


# South Brooks Solar Farm

## Preliminary Environmental Information

### Volume 2: Outline Landscape Environmental Management Plan

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Blue Planet Solar Limited



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this Document

1.1.1 This Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan ('oLEMP') has been prepared to support Phase Two Consultation for South Brooks Solar Farm (hereafter referred to as 'the Project') on behalf of Blue Planet Solar Limited.

1.1.2 The Project has been designed, where practicable, to avoid or reduce effects on landscape character, heritage assets and biodiversity through the incorporation of appropriate planting, species-specific mitigation, and habitat creation and enhancement measures. The Project also seeks to deliver new and enhanced, well-connected habitats that contribute to local nature conservation priorities at the landscape scale.

## 1.2 Aims & Objectives

1.2.1 The overall aim of this oLEMP is to establish a framework for the delivery, management and long-term stewardship of landscape and ecological mitigation and enhancement measures associated with the Project.

1.2.2 In order to achieve this aim, the objectives of the oLEMP are to:

- Integrate the Project within its landscape context, and minimise adverse effects on landscape character, biodiversity, heritage assets and visual receptors as far as practicable;
- Conserve and enhance the physical, natural and historic environment within the Project and surrounding area, embedding the Project boundary as a coherent component of the wider landscape;
- Improve functional connectivity corridors between the designated and protected sites of the Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity and safeguard these areas, with regard to the Kent & Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy<sup>1</sup>; and
- Provide a clear framework for delivering mitigation measures identified in the Preliminary Environmental Information ('PEI'), including biodiversity and green infrastructure enhancements, habitat creation and management, policy compliance, and measures to address potential glint and glare effects.

## 1.3 Structure of the Document

1.3.1 The structure of the oLEMP is as follows:

- Introduction;
- The Project;
- Landscape Strategy;
- Management Prescriptions; and

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<sup>1</sup> Kent County Council (2025). *Kent & Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy*, available at: <https://www.naturerecoverykent.org.uk/>

- Pre and post construction monitoring.

1.3.2 The terminology used in this document is defined in the Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations within the PEI Volume 2.

## 1.4 Supporting Documents

1.4.1 A detailed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan ('LEMP') would be prepared should the Project be granted development consent to build upon the principles set out in this oLEMP. The LEMP would indicate the broad approach to planting and habitat provision associated with the Project.

1.4.2 The approach to landscape and ecological management would also have regard to biodiversity net gain objectives, informed by available survey information and the ongoing development of the Project design.

## 2 National Legislation, Policy, and Guidance

### 2.1 Supporting Guidance

2.1.1 Legislation, planning policy and supporting guidance relevant to the landscape and ecological enhancement and mitigation measures detailed within this oLEMP have been reviewed and embedded within the practices set out. The list of documents will be reviewed as part of the preparation of the ES.

#### Legislation

2.1.2 Relevant documents reviewed are as follows:

- The Environment Act 2021<sup>2</sup>;
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 <sup>3</sup>(as amended);
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 <sup>4</sup>(as amended);
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 <sup>5</sup>(as amended);
- The European Landscape Convention (2022)<sup>6</sup>;
- The Planning Act 2008<sup>7</sup>;
- Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025<sup>8</sup>;
- Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990<sup>9</sup>;
- The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012<sup>10</sup>;
- Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981<sup>11</sup> (as amended);
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997<sup>12</sup>; and

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<sup>2</sup> The Environment Act 2021, available at: [Environment Act 2021](#)

<sup>3</sup> Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, available at: [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#)

<sup>4</sup> Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, available at: [Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#)

<sup>5</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents>

<sup>6</sup> Europe Landscape Convention 2022, available at: [Council of Europe Landscape Convention - EUROPARC Federation](#)

<sup>7</sup> Planning Act 2008, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents>

<sup>8</sup> Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, available at [Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

<sup>9</sup> Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/contents>

<sup>10</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/605/contents>

<sup>11</sup> Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, available at: [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#)

<sup>12</sup> The Hedgerow Regulations 1997, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1997/1160/contents/made>

- Protection of Badgers Act 1992<sup>13</sup> (as amended).

### National Planning Policy

- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (2025)<sup>14</sup> with particular regard to Part 5 (Generic Impacts), including landscape, visual and biodiversity considerations;
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (2025)<sup>15</sup> with particular regard to Section 2.10 (Solar Photovoltaic Generation);
- National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (2025)<sup>16</sup> with particular regard to Section 2 (Assessment and Technology-Specific Information) and associated mitigation principles;
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (updated February 2025)<sup>17</sup>; and
- Draft revised National Planning Policy Framework (published December 2025)<sup>18</sup>.

### Local Planning Policy

- Folkestone and Hythe District Council Places and Policies Local Plan (Adopted September 2020<sup>19</sup>);
- Folkestone and Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review (Adopted March 2022)<sup>20</sup> ;
- Rother District Council Core Strategy (Adopted September 2024)<sup>21</sup> ;
- Rother District Council Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (Adopted December 2019)<sup>22</sup> ; and

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<sup>13</sup> Protection of Badgers Act 1992, available at: [Protection of Badgers Act 1992](#)

<sup>14</sup> Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2025), Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1), available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overarching-national-policy-statement-for-energy-en-1-2025>

<sup>15</sup> Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2025), National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3), available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-for-renewable-energy-infrastructure-en-3-2025>

<sup>16</sup> Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2025), National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5), available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-for-electricity-networks-infrastructure-en-5-2025>

<sup>17</sup> National planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (updated February 2025), available at: [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

<sup>18</sup> Draft National Planning Policy Framework, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

<sup>19</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council (2020), Places and Policies Local Plan, available at: <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/3598/places-and-policies-local-pla>

<sup>20</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review (Adopted March 2022), available at: [Folkestone & Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review 2022](#)

<sup>21</sup> Rother District Council (2014) Rother Local Plan Core Strategy, available at: <https://rdcpbublic.blob.core.windows.net/website-uploads/2022/09/Core-Strategy-2014.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Rother District Council (2019) Development and Site Allocations Local Plan, available at: [https://rdcpbublic.blob.core.windows.net/website-uploads/2020/01/DaSA\\_Adopted\\_December\\_2019\\_Web.pdf](https://rdcpbublic.blob.core.windows.net/website-uploads/2020/01/DaSA_Adopted_December_2019_Web.pdf)

- Rother District Council Local Plan 2020 – 2040 Draft (Regulation 18) Version (April 2024)<sup>23</sup>.

### National Guidance

- Planning Practice Guidance: The Natural Environment (2024)<sup>24</sup> ;
- Planning Practice Guidance: Light Pollution (2019)<sup>25</sup> ;
- Planning Practice Guidance: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (2023)<sup>26</sup> ;
- Planning Practice Guidance – Biodiversity Net Gain; and
- Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2018, updated 2022) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland, CIEEM version 1.2, Winchester<sup>27</sup>.

### Local Guidance

- Guidance Note 01/21: The Reduction of Obtrusive Light<sup>28</sup>;
- Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045 (2020)<sup>29</sup>;
- Draft Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (2025)<sup>30</sup>;
- East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Habitat Measures) V6.3 (Draft)<sup>31</sup>; and
- Sussex Biodiversity Partnership – Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.<sup>32</sup>

2.1.3 Further information on legislation and planning policy in relation to the Project is available within the legislation and policy appendix as part of Volume 2 of the PEI.

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<sup>23</sup> Rother District Council (2024) Rother Local Plan 2020 – 2040 Draft (Regulation 18) Version, available at: [https://rdcpb.blob.core.windows.net/website-uploads/2024/04/New-Local-Plan\\_Reg-18\\_version\\_Final.pdf](https://rdcpb.blob.core.windows.net/website-uploads/2024/04/New-Local-Plan_Reg-18_version_Final.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2016, updated 2025), Planning Practice Guidance: Natural Environment, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2014), Planning Practice Guidance: Light Pollution, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution>

<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2023), Planning Practice Guidance: Renewable and low carbon energy, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy>

<sup>27</sup> Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment, available at: [Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment \(EcIA\) | CIEEM](https://www.cieem.org.uk/guidelines-for-ecological-impact-assessment/)

<sup>28</sup> The Institution of Lighting Professionals (2021), Guidance Note 01/21: The Reduction of Obtrusive Light, available at: <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-1-for-the-reduction-of-obtrusive-light-2021/>

<sup>29</sup> Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy, available at: [Kent-Biodiversity-Strategy-2020.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/media/1234567/Kent-Biodiversity-Strategy-2020.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Draft Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy, available at: [Local Nature Recovery Strategy documents | Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy](https://www.kent.gov.uk/media/1234567/Local-Nature-Recovery-Strategy-documents-Kent-and-Medway-Local-Nature-Recovery-Strategy)

<sup>31</sup> East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Habitat Measures) V6.3 (Draft), available at: [Local Nature Recovery Strategy | East Sussex County Council](https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/1234567/Local-Nature-Recovery-Strategy-East-Sussex-County-Council)

<sup>32</sup> Sussex Biodiversity Partnership – Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, available at: [Sussex BOA Statement](https://www.sussexboa.org.uk/sussex-biodiversity-partnership-biodiversity-opportunity-areas/)

## 2.2 Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance

- 2.2.1 The Overarching NPS (EN-1) (2025) states that development proposals should provide opportunities to build in beneficial biodiversity or geological features as part of good design, and that such opportunities in and around developments should be maximised where appropriate.
- 2.2.2 The NPPF (2025) states that planning decisions should enhance the natural and local environment by providing net gains in biodiversity.
- 2.2.3 The Project would seek to deliver a minimum of 10% BNG, with the potential for higher levels of BNG to be achieved across habitat and hedgerow units as the design develops.
- 2.2.4 From 2 November 2026, BNG will become a mandatory requirement for NSIPs, with applications required to demonstrate a measurable minimum of 10% BNG using the statutory biodiversity metric and secured through the DCO process.
- 2.2.5 The Project has been developed having regard to this emerging framework, with biodiversity enhancements identified through the application of the mitigation hierarchy and a combination of on-site and, where necessary, off-site measures.

## 3 The Project

### 3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 The Project comprises the construction, operation and decommissioning of a large-scale solar photovoltaic ('PV') energy generation development, together with associated infrastructure required to export electricity to the National Grid.
- 3.1.2 The information presented at this stage reflects the current phase of design development and is intended to support Phase Two Consultation. The Project design remains subject to refinement as further technical work, environmental assessment and regard to consultation feedback are progressed.
- 3.1.3 Further information on the Project description is provided within the PEI.

