exceeding the recommended target of 10% biodiversity net gain. Overall net gain would be achieved by mitigating the total loss of current on-site habitats (improved/grazed arable farmland and short sections of hedgerow) with appropriate habitat, including mixed native boundary scrub, wildflower meadow grassland, tree planting and replacement and strengthening of hedgerows with native species.

7.67 The ecological report provided, and the appropriate assessment carried out under the Habitats Regulations and agreed with Natural England conclude that, with mitigation, the proposed development may be carried out and operated for the period of time applied for without any undue adverse impacts on the special features for which nearby sites have been designated.

7.68 The proposed development would be in accordance with policy DM12 and the

recommendations of the NPPF and officers attach substantial weight to the ecological benefits to be gained.

Drainage and surface water run-off

7.69 The development comprises a range of tilted solar arrays that would change surface water flow within the site. Ground conditions would allow the majority of water to soak naturally into soils and prevent excessive levels of surface water run-off. However, a series of drainage ditches would be provided to control the run-off rate and reduce the potential intensity of flow down to Palmers Brook. A covered, gravel filled drainage ditch would be provided along the west edge of sector 2 of the arrays, inside the fence line and run along the western edge of the compound, and to the east of the buffer zone alongside the ASNW. This would also control adverse impacts on the Kings Quay SSSI, downstream of the brook.

7.70 The submitted Flood Risk Assessment was supplemented by additional information to overcome the concerns of the Environment Agency (EA) relating to fluvial flooding as a result of climate change. The south-western boundary of the site sits within Flood Zone 3. Each panel would be positioned 900mm above the ground it is located on, which is considered to be acceptable, but it is considered that it would be necessary to condition the height of each panel above the ground, especially closest to the Flood Zone.

7.71 As a result of the proposed measures to control surface water and the flood risk calculations, it is considered that the proposed development would not result in additional risk of flooding impacts on site or downstream and that the development would comply with the requirements of policy DM14. As run-off from the site and flood risks would not be increased, officers consider this matter to be a neutral factor neither weighing for or against the proposal.

Other matters

7.72 The Council's Archaeology Officer has confirmed that there are no designated heritage assets within or immediately adjacent to the proposed development site, although the Isle of Wight Historic Environment Record (IWHER) includes a small number of records of non-designated heritage assets within the boundary of the proposed development. The application has been supported by a Desk Based Assessment (E3S 2022) and a report on a geophysical survey (Magnitude Survey for Orion Heritage 2022), together with a Heritage Covering Summary Letter.

7.73 In light of geophysical survey results and the previous archaeological monitoring of the gas pipeline which passes through the site, the Council's Archaeology Officer has confirmed that further pre-determination evaluation would not be required, and it was considered unlikely that archaeological mitigation for the northern part of the proposal would be required (parcels north of Whiterails Road). The area south of Whiterails Road was considered to hold some limited potential for prehistoric and Roman archaeology to be present and due to some uncertainty regarding anomalies identified by the gradiometer survey, and the potential for extensive ground works required for the construction of the BESS and substation it is recommended by the Council's Archaeology Officer that conditions at attached to any approval, for a watching brief and access to archaeology for monitoring, which officers consider is appropriate to ensure that the proposed

development does not result in any impacts to below ground archaeology features.

8.0 Planning balance and conclusions

8.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states that the planning system is plan-led and that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. In the same way, planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The role of the planning system is to balance issues, particularly where they compete and compare the benefits of a proposed development with any identified harm. In this context, the NPPF advises that the planning system has three overarching objectives, these being economic, social and environmental objectives. These issues are balanced below:

Economic

8.2 The NPPF states that the economic objective is to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth. The proposed development would support the local economy through the generation of clean energy for the island and beyond. Jobs would be created for the maintenance of the park during its lifetime and the scheme would represent farm diversification adding to economic future of the farm. Substantial positive weight is afforded to the economic benefits.

Social

8.3 The NPPF states that the social objective is to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, referring to supporting the community's health, social and cultural well-being. The proposed development would support the wider wellbeing of the local community, directly by making a contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions and improving energy security and affordability. It would also provide island wide benefits such as improvements to the footpath network and support for farm diversification. However, the scheme would result in a significant visual change to the outlook of neighbouring residential properties. When balancing these matters the proposed development is considered to have a minimal adverse impact in this regard.

Environmental

8.4 The NPPF states that the environmental objective is to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

8.5 The proposed development would have significant positive environmental benefits from increased solar deployment on the Island, outside of protected sites, including the AONB, tackling climate change and supporting the move to a low carbon economy and decarbonisation. The proposal would also result in significant biodiversity net gain and would facilitate enhanced rights of way.

