



UNION 4 PLANNING

IBE Hixons Ltd

Land at Hixon's Lane, Dale Abbey, Ilkeston,
Derbyshire DE7 4PG

Proposed development of a photovoltaic solar energy farm for the local generation of renewable electricity to the local distribution network, including access, landscaping and associated works

EIA Scoping Request

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Executive Summary

1. This document comprises a formal Scoping Request prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations').
2. This Scoping Request is submitted on behalf of IBE Hixons Ltd to Erewash Borough Council and relates to the proposed development of a photovoltaic solar energy farm on the site. This will comprise the installation of ground mounted photovoltaic panels which will collect sunlight and convert it into a renewable energy source.
3. The photovoltaic panels will be arranged in a series of arrays across the site and the proposal will include supporting infrastructure in the form of inverters and private switchgear equipment. The proposal will have a design life of up to 40 years. The site would then be restored for future use as agricultural land at the end of its operational lifetime. The proposals will be the subject of a planning application to Erewash Borough Council.
4. IBE Hixons Ltd is the Applicant and developer of the proposed development. This Scoping Request is prepared by Union4 Planning, who act as planning advisers to IBE Hixons Ltd.
5. The summary description of the proposed development is as follows:

"Proposed development of a photovoltaic solar energy farm for the local generation of renewable electricity to the local distribution network, including access, landscaping and associated works."

6. The site comprises approximately 32 hectares (ha) and is proposed to provide a solar energy farm that will export up to 20 megawatts (MW) to the local distribution network. A solar energy farm of this scale would be expected to provide sufficient electricity to power approximately 6,305 homes and make a carbon saving of 4,076 tonnes annually.
7. Solar energy farms take advantage of what is known as the photovoltaic effect. Photovoltaics may be defined as the direct conversion of sunlight into electrical current and is achieved with the aid of solar modules. In its basic form, the technology is very simple. Solar electricity is produced from direct sunlight as well as from the more diffuse light of cloudy days. To extract maximum performance from the system, components must be matched and optimally adjusted to suit the design of the particular site and its location.
8. A solar power system is made up of an array of modules connected together in series in what is known as 'strings'. Several strings are connected in parallel with an inverter, which turns the DC into grid-compliant AC and feeds it into the energy provider's electricity network.
9. The Applicant submitted a Screening Request to Erewash Borough Council on 18 November 2024 and was of the opinion that the proposal did not constitute EIA development and that a formal Environmental Statement (ES) would not be required under the Regulations.

10. Erewash Borough Council issued a Screening Opinion on the 20 December 2024 advising as follows:

"On the basis of the above, the council is of the view that the development is likely to have a significant impact on landscape and visual amenity. It exceeds the thresholds in Schedule 2. The council therefore concludes that the development requires an Environmental Statement with the planning application."

11. The Screening Opinion on matters pertaining to landscape and visual impact, which we considered could be dealt with in a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Notwithstanding this, we hereby request Erewash Borough Council's advice regarding the scope of the EIA required for the proposed development.
12. The EIA is proposed to be undertaken in accordance with the details and methodology outlined in this Scoping Request. The results of the EIA process will be set out in the form of an Environmental Statement and Non-Technical Summary which will comply with the requirements of the EIA Regulations and set out the key aspects of the assessment relevant to the determination of the application.
13. The view of Erewash Borough Council is, therefore, invited on the scope of the proposed EIA and the matters to be considered.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This document comprises a formal Scoping Request prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations').
- 1.2 This Scoping Request is submitted on behalf of the Applicant, IBE Hixons Ltd, and relates to a parcel of land at Hixon's Lane, Dale Abbey, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 4PG. The site comprises an area of 32 hectares (ha) and is located in the countryside.
- 1.3 The proposed development comprises a solar energy farm which will export up to 20 megawatts (MW) to the local distribution network. The proposed development does not fall under the legislation pertaining to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects ('NSIP'). The relevant threshold for solar photovoltaic projects is >50MW.
- 1.4 The proposals will be the subject of a planning application to Erewash Borough Council, which is likely to be submitted in mid-2025.
- 1.5 The identification of the application site at Hixons Lane followed on from an initial site selection process and planning appraisal to assess it for its suitability to accommodate a prospective solar farm development.

