South Brooks Solar Farm

Preliminary Environmental Information
Volume 2: Appendix 1.3: Arboriculture

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Blue Planet Solar Limited

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1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This appendix sets out the indicative arboricultural survey findings for the Project, and is intended to be supplementary technical information to Volume 2 of the Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI).

1.2 Arboriculture

What is 'Arboriculture'

1.2.1 Arboriculture is the professional practice concerned with the care, management, and protection of trees in the built and natural environment. In the context of planning, arboriculture focuses on understanding how existing trees contribute to the local character, amenity and ecology of a site.

1.2.2 The arboricultural information has been prepared to inform the design of the proposed South Brooks Solar Farm. It provides details of the quality of trees and other significant vegetation, as well as their contribution and constraints they may pose to the site in terms of the Project.

Figure 1-1: Arboricultural sequence of works

Key Terms

Table 1-1: Key Terms

Term	Definition
Ancient Tree	A tree that has reached a stage of exceptional age relative to others of the same species and shows distinctive characteristics associated with very old trees.
BS5837	British Standards Institute (2012) BS5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction-Recommendations. British Standards Publications Ltd.
Tree Categorisation (A, B, C, U)	A grading system based on quality and value
Category A	High-quality trees (estimated life > 40 years). 'A' category trees would be considered as a material constraint, and every effort should be made to incorporate them within the design layout
Category B	Moderate-quality trees (estimated life > 20 years). Where possible, amendments to the Project should be considered in preference to tree removal for category 'B' trees.
Category C	Low-quality trees (estimated life > 10 years or young trees). 'C 'category trees should not be considered as a material constraint to a proposed scheme of works. However, C category trees should be retained where appropriate to provide screening and visual amenity
Category U	'U' category trees are defined as those that are unsuitable for retention. They are in such poor condition that they cannot realistically be retained as living trees in the context of the current land use for longer than 10 years. However, U category trees may have wider ecological benefits in the habitat that they can provide and should be retained where appropriate to retain these features.
Crown Spread	The maximum extent of the branches in four cardinal points (North, South, East, West)
Life Expectancy	The estimated period for which a tree is likely to continue making a useful contribution to the landscape, assuming reasonable management and no significant changes to site conditions
Root Protection Area (RPA)	A crucial layout tool defined as the minimum area around a tree (usually a circle with a radius 12 times the stem diameter, capped at 15 m) that must be protected from construction to maintain the tree's viability.

Term	Definition
	Where trees have been classified as Ancient/Veteran the protection increases with the calculation at 15 x diameter, or 5 m beyond the crown spread, whichever is greater.
Stem Diameter	Measured at 1.5 m above ground level (or calculated for multi-stemmed trees) for trees with stems greater than 75 mm to determine the size of the RPA.
Tree Constraints Plan	A Tree Constraints Plan (TCP) is a drawing prepared in accordance with BS 5837:2012 that illustrates the principal arboricultural constraints present on a site to inform the early stages of design. It typically shows the location of existing trees, their canopy spreads, and their Root Protection Areas (RPAs), together with any other relevant constraints such as woodland buffers or notable trees.
Veteran Tree	A tree which, because of its age, size or condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value.
Ancient Tree	A tree that has reached a stage of exceptional age relative to others of the same species and shows distinctive characteristics associated with very old trees.

Ongoing Arboriculture Work

1.2.3 All inspected trees and tree groups were categorised using the British Standard that was current at the time of survey (BS5837:2012) and a schedule of the trees is included. The schedule includes species, physiological and structural condition, age, and retention values.

1.2.4 A total of 1201 features were surveyed in October 2025 and they have been broken down into the BS:5837 categories, distribution and age class illustrated within Figures 1-1 to 1-4 below.

1.2.5 Tree Preservation Order (TPO) checks have been undertaken across the entire site via the interactive mapping service supplied by Folkstone and Hythe District Council within their website - https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/.

1.2.6 The only TPOs relate to off-site trees that abut the land at South Brooks D.

1.2.7 Further checks via the interactive mapping service supplied by Folkstone and Hythe District Council have confirmed that the site does not sit within a Conservation Area (CA), a Special Protection Area (SPA) or a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). There are however areas that fall within Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which are not proposed to include any above-ground infrastructure.

1.2.8 Checks on the DEFRA interactive mapping service supplied through their website[1] has confirmed that there are no designated areas of Ancient Woodland within the site. This includes Ancient and Semi

[1] https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.html

Natural woodland/Ancient Replanted woodland/Ancient Wood Pasture/ Infilled Ancient Wood Pasture.