### 3.2 Components of the Project

- 3.2.1 At this stage, the principal components of the Project comprise:
- Ground-mounted solar PV arrays, comprising PV panels mounted on metal support structures, arranged in rows across the Site;
  - Associated balance of system infrastructure, including inverters, transformers and switchgear required to convert and manage electricity generated by the PV panels;
  - Battery Energy Storage System ('BESS') infrastructure, comprising containerised battery units and associated electrical and safety equipment, the location and configuration of which remain subject to further assessment;
  - On-site substation infrastructure to collect and step-up electricity generated across the Site prior to export to the National Grid, together with associated control buildings, plant, access and laydown areas;
  - Satellite and collector compounds distributed across the Site to support electrical connection and operational requirements;
  - Underground electrical cabling to connect PV panels, BESS infrastructure and substations, and to export electricity from the Site to the National Grid point of connection;
  - Ancillary infrastructure, including internal access tracks, drainage and surface water management features, fencing, security infrastructure and temporary construction compounds; and
  - Landscape, ecological mitigation and enhancement measures, including habitat creation, management and reinforcement of existing landscape and ecological features.
- 3.2.2 The precise layout, scale and configuration of these components would continue to be refined through ongoing design development, informed by environmental assessment, technical studies and consultation feedback.
- 3.2.3 The Project would allow export of up to 500 megawatts ('MW') of electricity to the Dungeness Substation ('PoC'), which distributes the electricity to the National Grid. The generating capacity of the Project would be informed by the final layout and configuration of the PV panels as the design develops.

- 3.2.4 At this stage, the parameters remain subject to further design development, environmental assessment and consultation feedback.
- 3.2.5 Further information on the Project is provided within the PEI. Final details of the Project design and its evolution would be presented within the Environmental Statement and the associated application documents to be submitted with the DCO application.

### 3.3 Existing Landscape Features

- 3.3.1 The Project is located within the low-lying coastal plain of Romney Marsh. Its character is defined by a flat, open landform, producing long horizons and expansive skies.
- 3.3.2 Land use is primarily intensively managed agricultural fields, with areas of grazing marsh persisting in wetter zones, particularly toward Walland Marsh.
- 3.3.3 Field margins are present throughout, varying in width, with the widest margins occurring within the South Brooks A area (refer to Illustrative Masterplan, PEI). Fields margins are typically bounded by reed fringed drainage ditches with occasional clipped hedgerows.
- 3.3.4 A network of watercourses, comprising ditches, drains and larger channels crosses the Site provides a strong structural feature within the landscape.
- 3.3.5 Several temporary and permanent ponds are located within or adjacent to the Site boundary.
- 3.3.6 Tree cover is sparse, largely limited to pollarded willows, small shelterbelts and groups associated with settlements and farmsteads. A small woodland copse is present near Scotney Court Farm, originating from planted treelines along a watercourse that have matured through self-set broadleaved standards.
- 3.3.7 Scattered scrub, including bramble, willow and hawthorn scrub, occurs intermittently along ditch lines and field edges. Hedgerows are limited, largely species-poor and defunct, with hawthorn the dominant component.
- 3.3.8 Existing utility infrastructure, including pylons and overhead power lines, are present across the Project.
- 3.3.9 A network of Public Rights of Way provides recreational access and connections between settlements and the coastline.

### Habitats

- 3.3.10 The Site supports a range of habitats, although it is dominated by arable fields, with a mix of cereal crops and grass cultivars that make up most of the area. Field margins, though distinct, vary throughout the Site boundary with wide margins in the South Brooks A area, and narrower margins elsewhere. Margins are dominated by modified grassland with a proportion made up of other neutral grassland.
- 3.3.11 There are few hedgerows within the Site boundary, with the majority being defunct examples of species poor hedgerows, in poor condition. The dominant species within the hedgerows is hawthorn.
- 3.3.12 A network of watercourses cross the Site boundary including ditches, drains, and flood defences. Many of these watercourses are noted for their aquatic vegetation (macrophyte assemblages) and provide suitable habitat for water vole, with confirmed presence within the Site boundary. The watercourse network is widely connected throughout the Site including to designated areas nearby.

- 3.3.13 There is a small, isolated woodland copse within the Site boundary that abuts the farmstead at Scotney Court Farm. The woodland's origin appears to be as planted treelines along a watercourse which have grown out and produced additional self-set standards. The woodland comprises a mix of broadleaved species and is considered of limited importance to conservation.
- 3.3.14 Small, scattered parcels of scrub are located within field margins or as bankside vegetation adjacent to ditch networks, with mixed scrub, bramble scrub, willow scrub, and hawthorn scrub present.
- 3.3.15 Several ponds, both temporary and permanent, have been identified within and adjacent to the Site boundary. Should potential impacts on these waterbodies (or species potentially within them) be present due to the Project, further assessment may be required – the scope of which is discussed separately in the species section below.
- 3.3.16 Within the Site there is a single parcel of Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh ('CFPGM') identified on the Priority Habitat Inventory and does not match the UK Biodiversity Action Plan ('UK BAP') Priority Habitat Description for Coastal Floodplain Grazing Marsh as a review of time-lapse aerial imagery suggests the area has been used for crop production for more than 20 years.
- 3.3.17 The small woodland copses and scattered scrub provide limited additional habitat diversity.
- 3.3.18 There are no ancient woodlands or veteran trees within the Site.
- 3.3.19 Cable route options have the potential to intersect coastal vegetated shingle and other coastal habitats depending on the final method of installation.

## Species

- 3.3.20 The Site and its immediate surroundings support a range of protected and notable species associated with agricultural land, drainage ditches, field boundaries, and limited areas of scrub and trees.
- 3.3.21 Water vole are present within several ditches located within and adjacent to the Site boundary, with evidence indicating resident populations. No otter are present within the Site.
- 3.3.22 Badger are present throughout the Site and surrounding land, with foraging activity, latrines, and multiple setts recorded both within and adjacent to the Site boundary. The scale of the Site and distribution of records indicate the presence of multiple badger social groups.
- 3.3.23 The Site supports a low-density breeding bird assemblage typical of open farmland. Breeding species include skylark within arable fields, along with notable species such as tree sparrow, Cetti's warbler, yellow wagtail, and yellowhammer. Hobby and marsh harrier are present within or adjacent to the Site, with barn owl and peregrine recorded foraging in the surrounding area. Barn owl are considered likely to breed at one location within the Site.
- 3.3.24 During the non-breeding season, the Site boundary is used by relatively low numbers of waterbirds and waders, including golden plover, lapwing, mute swan, wigeon, and other waterbird species. Larger assemblages occur outside the Site boundary.
- 3.3.25 The Site includes areas of high-quality habitat for invertebrates, particularly bumblebees, with the scarce garden bumblebee recorded. These habitats contribute to the ecological value of the Site.
- 3.3.26 Bat activity within the Site is low and largely associated with linear features. Species present include common and soprano pipistrelle, with bats also known to forage in nearby residential areas.
- 3.3.27 Great crested newt may be present within the wider landscape.

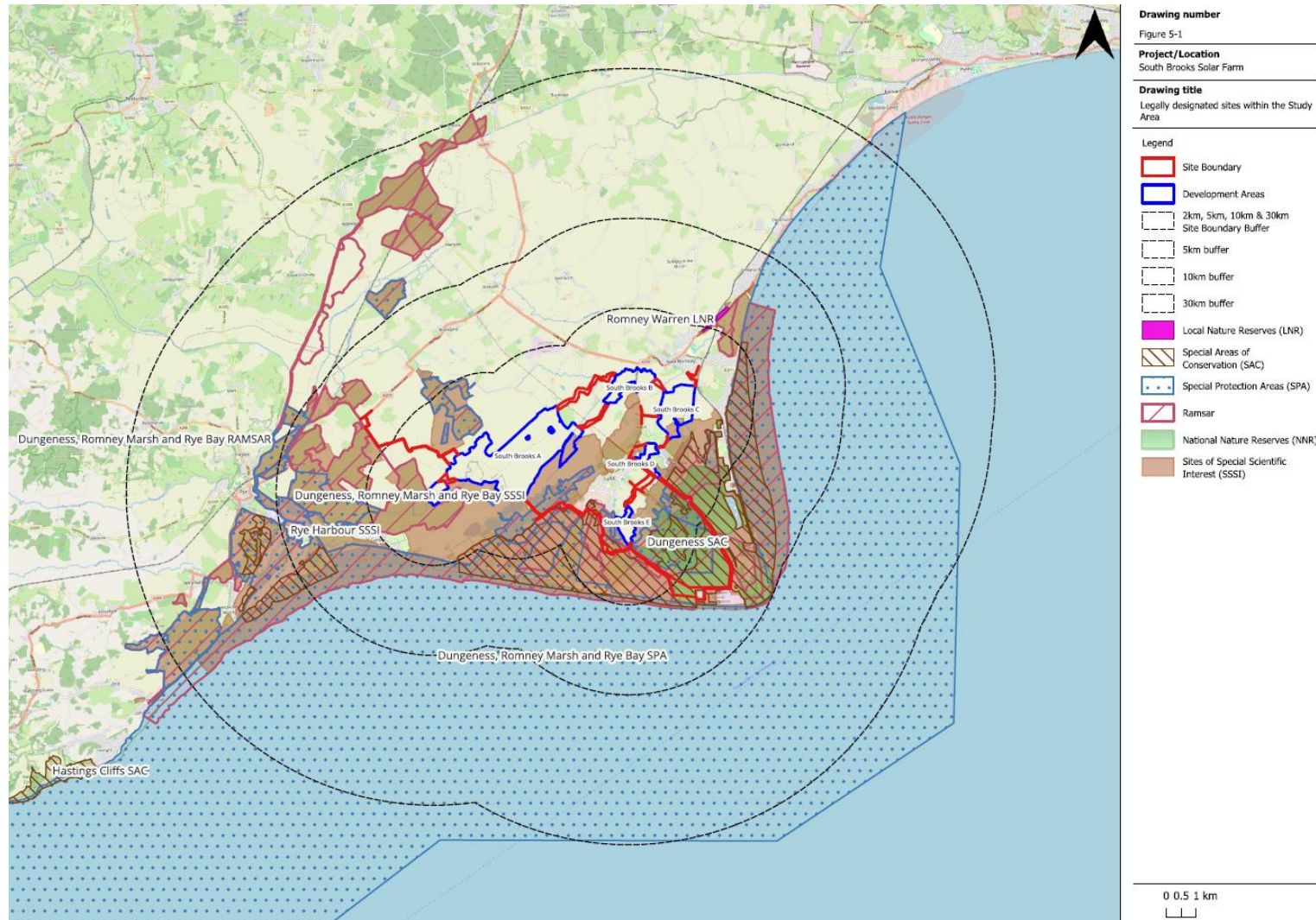
### 3.4 Statutory Landscape Designations

- 3.4.1 The Project is not covered by any statutory landscape designations (i.e. National Parks or National Landscapes).
- 3.4.2 The Project is however located within the Romney Marsh Local Landscape Area ('LLA'), as designated by Folkestone & Hythe District Council. LLAs are identified within the Places and Policies Local Plan and are defined as 'areas which are of particular local landscape value and/or function as green buffers within or adjoining urban areas, contributing to local environmental quality and identity'.

