

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

Blythe House Solar Farm Extension

Prepared by JCTR Ltd on behalf of Innova Renewables Developments Ltd



1 INTRODUCTION

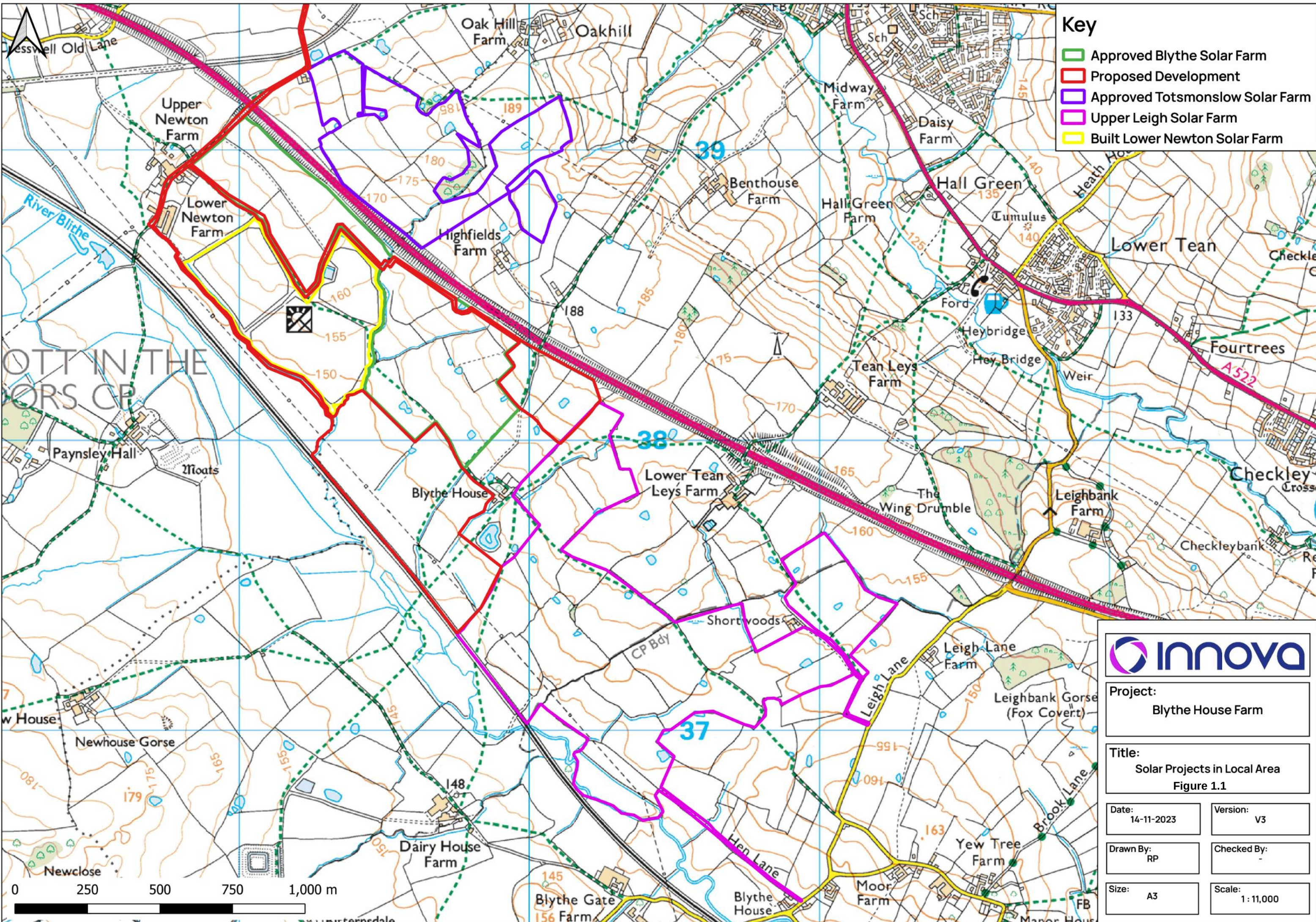
- 1.1 This report has been prepared by JCTR Ltd, a specialist environmental consultancy, on behalf of Innova Renewables Developments Ltd. (Innova). The purpose of this report is to investigate whether the Proposed Development, as described below, is likely to give rise to likely significant effects on the environment and thereby require Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), as defined by the EIA Regulations.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

- 1.2 In order to determine whether the Proposed Development is 'EIA development', regard must be had for the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended), referred to as the 'EIA Regulations'. EIA development is defined by the EIA Regulations as development 'likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location'.
- 1.3 A relevant planning authority must adopt a screening opinion within (a) 3 weeks beginning with the date of receipt of a request being made; or (b) such longer period, not exceeding 90 days from the date on which the person making the request submits the information required as may be agreed in writing with the person making the request.
- 1.4 Where a relevant planning authority adopts a screening opinion, the authority must— (a) state the main reasons for their conclusion with reference to the relevant criteria listed in Schedule 3; (b) if it is determined that the Proposed Development is not EIA development, state any features of the Proposed Development and measures envisaged to avoid, or prevent what might otherwise have been, significant adverse effects on the environment; and (c) send a copy of the opinion or direction to the person who proposes to carry out, or who has carried out, the development in question.

SITE LOCATION AND SURROUNDING LAND

- 1.5 The application site (hereafter referred to as "the Site") is located within open countryside approximately 1.5 km to the south-west of the village of Upper Tean and approximately 2km to the south-east of the village of Draycott in the Moors. The Site is positioned between the A50 trunk road to the north-east and the Crewe-Derby railway line. The overall character of the area is that of an open landscape with long range views over a rural river valley, but with urbanising influences such as the busy A50 dual carriageway, the railway line, overhead electricity transmission lines and pylons.



Key

- Approved Blythe Solar Farm
- Proposed Development
- Approved Totsmonslow Solar Farm
- Upper Leigh Solar Farm
- Built Lower Newton Solar Farm



Project:
Blythe House Farm

Title:
Solar Projects in Local Area
Figure 1.1

Date: 14-11-2023 **Version:** V3

Drawn By: RP **Checked By:**

Size: A3 **Scale:** 1:11,000

- 1.6 The majority of the Site lies within the parish of Checkley with the Site access falling within the parish of Draycott in the Moors.
- 1.7 The Site comprises agricultural land and is adjacent to land on which planning permission has recently been secured by the applicant for a solar farm development (LPA reference SMD/2022/0160) which, for the purposes of this document, will be referred to as “Blythe Solar Farm”. An existing solar development, “Lower Newton Solar Farm”, which is neither owned nor operated by the applicant, is also located in close proximity to the Site (Figure 1.1).
- 1.8 Additionally, the approved (but not yet constructed) Totmonslow Solar Farm (LPA reference SMD/2023/0197) is located to the north-west of the application site on the northern side of the A50 carriageway and a planning application has been submitted seeking approval for the construction of Upper Leigh Solar Farm (LPA reference SMD/2023/0059) adjacent to the south and east of the Site (Figure 1.1).
- 1.9 The Site is not located within a designated landscape or ecologically sensitive area.