2.0 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The site is located within the Borough of Erewash in Derbyshire. It is located on Land at Hixon’s Lane, Dale Abbey, Ilkeston, DE7 4PG and covers an area of approximately 32ha. It has access from Hixon’s Lane which runs along part of the northwest boundary, and from No Man’s Lane which runs along the southern boundary.
- 2.2 The site is bound to the southeast by adjacent parcels of agricultural land, to the northeast by an area of woodland, to the south by No Man’s Lane and to the west by surrounding roads and adjacent parcels of land. The approximate red line boundary is shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Site Location (boundary approximate)

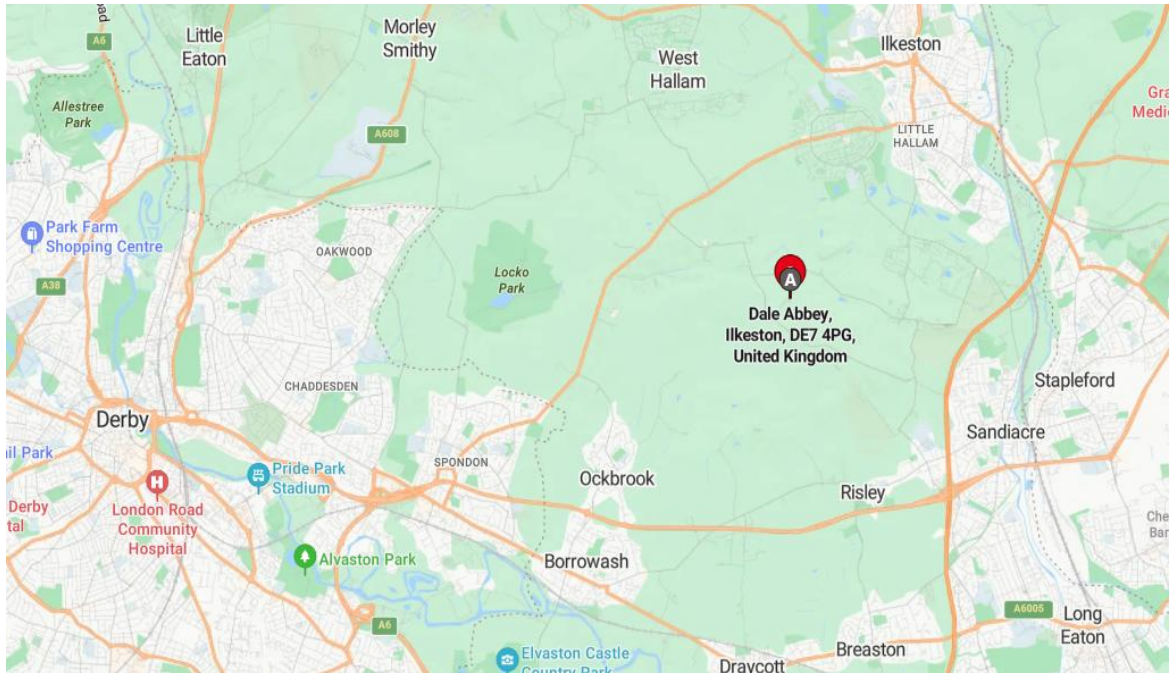


Source: Google Maps (2024)

- 2.3 The site contains a series of fields each separated by hedgerows and trees, which comprise actively farmed arable land.
- 2.4 The site is located wholly within the Green Belt. It has a rural location with limited built development surrounding the site. There are a small number of dispersed dwellings near the site, Moorlands Farm to the northwest and a small cluster of properties including Dalemoor Farm directly adjoining the site to the southwest. There are further small clusters of properties including Grove Farm (Grade II listed) and Grove Cottage to the north off Dale Road. To the east is High Lodge Farm. The impact and setting of these heritage assets will be considered in any application submission.

- 2.5 The nearest settlements are Stanton-By-Dale approximately 1.2km to the east and Dale Abbey approximately 1km to the west.
- 2.6 Erewash Borough is situated between the two cities of Nottingham and Derby, both large urban conurbations. Around three-quarters of the Borough is designated as Green Belt.

