



# WESTHIDE SOLAR LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

DECEMBER 2021

LANDMARK REF: 3352

*\*This document contains panoramic photographs which should be read in 'Two page view' when viewing as a pdf*

# CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 PLANNING POLICY	2
3.0 DESIGNATIONS	3
4.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF THE WIDER AREA	4
5.0 SITE CONTEXT	5
6.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF THE SITE	7
7.0 VISUAL BASELINE	11
8.0 THE PROPOSALS	12
9.0 LANDSCAPE MITIGATION	14
10.0 LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND EFFECTS	16
11.0 VISUAL SENSITIVITY AND EFFECTS	22
12.0 SECONDARY LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL MITIGATION	50
13.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION	51

## Figures

FIGURE 1 LOCATION PLAN	1
FIGURE 2 LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS	3
FIGURE 3 EXTRACT OF PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	4
FIGURE 4 SITE CONTEXT	5
FIGURE 5 TOPOGRAPHY	6
FIGURE 6 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH	7
FIGURE 7 ZONE OF THEORETICAL VISIBILITY (ZTV)	11
FIGURE 8 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	12
FIGURE 9 LANDSCAPE MITIGATION STRATEGY	14

## Appendices

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY
APPENDIX B: PLANNING POLICY EXTRACTS
APPENDIX C: PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER EXTRACTS
APPENDIX D: MASTERPLAN
APPENDIX E: LANDSCAPE MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT PLANS
APPENDIX F: ACCURATE VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS (AVRS)
APPENDIX G: CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT

© The Landmark Practice 2021

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be produced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of The Landmark Practice. The Landmark Practice is a division of Landmark Environmental Consultants Ltd (Limited Company No 1939302).

*This document was produced under Landmark contract for Ersun (Westhide SPV) Ltd*

Version	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Issued
D1	JH	LF	AS	03/12/2021
Fv1	JH	LF	AS	15/12/2021
Fv2	JH	LF	AS	16/12/2021

*The information which we have prepared and provided is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.*

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

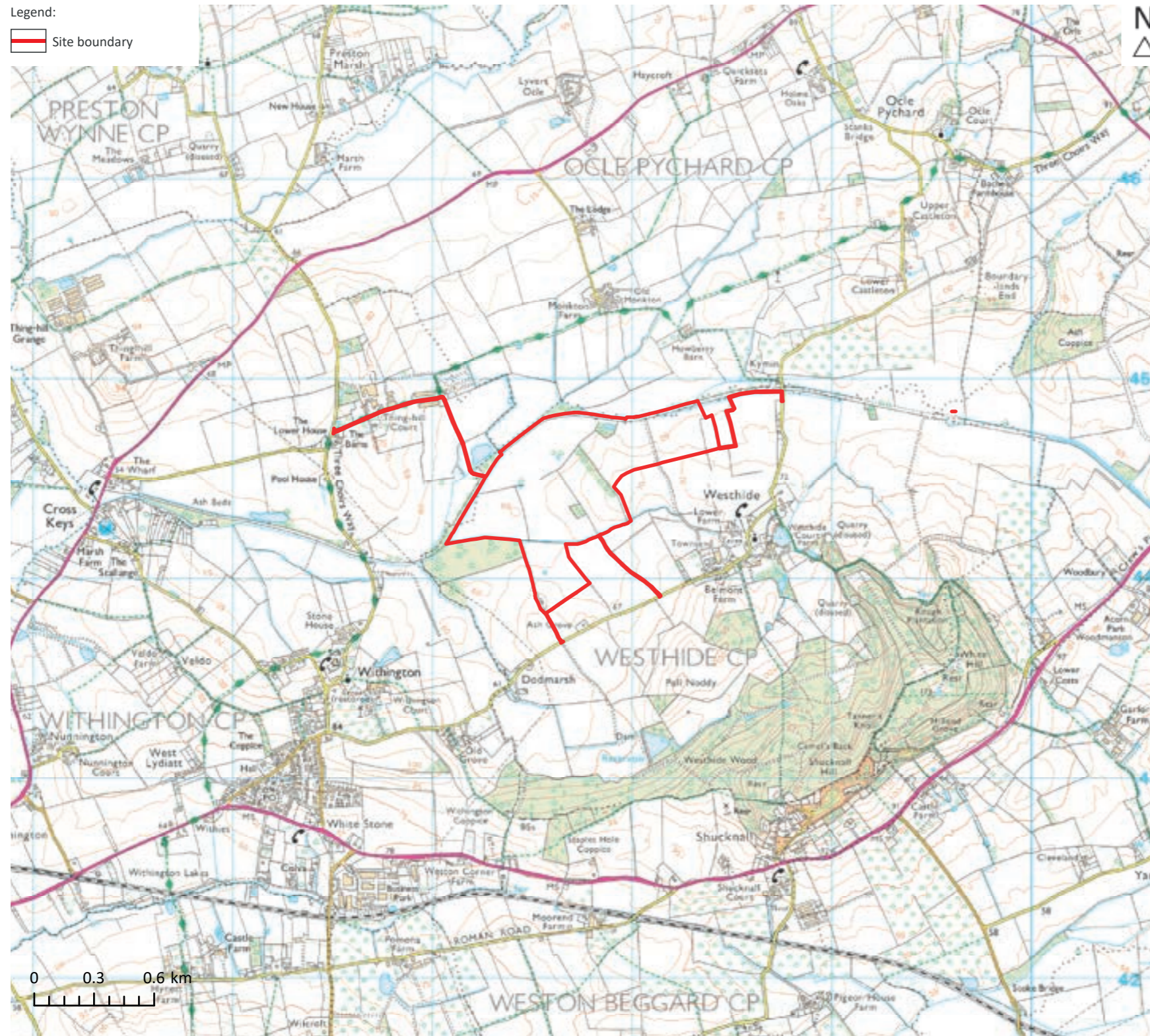


Figure 1 Location Plan

Scale 1 : 25,000 @ A3

- 1.1. The Landmark Practice (TLP) was commissioned in December 2020 by Ersun (Westhild SPV) Ltd to carry out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of land at Westhild, Herefordshire. The LVIA informs a planning application for a ground mounted solar PV array together with associated infrastructure over an area of circa 61.7 hectares, to provide approximately 34.6 MW of generation capacity.
- 1.2. This report comprises the findings of a desktop study, complemented by site survey work undertaken at the baseline in December 2020, and considers the following:
  - the landscape character of the site, and its relationship to its surroundings;
  - landscape-related planning designations;
  - views towards the site; and
  - assessment of landscape and visual effects.
- 1.3. Assumptions, informed by documentary review; consideration of the nature, type and extent of proposed development; and professional experience were made about:
  - The likely extent of views for receptors at locations which are not publicly accessible, notably private residences; and
  - Seasonal variations in visibility in terms of both internal and external views.

## Method

- 1.4. To ensure a systematic and transparent approach, consistent terms have been used throughout the assessment to define relative sensitivity, magnitude of impact and importance of effect. These criteria, developed from the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, 2013' and professional experience, are set out in Tables at **Appendix A**. These terms are always indicated in italics when used in the report text.

## Consultation

- 1.5. The scope and representative viewpoints included within this LVIA were submitted as part of pre-application discussions with Herefordshire Council in March 2021 and were approved through further consultation with the Landscape Officer in July 2021. Pre-application advice from the Planning Officer (March 2021) and Landscape Officer (April 2021) requested the inclusion of a cumulative assessment, visualisations, detailed landscape proposals and LEMP.
- 1.6. The scope and approach of both the cumulative assessment and visualisations were agreed with the Landscape Officer via email in July and September 2021, respectively. Refer to **Appendix F** for visualisations and **Appendix G** for the cumulative assessment.

## 2.0 PLANNING POLICY

### Relevant planning policy documents

- 2.1. The site is within the administrative area of Herefordshire Council.
- 2.2. A review of planning policies, supplementary planning guidance and other supporting documents relevant to landscape and visual issues has been undertaken to inform this assessment. This has involved a review of the following development plan documents:
  - Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2031 (HCS), Adopted 2015
  - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012, updated July 2021).

### Policy Context

- 2.3. The following paragraphs summarise the landscape policy context set by policy, planning guidance and supporting documents (relevant policies are listed in square brackets) with further detail and direct quotes set out at **Appendix B**.

### Local Policies

- 2.4. Local Development Plan policy requires development to respect and enhance local landscape character, and public amenity through design as follows:-
  - **Design and local distinctiveness** - Development proposals should converse and enhance environmental assets that contribute to local distinctiveness such as settlement pattern and landscape. Proposals should demonstrate that they have been positively influenced by the character of the landscape with specific regard to its scale, nature, site selection, protection and enhancement of the setting of settlements. [Policies SS6 & LD1, HCS]
  - **Historic environment** - Development proposals should protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance heritage assets and their settings in a manner appropriate to their significance. Proposals should, where appropriate, improve the understanding and public access to heritage assets. [Policies SS6 & LD4, HCS]
  - **Amenity** - Development proposals, should safeguard local amenity, including residential amenity for local residents, light pollution and tranquillity. [Policies SS6 & SD1, HCS]
  - **Green Infrastructure and natural assets** - Development proposals should protect and manage the existing green infrastructure network, including trees, hedgerows, woodlands and watercourses. New green infrastructure should be provided on site and should integrate with the surrounding network. Tree cover should be maintained through the retention of trees important for amenity and extended through new planting to support green infrastructure. [Policies SS6, LD1 & LD3, HCS]
  - **Renewable energy** - Development proposals for renewable energy should not adversely impact on residential amenity, heritage assets and landscape character. [Policy SD2, HCS]

### National Policies

- 2.5. The NPPF sets out the core planning principles in the delivery of sustainable development and key categories supporting these principles. Category 15 addresses 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'. Paragraph 174 notes that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by '*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes*' and recognise the '*intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*'. As such whilst designated landscapes, such as National Parks and AONBs, enjoy the highest level of planning protection, the impacts of development on landscapes outside designated areas can be an important consideration in the determination of planning applications.

### Supplementary Planning Guidance and Supporting Documents

- 2.6. More guidance is provided in the Herefordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (HGIS). Whilst it is not adopted for use beyond the evidence base, it does set out potential green infrastructure enhancements opportunities relevant to the site. References to the strategy have been included in the report, where appropriate, and full extracts can be found in **Appendix B**.

# 3.0 DESIGNATIONS

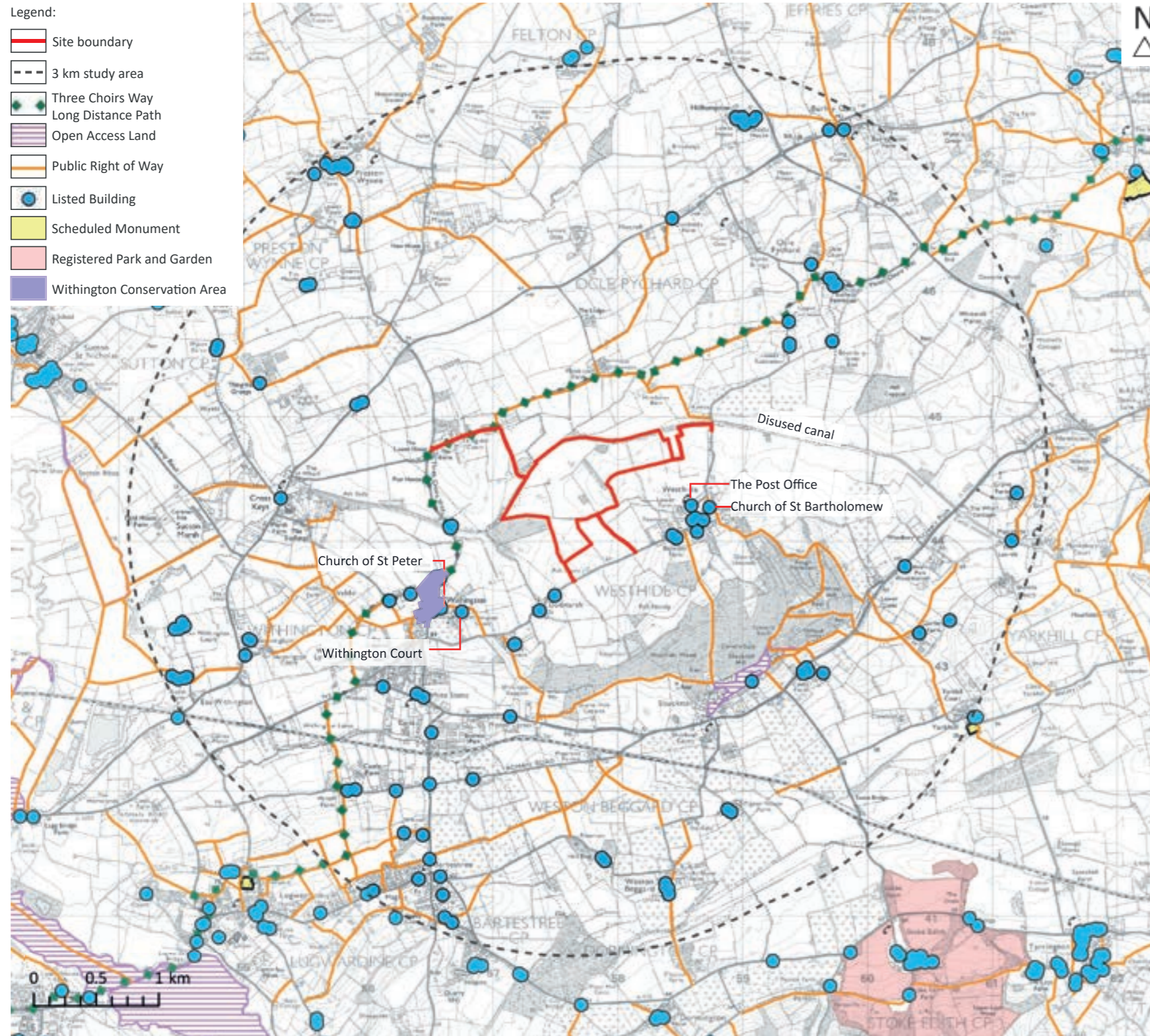


Figure 2 Landscape Designations

Scale 1 : 40,000 @ A3

3.1. Relevant landscape planning designations are shown on **Figure 2** and are described below.

## Heritage Assets

- 3.2. The nearest Listed Buildings to the site are those in the village of Westhite, approximately 400 m south-east of the site, which includes the Grade I listed Church of St Bartholomew and the Grade II listed Post Office.
- 3.3. The nearest Conservation Area to the site is Withington, approximately 600 m to the south-west, which contains additional listed Grade II listed buildings and the Grade II\* listed Church of St Peter. Further Grade II listed buildings lie just outside of the Conservation, which includes the Grade II Withington Court.
- 3.4. The nearest Scheduled Monuments are crosses in the churchyards of the Church of St Bartholomew, Westhite, and Church of St Peter, Withington.
- 3.5. Apart from those Listed Buildings specifically mentioned above, it is assessed that there will be little to no inter-visibility between the site and any other heritage assets within the study area due to intervening topography, built form and vegetation. These assets will, therefore, not be considered further in this assessment.
- 3.6. The disused Hereford to Ledbury Canal runs along the northern boundary of the site. Whilst not a listed asset, canals are identified within the Herefordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (HGIS) as historic features, stating that "historic connections and transport routes between settlements should be preserved and enhanced". The HGIS describes the opportunities these historic or redundant transport routes have for "making historic sites and features accessible ... whilst allowing interaction with the natural environment and promoting healthy activity", and for "enhancing and developing linear accessible public green spaces".