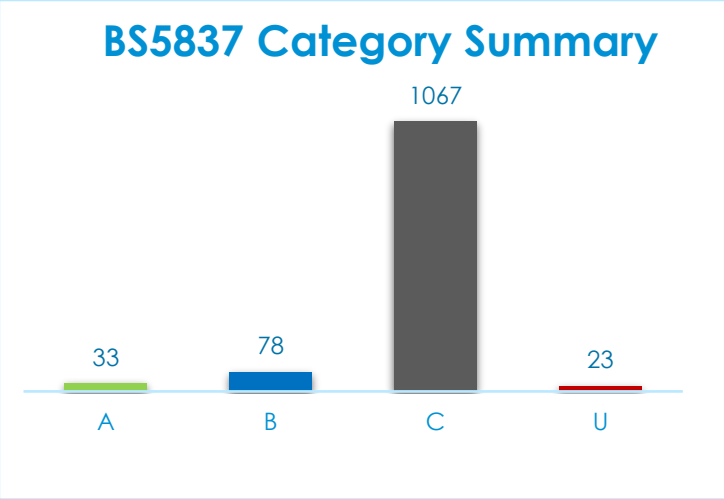

Figure 1-2: BS5837 Category Summary

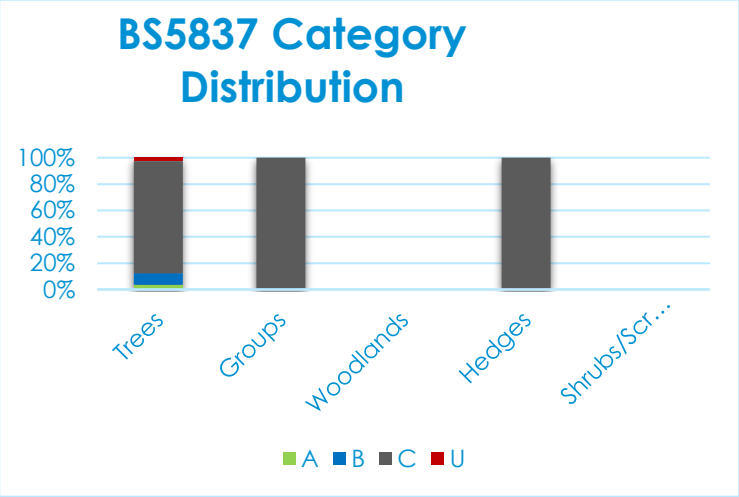

Figure 1-3: Category Distribution

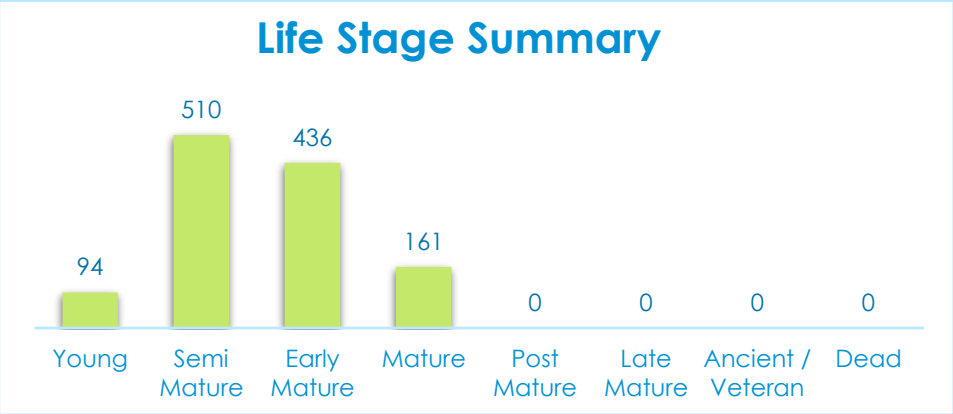

Figure 1-4: Life Stage Summary

Considering Arboriculture in Design

1.2.9 The tree constraints survey has identified a large population of field edge trees and hedges of mostly moderate and low-quality value located around the site boundary. Care should be taken during the design process to ensure that the permanent design carefully considers the RPAs with regards to temporary access for the construction and access for ongoing maintenance of the site not adversely impacting the trees on site. Consideration would be needed where larger trees are sited near to the proposed solar panels with regards to future shading and ongoing pressures to reduce the tree crowns to minimise these impacts. Appropriate buffers to the boundary vegetation would be an ideal solution to the pressures outlined above and should be considered within the overall design process. Where buffers are proposed to protect tree RPAs, they should not be used to facilitate temporary vehicular access without appropriate ground protection.

Potential likely significant effects at this stage of the Project

1.2.10 The sources of changes to arboricultural features associated with the Project have the potential to result in significant effects, including the following:

- construction;
- operation and maintenance of the Project; and
- decommissioning of the Project.

1.2.11 The design of the Project will evolve throughout the environmental impact assessment process to avoid, minimise and mitigate (in this order) environmental effects and respond to consultation and engagement feedback, where appropriate. The Applicant would seek to minimise tree losses and impacts but the constraints posed by these natural features, along with the technical feasibility that need to be considered for the implementation of the Project, such as highways access, visibility splays, traffic management, and cable corridor connections, is such that some tree removals would be required.

1.2.12 Potential effects within the site would be minor tree loss to facilitate the proposed works. The significance of this would depend on the value of the trees required for removal which would be understood at detailed design stage. As the majority of the survey area is currently used for agriculture there are already existing routes through boundary vegetation that have been utilised by farm machinery. Engaging with the tree constraints data and these existing access points would help to minimise the effects of the project.

Next Steps and Preparation of the Environmental Statement

1.2.13 Early arboricultural advice would be sought so that the design layout can successfully integrate the more prominent trees and trees with greater long-term potential. The tree data collected to date would be shared with all relevant environmental and engineering disciplines involved to ensure the design responds appropriately to the identified constraints prior to the submission of the DCO application. A key aim should be to avoid works within the RPAs of retained trees, including avoiding the need for any elements which would require excavation or raising of levels such as new surfaces, access routes, boundary fencing, lighting, CCTV towers and visibility splays, associated infrastructure or any other underground services.

1.2.14 Once the design layout is finalised, the arboricultural team would work with the wider project team to prepare an Arboricultural Impact Assessment to review the proposals as part of the DCO application. This would help identify any tree-related constraints early and, where possible, agree and set out further mitigation measures with the relevant disciplines, reducing the risk of avoidable delays to the planning application. Details of all aspects of the Project be supplied so that every impact can be assessed. This includes plans and construction details showing details, positions and types of structures, final levels, drainage and cable runs, proposed surfaces and CCTV sightlines and positions.

1.2.15 Further arboricultural surveys would be carried out within the underground grid connection corridor, once this is refined further at the Environmental Statement (ES) stage.

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