8.6 Environmentally, there would be some minimal to moderate negative impacts in terms of:

- Loss of agricultural land (minimal)
- Landscape visual impact (moderate)
- Impact on neighbouring properties (minimal to moderate)

Impacts to agricultural land would not be permanent, would be reversible and would not result in the loss of BMV land. Landscape impacts would be mitigated through biodiversity/landscape enhancements in terms of hedgerow and tree planting. Furthermore, the proposal would not harm the landscape character of a designated landscape. Impacts to neighbouring properties would be reduced through landscaping, as well as noise mitigation measures. Whilst there would be potential for archaeology to be impacted, a programme of archaeological works would be secured by condition to mitigate for this.

8.7 Although there would be some minimal to moderate negative impacts, the proposed development would make a significant contribution to the generation of clean energy and would result in a significant improvement to the biodiversity value of the site, and great positive weight is afforded to these benefits.

Conclusion

8.8 Having regard to the above, and subject to the recommended conditions, it is concluded by officers that the proposal would provide capacity of 20MW which would be a significant contribution to local renewable energy generation would result in significant positive economic, social and environmental benefits, that would outweigh the minimal to moderate negative economic and environmental impacts, principally with respect to loss of agricultural land, visual change to the rural landscape (outside AONB) and impacts on neighbouring residential amenity.

8.9 With regards to highways, archaeology and flooding (subject to conditions), the proposed development would have a neutral impact.

8.10 The proposal, on balance, is therefore considered to comply with the provisions of the development plan, the NPPF, and the council's duties under Regulation 9 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (as amended), Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended). The proposal would also contribute towards achieving the aims the Council's Mission Zero Strategy.

9 Statement of Proactive Working

9.1 ARTICLE 31 - WORKING WITH THE APPLICANT

In accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF, the Isle of Wight Council takes a positive approach to development proposals focused on solutions to secure sustainable developments that improve the economic, social, and environmental conditions of the area. Where development proposals are considered to be sustainable, the Council aims to work proactively with applicants in the following ways:

- By offering a pre-application advice service; and
- Updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and, where there is not a principle objection to the proposed development, suggest solutions where possible.

In this instance additional information was provided in relation to ecology, flood risk, surface water drainage and rights of way. This overcame officers' concerns and led to the recommendation for approval.

Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from date of this permission.

   Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

2. The development hereby permitted shall only be carried out in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbered/named:
   - 17432_LAY_1000 Rev F (Layout)
   - 17432_LAY_1004 Rev A
   - SK001 (Battery and substation compound)
   - SK003 (Unit details and elevations)
   - SK003 (Overall elevations
   - SK010 (BESS substation compound)
   - SK010 (Substation details)
   - 25978/02 Rev P01 (Briddlesford access visibility)
   - 25978/3 (Whiterails access visibility)
   - 25978/4 Rev P01 Flood Zones
   - SUO-001 - Typical Solar Panel Array Arrangement
   - SUO-002 - Typical Access Track Detail
   - SUO-003 - Typical Surface-Mounted Track Detail
   - SUO-004 - Typical Transformer Detail
   - SUO-005 - Typical Customer Container Detail
   - SUO-006 - Typical Cable Trench Detail
   - SUO-007 - Typical Site Fencing Detail
   - SUO-008 - Typical CCTV Mast
   - Indicative ditch alignment
   - Palisade fence detail

   Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the satisfactory implementation of the development in accordance with the aims of policy DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) of the Island Plan Core Strategy

3. When the land ceases to be used as a solar farm for renewable power production or at the end of the period of 40 years from the date of grid connection, whichever shall first occur, the use hereby permitted shall cease and all materials and equipment brought onto the land in connection with the use shall be removed and the land restored to its previous state and use for agriculture purposes, in accordance with details that have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the

Local Planning Authority prior to the decommission works taking place. Such details shall include a plan and time scale for decommissioning.

The applicant/developer shall inform the Local Planning Authority in writing of the date of grid connection and commencement of operation of the solar farm prior to the solar farm being brought into operation for energy generation.

Reason: The application has been assessed in accordance with the details submitted by the applicants, taking into account the benefits of the production of renewable energy. At the end of the design life of the development the land should be restored to its former condition in order to protect the visual amenity and character of the surrounding countryside and the existing agricultural land use and quality for future generations in accordance with the aims of policies SP5 (Environment), DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) and DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Island Plan Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. Prior to the commencement of works on the site a Construction Management Plan should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which should set out measures to address the following matters: - site clearance and preparation; details of noise and vibration management; hours of working; dust management; details of the location and extent of temporary construction access and safety measures for construction traffic; timing of delivery of materials and collection of equipment; security arrangements and contact details (including in the event of emergencies); Development to be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

   Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to comply with policy DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

5. Prior to the commencement of works on site a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) based upon the measures specified in the outline Construction Management Plan hereby approved, shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. Work shall be carried out in accordance with the approved CTMP.