# 4.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF THE WIDER AREA

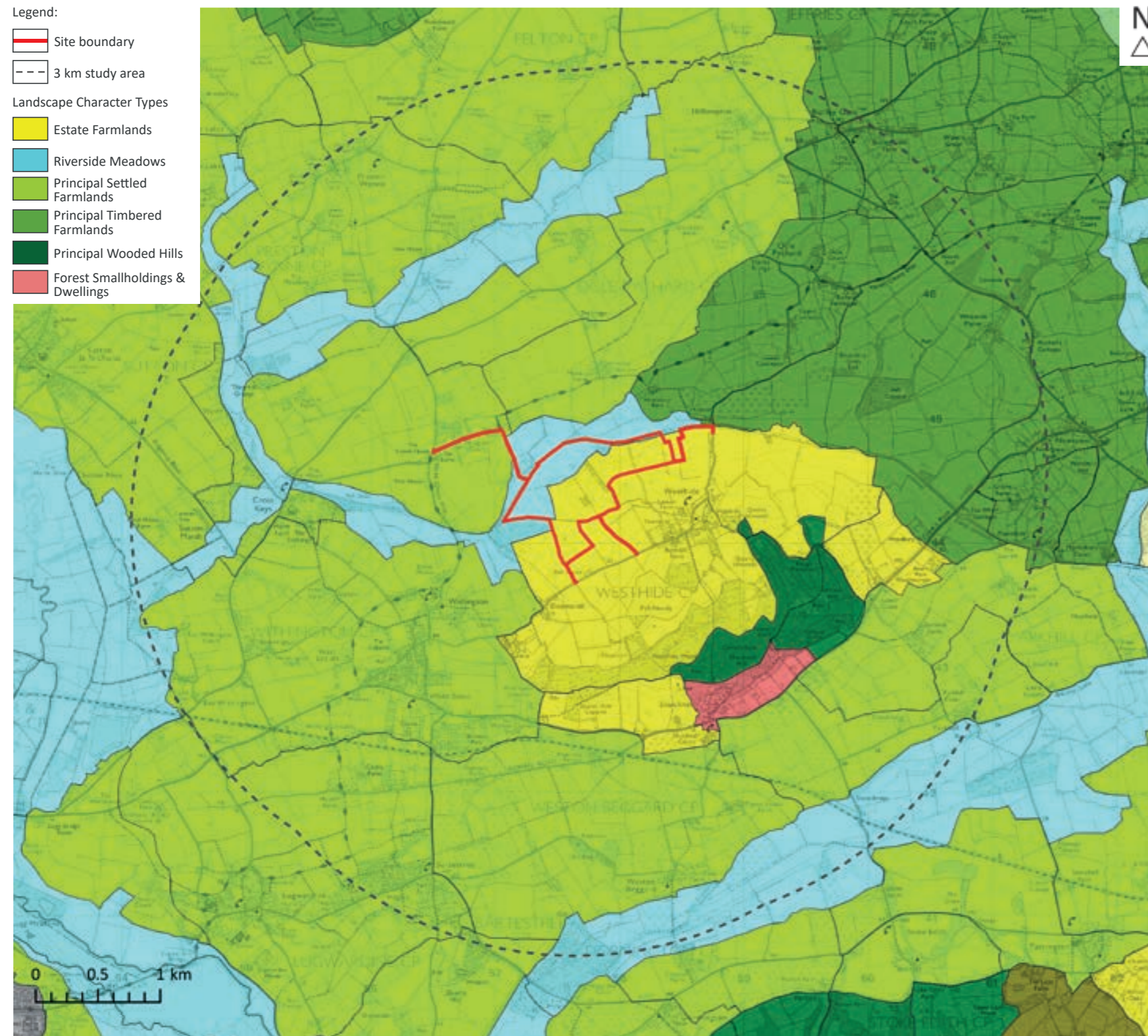


Figure 3 Extract of Published Landscape Character

Scale 1 : 40,000 @ A3

Extract taken from the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment, 2004

4.1. A number of published sources describe the character of the wider landscape and identify a series of landscape character types (LCT), extracts of which are included in **Appendix C**.

4.2. The application site falls within National Character Area (NCA) 100 Herefordshire Lowlands. Key relevant characteristics include '*Gently undulating landscape with localised steep-sided hills in the centre and wide agricultural flood plains*', '*Low hedgerows with sparse tree cover*', '*Dispersed rural settlement pattern throughout*', and '*Tranquil and relatively undisturbed by major infrastructure*'.

## Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment

4.3. Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2004 , Updated 2009) identifies the site within two LCT's, as shown on **Figure 3**. The majority of the site, including fields to the centre, east and south, falls within LCT Estate Farmlands. Key relevant characteristics include:

- '*...medium to large fields defined by hedgerows...*
- *mixed farming land use*
- *planned woodland character*
- *small geometrically shaped plantation woodlands*
- *medium-framed views*
- *clustered settlement pattern.*'

4.4. The management objectives are prescribed for LCT Estate Farmlands as Conservation/Enhancement, which includes '*Conserve the enclosure pattern of sub-regular hedged fields*' and '*Enhance tree cover through further planting of small scale plantations and tree belts*'.

4.5. The north-western most fields of the site fall within LCT Riverside Meadows. Key relevant characteristics include:

- '*...flat, generally well defined, alluvial floodplain, in places framed by steeply rising ground.*
- *pastoral land use*
- *well defined linear patterns of willow and alder*
- *tree cover represented by stream side and hedgerow trees*
- *unsettled landscape*
- *wetland habitat*
- *river channel*
- *hedge and ditch boundaries.*'

4.6. The management objectives are prescribed for LCT Riverside Meadows as Conservation/Restoration/Enhancement, including '*Conserve, restore and enhance continuous linear tree cover along hedge lines, ditches and watercourses*' and '*Seek to retain the strongly linear form of the landscape*'.

4.7. The site also interacts with LCT Principal Settled Farmland. Elevated areas of LCT Principal Timbered Farmland form a backdrop to the landscape, directly west of the site. Due to a lack of interaction with the site (refer to Viewpoint 6 at Section 11.0), no landscape effects on LCT Principal Timbered Farmland are anticipated and this LCT has been scoped out of this assessment.

# 5.0 SITE CONTEXT



Figure 4 Site Context

5.1. The site is located to the north-west of the village of Westhide and is currently comprised of eight arable fields, totalling c. 61.7 ha in area. It is bounded:

- to the north and west, by woodland along the edges of the disused Herefordshire to Gloucestershire Canal, with fields and farmsteads beyond;
- to the south, by hedgerows and woodland, with fields beyond; and
- to the east, by hedgerows, with fields and residential properties beyond.

## Vegetation pattern

5.2. The majority of the study area is comprised of small-medium fields bound by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees. Tree cover is limited to small geometric woodland blocks and tree belts, orchards, scattered trees, isolated trees, residential gardens and linear tree belts along watercourses, including the disused Herefordshire to Gloucestershire Canal. There is a larger area of woodland on the higher ground of Shucknall Hill and White Hill to the south of the site.

## Settlement pattern

5.3. The study area is typically rural in its landuse and is lightly settled with small villages and hamlets, scattered farmsteads and small clusters of residential properties, primarily located along rural lanes and the local network of A roads. The nearest villages are Westhide, 400 m to the south-east, and Withington, 800 m to the south-east.

5.4. Part of the agricultural landscape is comprised of polytunnels which cover areas around Cross Keys, to the west, and an area near Bartestree in the south-west. At the time of visit, a large polytunnel development was under construction on land south of the A465, west of Ocle Pychard.

## Public rights of way

5.5. The network of PRoW is typically focussed in and around the settlement areas, with limited connectivity across the study area. The only exception is the Three Choirs Way, a long distance circular path between Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester. The route runs around the west side of Withington before heading east across the higher ground 440 m north of the proposed PV array. The route of the northern construction access track will partially run along this footpath, currently a vehicular access for other agricultural businesses within the vicinity.

5.6. There are only a few PRoW near to the site, the closest being PRoW OP10 at Kymin, 260 m to the north-east, which connects with the Three Choirs Way. At Westhide, to the south-west, there are two PRoW which run from the village up to higher ground to the south-east, including PRoW WS1 which climbs Shucknall Hill. PRoW WT31 traverses an area of higher ground on the eastern edge of Withington, 850 m south-west of the site.

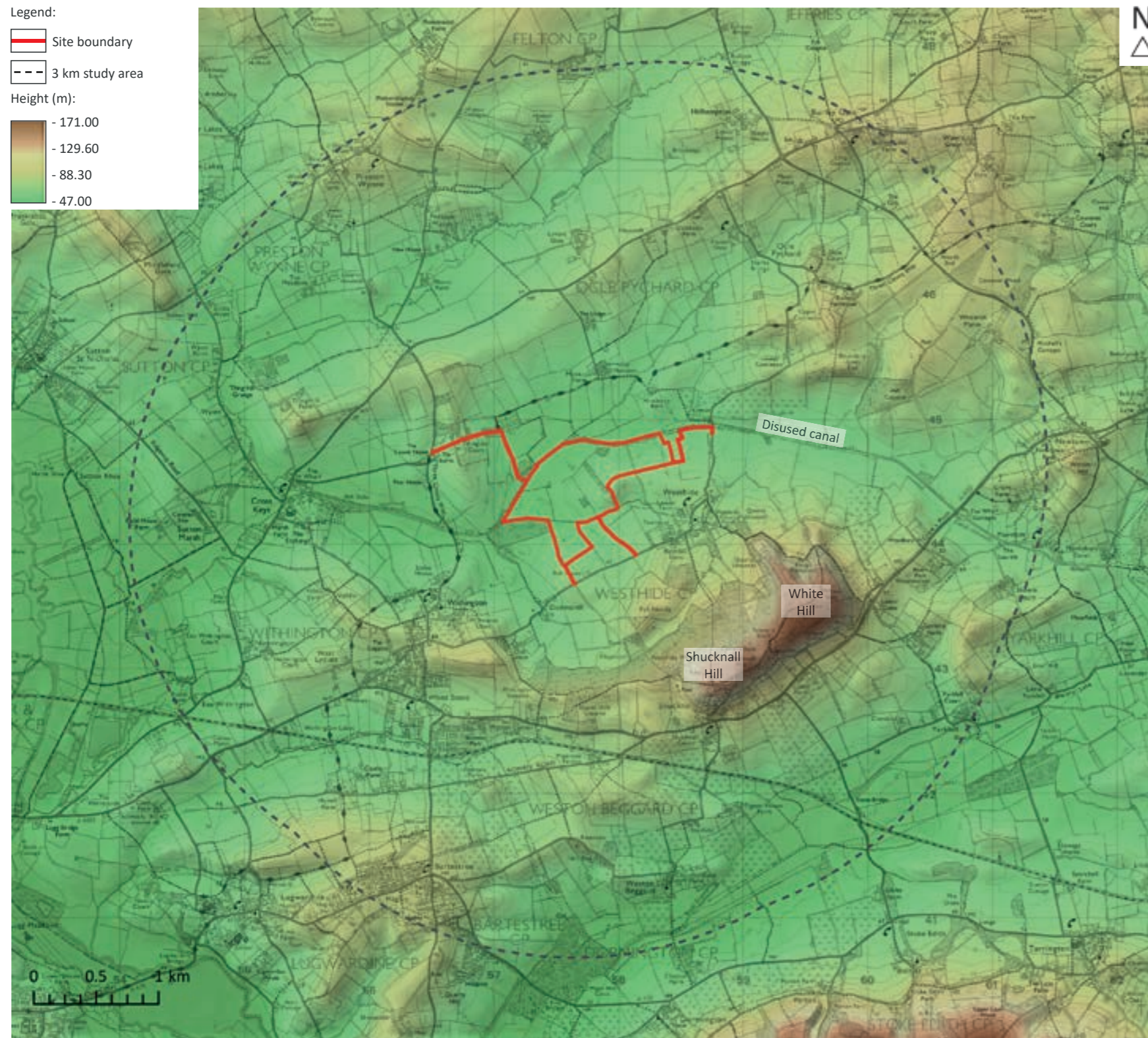
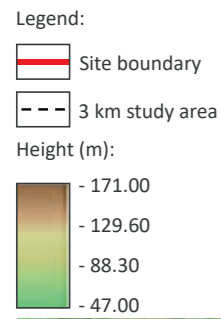


Figure 5 Topography

Scale 1 : 40,000 @ A3

## Landform and drainage

- 5.7. The local landscape is low lying and gently undulating, dissected by series of watercourses which have created wide valleys, as shown on **Figure 5**. The elevation ranges from c. 60m AOD at the valley floor up to around 80-100 m AOD on the higher ground. Shucknall Hill and White Hill to the south form a local high point rising up to approximately 170 m AOD, rising gently on the north facing side but more sharply on the south.
- 5.8. The primary watercourse is the River Frome, which passes through the south-eastern edge of the study area, 2.5 km from the site. Across the wider study area, the network of streams and tributaries typically flow eastwards towards the River Lugg, which lies beyond the study area 3 km from the site.
- 5.9. The disused Herefordshire to Gloucestershire Canal runs east to west across the study area, passing along the northern boundary of the site. Whilst sections of this have been filled in, the canal still forms part of the local drainage network.



# 6.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF THE SITE



Figure 6 Aerial photograph

Scale 1 : 40,000 @ A3

- 6.1. A site focused assessment was undertaken through field work to provide a better understanding of the site's character and how it relates to its immediate setting. An aerial photograph of the site is included at **Figure 6** and annotated panoramic photographs have been included below.
- 6.2. The site is currently comprised of eight arable fields, referred to as Fields A-I\* (refer to **Figure 6**), typically medium sized and divided internally by clipped hedgerows (1-2 m high). Field I to the east is a much smaller Field (Internal View H). Two access routes will follow existing farm tracks along the edge of two fields to the south of the site. A construction access track will be created across three fields to the north, connecting with an existing track at Thing-Hill Court  
  
*\*During the design development process, Field B was discounted from the proposals and is, therefore, not referred to in any reports or on any drawings.*
- 6.3. The western end of the site is relatively low lying, at approximately 60 m AOD in areas along the northern boundary adjacent to the disused canal, rising gently to a high point of 70 m AOD in the south-west corner of Field A (Internal View A). The eastern half of the site is more undulating, with areas of high ground just south of Fields G and H, 74 m and 72 m AOD respectively.
- 6.4. The northern boundary of the site is defined by mature wet woodland along the course of the disused canal, which provides a high level of enclosure from the wider landscape to the north and north-west (refer to Internal Views B and D). The southern and eastern boundaries are typically comprised of low clipped hedgerows with woodland blocks to the south of Fields A and C, and overgrown hedgerow south of Field E which affords partial and filtered views to the local landscape (Internal Views C, E, H and K). The higher ground of Fields E, G and H afford increased levels of inter-visibility with the wider landscape (refer to Internal Views E - G).
- 6.5. Hedgerows on site and within the immediate setting are generally in good condition and clipped, with occasional gaps. Tree cover internally is limited to a few hedgerow trees, isolated mature trees from historic boundaries (Internal Viewpoint J) and around ponds. There are recently planted whip trees along the northern, southern and eastern boundaries of Field D (Internal View I). A prominent feature is the mature woodland block upon the rising ground between Fields E and G (Internal View C).
- 6.6. There is generally a sense of tranquillity due to the rural location of the site, the enclosure from mature vegetation, the gently undulating nature of the landscape and the limited intrusions from pylons and built form. The surrounding road network is limited and is not visually or audibly intrusive, and therefore does not detract from the rural, tranquil character of the site. There is some influence from overhead wires and built development in and around Westhide to the south-east.