Figure 2: Location within the Wider Context



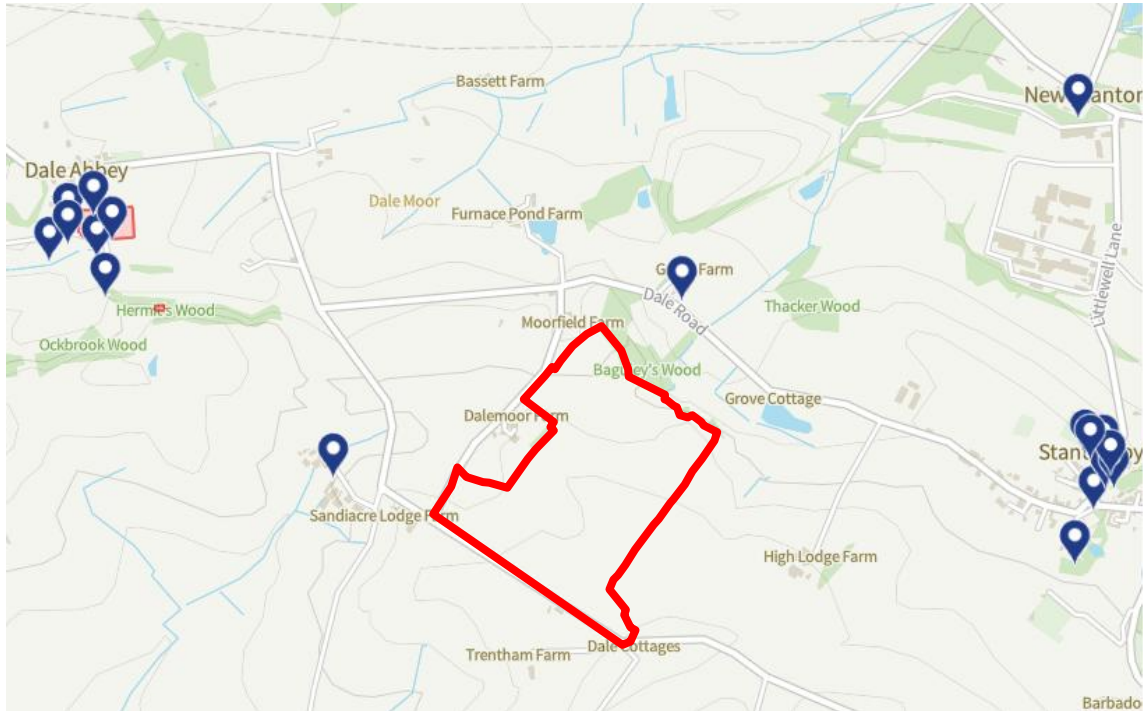
Source: Bing Maps (2024)

Heritage Assets

- 2.7 The site is not within a Conservation Area and there are no listed buildings within the site or immediate surroundings.
- 2.8 The closest heritage assets are the Grade II Listed Grove Farmhouse on Dale Road to the northeast of the site and the Grade II Boyah Grange, on Potato Pit Lane to the southwest of the site. Located in Hermitage Wood is the Hermitage Scheduled Monument. Due to intervening built form and dense areas of woodland, there is no visibility of these nearby heritage assets to or from the site and thus, it is unlikely that the proposed development would have any impact on their settings.
- 2.9 Moving further away from the site there are a cluster of Heritage Assets to the west in the Hamlet of Dale Abbey including the Grade I Abbey Ruins, the Grade II listed Abbey Manor House and Dale Abbey Ancient Monument. The wider area surrounding the Ancient Monument is a Conservation Area.
- 2.10 To the east, several Listed Buildings can be found in Stanton-by-Dale including the Grade II Church of St Michael and All Angels, the War Memorial, Middlemore’s Alms-houses and a number of

buildings in the centre of the village on Stanhope Street. These heritage assets are located within a conservation area.