### 3.5 Ecological Designations

- 3.5.1 There are three internationally designated sites within 10km of the Site boundary including the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Special Protection Area ('SPA') and Ramsar site, and the Dungeness Special Area of Conservation ('SAC').
- 3.5.2 The Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA and Ramsar site is designated for its internationally important wetland habitats and bird populations.
- 3.5.3 The Dungeness SAC is designated for the presence of habitats and species of international nature conservation importance.
- 3.5.4 There are three nationally designated sites of importance to biodiversity within 5km of the Site boundary including two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and one National Nature Reserve ('NNR'): Rye Harbour SSSI; Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI; and Dungeness NNR.
- 3.5.5 The Site currently overlaps with ~51ha of Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI. The Applicant has committed to ensuring that no above ground infrastructure is developed within this area, which is retained within the Site boundary for underground cabling or access requirements, or potential ecological enhancement land.

**Figure 3-1: Ecological Designations Plan**



- 3.5.6 The routing of the interconnecting cables between each of the areas proposed for solar, as well as the grid connection corridors between the Project and Dungeness Substation have not yet been finalised. Depending on the routing chosen, these have the potential to overlap with the above designations.
- 3.5.7 The proposed substation is not located within any ecological designation; however, it is situated within a wider landscape context that includes the abovementioned internationally designated nature conservation sites. While this represents a sensitive context, the substation forms a necessary component of the Project.
- 3.5.8 Further information on Designated sites can be found within the PEI.

### **3.6 Non-Statutory Designations**

- 3.6.1 There are three Local Wildlife Sites ('LWS') within 2km of the Site, all of these LWSs are outside of the Site boundary.
- 3.6.2 There is one Roadside Nature Reserve ('RNR') - FH07 Tourney Road. This RNR has been designated because it has a mosaic of uncommon shingle plants and others typical of sandy soils.

## 4 Landscape Strategy

- 4.1.1 Good design has been a key consideration from the outset of design development. In accordance with the NPS and NPPF, good design is understood as a key aspect of sustainable development, requiring the scheme to respond positively to its landscape context through careful siting, layout and landscape-led design.
- 4.1.2 The iterative design process has been shaped by on-going environmental surveys and the project design principles specifically developed to address the unique opportunities and constraints of the Project. The landscape strategy has been developed in response to policy requirements, published landscape character assessment guidance, and fieldwork analysis.
- 4.1.3 In developing the landscape design strategy, special attention was given to:
- Recommendations within relevant landscape guidelines, such as Natural England's Statements of Environmental Opportunity ('SEO') outlined in the profile for NCA 123 Romney Marshes<sup>33</sup>;
  - Guidance from the Landscape Institute's Infrastructure Technical Guidance Note 04/2020 ('TGN')<sup>34</sup>; and
  - Observations gained through fieldwork undertaken in winter and summer conditions.
- 4.1.4 In addition to providing mitigation, the proposed planting has been developed to maximise beneficial impacts, including opportunities for delivering biodiversity net gain.
- 4.1.5 New planting is proposed to provide visual screening and therefore provide mitigation for adverse visual impacts. The new planting has been designed to respond to the microclimate of the Site and provide environmental enhancement associated with other environmental topics. Examples include new hedgerows to complement existing species established across the Site, new individual trees, and areas of new grassland and meadow.
- 4.1.6 Accordingly, the design aims to:
- Integrate the Project into the existing landscape pattern by utilising and aligning with existing features, including vegetation where feasible;
  - Replace habitats temporarily affected during construction and enhance habitats within the solar PV areas through the creation and enhancement of hedgerows, scrub, grasslands and riparian habitats; and
  - To filter and screen more prominent components of the Project in views from sensitive receptors.
- 4.1.7 Prior to the commencement of the construction phase, the Applicant would submit to the relevant planning authority for approval of the terms of reference for a Community Liaison Group (CLG) whose aim is to facilitate liaison between representatives of people living in the vicinity of the Site and other relevant organisations in relation to the construction of the Project.
- 4.1.8 The Applicant would consult with the CLG in the preparation of detailed LEMP(s). The detailed LEMP(s) would include the location and content of any interpretation boards and waymarking signage,

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<sup>33</sup> Natural England (2013), *National Character Area Profile: 123 Romney Marshes (NE499)*, available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5701066775592960>

<sup>34</sup> Guidance from the Landscape Institute's Infrastructure Technical Guidance Note 04/2020, available at: [LI-Infrastructure-TGN-FINAL-200924.pdf](https://www.landscapelinstitute.org.uk/infrastructure-tgn-final-200924.pdf)

specification of the hedgerow and planting alongside permissive paths and PRoW, and how this would be managed. It would also explain how feedback from the CLG has been considered.

4.1.9 Following consultation with the CLG, the detailed LEMP(s) would include the specification of the hedgerow and tree belt planting along permissive paths and PRoW and how it would be managed, including explaining how the feedback from CLG has been considered. The detailed LEMP(s) would be submitted to the relevant planning authority for approval as would be required by the DCO.

4.1.10 Details of the landscape measures that are embedded into the Project's design are presented within the PEI.

## 4.2 Overview of Landscape Design Principles

4.2.1 This section provides a description of the landscape design principles that have informed the design of the Project.

## 4.3 Careful Siting in the Landscape

4.3.1 Careful consideration of the existing visual amenity of receptors has informed the offsets from residential properties in proximity to the Project, as well as PRoWs and key heritage features. The form and extent of these offsets have been refined through the design process, taking into account feedback from the community in regard to the existing character of views.

4.3.2 The design of the Project has been carefully developed through an iterative design process to minimise, or avoid, adverse effects on views experienced by residents.

4.3.3 As avoidance measure, appropriate setbacks have been incorporated into the design of the Project, around Designated Heritage Assets (Scheduled Monuments), PRoW, ecological and archaeological areas, and selected villages.

4.3.4 Substantial setbacks and removal of developable land is proposed at:

- Land adjacent to public rights of way and roads to maintain sense of openness which is considered characteristic of the local landscape and an important part of people's visual amenity.
- Land that includes physical constraints such as proximity to ditches.
- Land within the mid-ground of residential views. This builds on the 100m offset from any residential property embedded in the Phase One Consultation masterplan.
- Land within areas of heightened archaeological sensitivity.
- Land close to Lydd Airport in line with the airport's technical requirements.
- Land east of Lydd, reducing visual impact on setting and character of the town.
- Land within areas of greatest ecological sensitivity.

## 4.4 Conserving Existing Vegetation Patterns

4.4.1 The Project has been designed to minimise or avoid the loss of existing landscape features where possible, and to avoid significant impacts on those existing features.

- 4.4.2 The existing hedgerows, woodland copses, ditches, ponds and field margins would be retained within the Project, with the exception of small breaks and/or crossings required for new access tracks, security fencing, cable routes and new access junctions. Any hedgerow or ditch crossings would be designed to use existing agricultural gateways/tracks or gaps in field boundaries (where practicable). The width of any new crossings would be kept to a minimum. Where a cable crosses a hedgerow and the hedgerow is removed, these would be reinstated post-construction.
- 4.4.3 To create the points of access, vegetation would need to be removed to either widen an existing field access or create a new point of access. The vegetation on either side of the point of access would need to be removed or managed to create visibility splays. Where vegetation removal/pruning is required for access and/or visibility splays, the works would be limited to the required amount to achieve the appropriate access/visibility. Pruning of vegetation would be carried out over removal wherever possible.
- 4.4.4 Proposed planting responds to the existing character of the Site and looks to perpetuate the current conditions found there, allowing key views to stay open and key habitats to remain in place. Indicative species lists are provided within this oLEMP.
- 4.4.5 Where access points necessitate the removal of vegetation for visibility splays it is proposed that such vegetation is coppiced, rather than removed.
- 4.4.6 As set out within PEI Volume 2: Environmental Summary, there are no Tree Preservation Orders ('TPO') which apply to trees within the Site boundary.

## 4.5 Creating New Green Infrastructure

- 4.5.1 New Green Infrastructure ('GI') elements would be delivered as part of the Project, alongside the enhancement of existing and new habitat corridors. These measures, which would be subject to further refinement accounting for feedback from consultees and further environmental surveys, are intended to improve ecological connectivity for wildlife, respond to the existing character of the landscape, and deliver visual mitigation.
- 4.5.2 Extensive areas of species-rich grassland would be established beneath the PV panels and across the wider Project. This would support biodiversity by creating new habitats for a range of species, including pollinators and ground-nesting birds, while also contributing to the improvement of soil structure and condition following long-term agricultural use.
- 4.5.3 New areas of mixed scrub, including willow scrub and heathland scrub, would be created adjacent to existing associated habitats to extend habitat diversity, strengthen ecological networks, and provide transitional habitats.
- 4.5.4 Areas of tussock grassland would be established adjacent to Lydd Airport runway to reduce the risk of bird movement across active flight paths.
- 4.5.5 The proposed mitigation strategy recognises the open character of the Site, where hedgerows are limited, intermittent and can be challenging to establish. As such, mitigation focuses on selective reinforcement and targeted gapping-up of existing hedgerows where appropriate. These measures would improve habitat connectivity and respond sensitively to the open landscape character.
- 4.5.6 The existing PRowS that cross the Site would be retained and incorporated within multifunctional green corridors. The exact construction phasing and methodology are not currently known; therefore, there may need to be temporary diversions during the construction phase to ensure safety for path users.