Internal View A: Taken from the south-west corner of Field A, looking north towards Fields D and E



Internal View B: Taken from the south-east corner of Field C, looking north-west



Internal View C: Taken from the north-west corner of Field D, looking south-east towards Field E



Internal View D: Taken from the north-east corner of Field E, looking south-west



Internal View E: Taken from the eastern boundary of Field E, looking south-west



Internal View F: Taken from the high point of Field G, looking north



Internal View G: Taken from the high point of Field H, looking north



Internal View H: Taken from the south-west corner of Field I, looking north



Internal View I: New on-site tree planting and hedgerow gaps



Internal View J: Mature scattered trees



Internal View K: Woodland belt south of Field A

# 7.0 VISUAL BASELINE

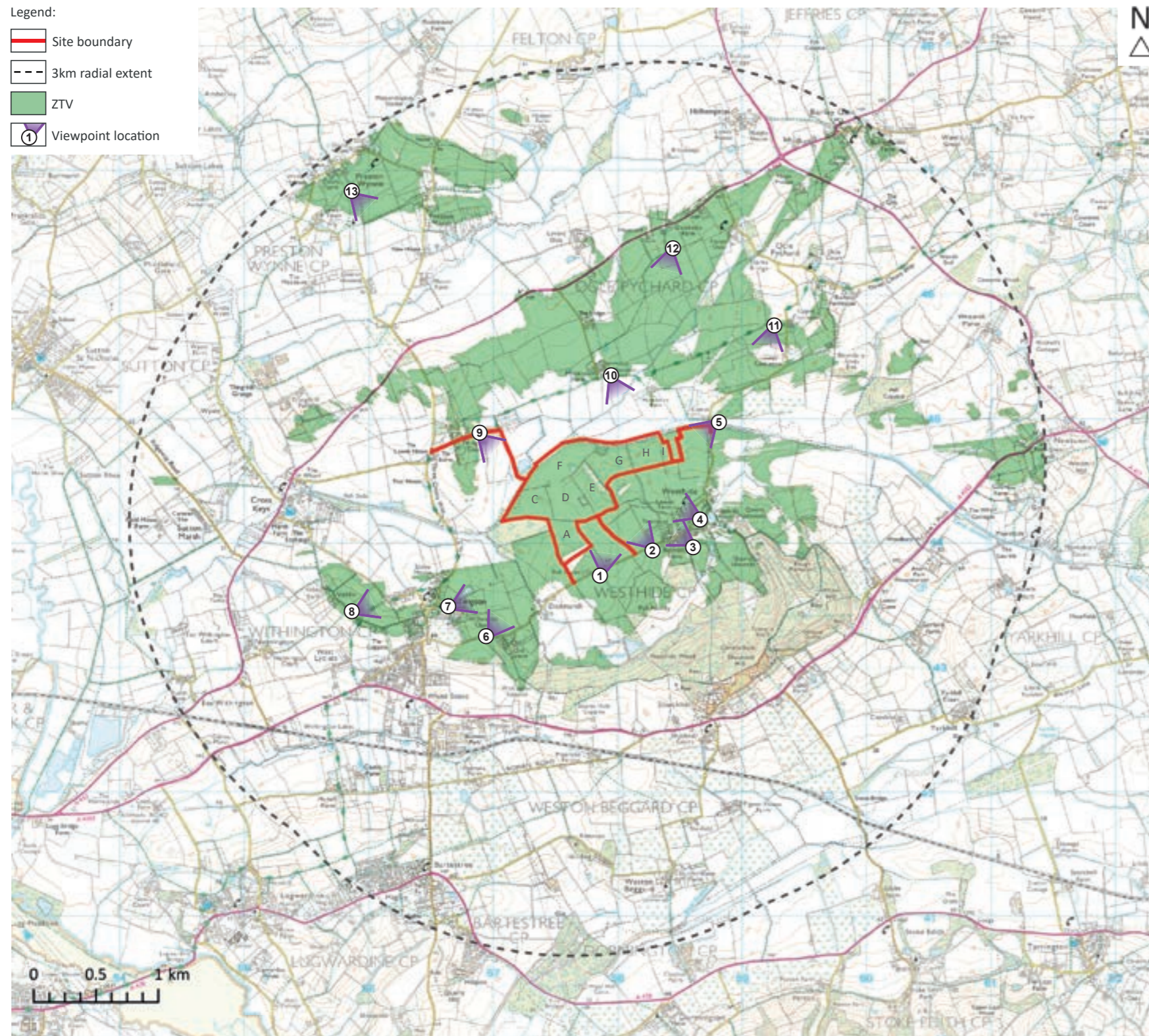


Figure 7 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

Scale 1 : 40,000 @ A3

## Extent of visibility

- 7.1. Figure 1 shows the theoretical extent to which development on the site is likely to be visible. The ZTV is generated from an observer height of 1.7 m (average eye level) and an average target height of 3 m. Multiple targets were placed throughout the site. The ZTV was generated using a computer calculation which cannot take account of all intervening surface features such as trees or hedges. It therefore represents a worse case or precautionary assessment. The ZTV was validated for this assessment by field survey carried out in December 2020 which confirmed that the zones as calculated provide a good match with topography, but a precautionary view of inter-visibility.
- 7.2. For the purposes of orientation within the viewpoints we have identified the individual fields within the site boundary, referred to as Fields A - I as shown on Figure 7. Fields which are visible in each viewpoint have been labelled accordingly.

## Representative views

- 7.3. Thirteen publicly accessible viewpoints (receptors) were selected to provide a representative sample and spread of typical views towards the site, shown on Figure 7.
- 7.4. Due to the topography within this landscape, together with intervening vegetation and buildings, views are predominantly from the southern half of the study area. These include local and medium distance views, as described below.

### Local views (under 0.5 km)

- 7.5. Local views can be summarised as those within close proximity of the site, taken from local roads, PRoW and the church yard in Westhildes where portions of the site are visible. This includes the road between the villages south of the site (Viewpoints 1-2), from Westhildes to the south-east of the site (Viewpoints 3-4) and from the road at Kymin to the north-east (Viewpoint 5).

### Medium distance views (0.5 – 2 km)

- 7.6. A medium distance, elevated view from PRoW WT31, on the edge of Withington to the south-west of the site, provides the most visibility of the site (Viewpoint 6). All other medium distance views of the site are limited by vegetation and landform, resulting in infrequent glimpsed views. This includes views from the churchyard and PRoW WT10 in Withington to the south-east (Viewpoints 7-8) and views from the Three Choirs Way and PRoW on higher ground to the north, generally restricted by the surrounding vegetation and topography (Viewpoints 9-12)

### Distant views (over 2 km)

- 7.7. No distant views were afforded (Viewpoint 13 refers).

## Private Views

- 7.8. Viewpoints 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 are captured close to dwellings around Westhildes and Withington to provide a representative sample of private views. It should be noted that access onto privately owned land is not possible, therefore these views were taken close to these properties.

# 8.0 THE PROPOSALS



Figure 8 The Proposed Development

Drawing produced by The Landmark Practice

- 8.2. The proposed development assessed in this LVIA is included at **Figures 8 and 9**. Refer to **Appendices D and E** for a full set of drawings which describe the development proposals, outlining the details of the PV panels, associated infrastructure and landscape mitigation
- 8.3. The scheme comprises of the installation of a solar photo voltaic (PV) array and associated infrastructure across eight arable fields, circa 61.7 hectares in area. The PV modules will be ground mounted on metal frames on posts, with a total height of 2.5 m to 3 m.
- 8.4. Associated infrastructure includes inverters (circa 2.4 m high), substation (circa 5 m high at the highest points of individual components), fencing and gates (circa 2.5 m high), and CCTV columns (circa 3 m high). The substation is to be located in the south-east corner of Field C, enclosed by metal palisade fencing (finished in green). Fencing and access gates around the PV arrays to be 2.5 m high timber post and metal mesh deer fence.
- 8.5. The site will be accessed by three tracks. Two of these routes will utilise the existing farm tracks which run across agricultural land to the south of the site from the road between Westhide and Withington. The surface of the western route will be upgraded to provide construction access to the substation in Field C. The eastern route will be for ongoing maintenance. The third will be a newly constructed route across land to the north of the site, accessed from the highway via Thing-hill Court, and will serve as the primary construction access for the development. From here, an internal network of tracks will provide access to all the fields.
- 8.6. The majority of existing trees, hedgerows, ponds and woodlands will be retained and suitable buffers applied to avoid adverse effects to these assets along with a Great Crested Newt (GCN) Ecological Corridor, as per ecological recommendations (refer to Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, TLP).
- 8.7. Six category U trees will be removed (as identified in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment), with hibernacula put in their place. The proposals include new native hedgerows (c. 1.24 km), tree planting (c. 190 no.) and wildflower grassland (c. 48. ha). Buffers and areas around the PV panels will be sown with a species rich wildflower grassland, with an area of wild bird seed mix sown along the western edge adjacent to the canal, as per ecological recommendations.
- 8.8. A permissive footpath is indicated running alongside the Herefordshire to Gloucestershire Canal, in accordance with Policy LD4 (HCS) and the Herefordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, circling the site. Four small openings in the existing hedgerows, maximum 2 m wide, would be created to accommodate the permissive path.

## Construction Phase

8.9. It is anticipated that the following construction activities will take place:

- Erection of hedgerow and tree protection measures in accordance with BS 5837:2012 prior to commencement of ground works;
- Installation of the solar PV array and associated infrastructure
- Planting of new hedgerows and trees;
- Construction traffic, plant and machinery movements within the site relating to delivery and installation of the solar PV array, associated infrastructure and mitigation planting;
- Exposure of bare soil in localised areas due to construction activity;
- Increased vehicular activity on site and along local roads resulting from the delivery of solar PV array, inverter/infrastructure and new planting;
- Internal access track leading to transformer stations and temporary construction access track to the north;
- Existing tracks, Field gates and gaps in hedgerows within the site to be utilised for access routes; and
- Temporary lighting of development area and construction activities if constructed during winter months.

## Operational Phase

8.10. Once the solar PV array is established, activity within the site will be limited to periodic repair and maintenance. It is anticipated that the site will be maintained in line with an approved maintenance regime (refer to the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan, TLP) which includes an approach to the management of the existing natural features, proposed planting, and ecological habitat provision, including the GCN ecological corridor.

# 9.0 LANDSCAPE MITIGATION

- Legend:
- View of the site
  - Glimpsed or filtered view
  - Existing hedgerow
  - Proposed hedgerow
  - Proposed buffer (5 m)
  - Existing woodland
  - Existing tree
  - Existing whip tree planting
  - Proposed tree planting
  - Existing waterbody

For detailed mitigation proposals refer to Landscape Mitigation and Enhancement Plans in **Appendix E**

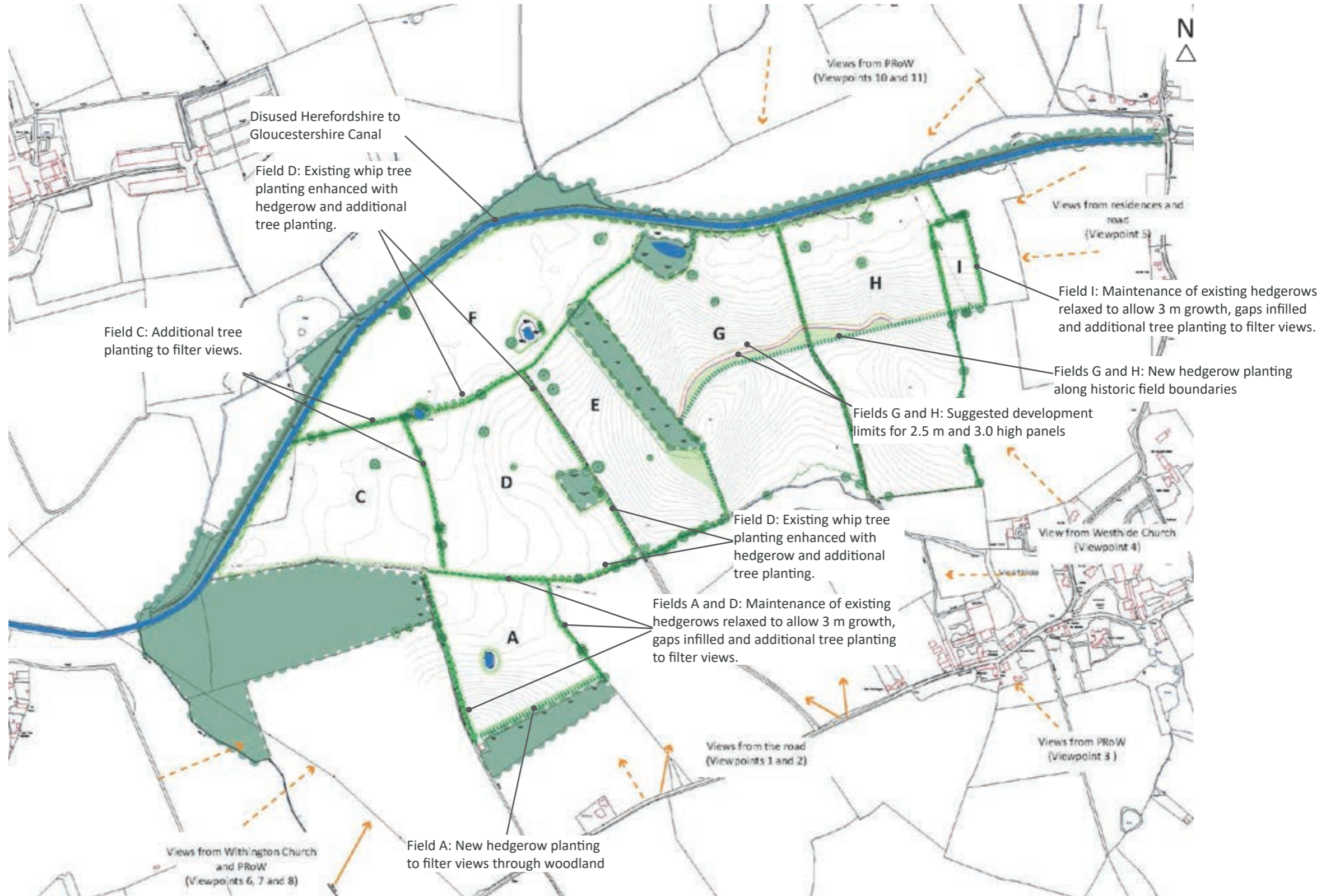


Figure 9 Landscape Mitigation Strategy

Drawing produced by The Landmark Practice



- 9.1. A number of measures have been incorporated by iterative design to ensure that any adverse landscape and visual effects of the proposed development are minimised. These include primary (embedded) mitigation which includes the siting, design and choice of materials and secondary mitigation, informed by this assessment to address outstanding effects.