Figure 3: Nearby Heritage Assets

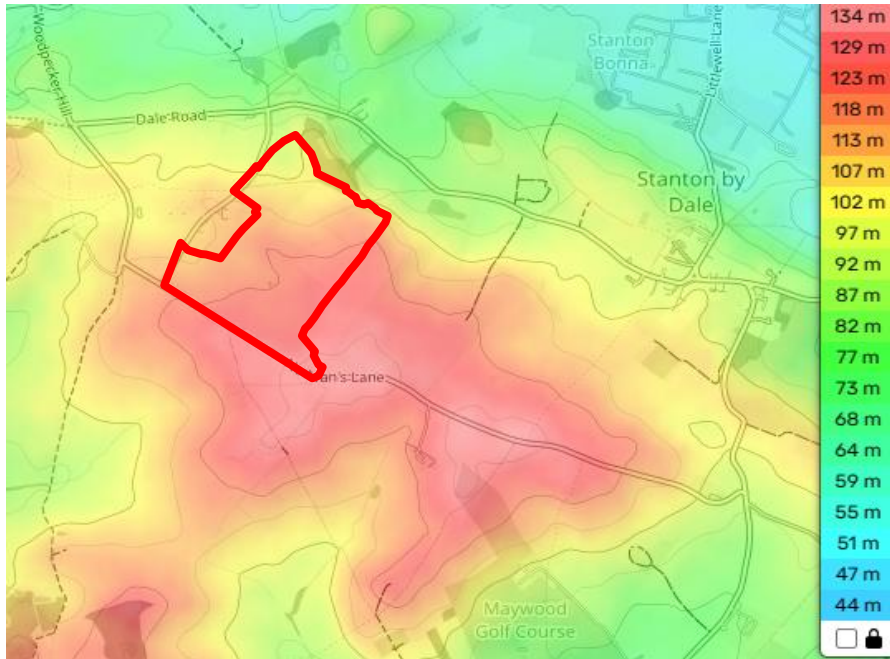


Source: Historic England (2023)

Topography

- 2.11 The topography of the site has a gentle gradient with an incline from Hixon's Lane up to the centre of the site from circa 100m up to 130m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

Figure 4: Topography

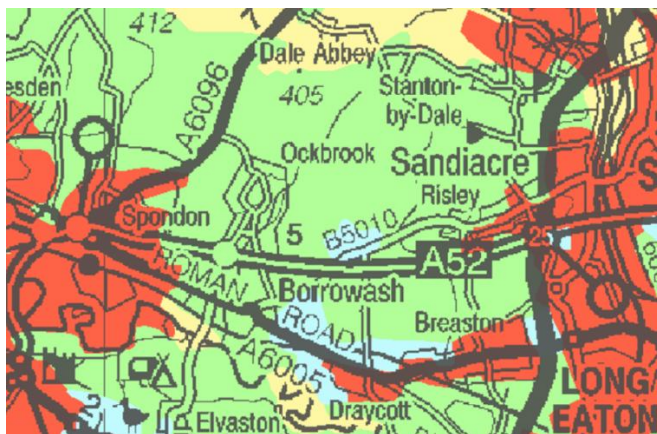


Source: OpenTopoMap (2023)

Agricultural Land

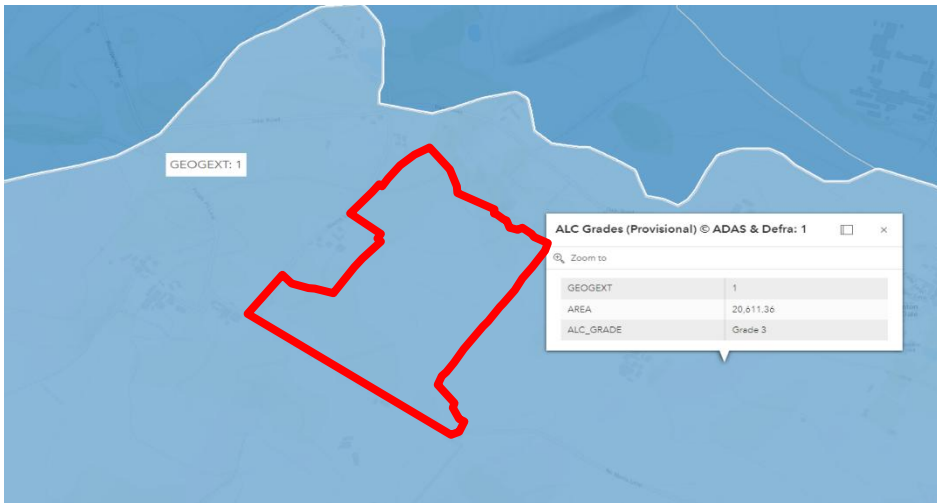
- 2.12 Agricultural land is graded using the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system. This system classifies land into five grades according to the extent to which physical or chemical characteristics impose long term limitations on the agricultural use of a site for food production. Grades are numbered 1 to 5, with Grade 3 divided into two Subgrades (3a and 3b).
- 2.13 Based on the maps at Figures 5 and 6, the site is identified as having a Grade 3 good to moderate classification of agricultural land in common with much of the area. There is no other information available to identify the sub grade of the soil.