4.5.7 The existing byway along Kingsmarsh Lane would be retained and incorporated with multifunctional green corridors, ensuring continued connectivity and access while contributing to the wider landscape and ecological strategy.

## 4.6 Ecology Strategy

4.6.1 The Project provides opportunities for delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (measured using the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs ('DEFRA') Statutory Biodiversity Metric 35 or relevant update) at a scale in keeping with the Lawton Principles 36 (i.e. more, bigger, better and joined up) that would be explored further and confirmed in the ES.

4.6.2 The scale of the Project provides the opportunity, during the operational phases of the Project, to link currently fragmented habitats and manage them to promote biodiversity. This creates the potential to strengthen ecological connectivity at both the Site and wider landscape scale, including connections to habitats of value beyond the Site. At a local scale, work is underway (with stakeholder engagement) to identify local conservation priorities and projects that should be considered for biodiversity enhancement.

4.6.3 Although the variety of habitats that would be created within the solar PV areas would be limited, the opportunities that they could provide for invertebrates, breeding birds, herptiles and bats could be large enough to support notable changes in the size of local populations.

4.6.4 Within the Site boundary there would be three broad opportunities, these being:

- Habitat enhancement and creation outside of areas of development (i.e. non-developable land (and watercourses), land set aside for biodiversity and other green infrastructure);
- Habitat enhancement and creation within areas of development; and
- Species-specific opportunities aimed at improving local provision in-line with conservation strategies.

4.6.5 The Site's proximity to the important habitats associated with the designated areas means that the Site provides an opportunity to seek to create or enhance habitats that are of greater biodiversity value than are currently present within the Site boundary.

4.6.6 Typical measures include:

- Transition of arable land to provide functionally linked land to the nearby designations;
- Creation of scrapes and pools for important invertebrate assemblages and great crested newts;
- Improved management of watercourses within the Site boundary;

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<sup>35</sup> Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) (2025). *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric – User Guide (July 2025)*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/689c5ee17b2e384441636196/The\\_Statutory\\_Biodiversity\\_Metric\\_-\\_User\\_Guide\\_-\\_July\\_2025.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/689c5ee17b2e384441636196/The_Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_-_User_Guide_-_July_2025.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Lawton, J.H. et al. (2010). *Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network*. Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). The review sets out the principles of creating ecological networks that are *"more, bigger, better and joined."* Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-space-for-nature-a-review-of-englands-wildlife-sites-and-ecological-network> [\[gov.uk\]](https://www.gov.uk)

- Creation of new hedgerows;
- Planting of new stands of scrub; and
- Salt-tolerant species of local provenance to reduce failure within the establishment period.

4.6.7 Mitigation land has been incorporated across the Project. Parcel E has become the focus of mitigation and enhancement, subject to refinement as the design is progressed. In line with the Project specific design principle to “Support the natural environment and enhance biodiversity, enriching ecosystems where possible”, Parcel E is proposed to be planted to provide habitat and resource for bird species that may otherwise be found across land proposed for development (such as parcels within Parcel A). Parcel E is well suited to this function, being located adjacent to Ramsar and SSSI, as well as the RSPB reserve.

4.6.8 There are further opportunities within the Site boundary to create a range of habitats dependent on location. Around tracksides and in the stand-off between infrastructure and field boundaries, wild bird cover and pollinator mixes sown in strips akin to current agri-environment schemes can be established.

4.6.9 These would provide opportunities for a range of species including invertebrates, birds and bats through the provision of greater food resources. In other locations, species rich grassland can be created. The grassland can have a variety of different characteristics dependent on location and soil type (e.g. meadow style grasslands adjacent to PV arrays, with more shade and drought tolerant communities around the panels) and management types (e.g. different grazing and cutting regimes). The aim of the design would be to ensure a sufficient range of different grassland types to ensure a variety of opportunities are available to local flora and fauna.

4.6.10 There is also the opportunity to create species or species group specific features to aid local conservation efforts. This could include the creation and management of invertebrate foraging habitats aimed at providing an increased food supply to rare and scarce invertebrates within the Site boundary.

## 5 Management Prescriptions

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section sets out the management principles and indicative prescriptions for the protection, creation and ongoing management of habitats within the Site during the operational phase of the Project. The prescriptions reflect the outline nature of this management plan and establish the framework for habitat management to be taken forward post-consent.

5.1.2 Further detail will be developed as the design progresses, including the refinement of species and seed mixes of local provenance, detailed management prescriptions and timescales, and site-specific mitigation and enhancement measures.

5.1.3 The habitats to be protected, created and/or managed are:

- Existing retained trees and shrubs (including existing hedgerows with trees, woodland, and mature trees);
- Drainage ditches (including riparian zones);
- Hedgerow (with trees);
- Individual trees (including scattered trees);
- Mixed, willow and heathland scrub;
- Wet tussocky grassland;
- Temporary ponds / scrapes; and
- Species-rich grassland.

5.1.4 Accesses to the Project that are established or modified during the construction phase may comprise a combination of temporary and permanent arrangements, depending on operational requirements. Where required for ongoing operation and maintenance, certain accesses may be retained into the operational phase. Other construction accesses may be removed, reinstated or reduced following completion of construction works, with land restored as appropriate. Vegetation management required to facilitate operational visibility splays would be undertaken where permanent or retained accesses remain, for the duration of the operational phase.

5.1.5 All implementation and monitoring works would be supervised by the Ecological Clerk of Works ('ECoW').

### 5.2 Native Planting – General Principles

5.2.1 The following steps and working methods would be included as part of the establishment of all native planting:

- Areas identified for planting would be clearly marked out and agreed with the Landscape Clerk of Works ('LCoW') in advance.
- Planting would take place in the first available planting season and at a time of year appropriate to the species being planted.
- Plants would be inspected by the LCoW at the nursery and on delivery to site prior to planting.

- Plants would generally be planted in staggered arrangements with planting densities and grouping adjusted as appropriate to species, location and local conditions. Hedgerow trees would be incorporated at appropriate intervals to reinforce structure and connectivity within the hedgerow network.
- Plants would be protected from strimming activities and damage from animals with individual biodegradable spiral guards, supported by a bamboo cane for hedgerow plants or double staked 300x60cm weld mesh guard for specimen trees. The type of guard selected appropriate to species and growth habit.
- Trees would be staked to protect against wind-rock.

5.2.2 The design of habitats within the LEMP would be informed by further habitat survey and soil testing that would take place prior to the commencement of construction. The soil testing would measure parameters including pH and nutrient status that would allow approaches to habitat creation (for example species mixes) to be appropriately tailored. It would also identify locations where actions would be taken to manage high nutrient levels from previous farming activities, for example through the use of sacrificial crops (i.e. crops grown without nutrient inputs to lower soil nutrient levels).

### 5.3 Existing Habitats

5.3.1 Existing habitats to be retained, as much as practicable, include:

- Individual trees and shrubs (including hedgerows trees);
- Hedgerows;
- Scrub (mixed, willow and heathland);
- Grassland;
- Drainage ditches (including riparian zones); and
- Shingle.

### 5.4 Existing individual trees and shrubs (including hedgerow trees)

5.4.1 The primary function of the retained trees and shrubs would be to maintain established habitats, visual amenity and the character of the landscape and provide a structure for the addition of the new planting and other features of the Project.

5.4.2 Existing trees and shrubs would be managed to provide longevity, increase species diversity, enhance habitat value and improve resilience to climate change. This would include the gapping up of existing hedgerows, where appropriate, to boost species and age diversity, providing better connectivity and increasing the number of climate and disease resilient species.

5.4.3 During construction the retained vegetation would be protected. Measures to be employed would include the use of clearly defined stand-offs, manage the structure and integrity of the retained vegetation, and undertake any pruning outside of the bird breeding season and in accordance with hedgerow regulations.

5.4.4 Retained trees would be periodically inspected by an arboriculturist during construction. Where construction works are adjacent to retained trees, works would be undertaken under a watching brief to record root loss and to recommend further arboriculture works where required. A grassland buffer

would be maintained around retained individual trees. Management of the grassland buffer is detailed under species-rich grassland below.

- 5.4.5 Root protection areas for individual trees would be accounted for during construction and habitat creation to ensure tree retention and to avoid damage, in accordance with BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.
- 5.4.6 Removal of existing trees would only occur where access is required. These crossings would, wherever possible, be located at current field access locations or in areas where there are existing gaps in the hedgerow and no trees.
- 5.4.7 Where tree removal is required, works shall be conducted in accordance with BS 3998:2010 Tree Work.

## 5.5 Existing hedgerows

- 5.5.1 Existing hedgerows would be managed to enhance biodiversity and improve ecosystem services, whilst also increasing screening for visual receptors. This would involve filling gaps and thickening hedgerows with a broader range of native species, where needed, and planting additional native hedgerow trees with locally appropriate species. Hedgerow creation would include a range of native species typical of the region, such as hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, privet and gorse, with supplementary planting ('gapping up') of species-poor and defunct hedgerows.
- 5.5.2 All retained hedgerows would be managed to achieve a minimum width and height of 3m x 3m. Where overshadowing of PV panels is not of concern the target height of hedgerows would be 4m. The planting of hedgerow gaps and positive management to increase hedgerow size would commence in the planting season (i.e. winter). Where temporary access is required during construction, hedgerows would be planted on completion of the works to reinstate and enhance their former structure.
- 5.5.3 When gapping up, additional species diversity would be introduced; this would include the provision of hedgerow trees where appropriate (i.e. where over-shading issues can be avoided). The hedgerows would be managed in a rolling programme to ensure that no hedgerow is cut more than once in each three-year period, to maximise flower and fruit production. More detail on the implementation, management and maintenance of hedgerow enhancements is described below in 'native hedgerows with trees and hedgerow enhancement'.
- 5.5.4 No tracks (other than field entrances), PV panels or other electrical infrastructure (other than cable crossings) would be located within 5m of the centre line of a hedgerow. Within this buffer zone a variety of habitats would be established including species-rich grassland, flower-rich margins, winter bird food margins, cultivated areas for arable plants and autumn sown bumble bird mix.
- 5.5.5 Where hedgerows are present within visibility splays at access and egress points from the local highway network, vegetation management would be used to maintain safety during the period of construction. These hedgerows would be reduced in height to 0.9m to allow suitable visibility, whilst avoiding hedgerow removal. During the operational period these hedgerows would be allowed to re-grow.