## Landscape Mitigation

- 9.2. Landscape mitigation measures that have been carried forward are illustrated on the landscape mitigation plan (**Figure 9**) and are detailed on the Landscape Masterplan submitted with the Planning Application (refer to **Appendix E**). These are summarised below:
- Retention of all existing hedgerows, with site access utilising existing field gates and existing breaks in hedgerows.
  - Retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows along the boundaries of Field A and south of Field D to assist in screening of the development in local views from the south-west (Viewpoint 6) and south-east (Viewpoints 1, 2 and 4), including residential views on the edge of Westhide. This will comprise of the infilling of gaps in the hedgerow, new native tree planting and relaxation of maintenance regime to achieve a height of 3 m;
  - Whip tree planting on the north, east and south boundaries of Field D to be retained and enhanced with additional native tree and hedgerow planting to assist in screening of development in Fields D, E and F in views from the south and south-west (Viewpoints 1 and 2). The new hedgerow planting will strengthen connections of on site landscape features and recreate historic field boundaries;
  - Native tree planting to the north and east boundaries of Field C to assist in screening of development in Fields F and D in views from the south-west (Viewpoint 6);
  - Proposed native hedgerow along the southern boundary of Fields G and H to assist in screening of the development from the south at Westhide (Viewpoints 3 and 4). The new planting will strengthen on site connectivity of landscape features and will restore historic field boundaries.
  - Retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows along the boundaries of Field I to assist in the screening of the development in views from the east, including residential views. This will comprise of the infilling of gaps in the hedgerow, new tree planting and relaxation of maintenance regime to achieve a height of 3 m; and
  - Fencing to solar panels arrays to be timber post and metal mesh deer fence, to compliment the rural landscape and reduce visual impact. Palisade fencing to substation to be finished with green colour to visually blend in with surrounding vegetation;

# 10.0 LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND EFFECTS

## Landscape sensitivity

10.1. The baseline review identified a number of landscape resources that are likely to be affected by the proposed development. An assessment of the value, susceptibility to change and overall sensitivity of the landscape has been undertaken. This is set out in Table 1 and is summarised below.

### Wider Landscape Sensitivity

10.2. The site falls within both LCT Estate Farmlands and LCT Riverside Meadows. In both cases, the landscape sensitivity is assessed as *Medium*. Due to the containment of the site by surrounding vegetation and landform, the proposed development is not likely to influence the key characteristics of the wider landscape. It is considered to have some capacity to accommodate the proposed development, providing the development is kept low level and local landscape features are retained and enhanced, as is the case for this proposal.

### Landscape Sensitivity of the Site and Immediate Surroundings

10.3. The landscape sensitivity of the site and immediate surroundings is also assessed as *Medium*. The site is not covered by any specific landscape designation nor does it have recreational value, however it is in good condition and provides a landscape setting to the adjacent disused canal. The surrounding vegetation provides a sense of containment from the wider landscape, with some limited inter-visibility from local roads, PRow and private residences. The site has some capacity to accommodate development of this type and scale without undue harm providing that the boundary vegetation is retained and enhanced to strengthen the site's containment, together with enhancing the landscape structure and character.

## Landscape Effects

10.4. Full details of the landscape effects, including effects on landscape features and on landscape character, are set out in Table 1 and are summarised below.

### Effects on Wider Landscape Character (All Periods)

10.5. The proposed development will introduce PV panels and associated infrastructure to a number of fields within the Estate Farmlands LCT. Structures of this type and scale are generally uncommon within this lightly settled, rural landscape, with the exception of large polytunnel schemes. The development will retain much of the existing field pattern and landscape features, with any tree and hedgerow removal barely discernible. New hedgerow planting will enhance connectivity of landscape features and recreate historic field patterns, reducing some fields in size but retaining the scale typical of the local field pattern. New tree planting will contribute to the planned woodland character of the LCT, which is prevalent around the site.

10.6. Mature boundary vegetation provides a high level of containment from the landscape to the north and west of the site, limiting any impacts on neighbouring LCT's in this direction. The design of the array at the eastern parts of the site positions the PV panels beyond the high ground to reduce inter-visibility with the wider Estate Farmlands LCT to the south and east. Due to the partial openness of the southern boundary, there will be inter-visibility between the development in the western fields (Fields A-E) and the wider area to the south (the northern fringes of the Estate Farmlands LCT). Due to the limited public access within the local landscape, the changes will be experienced from limited areas within the immediate vicinity of the site. In these areas the changes will be noticeable and the landscape effects on these limited parts of the northern fringe of the Estate Farmlands LCT are assessed as *Moderate adverse* at all stages.

10.7. The proposed development is unlikely to greatly impact on the character of LCT Riverside Meadows. Whilst this LCT is characterised as unsettled, the two fields (Fields C and F) in the north-west of the site are well contained by surrounding mature vegetation, local landform and internal hedgerows. There is no public access to this part of the site and any changes will be highly localised to the site and the immediate vicinity of the site to the south. Mitigation planting will introduce lines of hedgerow trees along ditches which are typical of the LCT and support management guidelines to 'enhance linear tree cover along hedge lines, ditches and watercourses'. The landscape effects on these limited parts of the River Meadows LCT are assessed as *Minor adverse*.

10.8. Due to the extent of surrounding vegetation and local landform there are limited opportunities for inter-activity between the site and LCT Principal Settled Farmlands. The development will not result in any direct impacts to the characteristics of the LCT. There is some inter-visibility from the north-east edge of the LCT around Withington (as demonstrated in Viewpoint 6), however this is limited to a very small area and the effects on the LCT Principal Settled Farmlands as a whole are judged to be *Negligible adverse*.

### Landscape Effects on the Site and Immediate Surroundings

10.9. The proposed development will result in the long term, but reversible, change to the character of the site by introducing PV panels and associated infrastructure across all areas of arable land. The site is provided some containment by local landform and existing boundaries in the form of mature wet woodland along the canal, woodland blocks, overgrown hedgerows and mature, clipped hedgerows. However more open boundaries to the south provide inter-visibility with the wider landscape. Other than the removal of a small number trees and small amounts of hedgerow, the majority of landscape features will be unaffected by the proposed development and will be enhanced by additional mitigation planting.

10.10. The proposed development will be implemented with mitigation measures shown on Figure 9. This includes the retention of, and relaxation of maintenance regimes for, existing field hedgerows, specific native hedgerow and tree planting. These measures will ensure the design of the development responds to its setting, enhances local green infrastructure corridors, restores historic field patterns and reinforces local landscape character. The development will, however, cause a noticeable change to the character of the site and the landscape effects on the site itself are assessed as *Moderate adverse* at all periods.

## Effects on the Landscape Setting of Heritage Assets

10.11. Due to the extent of intervening vegetation and built form, the rural landscape between Withington and Westhide forms a very small part of the landscape setting of the Grade I listed Church of St Bartholomew. Any changes would be barely perceptible and, therefore, the landscape effects are assessed as *Negligible adverse*. The Grade II listed The Post Office at Westhide, can only be appreciated from the village and its setting is, therefore, limited to the immediate road and adjacent land. The landscape effects are assessed as *No Change*.

10.12. The site forms part of the rural setting of the Grade I listed Church of St Peter and the addition of the PV panels would be a noticeable, however only when experienced from the road out of Westhide towards Withington. The landscape effects are assessed as *Minor adverse*.

10.13. The rural landscape between Withington and Westhide forms part of the outlook of the Grade II Withington Court from upper storey windows and the garden. Views from the property are orientated towards the rising ground of Shucknall Hill and White Hill to the south-east, with the site on the periphery. A small amount of development will likely be perceptible, limited to the northern edge of Field A, southern edge of Field D and higher ground of Field E. The landscape effects are assessed as *Minor adverse*.

10.14. For effects on heritage assets, refer to the Heritage Desk Based Assessment by Cotswold Archaeology.

## Cumulative landscape effects

10.15. In response to Herefordshire Council pre-application advice, a cumulative assessment has been carried out which explores the potential effects of this development with an existing poly tunnel development north of the site at Ocle Pychard, and a proposed Langport Solar Farm near Dormington, south-west of the site. This assessment is found in **Appendix G**.

Table 1 – Landscape Effects Table

Landscape Character Area	Baseline Description	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Landscape Effects
Wider Landscape						
<p>Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (Adopted 2004 - Updated 2009)</p> <p>LCT Estate Farmland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'medium to large fields defined by hedgerows</li> <li>mixed farming land use</li> <li>planned woodland character</li> <li>small geometrically shaped plantation woodlands</li> <li>medium-framed views</li> <li>clustered settlement pattern'</li> </ul>	<p>All periods: The development will introduce solar PV panels within six arable fields (Fields A,D,E, G-I) within the Estate Farmland LCT, a lightly settled landscape. Development includes CCTV, inverters and security fencing.</p> <p>Site access will utilise existing farm tracks in fields to the south from the road between Westhide and Withington, within the wider LCT. Internal access for construction and maintenance will utilise existing field gates or breaks in hedgerows, in order to minimise loss.</p> <p>New hedgerows will be planted across the south of fields G and H, reducing the size of the existing fields, however remaining in keeping with local field patterns and based on historic field boundaries. New hedgerows will redefine historic field boundaries in Field E and support existing tree planting.</p> <p>New hedgerow tree planting along existing hedgerows and increased heights of hedgerows will assist in screening, however the development will be noticeable. The hedgerow trees will strengthen the wooded character provided by the surrounding woodland and tree belts:</p> <p>The fields are generally well contained from the wider landscape by the surrounding tree cover, hedgerows and local landform. Public access to the LCT is restricted to local roads and a few PRoW, with partial inter-visibility with the site. Any changes will be localised to the north-west corner of Estate Farmland LCT and immediate landscape to the south.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retention of all existing hedgerows, with site access utilising existing field gates and existing breaks in hedgerows.</li> <li>Retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows along the boundaries of Field A and south of Field D. This will comprise of the infilling of gaps in the hedgerow, new native tree planting and relaxation of maintenance regime to achieve a greater height of field boundaries.;</li> <li>Whip tree planting on the east and south boundaries of Field D to be retained and enhanced with additional native tree and hedgerow planting to assist in screening of development in Fields F and E. The new hedgerow planting will strengthen connections of on site landscape features and recreate historic field boundaries;</li> <li>Proposed native hedgerow along the southern boundary of Fields G and H to assist in screening of the development from Westhide. The new planting will strengthen on site connectivity and rare on the approximate line of historic field boundaries.</li> <li>Fencing to solar panels arrays to be timber post and metal mesh deer fence and palisade security fencing to substation to be finished with green colour to blend into the landscape.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Overall sensitivity: Medium</b></p> <p>Value: <i>Medium</i></p> <p>[No landscape designations within study area. Landscape in good condition, valued at local level with cultural features including listed buildings and scheduled monuments. Recreation value provided by local PRoWs. Some intrusion by overhead power lines.]</p> <p>Landscape susceptibility to change: <i>Medium</i></p> <p>[Whilst there will be a change to the character of the site itself, the wider landscape has some ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue harm due to the extent of vegetation cover and topography which assist in containing the site from the wider LCT.]</p>	<p>Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i></p> <p>Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i></p> <p>Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long term, reversible</i></p>	<p><i>Moderate adverse</i></p>

Landscape Character Area	Baseline Description	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Landscape Effects
<b>Wider Landscape</b>						
<p>Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (Adopted 2004 - Updated 2009)</p> <p>LCT Riverside Meadows</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'flat, generally well defined, alluvial floodplain, in places framed by steeply rising ground</li> <li>pastoral land use</li> <li>well defined linear patterns of willow and alder</li> <li>tree cover represented by stream side and hedgerow trees</li> <li>unsettled landscape</li> <li>wetland habitat</li> <li>river channel</li> <li>hedge and ditch boundaries'</li> </ul>	<p>All periods: The development will introduce solar PV panels within two arable fields (Fields C and F) within the Riverside Meadows LCT, an unsettled landscape. Development includes CCTV, inverters and security fencing. A new substation will be introduced to the corner of Field C with security fencing.</p> <p>Site access will utilise a new farm track in fields to the north, within the wider LCT. Internal access for construction and maintenance will utilise existing field gates or breaks in hedgerows, in order to minimise loss.</p> <p>New hedgerow tree planting along existing hedgerows and increased heights of hedgerows will assist in screening of the development. Lines of hedgerow trees along ditches are typical of the LCT and support management guidelines to 'enhance linear tree cover along hedge lines, ditches and watercourses'</p> <p>There is no public access to the LCT. Any changes will, be localised to the site and not perceptible across the wider Riverside Meadows LCT.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retention of all existing hedgerows, with site access utilising existing field gates and existing breaks in hedgerows.</li> <li>Retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows along the boundaries of Field C and F. This will comprise of the infilling of gaps in the hedgerow, new native tree planting and relaxation of maintenance regime to achieve a height of 3 m;</li> <li>Whip tree planting on the southern boundary of Field E to be retained and enhanced with additional native tree and hedgerow planting to assist in screening of development. The new hedgerow planting will strengthen connections of on site landscape features and recreate historic field boundaries;</li> <li>Fencing to solar panels arrays to be timber post and metal mesh deer fence, to blend into the landscape.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Overall sensitivity: Medium</b></p> <p>Value: <i>Medium</i> [No landscape designations within study area or recreational access. Landscape in good condition, valued at local level with cultural features including disused canal.]</p> <p>Landscape susceptibility to change: <i>Medium</i> [Whilst there will be a change to the unsettled character of the landscape, the LCT has some ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue harm due to the extent of vegetation cover and topography which assist in containing the site from the wider LCT and landscape.]</p>	<p>Size/ scale: <i>Low</i></p> <p>Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i></p> <p>Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long term, reversible</i></p>	<p><i>Minor adverse</i></p>

Landscape Character Area	Baseline Description	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Landscape Effects
<b>Wider Landscape</b>						
Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (Adopted 2004 - Updated 2009)  LCT Principal Settled Farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'hedgerows used for field boundaries</li> <li>'mixed farming land use'</li> </ul>	All periods: Several fields will be replaced with solar PV development close to the edge of the LCT. Development unlikely to directly influence the characteristics of this area. Indirect effects as a result of inter-visibility from a small part of the LCT on the north-west edge near Withington.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retention and enhancement of all existing hedgerows on site and additional tree planting to assist in screening the development in views.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Overall sensitivity: Medium</b> Value: <i>Medium</i></p> <p>[No landscape designations within the study area. Landscape in good condition, valued at local level with cultural features including disused canal. Recreation value provided by local PROWs.]</p> <p>Landscape susceptibility to change: <i>Moderate</i> [The LCT has some ability to accommodate the changes within the neighbouring LCT's without undue harm due to the extent of vegetation cover and topography which assist in containing the site from the much of the wider LCT. and is unlikely to influence the key characteristics]</p>	<p>Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i></p> <p>Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i></p> <p>Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long term, reversible</i></p>	<i>Negligible adverse (No direct impact on landscape character. Inter-visibility with the site limited to a small area in the north-east edge of the LCT)</i>