   Reason: In the interests of impacts on the highway network and the safety of highway users, in accordance with Policy DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

6. The development shall not commence until sight lines have been provided in accordance with the visibility splays shown on the approved plans (plan numbers: 25978/02/Rev P01 and 25978/3). Nothing that may cause an obstruction to visibility when taken at a height of 1.0m above the adjacent carriageway / public highway shall at any time be placed or be permitted to remain within that visibility splay.

   Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to comply with policy DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

7. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, no development shall take place until details of the proposed scheme for the landscaping of the site to include additional hedgerow and tree screen planting surrounding the

development has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such details shall be in accordance with the principles of the landscape mitigation and enhancement measure included in the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment hereby approved, and shall include planting plans, written specifications, schedules of plants noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/ densities. The approved planting scheme shall be carried out in the first planting season following the commencement of the approved development and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the commencement of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the appearance of the development is satisfactory and to comply with the requirements of policies SP5 (Environment), DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) and DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

8. The solar farm hereby permitted shall not be brought into operation until a Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (BMEP), and a Land Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The Land Management Plan shall include details of how the land within the site, edged red on drawing 17432_LAY_1000 Rev F and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement works to be undertaken as part of the development, shall be maintained and managed for the life of the development hereby permitted to ensure biodiversity net gain is achieved and ecological enhancements maintained for the duration of the use permitted.

Reason: To ensure visual and landscape impacts of the development would be mitigated and that a biodiversity net gain would be achieved through development in accordance with the aims of policies DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) and DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Island Plan Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

9. No development shall take place until a detailed Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), based upon the principles within the submitted Outline Construction Environment Management Plan, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall include details of mitigation works to be undertaken and a lighting strategy. Work shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved CEMP.

Reason: To ensure protection of ecological interests on the site and to comply with the requirements of policies SP5 (Environment), DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) and DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

10. No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been agreed in writing by the County Archaeology and Historic Environment Service and approved by the planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.
Reason: To mitigate the effect of the works associated with the development upon

any heritage assets and to ensure that information regarding these heritage assets is preserved by record in accordance with Policy DM11 (Historic and Built Environment) of the Isle of Wight Council Island Plan Core Strategy.

11. To facilitate monitoring of the on-site archaeological works, notification of the start date and appointed archaeological contractor should be given in writing to the address below not less than 14 days before the commencement of any works:- Isle of Wight County Archaeology and Historic Environment Service, Westridge Centre, Brading Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight PO33 1QS.

    Reason: To mitigate the effect of the works associated with the development upon any heritage assets and to ensure that information regarding these heritage assets is preserved by record in accordance with Policy DM11 (Historic and Built Environment) of the Isle of Wight Council Island Plan Core Strategy.

12. No development shall take place until a scheme for the provision of a temporary and permissive route across the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include precise details of alignment, surfacing and signage. The temporary and permissive route shall be retained as approved for the operational lifetime of the development and removed thereafter.

    Reason: In the interests of the sustainable travel in the locality and to comply with the requirements of policies DM2 (Design Quality for New Development), DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and DM17 (Sustainable Travel) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

13. Development shall be undertaken in accordance with the indicative ditch alignment plan and the details in the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy by Mayer Brown dated August 2022 as amended by the Flood Risk Addendum dated February 2023.

    Reason: In the interests of flood risk in the locality and in accordance with Policy DM14 (Flood Risk) of the island Plan Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

14. Development shall be undertaken in accordance with the measures set out in the submitted Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method statement by MJC Tree services dated 19 August 2022, hereby approved.

    Reason: To ensure that the high amenity trees to be retained are adequately protected from damage to health and stability throughout the construction period in the interests of the amenity in compliance with Policy DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

15. Notwithstanding the details shown within the approved plans, no development shall take place until details of the means of enclosure and location of security cameras for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed boundary treatments shall be completed before the development hereby permitted is commenced. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect the visual amenity and character of the surrounding countryside and to comply with the requirements of policies SP5 (Environment), DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) and DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

16. No external lighting shall be installed at the site at any time.

Reason: To protect the visual amenity and character of the surrounding countryside, prevent light pollution and to comply with the requirements of policies SP5 (Environment), DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) and DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.