## 5.6 Existing scrub (mixed, willow, heathland)

- 5.6.1 Areas of scrub occur within parts of the Site, forming a mosaic of semi-natural habitats that contribute to structural diversity and ecological value. These areas are characterised by a varied assemblage of woody scrub species interspersed with heathland vegetation and patches of willow, typically associated with damper ground conditions.

- 5.6.2 Together, they provide a gradation between open habitats and wetter features, supporting a range of invertebrates, birds and small mammals, as well as offering shelter, foraging and nesting opportunities. The retention and sensitive management of these habitats would maintain their heterogeneous structure and species composition, ensuring their continued contribution to biodiversity, landscape character and habitat connectivity within the wider Site.

## 5.7 Existing species-rich grassland

- 5.7.1 Existing areas of species-rich grassland would be managed to enhance biodiversity and improve ecosystem services, retaining valuable habitats. This would be supplemented with large areas of species-rich grassland beneath PV panels and in habitat management areas, providing additional habitat and better connectivity across the Site.

## 5.8 Existing ditches (holding permanent water)

- 5.8.1 Ditches across the Project would be retained and maintained with new crossings minimised to maintain habitat connectivity. No development (other than at crossing points) would take place within 10m of the bank top.
- 5.8.2 Riparian zones are defined as 5 m from bank top along ditches, and up to 10 m from bank top along main rivers. Ditches would be managed to provide habitat for fish and other aquatic and semi-aquatic fauna, with new or upgraded crossings designed to maintain connectivity. Riparian zones would be managed for biodiversity and would be supplemented with a species rich seed mix, such as that shown in
- 5.8.3 Table 5 through to Table 5-.
- 5.8.4 The exact location and proportion of seed types would be tailored to conditions on Site.

## 5.9 Existing shingle

- 5.9.1 Areas of protected shingle that are intersected by the underground cable route, would be retained and safeguarded wherever practicable. Works within these areas would be minimised in extent and duration, with construction confined to the defined cable corridor and no additional land take beyond that required for installation.
- 5.9.2 Where the cable route passes through protected shingle habitat, installation would be undertaken using appropriate methods to reduce disturbance, maintain natural substrate profiles and avoid indirect impacts on adjacent undisturbed shingle. Excavated shingle would be carefully stored separately and reinstated in the correct stratigraphic order to maintain the physical and ecological characteristics of the habitat. No ancillary works, storage, or vehicle tracking would be permitted outside the agreed working width.
- 5.9.3 Following installation, shingle areas would be reinstated to pre-construction levels and contours, with natural regeneration promoted in preference to seeding unless otherwise agreed. Any reseeded, if required, would use a locally appropriate shingle species mix. Post-construction monitoring would be undertaken to ensure successful restoration, with remedial measures implemented where necessary to secure the long-term integrity and conservation value of the protected shingle habitat.

## 5.10 Proposed habitats

- 5.10.1 Habitats proposed across the Project comprise:

- Native hedgerow with trees (including existing hedgerow enhancement);
- Mixed scrub;
- Species-rich grassland in hedgerow and field margins, riparian zones, wildflower meadows and tussock mixes beneath PV panels; and
- Agricultural field margins.

5.10.2 Planting would be undertaken at appropriate times of year, having regard to species requirements, site conditions and construction phasing. The timing and sequencing of works would be confirmed through the detailed design and construction programme.

5.10.3 All existing and proposed habitats would be managed and maintained for the operational duration of the Project. In the unlikely event of external factors causing significant losses to the mitigation planting during the lifetime of the Project, such that the purpose of screening the development is no longer achieved as a result of gaps in the planting, replacement planting would be undertaken to infill gaps that may arise. This approach would ensure commitments are fulfilled in respect of providing screening of the scheme and enhancing biodiversity.

## 5.11 Native hedgerow with trees (including existing hedgerow enhancement)

### Function

5.11.1 New hardy, wind tolerant, native hedgerows with trees would be planted across the Site to supplement the existing hedgerow network, filter views of the Project and provide valuable habitats for a range of species, allowing for better connectivity across the Project.

5.11.2 It is acknowledged that parts of the Site are highly open and exposed to prevailing winds, and evidence indicates that hedgerows in these locations can establish slowly and may struggle to achieve significant height or density without enhanced protection. As such, increased planting densities are proposed to improve early structure, and hedgerows would be carefully positioned in relation to existing landscape features, landform and shelter to maximise establishment success.

5.11.3 Gorse is proposed to reflect its localised occurrence on drier banks and slightly raised ground within the Romney Marshes, while maintaining an overall thorn-dominated hedgerow structure characteristic of the open marsh landscape.

5.11.4 The height at which these hedgerows would be maintained would be between 3-4 m (hedgerow trees to grow taller) in order to adequately screen the PV panels and associated infrastructure. Where screening is not required, proposed hedgerows would be maintained at 3m or lower with a balance struck between biodiversity and desire to maintain open views of the countryside.

5.11.5 In more exposed locations where achieving this height may not be feasible due to wind exposure and soil conditions, a more naturalistic, lower and structurally varied hedgerow form may be adopted. In such circumstances, supplementary landscape measures (e.g. scrub belts or earthform integration) may be considered where additional screening is required.

5.11.6 Species would be selected to reflect local landscape character and to improve resilience to exposure, including the incorporation of wind-tolerant native species. Selection would also consider climate change projections and potential pest and pathogen threats to ensure long-term viability.

5.11.7 Where appropriate, existing hedgerows across the Site would be selectively 'gapped up', supported by reduced cutting and supplemental planting, to help reduce environmental effects. These

measures would increase species diversity, and improve habitat continuity, without introducing uncharacteristic enclosure.

### Implementation

- 5.11.8 Hedge trenches would be dug to dimensions of 450 mm wide by 450 mm deep, with the base loosened before returning the backfill mixture. All stock would be supplied as bare root if in season (unless otherwise stated) and container-grown if planted out of season. A detailed specification for hedgerows would be developed based on the indicative species, sizes, and percentages outlined in Table 5-1.
- 5.11.9 Individual trees would be planted in pits measuring 900 mm in diameter and 900 mm in depth. The base of the tree pit would be broken up to a depth of 200 mm, and the pit would be backfilled with topsoil, consolidated in layers to ensure the tree is positioned at the correct depth. Each tree would be planted to the nursery line and secured with stakes, ties, and an irrigation pipe. A specification for hedgerow trees would be developed, detailing the indicative species, sizes, and percentages, as presented in Table 5-1.
- 5.11.10 Tree planting and hedgerow planting would take place over the winters of the construction programme, between November to March, in soil that is not frozen or waterlogged. New planting shall be protected using adequate strimmer and pest guards and would vary depending on the size of the plant. The purpose of this is to:
- Gap up and plant standards in one third of the defunct hedgerows each winter
  - Plant new hedgerows (including standards) each winter
  - Existing hedgerows may be brought into positive management for biodiversity, subject to construction phasing and operational requirements.

**Table 5-1: Indicative mix for hedgerows**

Botanical Name	Common Name	Height	Root	Form	% Mix
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	40-60cm	BR	Transplant	20
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly	40-60cm	Container	Transplant	5
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	Wild privet	40-60cm	BR	Transplant	10
<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Crab Apple	40-60cm	BR	Transplant	5
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	40-60cm	BR	Transplant	20
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog Rose	40-60cm	BR	Transplant	15
<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Guelder Rose	40-60cm	BR	Transplant	10
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Dogwood	40-60cm	BR	Transplant	5
<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Gorse	40-60 cm	BR	Transplant	10

- 5.11.11 Folkestone & Hythe District Council and Rother District Council, together with Kent Wildlife Trust and Sussex Wildlife Trust would be consulted in preparation of the detailed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan to input to the species list proposed to respond to current priorities at the time of implementation.

### Establishment Maintenance

- 5.11.12 A detailed plan for the establishment and maintenance of the new hedgerows with trees would be submitted as part of the detailed LEMP. This would cover a period of five years from the start of the operation stage of the Project.
- 5.11.13 The aim of establishment maintenance would be to support the early stages of growth to encourage thick, bushy growth and good form. This is based on the following principles and outline prescriptions:
- Temporary wind protection measures during establishment (e.g. shelters or nurse planting);
  - Consideration of scrub belts or woodland edge planting in the most exposed locations where traditional hedgerow form is unlikely to thrive;
  - Maintain a 0.5 metre weed free strip either side of hedgerow through chemical and mechanical control;
  - First cut in spring to 45–60 cm above ground level taking care to exclude hedgerow trees;
  - Irrigation may be required during periods of drought or extended dry weather;
  - Remove litter, rubbish, and debris from planted areas throughout the year;
  - Re-firm soil around roots to ensure plants are supported and upright in spring each year;
  - Inspect and adjust stakes, guards, and ties in spring and autumn and after periods of particularly inclement weather;
  - Check and record failed or defective plants in September annually;
  - Replace failed or defective plants with matching species of the same size during the next planting season after failure; and
  - ECoW to undertake a quarterly check of plants to record their growth and condition.

### Long-Term Management

- 5.11.14 The long-term management of new hedgerows with trees would focus on the following interventions:
- Hedgerows required for screening purposes would be managed and maintained at a height of 3 m – 4 m, whilst individual tree species planted within hedgerows would be allowed to establish and left to reach maturity;
  - Cutting of hedgerows would take place outside of the bird nesting season and at the end of the winter in February. This would allow berries to stay in place for the maximum period of time throughout the winter;
  - Any branches/growth that overhangs or obstructs PRowS or access tracks would be cut back to keep routes clear to use;
  - Dead, dying or over-mature hedgerow trees would be removed if considered a hazard on health and safety grounds and in accordance with any protected species constraints; and

- Monitoring of new hedgerows would be undertaken periodically in order to check any significant changes in health and viability of the hedgerow. Maintenance and condition checks would take place every three years.

## 5.12 Native tree belts

### Function

- 5.12.1 Proposed native tree belts would be established to provide screening in sensitive areas. Proposed native tree belts would be planted to provide visual and physical screening to more sensitive receptors on the edge of the Project. These would also provide better connectivity and habitat for local wildlife.
- 5.12.2 Trees would be managed to achieve their maximum mature height, to better provide biodiversity enhancements and screening, where necessary. Species would be chosen to build in resilience and would consider the requirements of the local area, taking into account climate change and potential pest and pathogen threats.
- 5.12.3 Native species would form the majority of the tree stock, while specially selected non-natives may be used to build in resilience in the face of climate change.