THE SITE

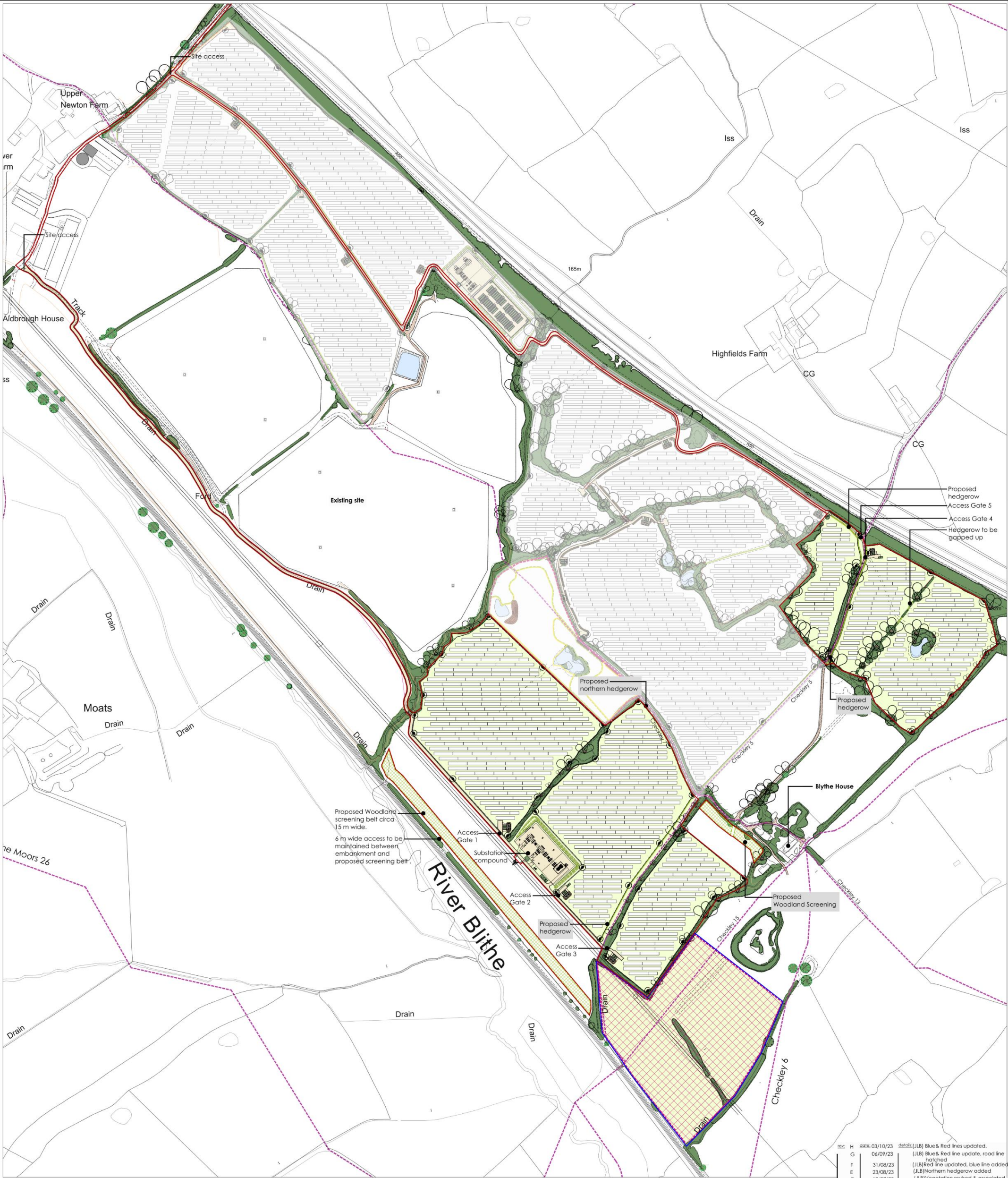
- 1.10 The Site comprises two parcels of land; one to the north and one to the south.
- 1.11 The northern parcel measures approximately 6.46 hectares and comprises three fields enclosed by hedgerows to the south of the A50. The most western field within this land parcel initially formed part of the site area for the Blythe Solar Farm planning application, although solar panels were not proposed within this field (Figure 1.2).
- 1.12 The southern parcel comprises three fields to the north of the Crewe-Derby railway line, measuring approximately 16.02 hectares, with an adjacent area measuring 5.44 hectares identified for ecological mitigation. An overhead 132kV electricity line runs along the southern boundary of the southern parcel of land (Figure 1.2).
- 1.13 The Public Right of Way (PRoW) “Checkley 5” follows the route of an existing farm track through the northern parcel of land, along the eastern boundary of the approved Blythe Solar Farm and through the southern parcel of land. The PRoW “Checkley 7” runs along the northern part of the northern boundary of the southern parcel and the PROW “Checkley 15” follow a NE-SW route through the ecological mitigation area.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Technology

- 1.14 Solar farms generate electricity from sunlight using photovoltaic panels. The panels are mounted on to a framing system which is fixed into the ground. The panels are dark in colour and tilted to absorb as much light as possible. The panels absorb daylight (i.e visible light) so will continue to generate electricity, even on a cloudy day.
- 1.15 Electricity generated by the panels is in Direct Current (DC) form and converted to Alternating Current (AC) form by inverters. Voltage is stepped up by transformers within the solar farm. From these, the electricity flows through underground cabling to a client substation and then

to the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) substation to be exported to the local grid network.



Key:

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|----------------------|
| | Application Area | | PV fence line |
| | Land within Applicants Control | | Transformer |
| | PROW | | CCTV |
| | Existing Vegetation | | PV Panels |
| | Proposed screening vegetation | | Storage container |
| | Hedgerows to be Planted | | Bird Mitigation Area |
| | Proposed internal tracks / hard standing | | Soil bund |

rev:	H	date:	03/10/23	details:	(JLB) Blue & Red lines updated.
G		06/09/23			(JLB) Blue & Red line update, road line hatched
F		31/08/23			(JLB) Red line updated, blue line added
E		23/08/23			(JLB) Northern hedgerow added
D		12/07/23			(JLB) Vegetation revised & associated updates
C		16/05/23			(JLB) Northwestern fence line adjusted to reflect Aboricultural comment
B		04/05/23			(JLB) Existing site return to as planned layout
A		13/04/23			(JLB) Red line added through planned site, drawing resized A2.