Figure 5: Soil Classification



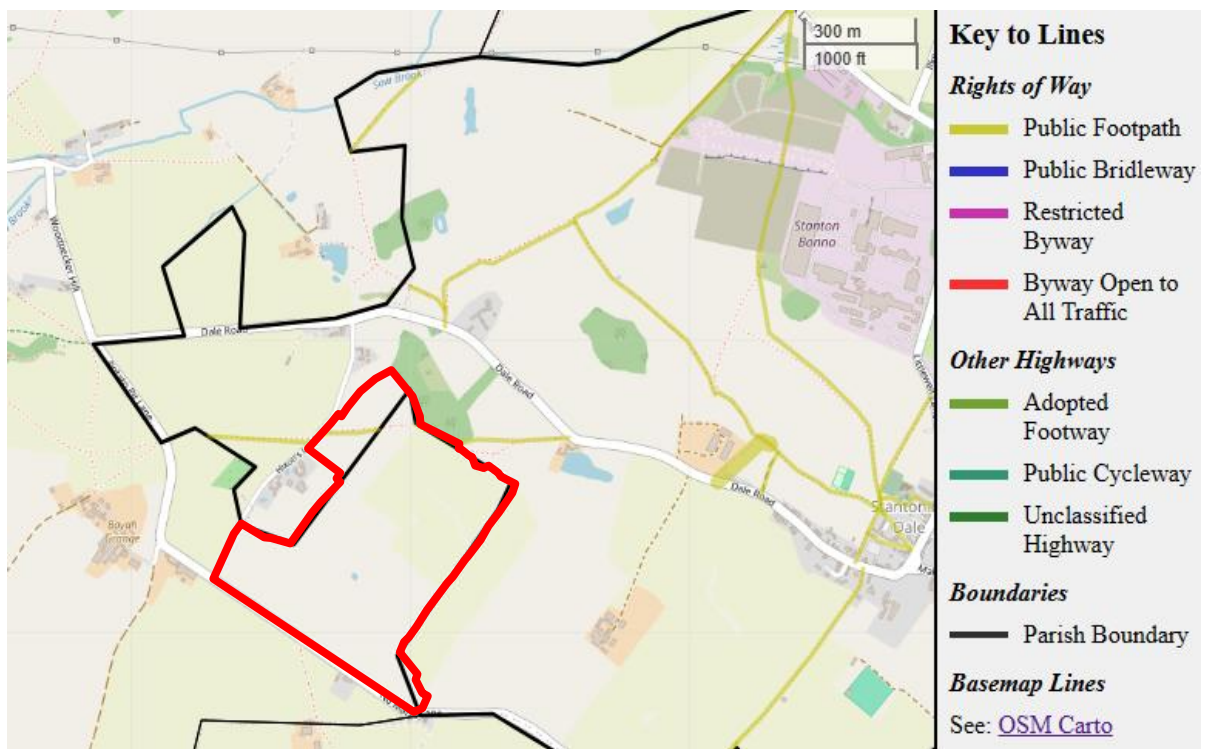
Source Natural England map East Midlands 2011

Figure 6: Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) (England) Map



Source: Natural England (2019)

Figure 7: Public Access



Source: Erewash Borough Council (2023)