### Implementation

- 5.12.4 Larger specimens within the mix indicated below would be planted approximately 2.5m apart to allow the canopy to close sooner. Specific species would be determined through future detailed design work to ensure mixes are reflective of local character, whilst also building in climate resilience.
- 5.12.5 New tree belts would be planted in well-prepared ground, with protection such as biodegradable spiral rabbit guards or shrub shelters to avoid harm by local wildlife. Where larger specimens have been specified, suitable anchoring would be necessary with tree stakes and ties to avoid root rock and/or displacement of trees. Once shelters and ties are deemed too small, they are to be removed and disposed of off-site.
- 5.12.6 Tree planting would be irregular to create both open and more closed areas between trees and would incorporate a range of native species typical of the region and a variety of nursery stock sizes to provide difference in age structure.
- 5.12.7 Scrub species would be planted between trees to establish an understory. A shade tolerant seed mix would also be used to encourage a diverse ground flora to develop. Supplemental planting of tree and scrub species would occur annually in the first five years to replace failed individuals and would continue to create a diversity in age class.
- 5.12.8 Larger specimens within the mix are indicated in table 5-2.

**Table 5-2: Indicative mix for proposed tree belts**

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Root</b>	<b>Form</b>	<b>% Mix</b>
<b><i>Corylus avellana</i></b>	Hazel	40–60 cm	BR	Transplant	15
<b><i>Crataegus monogyna</i></b>	Hawthorn	40–60 cm	BR	Transplant	20

<b><i>Prunus spinosa</i></b>	Blackthorn	40–60 cm	BR	Transplant	15
<b><i>Ulex europaeus</i></b>	Gorse	40–60 cm	BR	Transplant	10
<b><i>Salix caprea</i></b>	Goat Willow	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	15
<b><i>Alnus glutinosa</i></b>	Alder	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	10
<b><i>Fraxinus excelsior</i></b>	Ash	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	5
<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	English Oak	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	10

5.12.10 Table 5-2 would be planted in pits measuring 900 mm in diameter and 900 mm in depth. The base of the tree pit would be broken up to a depth of 200 mm, and the pit would be backfilled with topsoil, consolidated in layers to ensure the tree is positioned at the correct depth. Each tree would be secured with stakes and ties. A specification for proposed tree belts would be developed, detailing the indicative species, sizes, and percentages outlined in Table 5-3.

**Table 5-3: Indicative mix for species, sizes, and percentages**

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Root</b>	<b>Form</b>	<b>% Mix</b>
<b><i>Corylus avellana</i></b>	Hazel	40–60 cm	BR	Transplant	15
<b><i>Crataegus monogyna</i></b>	Hawthorn	40–60 cm	BR	Transplant	20
<b><i>Prunus spinosa</i></b>	Blackthorn	40–60 cm	BR	Transplant	15
<b><i>Ulex europaeus</i></b>	Gorse	40–60 cm	BR	Transplant	10
<b><i>Salix caprea</i></b>	Goat Willow	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	15
<b><i>Alnus glutinosa</i></b>	Alder	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	10
<b><i>Fraxinus excelsior</i></b>	Ash	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	5
<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	English Oak	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	10

### Establishment Maintenance

5.12.11 The aim of establishment maintenance would be to support the early stages of growth to encourage thick, bushy growth and good form. This is based on the following principles and outline prescriptions:

- Maintain a 0.5 metre weed free strip around the base of the tree through mechanical control;
- Irrigation may be required during periods of drought or extended dry weather;
- Remove litter, rubbish, and debris from planted areas throughout the year;
- Re-firm soil around roots to ensure plants are supported and upright in spring each year;
- Inspect and adjust stakes, guards, and ties in spring and autumn and after periods of particularly inclement weather;

- Check and record failed or defective plants in September annually;
- Replace failed or defective plants with matching species of the same size during the next planting season after failure; and
- ECoW to undertake a quarterly check of plants to record their growth and condition.

### Long-Term Management

5.12.12 The long-term management of proposed native tree belts would focus on the following interventions:

- Native tree belts would be left to reach maturity, with careful thinning to avoid any one species becoming dominant;
- Any necessary pruning/thinning would take place outside of the bird nesting season and at the end of the winter in February. This would allow any fruit to stay in place for the maximum period of time throughout the winter;
- Any branches/growth that overhangs or obstructs PRowS or access tracks would be cut back to keep routes clear to use;
- Dead, dying or over-mature trees would be removed if considered a hazard on health and safety grounds and in accordance with any protected species constraints; and
- Monitoring of new tree belts would be undertaken periodically in order to check any significant changes in health and viability of the hedgerow. Maintenance and condition checks would take place every three years.

## 5.13 Individual trees

### Function

- 5.13.1 Individual trees would be planted individually and linearly, creating tree lines along field boundary edges around the proposed PV panels, within existing and proposed new hedgerow and in larger areas of grassland to supplement existing retained trees and provide further screening and ecological benefits. Planted both singularly and in groups, they would provide structure in larger, wide spanning landscapes, whilst breaking up long distance views. Trees of a variety of nursery stock sizes would be planted to provide difference in age structure.
- 5.13.2 Proposed planting of individual trees would restore individual trees to the landscape and provide visual amenity and enhance biodiversity, creating important opportunities for nesting birds and creating habitats for invertebrates and small mammals. Whilst providing valuable shelter for various nesting birds and other wildlife, individual trees also link hedgerows and belts of trees, further adding to connectivity across the Site.
- 5.13.3 As well as providing additional habitat and wildlife connections, scattered individual trees would screen and filter views from the PRowS and residences.

### Implementation

- 5.13.4 Individual trees would be planted in pits measuring 900 mm in diameter and 900 mm in depth. The base of the tree pit would be broken up to a depth of 200 mm, and the pit would be backfilled with topsoil, consolidated in layers to ensure the tree is positioned at the correct depth. Each tree would be secured with stakes and ties. A specification for hedgerow trees would be developed, detailing the indicative species, sizes, and percentages outlined in Table 5-1.

- 5.13.5 Planting would take place from November to March, in soil that is not frozen or waterlogged. Consideration would be given to periods of excess flooding. New planting would be protected using adequate strimmer and pest guards and would vary depending on the size of the plant.
- 5.13.6 A specification for individual trees would be developed based on the indicative species, sizes and percentages presented in 5-4.

**Table 5-4: Indicative mix for individual trees**

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Root</b>	<b>Form</b>	<b>% Mix</b>
<b><i>Corylus avellana</i></b>	Hazel	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	10
<b><i>Crataegus monogyna</i></b>	Hawthorn	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	15
<b><i>Prunus spinosa</i></b>	Blackthorn	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	15
<b><i>Ulex europaeus</i></b>	Gorse	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	10
<b><i>Salix caprea</i></b>	Goat Willow	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	15
<b><i>Alnus glutinosa</i></b>	Alder	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	15
<b><i>Fraxinus excelsior</i></b>	Ash	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	10
<b><i>Quercus robur</i></b>	English Oak	175–200 cm	Root ball	Feather	10

### Establishment Maintenance

- 5.13.7 The aim of establishment maintenance would be to support the early stages of growth to encourage thick, bushy growth and good form. This is based on the following principles and outline prescriptions:
- Maintain a 0.5 metre weed free strip around the base of the tree through mechanical control;
  - Irrigation may be required during periods of drought or extended dry weather;
  - Remove litter, rubbish, and debris from planted areas throughout the year;
  - Re-firm soil around roots to ensure plants are supported and upright in spring each year;
  - Inspect and adjust stakes, guards, and ties in spring and autumn and after periods of particularly inclement weather;
  - Check and record failed or defective plants in September annually;
  - Replace failed or defective plants with matching species of the same size during the next planting season after failure; and
  - ECoW to undertake a quarterly check of plants to record their growth and condition.

### Long-Term Management

- 5.13.8 The long-term management of proposed individual trees would focus on the following interventions:

- Individual trees would be left to reach maturity, where trees are spaced close together, pruning/thinning may be required in order to promote growth and longevity;
- Any necessary pruning/thinning would take place outside of the bird nesting season and at the end of the winter in February. This would allow any fruit to stay in place for the maximum period of time throughout the winter;
- Any branches/growth that overhangs or obstructs PRowS or access tracks would be cut back to keep routes clear to use;
- Dead, dying or over-mature trees would be removed if considered a hazard on health and safety grounds and in accordance with any protected species constraints; and
- Monitoring of new individual trees would be undertaken periodically in order to check any significant changes in health and viability of the hedgerow. Maintenance and condition checks would take place every three years.

## 5.14 Scrub (mixed, willow, heathland)

### Function

- 5.14.1 Existing areas of mixed scrub, bramble scrub, willow scrub and heathland scrub within the Site would be retained and sensitively managed to maintain their ecological value, provide screening, and contribute to landscape character. Scrub habitats would provide foraging, nesting and shelter opportunities for a range of species, including birds, small mammals and invertebrates.
- 5.14.2 Scrub management would seek to maintain a mosaic of scrub types and age structures, avoiding uniformity and preventing succession to woodland where this would be inappropriate. Management would also ensure scrub does not encroach into operational areas of the PV panels or adversely affect retained heathland and grassland habitats.
- 5.14.3 Willow scrub would be managed to maintain its wetland edge function where associated with ditches, ponds and low-lying areas, while heathland scrub would be controlled to prevent excessive dominance of woody species and to retain areas of open heath characteristic of the local landscape.

### Implementation

- 5.14.4 Existing scrub would be surveyed prior to works to identify areas suitable for retention, enhancement or selective removal. Management prescriptions would be refined through detailed design to reflect local conditions, existing species composition and ecological constraints.
- 5.14.5 Selective thinning and rotational cutting would be used to manage scrub extent and structure, retaining a mix of dense cover and more open areas. Bramble scrub would be managed to prevent excessive spread while retaining sufficient cover for wildlife.
- 5.14.6 Where scrub removal is required for access, infrastructure or habitat management purposes, this would be undertaken on a phased basis to avoid sudden habitat loss and to retain connectivity across the Site.
- 5.14.7 Any new scrub planting required to reinforce existing areas or to provide additional screening would use native species of local provenance appropriate to soil moisture conditions, including species typical of mixed, wet and heathland edge scrub communities.