The Old Dairy
Tarnworth
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL54 3UG

tel: 01285 721072

client:	Innova Renewables Developments Limited
project:	Blythe House Farm Extension
title:	Planning Layout Figure 1.2

scale:	1:4000	date:	08/03/23	drawn by:	JLB	checked by:	AW	size:	A2
project ref:	613	drawn no:	BF/613/01	rev:	H				

The Proposed Solar Farm

- 1.16 If consented, the proposed solar farm (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development) would be adjacent to the approved Blythe Solar Farm development and would be operated as an extension to that solar farm. The export capacity of the additional areas is approximately 17.6MW.
- 1.17 The northern parcel of the Site would be accessed from the west, utilising the access already approved for Blythe Solar Farm, i.e to the north-west of the farm buildings at Upper Newton Farm. The southern parcel would be accessed by a separate access track and utilise an existing access to the south-west of Upper Newton Farm (Figure 1.2).
- 1.18 The solar panels would be the same as the panels approved for the Blythe Solar Farm development, i.e., a maximum height of panels above ground of 3.1 m and the angle of tilt approximately 20-25 degrees. String inverters would be sited to the rear of the panels and connect to stand-alone transformers which convert and distribute the electricity generated by the panels from a DC current to an AC voltage.
- 1.19 Within the northern parcel of the Site, there would be one pair of transformers and a storage container. Within the southern parcel, there would be three pairs of transformers and one storage container. The storage containers would be used for the storage of spare components and equipment required for the on-going management and maintenance of the site when it is operational.
- 1.20 The installation would be fenced to a maximum height of 2 metres with deer fencing, including openings to allow wildlife travel into and across the site. The site would be monitored by CCTV mounted on poles and no external lighting is proposed.

Electrical infrastructure compound

- 1.21 The electricity generated from the solar panels would be fed into the National Grid via the existing overhead line. Supporting electrical infrastructure would be contained within a compound, surrounded by palisade fencing. This would house the switch room, transformers, capacitor banks, relay rooms and storage area.

Changes to the Approved Blythe Solar Farm

- 1.22 Changes to the approved Blythe Solar Farm will be necessary as a result of the Proposed Development, if consented. The changes are:
- The relocation of the electrical infrastructure compound. This component was previously approved for Blythe Solar Farm, and it is proposed that, as part of the Proposed Development, it is relocated to a location adjacent to the overhead cables within the southern parcel of land, which will enable the installation of a more efficient connection to the Grid (Figure 1.2).
 - The relocation and extension of the proposed ecological mitigation land proposed for breeding birds to a site in the south-east corner of the proposed development (Figure 1.2).
- 1.23 In due course the above amendments will be sought under a separate application.

Construction, operation and decommissioning

- 1.24 If consented, The Proposed Development would be constructed in conjunction with the approved Blythe Solar Farm over a period of 16 weeks. A Construction Traffic Management Plan is submitted with the application.
- 1.25 Once operational, the solar farm will require 1-2 visits per month for maintenance. It is envisaged that such trips will be made by cars or small/medium sized vans.
- 1.26 The operational period of the solar farm will be 40 years from the first export of electricity. At the end of this period, the site will be decommissioned. All structures and hard surfacing will be removed, and the land will be restored to agricultural use.
- 1.27 The decommissioning and restoration processes will be controlled by a decommissioning statement to be secured by a planning condition.
- 1.28 After the site has been decommissioned, the land will revert to agricultural use and will not be considered by the LPA to be "Brownfield" or "Previously Developed Land" (PDL).

EIA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

1.29 The process of identifying whether or not EIA is required for a development is known as screening. In determining whether the Proposed Development constitutes EIA development, consideration should be had to the following:

- If the Proposed Development is of a type listed in Schedule 1;
- If not, whether it is listed in Schedule 2;
- Is it located within a sensitive area;
- Whether it meets any of the relevant thresholds and criteria set out in Schedule 2; and/or
- Would it lead to likely significant effects on the environment.

Schedule 1

1.30 EIA is mandatory for projects listed in Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations. Schedule 1 developments are large scale projects for which significant effects would be expected and comprise developments such as new airports and power stations. The Proposed Development is not of a type listed in Schedule 1.

Schedule 2

1.31 Smaller projects fall into Schedule 2 of the Regulations. If the development proposed is of a type listed in Column 1 of Schedule 2 then it must be screened for EIA if it meets any of the relevant thresholds or criteria in Column 2 of Schedule 2 and / or if the location of the development is in a sensitive area, as defined in the Regulations.

1.32 Sensitive Areas are defined in the EIA Regulations as:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and European Sites;
- National Parks, the Broads, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); and World Heritage Sites and Scheduled Monuments.

1.33 The site is not within a sensitive area as defined above. There are no designated sites, as listed above, within a 9km radius of the Proposed Development.

1.34 Column 1 of Schedule 2 includes '3 Energy installations (a) Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam, hot water'. The criteria and threshold for EIA screening for such development types is 'The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectares.'

1.35 As the Proposed Development forms an extension to the consented Blythe Solar Farm, which is yet to be constructed, it falls within Column 1 of Schedule 2 under '*13 Changes and extensions (b) Any change to or extension of development of a description listed in paragraphs 1 to 12 of column 1 of this table, where that development is already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed.*' The criteria and threshold for EIA screening for such a development is "*(ii) in relation to development of a description mentioned in column 1 of this table, the thresholds and criteria in the corresponding part of column 2 of this table applied to the change or extension are met or exceeded.*"

1.36 The Proposed Development would occupy approximately 24.14 hectares, forming an extension to the 42ha consented Blythe Solar Farm directly adjacent. EIA screening under

Schedule 2 does not always require environmental impact assessment. The development is screened against the criteria set out in Schedule 3, below, to establish if the proposal is likely to give rise to any significant environmental impacts.

Schedule 3

SCHEDULE 3

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR SCREENING SCHEDULE 2 DEVELOPMENT

Characteristics of development

1. *The characteristics of development must be considered with particular regard to— (a) the size and design of the whole development; (b) cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development; (c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity; (d) the production of waste; (e) pollution and nuisances; (f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge; (g) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).*

Location of development

- 2.—(1) *The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, with particular regard, to— (a) the existing and approved land use; (b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground; (c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas— (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths; (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment; (iii) mountain and forest areas; (iv) nature reserves and parks; (v) European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation; (vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure; (vii) densely populated areas; (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.*

Types and characteristics of the potential impact

3. *The likely significant effects of the development on the environment must be considered in relation to criteria set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 above, with regard to the impact of the development on the factors specified in regulation 4(2), taking into account—*
(a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected); (b) the nature of the impact; (c) the transboundary nature of the impact; (d) the intensity and complexity of the impact; (e) the probability of the impact; (f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact; (g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development; (h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

EIA SCREENING ANALYSIS

- 1.37 Table 1-2 below expands on the Schedule 3 criteria by asking concise questions, many of which are from the Screening Checklist published by the Planning Inspectorate to help ensure that an Authority giving development consent for a project makes its decisions knowing the likely effects on the environment.
- 1.38 The information in sections 1-11 and 13 of Table 1-2 considers the Proposed Development in isolation, whilst Section 12 considers cumulative effects with other proposed or approved projects, including the consented Blythe Solar Farm, shown on Figure 1.1.
- 1.39 The information included within the analysis below has been drawn from several sources, including documents submitted in the planning application. These are:

Table 1-1 Screening Data Sources and Supporting Documents

Document
Agricultural Land Classification, Blythe House Farm, Draycott in the Moors, prepared by Kernon Countryside Consultants Ltd.
Noise Impact Assessment, Proposed Solar Farm, Blythe House Farm, prepared by Acoustic Consultants Ltd.
Flood Risk Assessment & Surface Water Management Plan, Blythe Extension Solar Farm, prepared by Corylus Planning and Environmental Ltd.
Ecological Impact Assessment, Blythe Solar Farm, Stoke-on-Trent, prepared by Tyler Grange.
Arboricultural Statement on Proposed Additions to Blythe Solar Farm, nr Draycott in the Moors, prepared by Cheshire Woodlands.
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) – Installation of additional areas of solar panels, relocated electrical infrastructure compound and associated works at Blythe Solar Farm, prepared by Corylus Planning and Environmental Ltd.
Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment, Blythe House Farm Solar Farm Extension, prepared by Wessex Archaeology
Construction Traffic Management Plan, Blythe House Farm, Draycott in the Moors, prepared by Transport Planning Associates.
Glint & Glare Assessment, Blythe Solar Farm, prepared by Neo Environmental Ltd.