Landscape Character Area	Baseline Description	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Landscape Effects
<i>The Site and environs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprised of a eight arable fields typically medium sized and divided internally by clipped hedgerows (1-2 m high);</li> <li>Western end of the site is relatively low lying rising gently to a high point in Field A.</li> <li>The eastern half of the site is more undulating, with areas of high ground just south of Fields G and H;</li> <li>Partial containment by mature boundary vegetation along the disused canal and southern boundaries. More open visibility to the south and east, and especially from areas of higher ground;</li> <li>Hedgerow boundaries in good condition and clipped, with occasional gaps;</li> <li>Internal tree cover limited to occasional hedgerow trees, scattered isolated trees and a formal woodland blocks;</li> <li>Watercourses including the canal, ponds and ditches along hedgerows.</li> <li>Tranquil landscape with few interruptions from overhead wires, local roads and built form.</li> </ul>	<p>During Construction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installation of solar PV panels within eight arable fields (Fields A,D,E, G-I) with CCTV, inverters and security fencing. A new substation will be introduced to the corner of Field C with security fencing;</li> <li>Existing access track from south upgraded to provide access to substation in Field C and new access track constructed from Thing-Hill Court to the north to provide access to all fields;and</li> <li>Temporary reduction in tranquillity due to construction noise and traffic.</li> </ul>	<p>Retention of all existing hedgerows, with site access utilising existing field gates and existing breaks in hedgerows.</p> <p>Retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows along the boundaries of Fields A, C, F.and I This will comprise of the infilling of gaps in the hedgerow, new native tree planting and relaxation of maintenance regime.</p>	<p><b>Overall sensitivity: Medium</b></p> <p>Value: <i>Medium</i> [No landscape designations within study area or recreational access. Landscape in good condition, valued at local level with cultural features including disused canal.]</p> <p>Landscape susceptibility to change: <i>Medium</i> [The site has some ability to accommodate a PV scheme without undue harm due to the level of visual enclosure from the surrounding vegetation and landform, and providing that boundary vegetation is retained and strengthened, as is proposed for this scheme.]</p>	<p>Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i></p> <p>Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i></p> <p>Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i></p>	<i>Moderate adverse</i>
		<p>On Completion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long term, but reversible, loss of the fields in which the development sits;</li> <li>Introduction of new infrastructure and boundary treatments;</li> <li>Introduction of mitigation planting in the form of new tree planting along existing hedgerows, new hedgerow planting and wildflower grassland;</li> <li>New hedgerows recreate historic field boundaries in Fields D, E, G, H and I; and</li> <li>A permissive path will follow the course of the disused canal and across the high ground providing recreation access to the site.</li> </ul>	<p>Whip tree planting to be retained and enhanced with additional native tree and hedgerow planting to assist in screening of development. The new hedgerow planting will strengthen connections of on site landscape features and recreate historic field boundaries.</p> <p>Proposed native hedgerow along the southern boundary of Fields G and H to assist in screening of the development from Westhide. The new planting will strengthen on site connectivity and are loosely restore historic field boundaries.</p>		<p>Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i></p> <p>Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i></p> <p>Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long term, reversible</i></p>	<i>Moderate adverse</i>
		<p>15 Years After Planting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed trees and hedgerows are maturing, reinforcing and complimenting the existing hedgerows which have been allowed to grow in height. This will soften development along the southern and eastern boundaries, enhance connectivity of features and restore historic field patterns.</li> </ul>	<p>Fencing to solar panels arrays to be timber post and metal mesh deer fence and palisade security fencing to substation to be finished with green colour to blend into the landscape.</p>		<p>Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i></p> <p>Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i></p> <p>Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long term, reversible</i></p>	<i>Moderate adverse</i>

# 11.0 VISUAL SENSITIVITY AND EFFECTS

11.1. The baseline review identified a number of visual receptors that are likely to be affected by the proposed development. An assessment of the value, susceptibility to change and overall sensitivity of views has been undertaken. This is set out in the following tables which accompany each viewpoint photograph and is summarised below.

## Visual Sensitivity

### Low/ Medium Sensitivity Views

11.2. Views from the road between Westhide and Withington, south of the site, are assessed as *Low-Medium* visual sensitivity (Viewpoints 1 and 2). This is a route used by motorists travelling along a scenic route where views of the surrounding landscape are moderately important to the quality of the journey. This is also the case for views from the road to the east at Kymin (Viewpoint 5), however, these views are fleeting and incidental to the journey. The visual sensitivity for Viewpoint 5 is, therefore, assessed as *Low*.

### Medium Sensitivity Views

11.3. Views from PRoW across the study are (except those on the Three Choirs Way) are assessed as *Medium* visual sensitivity (Viewpoints 3, 6, 8, 12 and 13). Users of these routes are likely to be focussed on the landscape and the views form a part of the experience, however, these routes are not within a designated landscape, nor do they form popular viewpoints.

### High Sensitivity Views

11.4. Views from the Three Choirs Way, north of the site, are assessed as *High* visual sensitivity (Viewpoints 9-11). These views are from the long distance footpath which has important cultural associations and users of the route are likely to be focussed on the landscape.

11.5. Views from the St Bartholomew's Church, Westhide, and the Church of St Peter, Withington, are assessed as *High* visual sensitivity (Viewpoints 4 and 7). These are Grade II listed buildings and the site of Scheduled Monuments, where views of the surroundings are an important part of the experience for visitors to these heritage assets.

## Visual Effects Summary

### Visual effects

#### *Views from road between Westhide and Withington (Viewpoints 1 and 2)*

11.6. The visual effects on views from the road between Westhide and Withington are assessed as *Moderate adverse*. The short-term construction activities and long-term development will introduce new features including PV panels, fencing, CCTV and inverters, most noticeable in Fields A, C, D and E (AVR Viewpoint 01 and 02 refer, **Appendix F**). These features, along with a newly planted hedgerow, will also be partially visible along the high ground of Fields G and H, however, the PV panels will not be visible as they are positioned beyond the high ground. In the long-term, existing and proposed mitigation planting will mature to assist in filtering views of the development, breaking up the expanse of panels. The visual effects will, therefore, reduce to *Minor adverse*.

#### *Views from Westhide (Viewpoints 3 and 4)*

11.7. There will be *Negligible adverse* visual effects on views from PRoW WS1, south of Westhide (Viewpoint 3) at all stages. From the path there will be partial and filtered views to construction activity and development within Field G. PV panels will be positioned down slope from the high ground to restrict visibility, however, there will be glimpses from this elevated position (AVR Viewpoint 03 refers, **Appendix F**). Once the new hedgerow has matured along the southern boundary of Fields G and H, the fence and CCTV will be barely perceptible.

11.8. From the church yard of St Bartholomew's much of the wider landscape is obscured by vegetation and built form (Viewpoint 4). There is an opportune view through to Field A, however, construction work and development will be barely perceptible due to the distance (AVR Viewpoint 04 refers, **Appendix F**). On maturity of mitigation planting, views of development in Field A will be barely perceptible. There will also be glimpses to construction traffic moving along the access track to Field G. Visual effects at all stages are assessed as *Minor adverse*.

#### *Views from road at Kymin (Viewpoint 5)*

11.9. The visual effects on views from the road at Kymin are assessed as *Minor adverse*. Within this glimpsed and filtered view, construction activities and development will introduce new features in Fields G, H and I (AVR Viewpoint 05 refers, **Appendix F**). PV panels in Field I are designed to sit lower in the view, limiting their visibility behind the existing hedgerow. PV panels in Fields G and H will, however, be more noticeable due to the rising elevation of the land. In the long-term, existing and proposed mitigation planting along the boundaries of Field H and I will mature to assist in screening much of the development with filtered views likely in winter. Visual effects will reduce to *Negligible adverse* in the long term.

#### *Views from Withington (Viewpoints 6-8)*

11.10. There will be *Moderate adverse* visual effects on views from PRoW WT31, on the western edge of Withington (Viewpoint 6). Within this panoramic and long distance view, there will be visibility to construction activities and development in Fields A, D, E and F (AVR Viewpoint 05 refers, **Appendix F**). PV panels in Field A are designed to sit lower in the view behind the existing hedgerow, however, there will be partial visibility from this elevated position. Due to the low height of boundary hedgerows, the panels in Fields A, D and E will appear as a single expanse. On maturity, the existing and proposed planting will assist in the filtering views of the development and breaking up the expanse of panels, however, there will be some remaining filtered and partial views to development in Fields D and E. The visual effects long-term will therefore remain as *Moderate adverse*.

11.11. From the church yard of the Church of St Peter there is a view of the site access track and a partial view to the south-west corner of Field A where construction activities will be perceptible (Viewpoint 7). The PV panels in Field A are designed to sit lower in the view behind the existing hedgerow and on completion will be barely perceptible. The visual effects are assessed as *Minor adverse* at all stages.

11.12. The visual effects on views from PRoW WT10 are assessed as *Minor adverse* at all stages (Viewpoint 8). From this elevated position, there will be partial views to construction activities and development in the south of Field E and along the access track to Field G. On maturity, proposed and existing tree planting on the boundary of Field E will assist in filtering views of the development, however there will remain visibility of the PV panels on the higher ground.



#### *Views from PRoW to the north of the site (Viewpoints 9-13)*

11.13. Due to the extent of intervening vegetation and landform screening the site, the visual effects on views from PRoW to the north of the site, including the Three Choirs Way, are assessed as either *No Change* or *Minor adverse* at all stages.

#### **Visual Effects on Private Properties**

##### *Properties at Westhide*

11.14. There are a number of properties at Westhide which will experience views (and any changes), however, the visual effects will be minimal. The greatest visual effects are expected to be during construction and completion for properties oriented towards the eastern end of the site. Residents may experience partial views of development along the high ground of Fields G and H, and within Field I. Viewpoint 3, which is taken from a higher position than these properties, demonstrates the limited amount of development visible due to the intervening landform (Refer also to AVR Viewpoint 03).

11.15. A limited number of properties in Westhide which are oriented to the west will have visibility of the development in Fields A (as per Viewpoint 4), whilst those on the western edge of the village will have oblique views from windows and partial views from private gardens to development in Fields A, C, D and on the high ground of Field E (as per Viewpoint 2. Refer also to AVR Viewpoint 02, **Appendix F**).

11.16. Properties along the road east of the site and at Kymin, north of Westhide, will experience views of construction activities and development in Fields G, H and I. Due to intervening layers of vegetation, these views will be mostly limited to the high ground of Fields G and H from upper floor windows (Viewpoint 5 refers. Refer also to AVR Viewpoint 05, **Appendix E**). PV panels in Field I have been designed to sit lower in the view behind the existing boundary hedgerow.

##### *Properties on road between Westhide and Withington*

11.17. Ash Grove, the isolated property along the road south of the site, will experience filtered views through the mature, intervening woodland towards Field A and views north-east to development on the high ground of Field E (Viewpoint 1 refers). Views from the clusters of properties at Dodmarsh and Old Grove, to the south-west of the site, are restricted due to the orientation of the buildings, local landform and by the intervening vegetation.

##### *Properties at Withington*

11.18. Due to the intervening layers of vegetation and local landform, visibility of the site from Withington is limited to a small number of properties along the eastern edge of the village and from properties on the elevated Veldo Lane, further west (Viewpoint 8 refers). The greatest visual effects are expected to be on views from Withington Court which will experience construction activities and development in Fields A, B, D and E (Viewpoint 6 refers. Refer also to AVR Viewpoint 06, **Appendix F**).

##### *Properties north of the site*

11.19. Views of the development from properties in the wider landscape to north are highly restricted by the surrounding layers of vegetation and focussed on the high ground of Fields G and H. There are filtered views from nearby farmsteads (Viewpoint 10 refers) and upper storey views from properties around Ocle Pychard, to the north-east (Viewpoint 11 refers).

#### **Visual Effects on Heritage Assets**

11.20. Views of the development from most listed buildings at Westhide are obscured by built form and vegetation. There is no view from within the Grade II listed St. Bartholomew's Church, however the views from the grounds of the church and Scheduled Monument have been assessed (refer to Viewpoint 4). The greatest visual effects are expected for the Grade II The Post Office which is oriented towards the eastern end of the site whereby construction activities and development along the high ground of Fields G, H and I will be visible.

11.21. The majority of listed buildings at Withington, Old Grove and Dodmarsh have no visibility of the site, including from the Grade II listed Church of St. Peter. The assessment of Viewpoint 7 summarises the visual effects from the grounds of these heritage assets and the Scheduled Monuments within. From Withington Court there will likely be partial and filtered views of development in Fields A, D and on the higher ground of Field E. Construction traffic will also be visible along the access track to the south. These views are, however, oblique from south-east facing windows or from the gardens. The visual effects are anticipated to be greatest during construction, but not overly harmful.

11.22. Any listed buildings in the wider landscape to the north of the site are anticipated to experience views highly filtered and obscured by intervening layers of vegetation or partial views to the development on the high ground of Fields G and H. The greatest visual effects are expected for the Grade II Upper Castleton, to the north-east, which will experience partial views, from upper storey windows to construction activity on the high ground (Viewpoint 11 refers).



Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects
1. From road to Westhide, adjacent to Ash Grove, looking north-east  Distance from site: 150 m  Refer to AVR Viewpoint 01 in Appendix F	Users of the road (motorists) are afforded a view across an agricultural landscape of fields bound by clipped hedgerows and mature tree belts.	<u>During Construction:</u> Construction activity associated with the development in Fields A,D and E will be partially visible as will activity along the access track to Fields G and H.	Retention of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries within the view with gaps infilled. Relaxed management of hedgerows to allow greater growth height of field boundaries.	<b>Overall sensitivity: Low-Medium</b>  Value of the View: <i>Low</i> (From local road. No designation, not popular viewpoint)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>Medium</i> (View experienced by motorists travelling on a scenic route where the view is moderately important to the quality of the journey.)	Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Moderate adverse</i>
	The site lies in the middle distance with partial and filtered views to rising ground of Field E and the high ground south of Fields G and H. There are highly filtered views through the trees to Fields A and D through the woodland block in the foreground.	<u>On Completion:</u> The development will be largely obscured by the existing vegetation and landform. PV panels (front elevation), CCTV, fencing, and new tree planting will be visible in Fields A, D and E, largely filtered by mature vegetation but with some open views across hedgerows. Most visible will be the PV panels on the rising ground of Field E.	New tree planting along existing boundary hedgerows of Fields A, D and E. New native hedgerow planting along the southern boundary of Field A and infill planting along southern boundary of Field D.		Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Moderate adverse</i>
	Mature vegetation and landform limits visibility to the remainder of the site and the wider landscape, with only glimpses of higher ground in the distance.	<u>15 Years after planting:</u> Existing and proposed hedgerows and trees will have matured along the boundaries of Fields A, D and E to assist in filtering views of the development, however there will remain filtered and partial views to the panels on the rising ground of Field E. In summer, leaves on trees will reduce visibility, with only glimpses of PV panels on the higher ground of E.	Enhancement of existing tree planting on western boundary of Field E with additional tree and new hedgerow planting.  Reduced height panels positioned within Field A and the southern edge of Fields G and H near the high ground.		Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>



Photo continues on page 24

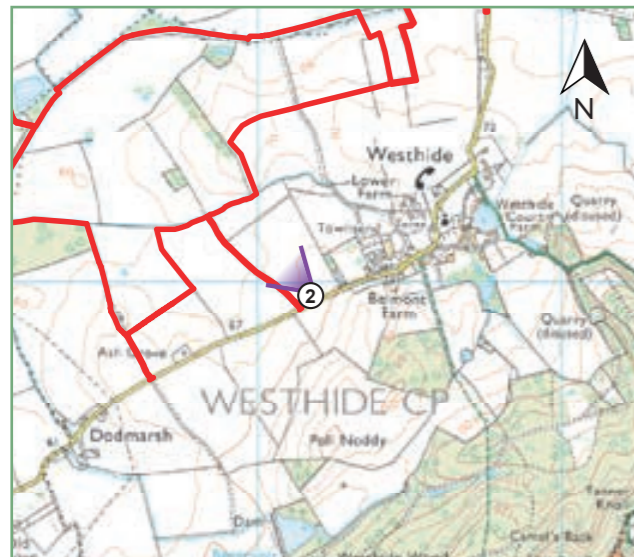




Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change > (Impact)	Visual Effects		
2. From lane to Westhide, looking north-west  Distance from site: 44 m  Refer to AVR Viewpoint 02 in Appendix F	Users of the road (motorists) are afforded a view across an agricultural landscape of fields bound by clipped hedgerows and mature tree belts.  The site lies in the middle distance with partial visibility to Fields A, C and D across the clipped hedgerows. There are filtered views in to Field E through the boundary vegetation, and the high ground south of Field G is also visible.  Mature vegetation and landform limits visibility to the remainder of the site and the wider landscape, with only glimpses of higher ground in the distance.	<u>During Construction:</u> Construction activity associated with the development in Fields A, C, D and E will be partially visible as will activity on the high ground of Field G, including the new access track.	Retention of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries within the view with gaps infilled. Relaxed management of hedgerows to allow greater growth height of field boundaries.	<b>Overall sensitivity: Low-Medium</b>  Value of the View: <i>Low</i> (From local road. No designation, not popular viewpoint)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>Medium</i> (View experienced by motorists travelling on a scenic route where the view is moderately important to the quality of the journey.)	Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Moderate adverse</i>		
		<u>On Completion:</u> PV panels (front elevation), CCTV, fencing, and new tree planting will be visible in Fields A, C, D. Due to the low hedgerows, these areas will initially appear as a single expanse of panels. The majority of development in Field E will be filtered by the existing vegetation, however PV panels will be visible on the rising ground. The access track up to Field G will be visible.	New tree planting along existing boundary hedgerows of Fields A, C and D.				Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Moderate adverse</i>
		<u>15 Years after planting:</u> Existing hedgerows and proposed trees will have matured along the boundaries of Fields A, C and D to assist in filtering views of the development and break up the expanse of PV panels, however the development will still be noticeable. New hedgerow planting along the southern boundary of Field G will have matured to screen the development. In summer, leaves on the trees will reduce visibility, with only glimpses of PV panels in Fields A and D, and on the higher ground of E.	Reduced height panels positioned within Field A and the southern edge of Field G near the high ground.  New native hedgerow planting along the southern boundary of Field G.				Size/ scale: <i>Low</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>



Photo continues on page 26



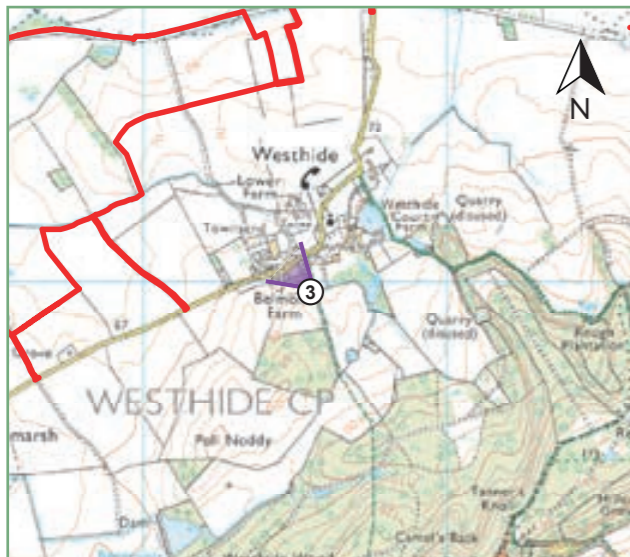


Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects
3. From PRoW WS1, looking north-west.  Distance from site: 385 m  Refer to AVR Viewpoint 03 in Appendix F	Users of the PRoW (pedestrians) are afforded a long distance view across the rural landscape.  The site lies in the middle distance mostly obscured by the built forms and vegetation of Westhide in the foreground, with only the high ground of Field G and H visible in the middle distance.	<u>During Construction:</u> Construction activity associated with the development on the high ground of Fields G and H will be visible.	New native hedgerow planting along the southern boundary of Fields G and H.	<b>Overall sensitivity: Medium</b>  Value of the View: <i>Medium</i> (No designation, not popular viewpoint but PRoW valued at local level)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>High</i> (View is experienced by people on the PRoW, likely to be focussed on the local landscape)	Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Negligible adverse</i>
		<u>On Completion:</u> The development will be mostly obscured by the existing vegetation, landform and built form. CCTV, fencing, new hedgerow planting and small portion of PV panels (front elevation) on the southern boundary of Field G will be visible across the high ground, largely filtered by vegetation in the foreground.	Reduced height panels positioned along southern edge of Field G near the high ground.		Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Negligible adverse</i>
		<u>15 Years after planting:</u> New hedgerow planting along the southern boundary of Field G will have matured to screen the development.			Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Negligible adverse</i>

Photo continues on page 29



Photo continues on page 28





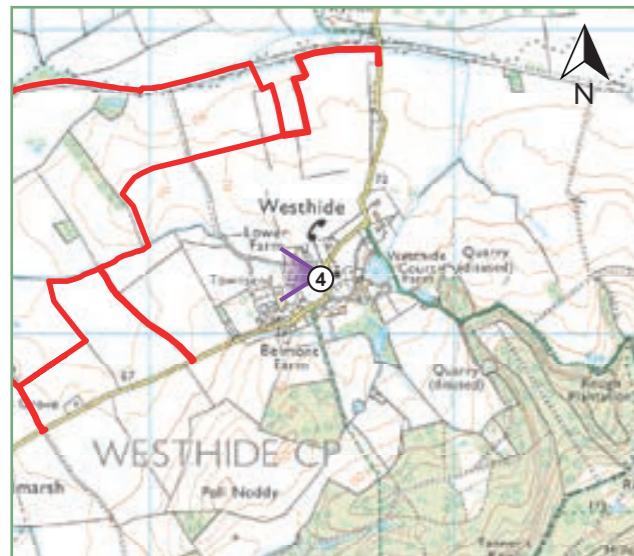
Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects		
4. From grounds of St Bartholomew's Church, looking north-west  Distance from site: 255 m  Refer to AVR Viewpoint 04 in Appendix F	Users of the church yard (pedestrians/visitors) are afforded a restricted view to the local and distant landscape, largely obscured by the surrounding built forms and vegetation in Westside.  From a gap between buildings, Field A and B are partially visible in the middle distance. The proposed position of the access track is visible on the high ground south of Field G.	<u>During Construction:</u> Construction activity associated with the development will be within Fields A and B would be visible, but barely discernible due to the distance. Activity will be glimpsed on the access track to Field G on the high ground.	Retention of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries within the view with gaps infilled. Relaxed management of hedgerows to allow greater growth height of field boundaries.	<b>Overall sensitivity: High</b>  Value of the View: <i>High</i> (From the grounds of a listed building and scheduled monument where the views form an important part of the experience.)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>High</i> (View is experienced by visitors to the church yard, where views of the surroundings form an important part of the experience)	Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>		
		<u>On Completion:</u> The development will be mostly obscured by the existing vegetation and built form. PV panels (side elevation), CCTV, fencing, and new tree planting will be barely perceptible in Field A. The new substation and security fencing will be partially visible in Field B behind the existing boundary hedgerow and trees in Field A. Glimpsed views of the access track up to Field G.	New tree planting along existing boundary hedgerows of Field A.  Advanced planting of hedgerow and trees around the proposed substation in Field B.				Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
		<u>15 Years after planting:</u> Existing and proposed hedgerows and trees will have matured along the boundaries of Field A and B to create layers of vegetation to assist in filtering views of the development. Glimpsed views of the access track, and users of the permissive path, up to Field G will remain. In summer, leaves on the trees will completely screen the development in Fields A and B.	Reduced height panels positioned within Field A.  Substation and security fencing finished with green colour.				Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	





Access track to  
Fields G and H

Photo continues on page 30



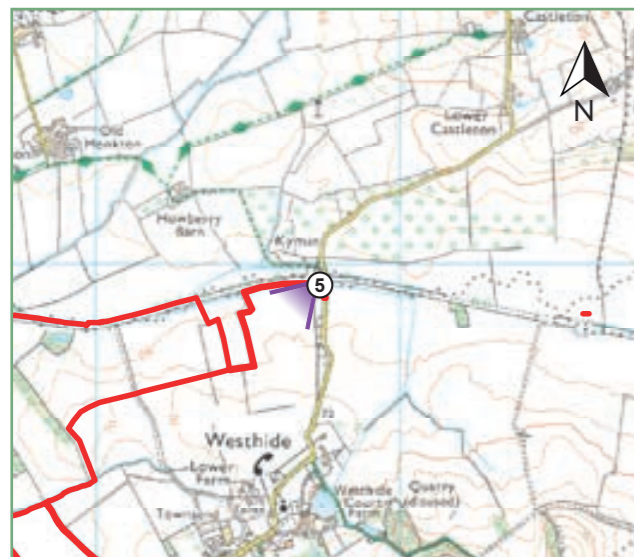


Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects
5. From lane to Westhide, near Canal House, looking south-west.  Distance from site: 385 m  Refer to AVR Viewpoint 05 in <b>Appendix F</b>	Users of the road (motorists) are afforded a glimpsed and filtered views through the vegetation towards the eastern end of the site. The rising ground of Fields G and H are visible in the middle-distance, whilst Field I is obscured by hedgerows.	<u>During Construction:</u> Construction activity associated with the development will be within Fields G,H and I	Retention of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries within the view with gaps infilled. Relaxed management of hedgerows to allow greater growth height of field boundaries.	<b>Overall sensitivity: Low</b>  Value of the View: <i>Low</i> (From local road. No designation, not popular viewpoint)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>Low-Medium</i> (View experienced by motorists travelling on a scenic route where the view is moderately important to the quality of the journey, however is fleeting)	Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
	Mature vegetation and landform limits visibility to the remainder of the site and the wider landscape, with only glimpses of higher ground in the distance.	<u>On Completion:</u> The development will be mostly obscured by the existing vegetation and landform. PV panels (side elevation), CCTV, fencing and new tree planting will be partially visible in Fields G, H and I.	New tree planting along existing boundary hedgerows of Fields G, H and I.		Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
		<u>15 Years after planting:</u> Existing hedgerows and proposed tree planting will have matured to create layers of vegetation to assist in filtering views of the development. In summer, leaves on the trees will completely screen the development in Fields G and H.	Reduced height panels positioned within Field I.		Size/ scale: <i>Low</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Negligible adverse</i>

Photo continues on page 33



Photo continues on page 32

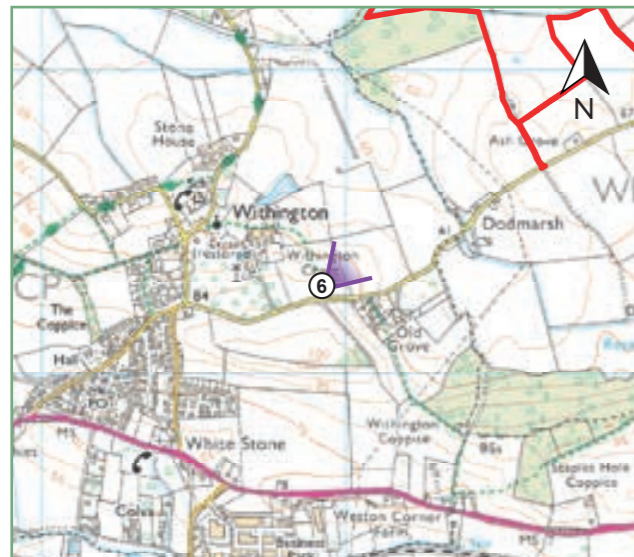




Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects		
6. From PRoW WT31, near Withington Court, looking north-east.  Distance from site: 815 m  Refer to AVR Viewpoint 06 in <b>Appendix F</b>	Users of the PRoW (pedestrians) are afforded a long distance, panoramic view across the undulating, rural landscape with strong linear boundary features, including hedgerows and tree belts.  The site lies in the middle distance with clear visibility into Fields D, E, and partial visibility of Field A and F. Field C is obscured by mature woodland in the foreground, whilst Fields G and H, obscured by the tree belt on the high ground.  The polytunnels at Monkton Farm are a notable feature in the view just beyond the site (refer to Cumulative Assessment).	<b>During Construction:</b> Construction activity associated with the development will be within Fields A, D, E and F, and along the southern site access track.	Retention of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries within the view with gaps infilled. Relaxed management of hedgerows to allow greater growth height of field boundaries.  New tree planting along existing boundary hedgerows of Fields A, D and F.  Enhancement of existing tree planting on western boundary of Field E with additional tree and new hedgerow planting.	<b>Overall sensitivity: Medium</b>  Value of the View: <i>Medium</i> (No designation, not popular viewpoint but PRoW valued at local level)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>High</i> (View is experienced by people on the PRoW, likely to be focussed on the local landscape)	Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Moderate adverse</i>		
		<b>On Completion:</b> PV panels (front elevation), CCTV, fencing and new planting will be visible in Fields A, D, E. Whilst hedgerows are low in height, the array will appear as a single expanse across these fields. Development in Field F will be partially visible, separated from the rest of the development by surrounding vegetation. The access track to Field G will be partially visible?					Size/ scale: <i>Medium</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Moderate adverse</i>
		<b>15 Years after planting:</b> Existing and proposed hedgerows and trees will have matured along the field boundaries to assist in filtering views of the development and compliment the linear pattern of boundary features. The expanse of panels in Fields A, D and E will appear more fragmented, whilst development in Field F will be largely obscured. Due to the elevated position of the view, areas of panels will still be visible past the tree planting on the rising ground of Field E and to the centre of Field D. Users of the permissive path will not be visible. In summer, leaves on trees will screen most of the development, with only glimpses of PV panels to the centre of Field D and on the higher ground of E remaining.						