## Establishment Maintenance

5.14.8 The aim of establishment maintenance for scrub habitats would be to support healthy growth and ensure successful integration with existing vegetation. This would be based on the following principles and outline prescriptions:

- Control of invasive or undesirable species where these threaten the integrity of retained scrub habitats;
- Replacement planting where newly established scrub has failed, using appropriate native species;
- Monitoring for excessive encroachment into grassland, heathland or operational areas, with remedial cutting where required;
- Removal of litter, rubbish and debris from scrub areas as necessary; and
- ECoW to undertake periodic inspections to record scrub condition, extent and ecological value.

5.14.9 The long-term management of scrub habitats would focus on maintaining structural diversity, habitat connectivity and landscape function through the following interventions:

- Rotational cutting of scrub on a multi-year cycle to maintain a range of age classes and prevent over-maturity;
- Management works to be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season unless otherwise agreed with the ECoW;
- Selective control of willow scrub where required to prevent shading of ponds, ditches or adjacent habitats of higher conservation value;
- Retention of dense scrub blocks alongside more open, transitional areas to support a wide range of species;
- Removal of scrub only where it poses a safety risk or conflicts with operational requirements, and subject to ecological constraints; and
- Periodic monitoring to assess scrub health, extent and species composition, with management reviewed every three years as part of the oLEMP.

## 5.15 Species-rich grassland

### Function

5.15.1 Species-rich grassland would be established across the Project created within fields which currently support arable crops or species-poor grassland, under the PV panels, field margins buffer zones/habitat management areas, and within all fields within the Site that are identified for enhancement only. The type of mix would vary across the Site and would consider ground conditions and soil types to establish a diverse and successful sward of grasses and wildflowers.

5.15.2 A range of seed mixes would be used to ensure successful establishment within the conditions of a particular area.

- 5.15.3 A shade tolerant seed mix would be selected for grassland adjacent to existing and newly created hedgerows, around areas of tree planting and underneath PV panels. Grassland habitats would be managed to ensure that target conditions are achieved, through:
- Mowing (outside of the main bird breeding season), treatment of weeds and dominating species, and reseeding at regular intervals where required;
  - Cutting regimes would be phased to ensure a range of sward heights at any one time; and
  - Should it be possible, conservation grazing would be implemented to maintain the sward.
- 5.15.4 Grassland diversity would be achieved both through different species mixes and through management (e.g. traditional meadow style management and maintenance of flower rich tussocky swards).
- 5.15.5 By establishing a diverse sward of grasses and wildflowers biodiversity would increase, enhancing value for wildlife. The mixes used for the open areas, verges and field margins would provide a variety of wildflowers to both enhance biodiversity and to provide a valuable food source and habitat to local invertebrates and wildlife.

### Implementation

- 5.15.6 The exact location and proportion of seed types would be tailored to conditions on Site and to the needs of the Site's biodiversity. The buffer zones vary in their scale dependent on the location of panels/roads/residential properties.
- 5.15.7 A specification for species-rich grassland would be developed based on the indicative species, sizes and percentages presented in
- 5.15.8 Table 5 through to Table 5-.

**Table 5-5: Indicative mix for proposed marshland wildflower mix beneath PV panels**

<b>Wildflowers - Botanical Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>% Mix</b>
<b><i>Achillea millefolium</i></b>	Yarrow	1.0
<b><i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i></b>	Agrimony	0.3
<b><i>Centaurea nigra</i></b>	Common knapweed	2.0
<b><i>Centaurea scabiosa</i></b>	Greater knapweed	1.0
<b><i>Cruciata laevipes</i></b>	Crosswort	0.5
<b><i>Daucus carota</i></b>	Wild carrot	1.0
<b><i>Dipsacus fullonum</i></b>	Wild teasel	1.0
<b><i>Filipendula ulmaria</i></b>	Meadowsweet	1.5
<b><i>Galium album</i></b>	Hedge bedstraw	2.0
<b><i>Knautia arvensis</i></b>	Field scabious	1.0
<b><i>Lathyrus pratensis</i></b>	Meadow vetchling	0.8
<b><i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i></b>	Oxeye daisy	1.5

<b>Wildflowers - Botanical Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>% Mix</b>
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Birds-foot trefoil	0.8
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	1.5
<i>Poterium sanguisorba</i>	Salad burnet	1.2
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red campion	0.8
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted vetch	0.8
<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	Crested dogstail	25
<i>Festuca rubra ssp. rubra</i>	Creeping red fescue	25
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog	15
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Meadow foxtail	15
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough meadow-grass	10

**Table 5-5: Indicative mix for proposed marshland wildflower mix in field margins and hedgerows**

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>% Mix</b>
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	1.0
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Agrimony	0.5
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Common knapweed	2.0
<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>	Greater knapweed	1.0
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Wild carrot	1.0
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Wild teasel	1.5
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadowsweet	1.5
<i>Galium album</i>	Hedge bedstraw	2.0
<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	Field scabious	1.0
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Meadow vetchling	1.0
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Oxeye daisy	1.5
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Birds-foot trefoil	1.0
<i>Poterium sanguisorba</i>	Salad burnet	1.5
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	1.5
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted vetch	1.0
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Meadow foxtail	20

<b><i>Cynosurus cristatus</i></b>	Crested dogstail	20
<b><i>Festuca rubra</i></b>	Red fescue	15
<b><i>Holcus lanatus</i></b>	Yorkshire fog	10
<b><i>Dactylis glomerata</i></b>	Cocksfoot	10
<b><i>Poa trivialis</i></b>	Rough meadow-grass	7.5

**Table 5-6: Indicative mix for proposed tussocky grassland mix**

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>% Mix</b>
<b><i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i></b>	Tufted hair-grass	30
<b><i>Alopecurus pratensis</i></b>	Meadow foxtail	25
<b><i>Festuca rubra</i></b>	Red fescue	15
<b><i>Holcus lanatus</i></b>	Yorkshire fog	10
<b><i>Poa trivialis</i></b>	Rough meadow-grass	10
<b><i>Filipendula ulmaria</i></b>	Meadowsweet	4.0
<b><i>Lychnis flos-cuculi</i></b>	Ragged robin	2.0
<b><i>Lotus corniculatus</i></b>	Birds-foot trefoil	2.0
<b><i>Achillea millefolium</i></b>	Yarrow	2.0

- 5.15.9 In addition to the above indicative seed mix, green hay and/or seed collected from nearby conservation sites, such as Little Cheyne Court and/or RSPB reserves, may be used where available and appropriate. The use of locally sourced material would be confirmed at the detailed LEMP stage.
- 5.15.10 Tailored mixes would also be created for areas of newly created Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (e.g. species rich mix capable of thriving in waterlogged soils) and riparian strips alongside existing wet ditches and watercourses.

### Establishment Maintenance

- 5.15.11 The aim of establishment maintenance would be to support the early stages of growth to encourage a healthy sward and allow a diverse mix of species to establish. This is based on the following principles and outline prescriptions:
- Where practicable, seed would be obtained from a local source for the purpose of maintaining continuity with local species-rich grasslands;
  - Receiving soils should be prepared in order to reduce the nutrient levels. Techniques for reducing nutrient levels should follow best practice and take into consideration soil survey results. These measures may include sowing of crops such as forage maize or mustard without fertiliser application;
  - Once the nutrient level is reduced, all clods would be broken up and alien material (such as plastics and metals) above 50 mm in size would be removed.

- The top 50mm should be raked to allow for a fine tilth before seeding. This should be done directly before seeding which should take place preferably in the autumn to avoid sowing during dry periods. If unable to sow during autumn, then the spring sowing window should be used; and
- Seeding and rolling would be conducted in dry weather and access would be prohibited to seeding areas until seed has germinated and a sward has established (see establishment maintenance section for grasslands generally).

### Long-Term Management

- 5.15.12 Within the first 12 months after sowing, the species-rich grassland field margins, PRoW buffers and open space areas would be cut to help the sown species to establish. The cuttings would be left for a period of seven days before being removed to appropriate storage areas on site.
- 5.15.13 Once the areas are fully established, typically the second Spring after sowing, the area would need to be cut in the Spring (before April) to reduce the vigour of the grass.
- 5.15.14 Following this, areas would be cut towards the end of September, after the breeding season (typically March to August inclusive), to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds. Tussocky grassland areas would be cut less frequently once established (on a 2 to 3 year cycle).
- 5.15.15 Cutting would be done strategically to allow for areas with both taller and shorter swards to provide opportunities for a range of fauna.
- 5.15.16 Skylark monitoring would be conducted to assess the efficacy of mitigation during construction and operation. Sampling locations used during baseline work would be incorporated for direct comparisons, alongside the assessment of PV panels and grassland mitigation fields.
- 5.15.17 Grassland habitats would be managed to ensure that target conditions are achieved, through:
- Mowing (outside of the main bird breeding season), treatment of weeds and dominating species, and reseeding at regular intervals where required; and
  - Cutting regimes would be phased to ensure a range of sward heights at any one time.

## 5.16 Agricultural field margins

- 5.16.1 Agricultural field margins will be established along one boundary of each field supporting PV panels, in accordance with DEFRA prescriptions, and will be maintained and re-sown as required.

### Function

- 5.16.2 By establishing and maintaining a range of agricultural field margins food sources and cover for a range of fauna would be provided (e.g. for farmland birds, invertebrates and small mammals) and heterogeneity delivered.

### Implementation

- 5.16.3 The exact location and proportion of seed types would be tailored to conditions on site and to the needs of the site's biodiversity. Countryside Stewardship prescriptions AB8 Flower-rich margins (targeting pollinators in the summer), AB16 Autumn sown bumblebird mix and AB9 Winter bird food (provisioning for farmland bird species in long and/or cold winters) would be grown. In locations where hedgerows would be allowed to grow to 4m tall, mixes would be tailored with fumitory and chickweed that would benefit turtle dove.

- 5.16.4 The margins would be established as per guidance and maintained for the appropriate timescale (usually 1 or 2 years dependent on mix), before being removed and replaced. There is no long term management as these margins would be created, lost and replaced on a regular cycle.

## 5.17 Ditches (holding permanent water)

- 5.17.1 Ditches across the Project would be retained and maintained with new crossings minimised to keep habitat connectivity. No development (other than at crossing points) would take place within 5m of the bank top.
- 5.17.2 The condition of the watercourses varies significantly across the Site, although most show steep side slope profiles and are relatively straight. This is likely to be a result of historic agricultural practices.