Table 1-2 Screening Analysis Checklist

Question		Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
				Is a significant effect likely, having regard particularly to the magnitude and spatial extent (including population size affected), nature, intensity and complexity, probability, expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact and the possibility to effectively reduce the impact? If the finding of no significant effect is reliant on specific features or measures of the project envisaged to avoid, or prevent what might otherwise have been, significant adverse effects on the environment these are identified here.	
1. NATURAL RESOURCES					
1.1	Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area?	No	Infrastructure will be installed at a height variable to the contours of the site. The general physical topography within the site will not change.	N/A	
1.2	Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources above or below ground such as land, soil, water, materials/minerals or energy which are non-renewable or in short supply?	No	With the exception of fuel used by plant during construction of the development, the project will not use natural resources which are non-renewable or in short supply. Conversely, the project aims to provide a new source of renewable energy.	N/A	
1.3	Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, e.g. forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals?	No	An Agricultural Land Classification report was prepared for the site and is submitted with the planning application. The report confirms that the vast majority of the land that would be occupied by the Proposed Development is categorised as either ALC Grade 4 (67%) or Grade 3b (31%), with only 2% of land, situated along a field margin, being categorised as Grade 3a. The land affected by the Proposed Development is therefore not within the classification of Best and Most Versatile (BMV). Additionally, field boundaries and hedgerow vegetation would be retained, and existing field access points used during construction and operation, where possible.	N/A	
2. WASTE					
2.1	Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes	Solid waste is likely to be produced during construction (such as packaging and waste from site workers’ facilities). There are no waste arisings likely as a result of the operation of the solar farm.	No	Wastes would be managed in line with standard good practice through the construction contractor’s Site Waste Management Plan.
3. POLLUTION AND NUISANCES					
3.1	Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	Yes	There is potential that dust would be generated during the construction process and that emissions to air may arise due to associated construction traffic.	No	Dust generation and construction traffic emissions will be mitigated through the implementation of good-practice measures outlined within and delivered via the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) submitted with the planning application. As such significant effects associated with dust and construction traffic are not considered likely.
3.2	Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes	Noise may be generated in association with the construction of the Proposed Development. In addition, temporary lighting may be required during construction.	No	Impacts associated with noise and light during construction would be short-term and temporary in nature.

Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
3.3 Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	No	A Noise Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the Proposed Development and has been submitted with the planning application. During operation the noise environment would not change as a result of the activities on the site and no permanent external lighting during operation is currently proposed. Based on the limited previous development across the site, potential on-site sources of contamination are considered to be limited to those associated with construction, i.e. fuel spills.	No	Noise relating to construction would be mitigated through the implementation of good-practice measures outlined within and delivered via a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). A condition relating to the requirement for a CEMP is expected to accompany any planning permission, as per Condition 11 relating to the approval of the consented Blythe Solar Farm. Whilst there would be no permanent lighting during operation, it may be required temporarily during the construction phase. Lighting during construction, if required, would be minimised and sensitively designed, taking into account the rural nature of the site and to avoid light-spill onto residential receptors and ecologically sensitive areas, as discussed within Section 6.2 below. A condition relating to external lighting would be expected to accompany any planning permission, as per Condition 9 relating to the approval of the consented Blythe Solar Farm. Risks of contamination during construction would be controlled through standard good practice, such as spills kits and suitable fuel storage and detailed within a Construction Environmental Management Plan, subject to the approval by the local authority prior to construction. A condition relating to the requirement for a CEMP and the reporting of unexpected contamination is expected to accompany any planning permission, as per Conditions 1 and 22, respectively, relating to the approval of the consented Blythe Solar Farm.
3.4 Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage, e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project?	No		N/A	
4. POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH				
4.1 Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?	No		N/A	
4.2 Will the project present a risk to the population (having regard to population density) and their human health during construction, operation or decommissioning?	No	Pollutant linkages are absent with regard to human health. The construction of the project would implement standard good practice to reduce dust, noise and air pollution. The Proposed Development would be fenced to prevent public access.	N/A	
5. WATER RESOURCES				
5.1 Are there any water resources including surface waters, e.g. rivers, lakes/ponds, coastal or underground waters on or around the location which could be	Yes	The Proposed Development comprises the installation of solar arrays with further impermeable infrastructure comprising a sub-station compound and transformers.	No	The watercourses located adjacent to the site would remain undisturbed throughout the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
affected by the project, particularly in terms of their volume and flood risk?		The Site slopes generally down to the south-east towards the River Blithe. There are no watercourses crossing the general Site, though a small watercourse drains along the western boundary. There is a small risk of surface water flooding associated with the watercourse; however, since it is well incised and on the edge of the Site, there is no practical risk to the Proposed Development and no requirement for mitigation of flood risk. The entire northern parcel of land lies entirely within Flood Zone 1 and is thus at Negligible risk of either tidal or fluvial flooding with a very low risk of flooding that is with an Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of lower than 0.1% (1 in 1,000 annual probability). The majority of the southern parcel of land within the Site lies in fluvial Flood Zone 1 with a very low risk of flooding, though some of the most southerly areas of it fall with Flood Zone 3, notably the access track and other low-lying land where shallow flooding may occur. However, only solar panels are proposed to be installed within the area and any flooding is likely to be well below 800 mm which represents the minimum height of the panels above ground level. There may be potential offsite impacts of the development relating to runoff from any of the impermeable surfaces. These are to be mitigated by directing runoff to gravel soakaways adjacent to the impermeable areas, supplemented by attenuation at three of the Transformer “pairs” due to low infiltration rates at these locations.		Given the nature of solar farm developments of this scale, there is likely to be only very small changes to the overall area of impermeable surfaces across the site and, as such, site drainage is unlikely to change significantly. However, as the site is over one hectare in size, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) with incorporated Surface Water Drainage Plan is submitted with the planning application. A condition requiring the implementation of the Surface Water Management plan would be expected to accompany any planning permission, as per Condition 12 relating to the approval of the consented Blythe Solar Farm.