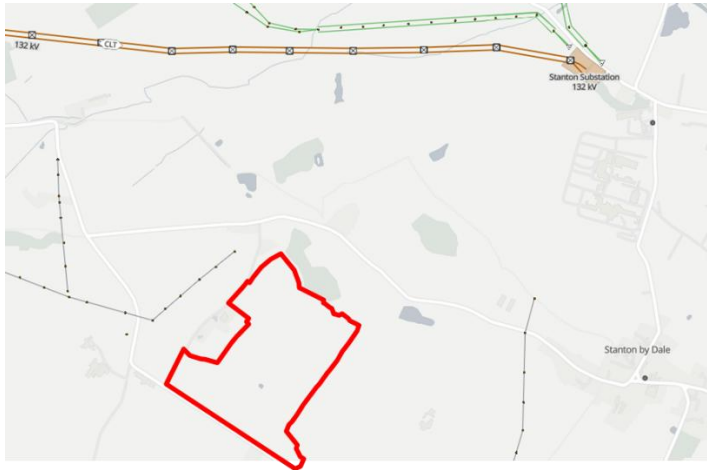
Habitat

2.14 There are no statutory or non-statutory habitat designations within the site. Baguley’s Wood which adjoins the site to the northeast is identified as a secondary broadleaf woodland.

Infrastructure

- 2.15 There are no existing power lines crossing the site. An existing 132KV is located to the north, running to the Stanton Sub-station (shown in orange). There is a wind turbine on land to the south on No Man’s Road.

Figure 8: Infrastructure

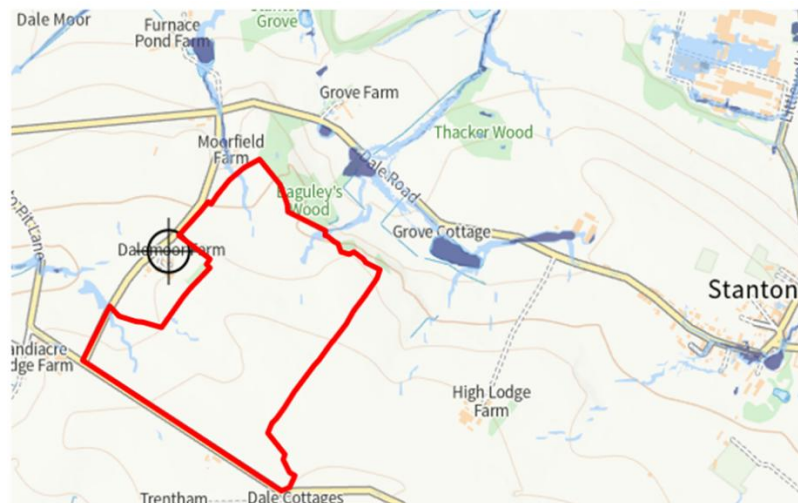


Source: Open Infrastructure Map (2023)

Flood Risk

- 2.16 The site lies within Flood Zone 1, with a low risk of flooding from rivers or sea. At the northeast boundary there are small areas identified as having some risk (low level) of flooding from surface water. There is no risk from reservoir flooding.

Figure 9: Map showing river flooding



Source: Environment Agency Map (2023)