### Function

- 5.17.3 Ditches would be managed to provide habitat for fish and other aquatic and semi-aquatic fauna, with new or upgraded crossings designed to maintain connectivity.
- 5.17.4 Riparian zones would be managed for biodiversity and would be supplemented with a species rich seed mix, such as that shown in
- 5.17.5 Table 5 through to Table 5-.

### Implementation

- 5.17.6 The exact location and proportion of seed types would be tailored to conditions on Site and to the needs of the Site's biodiversity. Grassland strips approximately 5m wide (measured from bank top) would be established as described above for other species-rich grasslands.
- 5.17.7 Riparian seed mixes, including dense tussocky grasses, common reed, and reed canary grass, would be used along draining ditches and banks, incorporating a 2m strip either side of the bank top.

### Long-term management

- 5.17.8 Ongoing management of drainage ditches would involve:
- The clearance of any silt build-up as required (outside of the main bird breeding season), with the aim of clearing no more than one third of each ditch in each year, and from one bank/side only.
  - Bankside vegetation would be cut every other year (in autumn), alternating from one bank to the opposite bank, maintaining vegetation cover all year round.
  - Removing obstructions to ensure normal flow is not impeded.
  - Maintaining the beds and banks of the watercourse.
  - Maintaining any structures such as culverts, bridges and outfalls.
- 5.17.9 Potential landscape partnership scheme opportunities include:
- *Blue Lanes* project promoting habitat management in watercourses and wetlands.
  - *Green Lanes* for Bumblebees project, promoting positive management of field margins to provide bumblebee habitats.

- 5.17.10 Building on existing ditch management provisions, the Blue Lanes project would enhance aquatic and marginal habitats through rotational clearance, improved water level control, creation of buffer strips and wet features, and measures to intercept sediment and nutrients. Working in partnership with landowners, Internal Drainage Boards, the Environment Agency and Natural England, the initiative would deliver integrated outcomes for biodiversity, water quality and natural flood management. Long-term delivery would be secured through stewardship agreements, coordinated management plans and ongoing ecological and hydrological monitoring to ensure the ditch network functions as a connected “blue corridor” across the landscape.
- 5.17.11 Through the establishment of species-rich pollen and nectar margins, reduced cutting regimes, tussocky grass areas for nesting, and careful control of pesticide drift, the Green Lanes scheme would enhance forage continuity and nesting opportunities for bumblebees and other pollinators. Delivered in collaboration with farming clusters, Natural England and specialist organisations such as the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, the project would support both biodiversity recovery and sustainable agricultural productivity. Long-term management agreements and regular pollinator monitoring would ensure these “green corridors” remain effective components of the wider ecological network.

## 5.18 Localised features

- 5.18.1 A range of localised measures would be delivered to increase the opportunity for a range of flora and fauna, many of which are local conservation priorities. These measures are:
- Beetle banks;
  - Habitat piles/hibernacula;
  - Gabion baskets;
  - Bat and bird boxes; and
  - Fence access (badgers and other mammals).

### Beetle Banks

- 5.18.2 Beetle banks are to be created within solar PV fields and species-rich grassland mitigation areas to improve the availability and diversity of invertebrates for skylark and other species which feed on invertebrates. They would be constructed to be 0.4m high and 1.5–2m wide (as per Countryside Stewardship prescription). They would be positioned to run along PV panels or alongside access tracks. The banks would be constructed in spring or autumn and sown with a species-rich grassland sward to create a diverse structure.
- 5.18.3 Soil type for the base of beetle banks would be based on that available in that location. However, should different soils be available on Site (through construction) such as sand / sandy loam these would be considered for use as capping material to increase species diversity.

### Habitat piles/hibernacula

- 5.18.4 Habitat piles would be created within PV panel fields and mitigation areas. They would be strategically located close to scrub, hedgerows and other habitats providing habitat for invertebrates and shelter and/or hibernating opportunities for amphibians and reptiles. They would be created from logs (ideally locally sourced from associated vegetation clearance) piled into a shallow hole up to 30cm deep and covering an area of 2 x 3-4m and up to a height of 1-1.5m above ground level. The pile would be topped with a layer of mulch and/or brush and leaves to help initiate decomposition of the logs below. A final layer of grass sods or turf would be applied to prevent the materials from dispersing in high winds. These would be created outside of the design flood extent.

### Gabion baskets

- 5.18.5 Gabion baskets/cages would be used to create habitat for invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles. They would be filled using a range of materials, including large and small rocks/pebbles, stacked logs, bamboo, bricks and ceramic pipes. This would create a range of features for fauna of various sizes and life stages. They would be provided in a variety of sizes; a minimum of 1m wide and high, and up to 20m long, located in both PV panel fields and mitigation fields. Some would be located in the centre of fields, and others along drainages ditches. Where they are positioned running east to west, they can be used to support earth works to create a shallow, south facing slope, providing basking opportunities for reptiles.

### Bat and bird boxes

- 5.18.6 Bat and bird boxes would be installed within mature trees throughout the Project to increase roosting and nesting opportunities for bats and birds. A range of sizes, designs and materials would be used to provide a range of conditions for various species. They would be installed on the south-west or south-eastern aspect of a tree trunk, at a minimum of 3m from ground level, ensuring there is a clear entry to the box with no branches or foliage which might block the entrance.

### Fence access (badgers and other mammals)

- 5.18.7 Holes in fence bottoms (300mm by 300mm) would be cut and framed every 150m to allow access to badgers and other wildlife such as brown hares, foxes and hedgehogs. In locations where existing mammal paths have been identified and areas with existing or proposed suitable habitats additional openings, would be provided. The openings would be left without a hinged gate to maximise the range of species that can use them.

## 6 Pre and post construction monitoring

- 6.1.1 Monitoring is required to determine that the functions documented within this oLEMP are being achieved and whether any remedial management action may be required. The baseline against which the monitoring can be compared against comprises the pre-construction baseline data. This baseline data would require updating prior to construction, as by operation, this data would be over six years old and out of date. Updates would include a similar set of surveys undertaken at the baseline where relevant ecological receptors have been identified, including surveys of breeding and non-breeding birds, bats, riparian mammals and badgers.
- 6.1.2 The Applicant would define the appropriate roles and responsibilities for site staff, as outlined in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan. An ECoW would be tasked with ensuring that construction-related environmental mitigation measures are properly implemented, monitored, and maintained. These measures would include, but are not limited to, vegetation clearance, species identification, and exclusion of protected or non-protected species.
- 6.1.3 The ECoW's responsibilities would encompass activities that could impact biodiversity, such as providing advice on methods to prevent or minimise light spill, as well as delivering Toolbox Talks before starting any work that might affect habitats and species.
- 6.1.4 The Contractor, appointed by the Applicant to construct the Project, would be responsible for establishing, managing, and monitoring the implementation of landscape and ecological mitigation during the five-year establishment aftercare period. The Applicant would inspect and record the success of this establishment during that time. Further details are provided in Section 4.
- 6.1.5 Any long-term biodiversity monitoring and management requirements specified in this document would be conducted by the Applicant and/or a Contractor appointed by the Applicant.
- 6.1.6 A post-construction monitoring programme would be formalised, agreed and included within the detailed LEMP. Walkover surveys of the Site would be undertaken between April and June in years 2, 4, 6 and 10, and subsequently at 5 year intervals during the operational phase, up to year 30. There is no requirement for this monitoring to continue beyond year 30. The surveys would involve inspection of the hedgerows, tree belts, grassland and riparian habitats to ensure they are being managed accordingly and are in line with the Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy.
- 6.1.7 Post-construction monitoring for flora, birds (breeding and non-breeding), water vole, badgers, reptiles and bats (bat box roosting and activity survey using static acoustic devices), would be undertaken in the respective seasons, in years 1, 3, 5, and 10 following construction. The requirement for monitoring beyond year 10 would be reviewed in light of the monitoring results and the establishment of habitats, with any further surveys agreed where necessary.
- 6.1.8 The monitoring of bat activity using static acoustic devices would be conducted at the same locations as baseline monitoring (once during construction and in years 1, 3, 5 and 10 post construction); with additional locations as agreed. Reports would be produced to be made publicly available for the development of bat mitigation strategies for future solar schemes in the UK and beyond.
- 6.1.9 Skylark monitoring would be conducted to assess the efficacy of mitigation and compensation during construction and operation. Sampling of both developed and undeveloped areas would be undertaken to record breeding densities and usage (i.e. for breeding, feeding etc.). In years 1, 2, 3, 5, 10 and 15, the results would be used to inform any adaptive management measures required through the LEMP. Reports would be produced to be made publicly available for the development of skylark mitigation strategies for future solar schemes in the UK and beyond.

- 6.1.10 Maintenance checks of wildlife feature (e.g. bat and bird boxes etc.) would be made annually to ensure that these features are still in position and secure. Some refitting of boxes, repairs and replacements are likely to be required over the lifetime of the Project.
- 6.1.11 Results from the post-construction monitoring would feed into the management plan and, if required, management would be amended accordingly based on this monitoring.
- 6.1.12 Biodiversity Net Gain would be provided for area, hedgerow and watercourse units as measured with the statutory biodiversity metric. Monitoring would be secured through a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan in-line with DEFRA requirements for significant habitat delivery.
- 6.1.13 To ensure that the creation and management of new habitats and those subject to enhancement is delivered effectively a steering group would be created. The Applicant would invite the relevant Local Planning Authority ecologists, Natural England and the Environment Agency to be members of the Steering Group. The Steering Group would undertake the following tasks:
- Review the detailed specifications of habitat creation and enhancement during the detailed design process;
  - Review the detailed monitoring protocols for habitat, flora and fauna;
  - Review the location and design of individual features for biodiversity benefit (e.g. hibernacula and bird boxes etc.);
  - Review biodiversity monitoring reports throughout the lifetime of the project and provide advice on any adaptive management measures necessary to ensure biodiversity aims are being met.
- 6.1.14 The Steering Group would also be informed by the Applicant discussing with other willing solar developers in the area, County ecologists and conservation organisations such as the Kent Wildlife Trust and Sussex Wildlife Trust opportunities for delivering biodiversity enhancements strategically, sharing lessons learnt regarding habitat establishment and management and adding to the overall knowledge base regarding the interrelationship between solar farms and biodiversity.



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