6. BIODIVERSITY (SPECIES AND HABITATS)

6.1	Are there any protected areas which are designated or classified for their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, or any non-designated / non-classified areas which are important or sensitive for reasons of their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, located on or around the location and which could be affected by the project? (e.g. wetlands, watercourses or other water-bodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, undesignated nature reserves or parks. (Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).	Yes	There are no designated or non-designated sites located within or directly adjacent to the Site boundary. There are two designated sites considered to be of international ecological importance are present within 10km of the site, namely: - West Midland Mosses SAC situated 9.07km south of the site which is designated for its nationally scarce habitats including natural dystrophic lakes and ponds, and transition mires and quaking bogs; and - Midland Meres & Mosses Ramsar situated 9.07km south of the site, designated for its nutrient rich water bodies/meres and associated fringe habitats hosting a wide range of invertebrate species. No designated sites considered to be of local or national ecological importance (SSSIs, LNRs etc.) are present within 2km of the site. There are records of six local wildlife sites (LWS) and biodiversity alert sites (BAS), considered to be of county ecological importance, within 2km of the site, the nearest of which is Blythe House LWS situated 0.08km south of the site, designated for its marshy grassland habitat which acts as a floodplain for the River Blithe.	No	The Proposed Development is in close proximity to Blythe House LWS. Though the nature of the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in increased recreational pressure to the site, it is connected to the LWS by a network of ditches, and therefore as a precaution, safe working methodologies would be employed to eliminate/minimise any surface runoff associated with construction. Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure pollution does not occur, including ensuring discharge or water contaminated with pollutants (i.e. silt, effluent, sewage, fuel, any discoloration) does not enter watercourses or drains. Such measures would be controlled through best practice pollution prevention measures, which would be implemented and conditioned in a CEMP. A condition relating to the requirement for a CEMP is expected to accompany any planning permission, as per Condition 11 relating to the approval of the consented Blythe Solar Farm.
6.2	Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which	Yes	An Ecological Impact Assessment and associated ecological survey work was carried out for the Site. The corresponding report is submitted with the Planning Application.	No	The construction of the project would implement standard good practice to protect ecological receptors.

Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
use areas on or around the site, e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over-wintering, or migration, be affected by the project?		The Proposed Development will primarily affect habitats of negligible ecological importance. Current site plans (see Figure 1.2) retain habitats of ecological importance (including native hedgerows, lines of trees, ponds, and ditches), and the loss of areas of grassland is expected to be mitigated through the planting of additional areas of grassland of equal and greater value, as well as the planting of native trees and native hedgerows. Amphibians (including Great Crested Newt (GCN)): Surveys indicate that GCN are likely to be present on or in the immediate vicinity of the site. Bats: Multiple trees with bat roost potential were identified during surveys, though these are to be retained. The Proposed Development also has the potential to impact commuting and foraging route. Birds: Hedgerows along field boundaries offer cover and foraging opportunities for a variety of nesting bird species and would be retained. Enhancement in the form of additional native hedgerow and tree planting is expected to further increase nesting opportunities on site. Following the completion of the breeding bird surveys conducted April-July 2023, it was determined that several species were recorded on site and within hedgerow and treeline vegetation, including moderate numbers of ground-nesting species such as skylark and yellow wagtail which were present and breeding within the site area. Overall risks to badgers, otters and water voles is considered low. Pre-commencement surveys for badgers will be undertaken.		As recommended within the Ecological Impact Assessment, the following mitigation measures would be implemented: - Protection and buffering of boundary habitats and watercourses. In order to ensure this, adequate buffers would be established during the construction phase. - As impacts on GCN are possible, the Proposed Development will proceed under the council's District Level Licensing Scheme for GCN, in combination with the consented Blythe Solar Farm. - Should tree retention plans change and any of those noted to have bat roost potential become scheduled for removal/pruning, then further nocturnal or tree-climbing surveys would be carried out to determine roost presence/absence. - It is not expected that any external lighting of the site is required, but should there be any localised requirement, lighting along site boundaries would be avoided or minimised and sensitively designed, taking into account the rural nature of the site and to avoid light-spill onto ecologically sensitive areas. This is to ensure avoidance or minimal light spill, particularly along the boundary habitats, to maintain the areas functionality for commuting and foraging bats. - To enhance the site for roosting bats, three bat boxes would be incorporated within scheme and installed on retained trees on site. - With regards the loss of potential breeding habitat for bird species, a bird mitigation area of approximately 5.44ha of neutral grassland would be created in the south-east corner of the Site. Additionally, three bird boxes would be erected on retained trees on site to further mitigate loss of nesting habitat arising from the proposals. Any works to remove suitable nesting vegetation would be conducted outside of the core nesting bird season (March-August inclusive) or preceded by checks by a suitably qualified ecologist. Details of the above mitigation would be included within a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan which would be prepared, potentially in combination with the consented Blythe Solar Farm, should planning permission be granted, as per Condition 10 relating to the consented Blythe Solar Farm. The development is temporary, and after 40 years the site would be reinstated to agricultural use having benefited from additional habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement.

7. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

7.1	Are there any areas or features on or around the location which are protected for their landscape and scenic value, and/or any non-designated / non-classified areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around	No	The Proposed Development site is not located within any national or local landscape designation. The nearest nationally designated area is the Peak District National Park, the south-western boundary of which is located approximately 14km to the north-east.	Not in the long term	A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is submitted with the planning application. The Proposed Development would not result in the loss of valued landscape elements such as hedgerows and trees, and the prevailing field patten as these are retained in all current proposals.
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Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)
the location which could be affected by the project? Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).		The site comprises a relatively remote and intact rural landscape reflective of the relevant 'Character Areas' and 'Character Types' defined within the national and local Landscape Character Assessments. The overall character of the site and surrounding area is that of a fairly remote pastoral landscape with long range views over a rural river valley, but with urbanising influences such as the A50 dual carriageway, the Stoke to Derby railway line, overhead electricity transmission lines and an existing solar development at Lower Newton Farm. There are no specific features of high landscape value within the Site or surrounding area, although there are valued landscape elements such as hedgerows, hedgerow trees and the prevailing irregular field pattern which contribute to the existing character and scenic quality of the local landscape. Although the site is not within a 'Sensitive Area' as defined within the EIA Regulations, the LVIA accompanying the planning application has assigned the site and local environment as having a moderate landscape sensitivity.	Mitigation proposals are put forward in order to reduce any potential landscape impacts caused by the Proposed Development through establishing new native woodland to the south of the site and to the immediate south-west of Blythe House Farmhouse; to plant and establish new native hedgerows along the public footpaths on the site boundaries; to 'gap-up' existing hedgerows; and to create a dedicated ground nesting bird mitigation zone within a south-eastern field of Proposed Development site boundary. These proposals are designed to provide landscape and biodiversity enhancement. In respect of effects upon landscape character, the Proposed Development is predicted to have a major effect at the immediate site level, prior to the establishment of the proposed mitigation planting. This is due to a moderate sensitivity and a substantial change resulting in a major effect until the mitigation planting is established, which is likely to take 8 to 10 years. Within the wider landscape, it is expected that the Proposed Development will give rise to a moderate effect upon the inherent landscape character of this section of the Blithe Valley, prior to the establishment of the proposed mitigation planting. This is due to a moderate sensitivity and a moderate change resulting in a moderate effect until the mitigation planting is established, which is likely to take 8 to 10 years. Notwithstanding the temporary and short to medium term landscape character effects described above, the proposed planting schemes for the Proposed Development, will serve to mitigate these adverse impacts, both at the immediate vicinity of the site and within the wider area. Therefore, the reversible and long-term (approximately 30 years of the 40 years operational lifetime of the Proposed Development to be consented) effect on the site and wider area landscape character, following establishment of planting, would be moderate at a site level and minor to moderate at a wider landscape area level and neither would be significant. The mitigation planting and management schemes will provide significant benefits in respect of landscape structure, habitat connectivity and biodiversity enhancement, which is likely to have a positive impact upon the landscape condition and the value of the local landscape character area. The development is temporary, and it is proposed that all of the solar infrastructure will be removed after 40 years with the site being reinstated to agricultural use. Hence once it is returned to agricultural use it is predicted that there will be no adverse landscape impacts and the site will have benefited from additional hedgerow and woodland planting, and positive landscape management.
7.2 Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people? (If so, from where, what direction, and what distance?)	Yes	There are scattered and varied visual receptors in close proximity to the site. These include: - The local area is well served by public rights of way, including three public footpaths which run immediately adjacent to the site boundaries. - The Stoke to Derby railway line runs close to the proposed development site. - Scattered houses, often associated with farms are present. The intervisibility between the site and the surrounding landscape is mainly influenced by the orientation of the site on a shallow south-west facing slope and the potential screening effects of local hedgerows, hedgerow trees and occasional woodland plantations within the landscape. The site has a significant zone of visibility covering an	Not in the long term A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is submitted with the planning application. Mitigation proposals are put forward in order to reduce any potential visual impacts caused by the Proposed Development through establishing new native woodland to the south of the site and to the immediate south-west of Blythe House Farmhouse; to plant and establish new native hedgerows along the public footpaths on the site boundaries; to 'gap-up' existing hedgerows; and to create a dedicated ground nesting bird mitigation zone within a south-eastern field of Proposed Development site boundary. These mitigation schemes are designed to assist in visually screening the development from identified receptors. Until the mitigation planting is established, which is likely to take 8 to 10 years, the proposed development is predicted to have a temporary major visual effect upon receptors

Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
		arc of land within the valley floodplain and on rising ground to the south and south-west. The site's zone of visual influence potentially extends for some 2 – 2.5km to the south and south-west. Most of the public rights of way located immediately adjacent to the site boundaries are likely to be visually affected by the proposed development. Also, there are potential views of part of the site from one nearby residential property (Blythe House Farmhouse), and some limited views from a handful of farmsteads and isolated dwellings within the wider landscape to the south and south-west.		with close range views from sections of public footpaths 'Checkley 5' and 'Checkley 7'. There will also be temporary moderate effect upon views from some first and second floor windows at Blythe House Farmhouse. In terms of long range views from footpaths across the Blithe Valley temporary moderate visual effect are predicted for users of sections of public footpaths within a 1-2km radius of the Site to the south and south-west. However, once the mitigation planting around the site is established, the medium to long-term visual effect is likely to reduce to minor / moderate upon these receptors, albeit some of the footpath routes adjacent to the Site will become more enclosed, resulting in a perceived change of character. Therefore, the reversible and long-term (approximately 30 years of the 40 years operational lifetime of the Proposed Development to be consented) effect on visual receptors, following establishment of planting, would be minor to moderate and would not be significant. The development is temporary, and it is proposed that all of the solar infrastructure will be removed after 40 years with the site being reinstated to agricultural use. Hence once it is returned to agricultural use it is predicted that there will be no adverse visual impacts and the site will have benefited from additional hedgerow and woodland planting. A Glint and Glare Assessment is submitted with the planning application. The planting and infilling of hedgerows along site boundaries will mitigate impacts associated with solar reflections at four receptors.

8. CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY

8.1 Are there any areas or features which are protected for their cultural heritage or archaeological value, or any non-designated / classified areas and/or features of cultural heritage or archaeological importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project (including potential impacts on setting, and views to, from and within)? Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).	Yes	Historic Setting There are no designated heritage assets within the Site. The closest designated heritage asset is the Grade II listed Blythe House located 75m north of the southern land parcel. Further to this, there are two scheduled monuments outside of the Site, both of which are associated with former moated settlements (460m west of the southern land parcel and 940m south of it) and a further three Listed Buildings, all Grade II, representing the hall within the Paynsley hall moated site, the Churchyard Cross in Cresswell and a milepost at Totmonslow. A Desk-Based Historic Environment Assessment has been submitted with the planning application. The setting assessment carried within it concluded that the Proposed Development's impact on the setting of Blythe House may result in a very minor change to its significance (less than substantial harm). Whilst the extension of solar farm infrastructure in close proximity to Blythe House will slightly diminish the contribution made by this part of its rural setting to its significance, the vast majority of the contribution made by setting to its significance comes from its surrounding farmyard and buildings and from the large expanse of farmland which it looks over to the east and south-east, neither of which will be impacted by the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development may also result in a very minor change to the setting of Paynsley Hall and moated site. However, as the significance of these assets does not rely on any contribution made by that part of their setting which would be occupied by the development, the significance of these assets (and the ability to appreciate and understand that significance) is considered to be unharmed.	No	Should planning permission be granted, as per Condition 13 relating to the consented Blythe Solar Farm, prior to the commencement of the development, a written scheme of archaeological investigation will be submitted for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority, providing details of the programme of archaeological works to be carried out within the site, including post-excavation reporting and appropriate publication and interpretation.
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Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
		Archaeology Whilst the Proposed Development does have the potential to disturb artifacts of archaeological importance during construction, assessments carried out have determined that there is a low overall archaeological potential within the Site, primarily limited to the potential below ground presence of features related to the postmedieval water meadows and 19th century field boundaries.		
9. TRANSPORT AND ACCESS				
9.1 Are there any routes on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the project?	Yes	Construction traffic will access the site from the east via the A50. It will then turn right at the Tean roundabout onto the A521 (a dual carriageway road, subject to the national speed limit) towards Blythe Bridge and Draycott. After approximately 660m, Uttoxeter Road reverts to a single carriageway road with a hatched central reserve, which is subject to a 40 mph speed limit on the approach to the village of Draycott in the Moors. Passing through the village, the central hatched reserve terminates by the junction with Cresswell Lane. Approximately 1.35 km after the junction (whereby Uttoxeter Road becomes Draycott Road), construction vehicles will turn right and utilise approximately 1km of private track that comprises the farm access serving properties including Upper and Lower Newton Farm (the majority of which are landowners for the application). The private track provides access to several dwellings within 50m of the turn off the public highway. The private track is also a footpath, forming part of Public Right of Way, 'Draycott in the Moors 15'.	No	Whilst there would be an increase in HGV movements on the roads used to access the site during construction, these effects would be short-term and temporary in nature. There are relatively few residential properties served by these roads. As such, the impact of additional traffic from the Proposed Development is not likely to affect a large population. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been prepared for the Proposed Development and is submitted with the planning application and includes the following controls: - Signs to direct construction vehicles associated with the development will be installed along the route. - drivers, contractors and visitors will be provided with a route plan in advance of delivering to Site to ensure that vehicles follow the identified route; - all signage on the designated route will be inspected twice daily by the Site Manager to ensure they are kept in a well maintained condition and located in safe and appropriate locations; - use of advisory signs informing contractors and visitors that parking is not permitted on road in the vicinity of the Site or on the Site access track; - a compound area for contractors will be set up on-site including appropriate parking spaces. Contractors and visitors will be advised that parking facilities will be provided on-Site in advance of visiting the Site and that they should not park on-street; - a requirement for engines to be switched off on-Site when not in use; - banksmen will be provided at the Site access to indicate to construction traffic when it is safe for them to enter and exit the Site; and - the contact details of the Site Manager will be provided on a noticeboard at the Site access. A condition relating to the requirement for a CTMP is expected to accompany any planning permission, as per Condition 14 relating to the approval of the consented Blythe Solar Farm.

Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
9.2 Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion, or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?	No	The Proposed Development would be constructed in conjunction with the consented Blythe Solar Farm. As such, it is proposed to utilise the same construction route; namely accessing the site via the A50/A521, Uttoxeter Road, Draycott Road and an existing farm access. The local area is rural in nature and not heavily populated and the local road network is not susceptible to congestion. Issues associated with agricultural traffic, i.e. slow moving vehicles, dust generation from farming activities and mud on the road, may occur. Once operational, there would be very little traffic associated with the Proposed Development, as only occasional scheduled maintenance and service visits would be required.	No	Further discussion relating to impacts to users of public rights of way is included at Section 10 below. Overall, the number of vehicle movements associated with the construction of the Proposed Development (approximately 17 per day) is forecast to be low and therefore unlikely to have a material impact on the safety or operation of the local highway network. The effects associated with this increase would be short-term and temporary in nature. A Construction Traffic Management Plan detailing mitigation measures (as above) to minimise the impact resulting from construction traffic has been prepared for the Proposed Development and submitted with the planning application. This includes the following measures to mitigate the effects mud/dust: - A wheel wash facility will be provided ahead of the Site egress to ensure that no mud or debris is spread onto the local highway network; - a road sweeper will be provided in the vicinity of the Site access to alleviate any residual debris generated during the construction phase, as required; - spraying of areas with water supplied as and when conditions dictate to prevent the spread of dust; and - vehicles carrying waste material off-site to be sheeted. A condition relating to the requirement for a CTMP is expected to accompany any planning permission, as per Condition 14 relating to the approval of the consented Blythe Solar Farm.

10. LAND USE

10.1 Are there existing land uses or community facilities on or around the location which could be affected by the project? E.g. housing, densely populated areas, industry / commerce, farm/agricultural holdings, forestry, tourism, mining, quarrying, facilities relating to health, education, places of worship, leisure /sports / recreation.	Yes	The Site and surrounding land are dominated by with agricultural land use with a high density of footpaths. The Proposed Development represents agricultural diversification and would be a temporary change of land use from agriculture to energy generation. The operational period of the solar farm will be 40 years, at the end of which the site will be decommissioned and the land will be restored to agricultural use. 'Draycott in the Moors 15' footpath, comprises part of the construction access route and therefore may be affected temporarily by the presence of construction traffic.	No	A Construction Traffic Management Plan detailing mitigation measures (as above) to minimise the impact resulting from construction traffic has been prepared for the Proposed Development and submitted with the planning application. This includes the following measures to mitigate the effects associated with further mud/dust associated with agricultural traffic: Use of advisory signs informing pedestrians of construction traffic and HGVs. A condition relating to the requirement for a CTMP is expected to accompany any planning permission, as per Condition 14 relating to the approval of the consented Blythe Solar Farm.
10.2 Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	No	There is a live planning application Upper Leigh Solar Farm (SMD/2023/0059) which is expected to be determined in November 2023. The proposal is not on the Proposed Development site however one of the three construction access routes for Upper Leigh Solar Farm uses an existing access track between fields proposed for solar panels for the Proposed Development.	No	The Proposed Development would not interfere with the safe passage of construction traffic for the yet to be determined Upper Leigh Solar Farm (SMD/2023/0059), should construction phases overlap, and potential impacts would be controlled via the CTMP and/or CEMP.

11. LAND STABILITY AND CLIMATE

Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
11.1 Is the location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme /adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	No	The site is not at risk of extreme climatic conditions. The online Coal Authority Interactive Map Viewer shows the site is not located within a designated Development High Risk Area. The Coal Authority has confirmed that a) ground movement resulting from past workings in the area should now have ceased; b) there are no known coal mine entries within the site or within 20m of the site boundary; c) there is no known damage due to geological faults or other lines of weakness that have been affected by coal mining; d) the site is not within the boundary of an opencast site from which coal has been removed by opencast methods.	N/A	

12. CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

12.1 Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulation of impacts together during the construction/operation phase?	Yes	<u>Existing and/or approved developments</u> There is an existing solar farm to the west of the Proposed Development, consented in 2014 and now well established (as shown on the cover of this report). The Proposed Development would form an extension to Innova's Approved Blythe Solar Farm (SMD/2022/0160) which is adjacent to the existing solar farm, submitted 23 Mar 2022 and approved 1 Feb 2023. There is one other approved development (See Approved Totmonslow Solar Farm shown on the 'Solar Developments in Local Area' plan in this report) the other side of the A50 from the Proposed Development. The planning application SMD/2023/0197 was submitted 23 April 2023, approved 17 Aug 2023, and a decision notice and conditions area awaited. An EIA screening response dated January 2022 concluded this scheme was not EIA development. There is the potential for a cumulation of impacts from the Proposed Development with the above existing and approved schemes.	Not in the long term	<u>Existing and/or approved developments - Construction – Approved Blythe Solar Farm and the Proposed Development:</u> The likelihood of construction impacts resulting in cumulative adverse effects on the same receptors (e.g. road and footpath users, local people) as the Proposed Development is driven by the potential for overlap in construction programmes. The Proposed Development would form an extension to Innova's approved solar farm (SMD/2022/0160) and share infrastructure such as the sub-station and cable route. Therefore, if the Proposed Development is approved, both Innova's projects would be built over the same period by Innova and their chosen Contractor over a period of 16 weeks. Both are using the same access which would be controlled via the conditions set out for the Approved Blythe Solar Farm, which are expected to be require for the Proposed Development in terms of traffic management (see section 9 above) and construction onsite environmental controls to mitigate impacts from dust, noise, light, waste, as set out in sections 2 and 3 above, on water resources and biodiversity as set out in sections 5 and 6 above, and buried archaeology as set out in section 8 above. There would be moderate to major effects on landscape and visual receptors during the construction period of 16 weeks and these would be temporary. <u>Existing and/or approved developments - Construction - Approved Blythe Solar Farm and the Proposed Development and the Approved Totmonslow Solar Farm:</u> It is possible that the approved Totmonslow Solar Farm could be constructed at the same time as the simultaneous construction of Innova's Approved Blythe Solar Farm and the Proposed Development. It is understood that the Totmonslow solar farm consent requires the implementation of the scheme by August 2026. The consented Blythe solar farm is required to be implemented by February 2028 and it is understood that the proposed extension would seek a similar five year implementation condition. As such, it is unlikely that the two schemes will overlap. As stated in the Proposed Development CTMP, data set out in the Transport and Access Statement prepared by Apex Transport Planning states that the Totmonslow site would generate 322 HGV trips over a 16 week period. This would add on average 4 one way construction vehicles trips/day over the 16 week period, with a peak of 8 one way trips per day during the construction of the site access tracks (weeks 3-6). Taking the two sites together, that would suggest an average daily one way flow of 36 vehicles (i.e. 22 associated with the consent Blythe development + 10 associated with the proposed Blythe extension + 4 associated with Totmonslow), or less than 5 vehicles/hour.
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Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
				Controls to mitigate potential impacts of driver delay, severance of routes, pedestrian delay, fear and intimidation, accidents and road safety have been presented for all schemes and would work in combination. Draft planning conditions within Agenda Item 7 of Public reports pack Planning Applications Committee from 10th August 2023 sets out draft conditions for Totmonslow, which are expected to appear in the awaited Decision Notice and will secure controls related to construction traffic and onsite environmental controls, include a condition reading ‘No development shall take place, until a traffic Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.’ And ‘No mud, other debris or deleterious material shall be deposited on the highway. Any that is shall be immediately removed using mechanical means.’ These controls in conjunction with those secured for the Approved Blythe Solar Farm and expected for the Proposed Development shall minimise adverse effects on road users. The addition of Totmonslow being constructed simultaneously with the consented and Proposed Development would not change the levels of effect on landscape and visual receptors reported above at 7.2 because of the limited additional visual effect of the Totmonslow development as demonstrated at viewpoint 12 of the LVIA. It is anticipated that there will be no intervisibility between the Proposed Development and the Totmonslow site. <u>Existing and/or approved developments – Operation – Existing, Approved Blythe Solar Farm and the Proposed Development and the Approved Totmonslow Solar Farm:</u> Within the wider landscape, it is expected that the Proposed Development along with the approved Blythe Solar Farm and existing Lower Newton development will give rise to potential cumulative landscape and visual effects within this section of the Blithe Valley. However, once the proposed landscape planting has become established within the Blythe Solar Farm site and extension site (which would be constructed at the same time, resulting in no lag time in the planting establishing between the two projects), then the overall effects are likely to reduce in respect of landscape character, with regard to the majority of the identified visual receptors. The addition of Totmonslow Solar Farm to the existing solar farm, the consented Blythe House Farm scheme and the Proposed Development is expected to result in very limited additional landscape and visual effects within the wider landscape once the proposed landscape planting has become established. The proposed solar developments would not result in the loss of valued landscape elements such as hedgerows and trees, and the prevailing field pattern as these are retained in all current proposals. These also include appropriate landscape, visual and ecological mitigation and enhancement to be secured through the planning process, e.g. via a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan.
		<u>Yet to be determined Upper Leigh Solar Farm</u> There is a live planning application Upper Leigh Solar Farm (SMD/2023/0059) which is expected to be determined in October 2023. Should this application be approved there is the potential for a cumulation of impacts from the Proposed Development with the above existing and approved schemes. The EIA Regulations do not require EIA Screening to consider cumulative effects with other developments unless they are existing or approved. However, in this case there is a	Not in the long term	<u>Yet to be determined Upper Leigh Solar Farm – Construction</u> Upper Leigh Solar Farm could be constructed at the same time as Totmonslow, Innova’s simultaneous construction of the Approved Blythe Solar Farm and the Proposed Development. The Upper Leigh Solar Farm does not propose to share construction phase access with Innova’s Approved Blythe Solar Farm and the Proposed Development. Upper Leigh Solar Farm proposes access via Blythe House, Lower Tean Leys Farm and Leigh Lane.

Question	Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
		solar farm proposed adjacent to the Proposed Development nearing determination and therefore it is included here.		In terms of on-site construction impacts, these are expected to be mitigated using similar level of good practice controls in terms of Construction Environmental and Traffic Management as secured via planning condition for solar farm developments in this area. The addition of Upper Leigh being constructed simultaneously with the consented and Proposed Development and Totmonslow solar would not change the effects within the Proposed Development site due to the limited intervisibility between the Proposed Development Site and the Upper Leigh Solar Farm. The effect upon the wider landscape to the south and south-west would be more substantial due to the perceived extended area of development within the valley as demonstrated at viewpoint 12 of the LVIA, however, the likelihood of all three schemes being constructed simultaneously is low and any impacts would be temporary and short-term. <u>Yet to be determined Upper Leigh Solar Farm – Operational</u> The proposed solar developments in the area would not result in the loss of valued landscape elements such as hedgerows and trees, and the prevailing field patten as these are retained in all current proposals. These also include appropriate landscape, visual and ecological mitigation and enhancement to be secured through the planning process, e.g. via a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan. In the medium to long-term, the planting and landscape mitigation proposals associated with all of the consented and proposed developments will provide some beneficial landscape impact, thus moderating any medium to long-term landscape character effects. The landscape planting for the approved Blythe Solar Farm and the proposed extension would be undertaken at the same time and would be well established 8 to 10 years after construction. At the immediate site level however, the cumulative landscape and visual effects are not likely to change significantly due to the limited intervisibility between the Proposed Development Site and the Upper Leigh Solar Farm.
13. TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS				
13.1 Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	No		N/A	

2 CONCLUSIONS

- 2.1 This EIA screening assessment has considered whether the Proposed Development is likely to give rise to significant effects on the environment. It has concluded that the proposal is not likely to introduce significant environmental effects and, where environmental impacts have been identified, it would be possible to avoid or mitigate these impacts through tried and tested methods, the details of which would be secured through the planning permission process.
- 2.2 Significant effects on the environment are not considered likely either alone or in combination with other existing or/and approved development. The Proposed Development is therefore not considered to be EIA development, as defined by the EIA Regulations.

Upper Leigh Solar Farm (SMD/2023/0059)

- 2.3 There is a live planning application Upper Leigh Solar Farm (SMD/2023/0059) which is expected to be determined in December 2023. Should this application be approved there is the potential for a cumulation of impacts from the Proposed Development with the above existing and approved schemes. Despite the fact the EIA Regulations do not require EIA Screening to consider cumulative effects with other developments unless they are existing or approved, in this case we have considered the cumulative effects.
- 2.4 The addition of Upper Leigh alongside the existing solar, consented Blythe Farm Solar, Proposed Development and Totmonslow would likely increase the cumulative landscape and visual effects upon the wider landscape to the south / south-west. As discussed within the LVIA, these effects will be mitigated by planting across all of the sites in the medium to long term. The planting and landscape mitigation proposals associated with all of the consented and proposed developments will provide some beneficial landscape impact, thus moderating the medium to long-term landscape character effects.