Photo continues on page 34





Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects
7. From grounds of the Church of St Peter, looking north-east.  Distance from site: 970 m	Users of the church yard and PRoW (pedestrians/visitors) are afforded a long distance view across the local, rural landscape.  The site lies in the middle distance mostly obscured from view by intervening layers of mature vegetation and local landform.  The western boundary hedgerow of Field A and southern site access track is partially visible.	<u>During Construction:</u> Construction activity associated with the development will be glimpsed in Field A and along the southern site access track.	Retention of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries within the view. Relaxed management of hedgerows to allow greater growth height of field boundaries.	<b>Overall sensitivity: High</b>  Value of the View: <i>High</i> (From the grounds of a listed building and scheduled monument where the view forms an important part of the experience.)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>High</i> (View is experienced by people on the PRoW and visitors to the church yard, where views of the surroundings form an important part of the experience)	Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
		<u>On Completion:</u> The development and associated boundary treatments will be mostly obscured by the existing vegetation and landform. A small area of PV panels (side elevation), CCTV, fencing and new tree planting will be partially visible in south-west corner of Field A over the boundary hedgerow.	New tree planting along existing boundary hedgerows of Field A.		Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
		<u>15 Years after planting:</u> Existing hedgerows and proposed tree planting along the western boundary of Field A will have matured to screen the development.			Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>

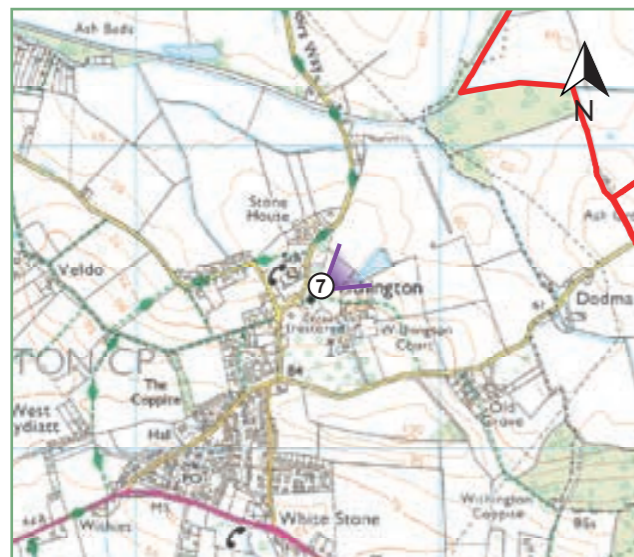


Photo continues on page 36



Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects
8. From PRoW WT10, looking north-east.  Distance from site: 1440 m	Users of the PRoW (pedestrians) are afforded a long distance, panoramic view across the undulating, rural landscape. The village of Withington lies in the foreground alongside arable fields.  The site lies in the middle distance, largely obscured from view by the layers of intervening mature vegetation in the foreground. There are glimpsed and filtered views to the south-east corner of Field E where it rises.  The polytunnels at Monkton Farm are a visible feature in the view north of the site. (refer to Cumulative Assessment).	<b>During Construction:</b> Construction activity associated with the development will be glimpsed within Field E and along the adjacent access track up to Fields G.	Young tree planting along western boundary of Field E retained and enhanced with additional tree and hedgerow planting.	<b>Overall sensitivity: Medium</b>  Value of the View: <i>Medium</i> (No designation, not popular viewpoint but PRoW valued at local level)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>High</i> (View is experienced by people on the PRoW, likely to be focussed on the local landscape)	Size/ scale: <i>Low</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
		<b>On Completion:</b> The development and associated boundary treatments will be mostly obscured by the existing vegetation and landform. PV panels (side elevation), CCTV, fencing and new hedgerow planting will be visible in Field E.	New hedgerow and tree planting on the eastern boundary of Field E, adjacent to access track to Field G.		Size/ scale: <i>Low</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
		<b>15 Years after planting:</b> Existing and proposed tree planting along the western boundary of Field E will have matured to assist in filtering views of development in Field E, however panels will remain visible on the highest ground of Field E. In summer, leaves on the trees within the landscape will remove the filtered views of the site, leaving a glimpsed view to a small area on the high ground of Field E.			Size/ scale: <i>Low</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>

Photo continues on page 39





Photo continues on page 38



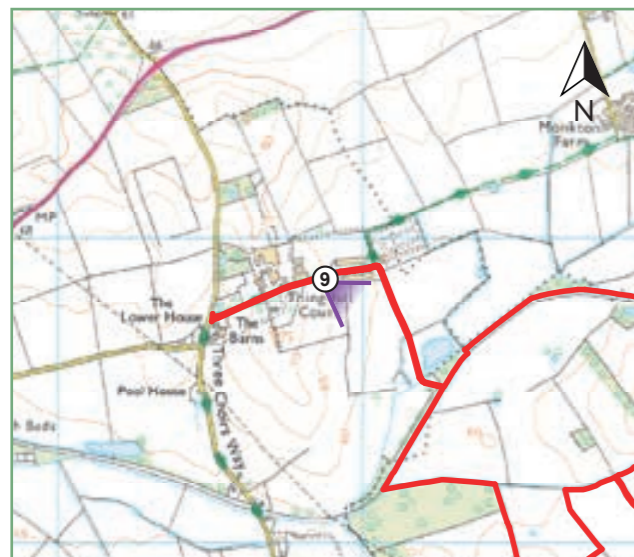


Three Choirs Way  
(PRoW WT21)

Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects
9. From Three Choirs Way (PRoW WT21), looking south-east.  Distance from site: 615 m	Users of the long distance footpath (pedestrians) are afforded a brief view from a break in the hedgerow to the operational area of the tree nursery and surrounding fields in the foreground.	<b>During Construction:</b> Construction activity associated with the development will be glimpsed within Field D and along the temporary site access track running north from Field F, set behind the hedgerow and trees in the foreground. Construction traffic will also be visible passing along the route of the PRoW in the foreground.	Retention of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries within the view. Relaxed management of hedgerows to allow greater growth height of field boundaries.	<b>Overall sensitivity: High</b>  Value of the View: <i>High</i> (Long Distance Footpath with important cultural associations and where the view forms part of the experience)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>High</i> (View is experienced by people on the PRoW, likely to be focussed on the local landscape)	Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
	The site lies in the middle distance, mostly obscured by the mature vegetation along the disused canal and mature trees in the foreground. Fields D and F can be glimpsed in the view, either filtered by the mature vegetation or through a break in the trees. The construction access will run from Field F, set behind existing hedgerows, up to and along the PRoW in the foreground.	<b>On Completion:</b> The development will be mostly obscured by the existing vegetation and landform. Filtered and glimpsed views of PV panels (rear elevation), CCTV, fencing and new tree planting in Fields F and D.	New tree planting along existing boundary hedgerows of Field D.		Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
	The wooded, high ground of Shucknall Hill and White Hill is visible in the distance.	<b>15 Years after planting:</b> Existing hedgerows and mitigation tree planting will have matured to assist in screening development in Field D. Filtered and glimpsed views of development in Field F will remain. In summer, leaves on the surrounding trees will remove filtered views into the site, leaving only a glimpsed view into Field F.			Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>



Photo continues on page 40





Approximate extent of the site

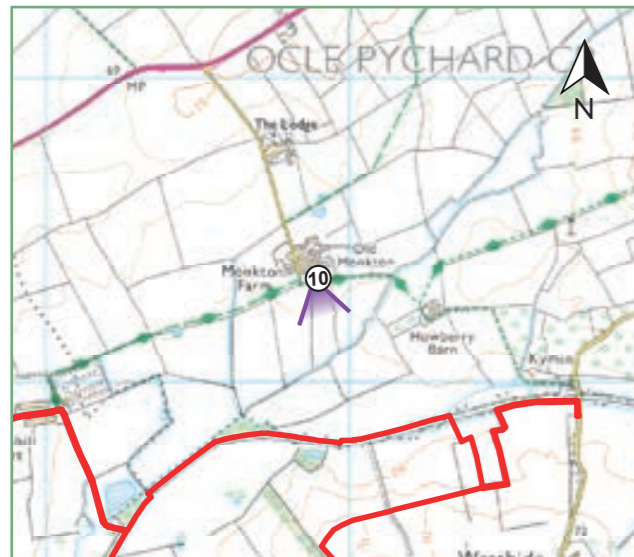
Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects
10. From Three Choirs Way (PRoW OP10), by Old Monkton, looking south.  Distance from site: 550 m	Users of the long distance footpath (pedestrians) are afforded a short distance view to an agricultural field in the foreground. Mature vegetation along the disused canal and local landform obscure much of the site and the wider landscape from view.  There are glimpsed and filtered views to the higher ground of Field G in the middle distance. The wooded high ground of Shucknall Hill is visible in the distance.	<u>During Construction:</u> Construction activity associated with the development in Fields G will be visible, filtered through the existing vegetation.	New native hedgerow planting along southern boundary of Field G.	<b>Overall sensitivity: High</b>  Value of the View: <i>High</i> (Long Distance Footpath with important cultural associations and where the view forms part of the experience)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>High</i> (View is experienced by people on the PRoW, likely to be focussed on the local landscape)	Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
		<u>On Completion:</u> The development and associated boundary treatments will be mostly obscured by the existing vegetation and landform. Views of PV panels (rear elevations), CCTV, fencing and new hedgerow planting in Field G will be glimpsed and filtered by the existing vegetation.			Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
		<u>15 Years after planting:</u> Mitigation planting along the southern boundary of Field G will have matured, however will be barely discernible. In summer, leaves on the intervening trees will remove the filtered views of the development in Field G.			Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>

Photo continues on page 43



Field G

Photo continues on page 42

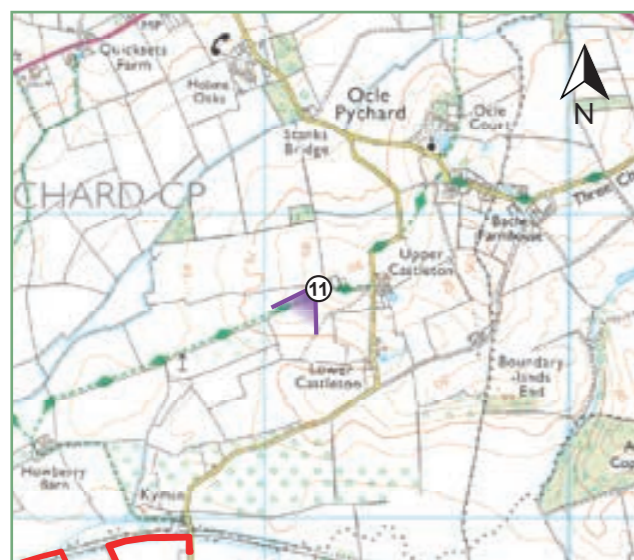




Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects
11. From Three Choirs Way (PRoW OP12), looking south-west.  Distance from site: 1230 m	Users of the long distance footpath (pedestrians) are afforded a brief, long distance and panoramic view across the local, rural landscape, with the village of Westhide and wooded high ground of Shucknall Hill in the mid-ground.  The site lies in the middle-distance, largely obscured from view by intervening local landform and mature vegetation. Partial and oblique views to the high ground of Fields G and H.	<u>During Construction:</u> Construction activity associated with the development in Fields G and H will be filtered through the existing vegetation.	Retention of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries within the view. Relaxed management of hedgerows to allow greater growth height of field boundaries.  New native hedgerow planting along southern boundary of Fields G and H.	<b>Overall sensitivity: High</b>  Value of the View: <i>High</i> (Long Distance Footpath with important cultural associations and where the view forms part of the experience)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>High</i> (View is experienced by people on the PRoW, likely to be focussed on the local landscape)	Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Temporary</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
		<u>On Completion:</u> The development and associated boundary treatments will be mostly obscured by the existing vegetation and landform. PV panels (side elevations), CCTV, fencing and new hedgerow planting in Fields G and H will be barely perceptible and filtered by the existing vegetation.			Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>
		<u>15 Years after planting:</u> Mitigation planting along the southern boundary of Fields G and H will have matured, however will be barely discernible. In summer, leaves on the tree in the foreground will screen most of the view towards the site.			Size/ scale: <i>Negligible</i> Geographical Extent: <i>Localised</i> Duration/ Reversibility: <i>Long-term, reversible</i>	<i>Minor adverse</i>



Photo continues on page 44





Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects
12. From PRoW OP8#1, looking south.  Distance from site: 1510 m	Users of the PRoW are afforded a glimpsed view from a field access to a field in the foreground and the wooded high ground of Shucknall Hill and White Hill in the distance. The site lies in the middle distance obscured from view by layers of intervening vegetation and landform.  The field in the foreground is part of a polytunnel development which was being constructed at the time of site visit. This view will be seasonally obscured by polytunnels (February - November) and permanent polytunnels will be visible through the hedgerow beyond.	<u>During Construction:</u> No change	N/A	<b>Overall sensitivity: Medium</b>  Value of the View: <i>Medium</i> (No designation, not popular viewpoint but PRoW valued at local level)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>High</i> (View is experienced by people on the PRoW, likely to be focussed on the local landscape)	Size/ scale: <i>No Change</i>	<i>No Change</i>
		<u>On Completion:</u> No change				<i>No Change</i>
		<u>15 Years after planting:</u> No change				<i>No Change</i>

Photo continues on page 47



Approximate extent of the site

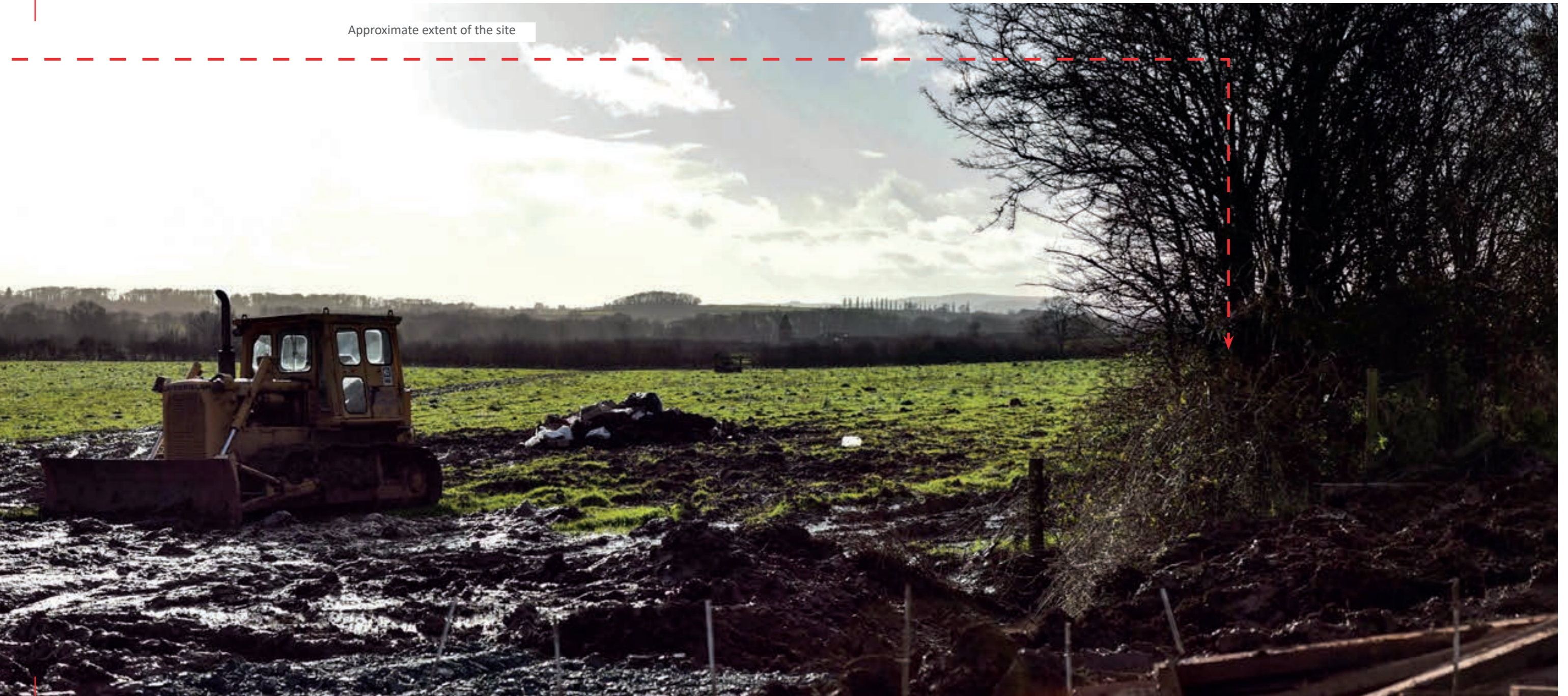
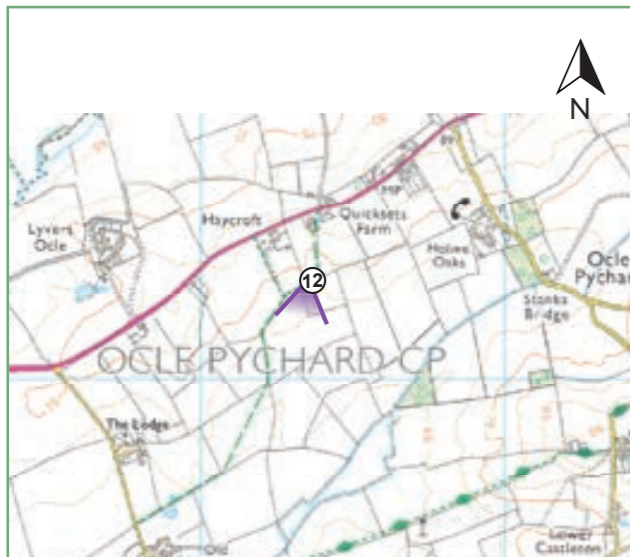


Photo continues on page 46





Viewpoint No. and Location	Description of Baseline View	Description of Change	Mitigation and Relevant Considerations	Sensitivity >	Magnitude of Change (Impact) >	Visual Effects
13. From PRoW PW9, looking south-east.  Distance from site: 2630 m	Users of the PRoW (pedestrian) are afforded a long distance and panoramic view across the undulating rural landscape, with the village of Westhide and wooded high ground of Shucknall Hill and White Hill in the mid-ground and further high ground in the distance.  The site lies in the middle-distance, largely obscured from view by intervening local landform and mature vegetation. Highly filtered views are afforded to the high ground of Fields G and H.	<u>During Construction:</u> Construction activity associated with the development in Fields G and H will not be perceptible and filtered by the existing vegetation.	New native hedgerow planting along southern boundary of Fields G and H.	<b>Overall sensitivity: Medium</b>  Value of the View: <i>Medium</i> (No designation, not popular viewpoint but PRoW valued at local level)  Visual receptor susceptibility to change: <i>High</i> (View is experienced by people on the PRoW, likely to be focussed on the local landscape)	Size/ scale: <i>No Change</i>	<i>No Change</i>
		<u>On Completion:</u> The development and associated boundary treatments will be mostly obscured by the existing vegetation and landform. PV panels (side elevations), CCTV, fencing and new hedgerow planting on high ground of Fields G and H will not be perceptible and filtered by the existing vegetation.			Size/ scale: <i>No Change</i>	<i>No Change</i>
		<u>15 Years after planting:</u> Mitigation planting along the southern boundary of Fields G and H will have matured, however will not be discernible. In summer, leaves on the trees in the landscape will removed filtered views of the site.			Size/ scale: <i>No Change</i>	<i>No Change</i>

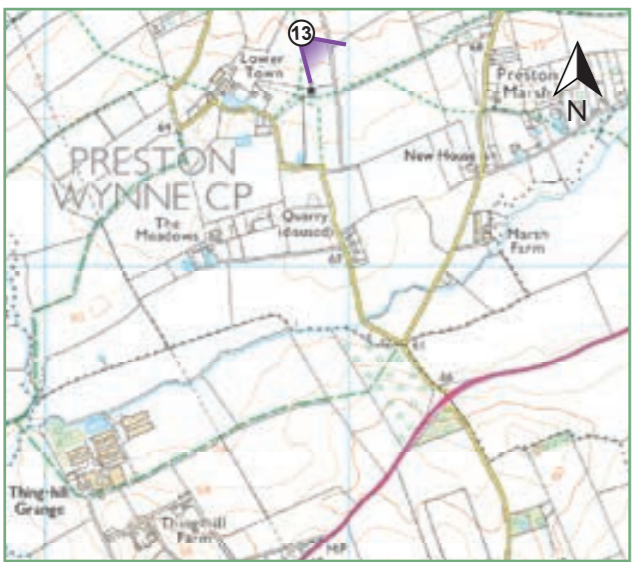
Photo continues on page 49

Approximate extent of the site  
(Obscured by landform and vegetation)

Shucknall Hill



Photo continues on page 48



# 12.0 SECONDARY LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL MITIGATION

## During Construction

- 12.1. Existing trees and hedgerows that are to be retained within the proposed development should be protected during construction activity. Measures should be implemented (in accordance with BS 5837 Trees in relation of Design, Demolition and Construction, 2012 and the Habitat Regulations, 1997) to ensure that hedgerows which will not be felled/ removed, do not suffer direct damage through operations on site or indirect damage from spillages within the root zone or storage causing root compaction. A 'no-dig' policy should be introduced close to Root Protection Areas.
- 12.2. Lighting may be necessary during construction working hours in the winter months when daylight is reduced, to enable safe working. To minimise sky glow, light spill and glare the following mitigation measures should be applied:
- Lighting should only focus on the area needed for construction activity, public amenity and safety;
  - Vertical light spillage to be kept to a minimum. Lighting equipment should be chosen to minimise the upward spread of light where possible, minimising the use of lighting columns; and
  - To reduce the glare of lighting, the main beam angle should be adjusted so as not to be directed towards potential observers;
- 12.3. Introduce a phased programme of works to minimise disturbance.
- 12.4. Topsoil and subsoil excavated from site should be stockpiled within the site in accordance with the Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites.

## After Completion

### Buildings, boundary treatments and features

12.5. Mitigation measures that are recommended include:

- New ancillary features (e.g. fencing, substations and inverters), where possible, should be unobtrusive and finished in green.

### Lighting

12.6. Due to the nature of the proposed development, there will be no need for new sources of artificial lighting.

### Maintenance / management

12.7. Mitigation measures recommended include:

- A long term Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Plan (LEMP, TLP December 2021) has been prepared alongside this report to secure protection and long term survival of existing and proposed planting and nature conservation interests. Future maintenance and management should be carried out in accordance with the LEMP, which includes clear aims and objectives for different habitat regimes.

12.8. A key component of the LEMP is the management of both existing and proposed hedges on site which will be maintained at a minimum height of 3 m for the benefit of ecology as well as to aid visual screening.

# 13.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

## Baseline

- 13.1. The site, approximately 61.7 ha in area, is comprised primarily of eight arable fields in the rural landscape to the north-west of Westhide and north-east of Withington. No public rights of way (PRoW) cross the site, the nearest include a PRoW south of Westhide and PRoW east of Withington, which are elevated in places with views across the site. A number of PRoW cross the landscape to the north, including the Three Choirs Way Long Distance Footpath, which have limited visibility due to intervening landform and vegetation.
- 13.2. The application site is not covered by any statutory landscape designations. There are a number of heritage assets within the study area. Listed buildings which interact with the site include those at Westhide, including the Grade I listed Church of St Bartholomew and the Grade II The Post Office. Withington is designated as a Conservation Area with additional listed buildings, and interaction with the site was also found with the Grade II\* Church of St Peter. Both church yards contain Schedule Monuments in the form of Crosses. East of Withington Conservation area lies the Grade II listed Withington Court which has limited interaction with the site, with oblique and filtered views. Due to intervening landform, mature vegetation and built form, this assessment found no likely impact other on heritage assets in the study area.
- 13.3. The disused Herefordshire to Gloucestershire Canal which runs along the northern boundary of the site is not a listed asset, however, canals are identified within the Herefordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (HGIS) as historic features, stating that "*historic connections and transport routes between settlements should be preserved and enhanced*".

## Landscape Character

- 13.4. The site is typical of the local rural landscape, with medium sized fields defined by clipped hedgerow boundaries and with occasional hedgerow trees. The site is low lying in areas along the northern boundary, adjacent to the route of the disused canal, rising gently to the south and is more undulating to the east. Mature wet woodland along the disused canal is a linear feature and provides a high degree of enclosure from the wider landscape to the north. The southern and eastern boundaries are typically comprised of low clipped hedgerows with areas of mature woodland and overgrown hedgerow which affords partial and filtered views to the local landscape. The higher ground to the east affords increased levels of inter-visibility with the wider landscape. There is generally a sense of tranquillity on the site itself due to its rural context, the enclosure from mature vegetation, the limited road network and the few intrusions from pylons and built form.
- 13.5. The wider landscape containing the site is defined by the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment as LCT 'Estate Farmlands' and LCT 'Riverside Meadows'. The former is characterised by its medium-large fields defined by hedgerows, its planned woodland character and geometrically shaped plantation woodlands. LCT 'Riverside Meadows' is characterised by its flat, alluvial plane, unsettled landscape, hedge and ditch boundaries and its linear patterns of willow and alder.
- 13.6. Scattered development is found within the wider landscape, including telegraph poles which run from Westhide in the south-east up to the site and across the site along the southern boundaries of Fields C and D. Polytunnels are a recurring feature in the landscape, with developments to the south-east and north-east. A large polytunnel development to the north near Ocle Pychard was under construction at the time of site visit and is assessed as part of the cumulative assessment in **Appendix G**

- 13.7. Layers of mature vegetation across the local landscape, including the mature wet woodland along the canal, result in limited opportunities for views towards the site. Local views (under 0.5 km) are limited to local roads, PRoW and the church yard at Westhide, south-east and east of the site. Medium distance views (0.5 -2 km) are afforded from local roads, PRoW and the church yard at Withington, south-west of the site, together with PRoW to the north, including the Three Choirs Way. No distance views (over 2 km) were recorded.

## Proposed Development

- 13.8. The proposed development is for a 34.6 MW solar photo-voltaic (PV) array and associated infrastructure, including fencing, substation, inverters, CCTV and access tracks. Existing hedgerow boundaries will be retained and enhanced by infilling gaps, new tree and hedgerow planting and relaxation of the maintenance regime to allow a greater height, all contributing to the screening of the development. New hedgerows will be planted to assist in screening, informed by historic field pattern and all areas around the panels will be seeded with wildflower grassland.
- 13.9. As part of the scheme, a circular permissive path is proposed as a connection to the Herefordshire to Gloucestershire Canal, via Westhide and Kymin, in accordance with aspirations within Policy LD4 (HCS) and the Herefordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy. The panels have been set back from the canal in order to respect this policy aspiration.

## Landscape Effects

- 13.10. The proposed development will have a *Moderate adverse* effect on LCT Estate Farmlands. The development will introduce solar PV arrays to the north-east edge of the LCT. Mature vegetation and landform provides a high level of containment from the north, east and west of the site. The more open southern boundary affords inter-visibility between the western end of the site and the wider LCT to the south and the changes will be noticeable.
- 13.11. The proposed development is unlikely to greatly impact on the character of LCT Riverside Meadows. The two fields in the north-west of the site are well contained by surrounding mature vegetation which separate them from the wider LCT. Any changes will be highly localised to the site and the immediate vicinity of the site to the south. The landscape effects are assessed as *Minor adverse*.
- 13.12. The development will not result in any direct impacts to the characteristics of the LCT. There is some inter-visibility from the north-east edge of the LCT around Withington, however this is limited to a very small area and the effects on the LCT Principal Settled Farmlands as a whole are judged to be *Negligible adverse*.
- 13.13. The character of the site will experience a *Medium* magnitude of impact resulting from the addition of the solar PV arrays and associated ancillary infrastructure. The development will retain and enhance all landscape features, together with introducing new hedgerows along historic field patterns. Due to the openness of the southern boundary, changes will be noticeable and the landscape effects assessed as *Moderate adverse* on the site and local environs.

## Views

13.14. In all cases, mitigation planting will assist in supporting management guidelines for the LCTs by enhancing key features of the LCTs and the site, such as woodland planting, field patterns and hedgerows.

13.15. Due to surrounding vegetation, topography and built form, the site forms little to no part of the landscape setting of local heritage assets and the landscape effects are assessed as *No Change to Minor Adverse*.

## Visual Effects

13.16. The site is well contained to the north by mature vegetation across the local landscape, which limits the visual effects on views from PRow and the Three Choirs Way, north and north-east of the site to *Negligible adverse* or *No Change*. The site is also well contained to the south by the higher ground of Shucknall Hill and White Hill, restricting views to local roads and PRow around Westhide and Withington where the effects are typically *Negligible adverse* to *Minor adverse*, due to intervening vegetation, topography and built form. The mitigation planting will assist in screening the development in the majority of views, reducing the visual effects.

13.17. The largest effects include views from the eastern end of the road to Westhide and from PRow WT31 on the eastern edge of Withington. Receptors in these locations are afforded direct views into the western part of the development due to the openness of the southern boundary. Due to the greater elevation of PRow WT31, the construction activities and development will be noticeable from this part of the route. From the eastern end of the road between Westhide and Withington construction activities and development will also be noticeable. The visual effects are assessed as *Moderate adverse* for both locations on completion. Mitigation planting will contribute to filtering views of the development in these locations, breaking up the expanse of panels and reducing the visual effects to *Minor adverse* from the road to Westhide.

13.18. Due to surrounding vegetation, landform and built form, few private properties or heritage assets have visibility of the site and the visual effects are not anticipated to be harmful.

## Policy Considerations

13.19. The thrust of planning policy is a requirement for proposed development to respect and enhance local landscape character including distinctive landscape features and environmental assets, together with residential amenity and the setting of heritage assets. The proposed development responds to this in terms of the siting in a well enclosed location, and the retention and enhancement of key landscape features. Proposals include a landscape masterplan which will provide enhanced boundaries, restoration of historic boundaries, new green infrastructure links and appropriate hedgerow and tree planting.

## Conclusion

13.20. The proposed development will result in some limited adverse effects, however, these will be highly localised to the site and its immediate environs. The scheme proposes a number of landscape enhancements to make a positive contribution to the local landscape character and reinforce the visual containment of the site from the wider landscape. Based on a review of the evidence considered above, and subject to the application of the mitigation measures set out in **Section 9**, this assessment concludes that the proposed development is acceptable in landscape and visual terms.