3.0 Proposed Development

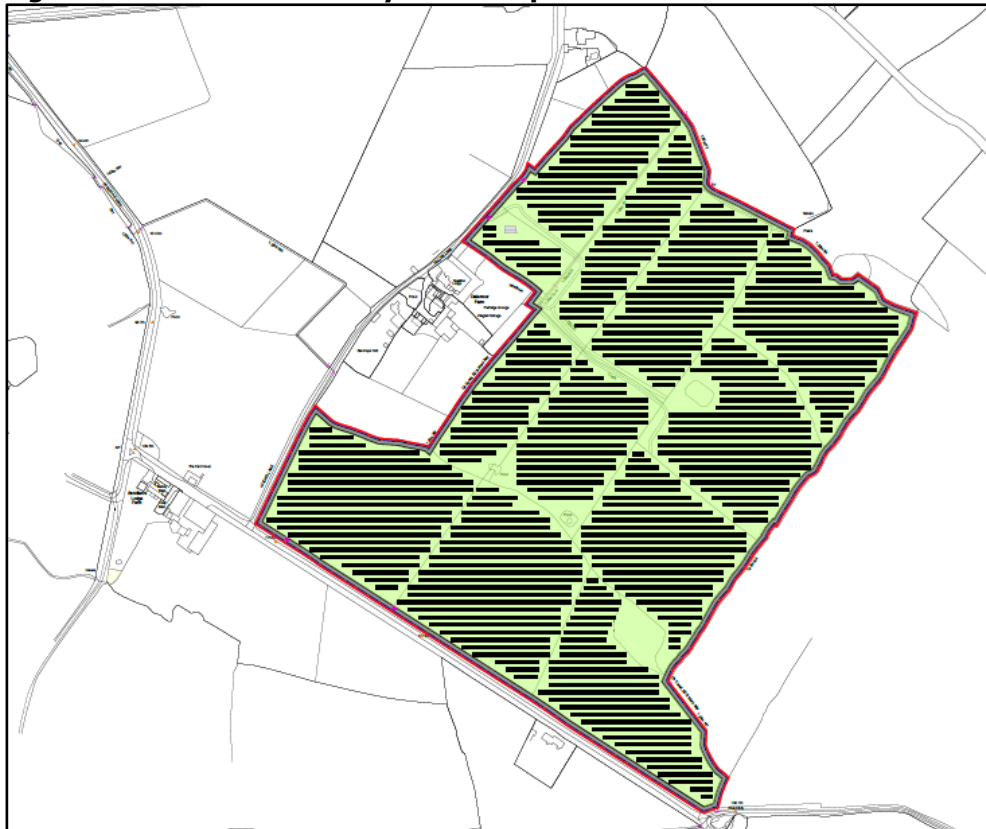
3.1 The proposed development comprises a photovoltaic solar energy farm on the site. This will comprise of the installation of ground mounted photovoltaic panels which will collect sunlight and convert it into a renewable energy source. The photovoltaic panels will be arranged in a series of arrays across the site and the proposal will include supporting infrastructure in the form of inverters and private switchgear equipment. The proposal will have a design life of up to 40 years and is therefore considered to be a long-term temporary development. The site would then be restored for future use as agricultural land at the end of the design life if desired with limited remediation works.

3.2 The summary description of the proposed development is as follows:

"Proposed development of a photovoltaic solar energy farm for the local generation of renewable electricity to the local distribution network, including access, landscaping and associated works."

3.3 The proposed layout and design of the solar energy farm will be subject to a detailed design and will be informed by the inputs and expertise of the specialist environmental consultants. An indicative site layout is shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Indicative Site Layout of Proposed Solar Farm



Source: IBE Hixons Ltd (December 2024)

- 3.4 Ground mounted arrays will be used to capture light and will be typically 2-3m in height. A series of inverters and private switchgear will be included as part of the proposals. A construction environment management plan would be part of the development to deal with temporary construction stage impacts.
- 3.5 The proposed development will export up to 20 MW to the local distribution network of the National Grid. A solar energy farm of this scale would be expected to provide sufficient electricity to power approximately 6,305 homes and make a carbon saving of 4,076 tonnes annually.
- 3.6 The PV panels will be ground mounted on angled supports comprised of galvanised steel. The PV panels will be orientated to the south in order to capture maximum solar energy.
- 3.7 Solar energy farms take advantage of what is known as the photovoltaic effect. Photovoltaics may be defined as the direct conversion of sunlight into electrical current and is achieved with the aid of solar modules. In its basic form, the technology is very simple. Solar electricity is produced from direct sunlight as well as from the more diffuse light of cloudy days. To extract maximum performance from the system, components must be matched and optimally adjusted to suit the design of the particular site and its location.
- 3.8 A solar power system is made up of an array of modules connected together in series in what is known as 'strings'. Several strings are connected in parallel with an inverter, which turns the DC into grid-compliant AC and feeds it into the energy provider's electricity network.
- 3.9 The precise layout and design of the development are not yet confirmed; however, it is anticipated that the majority of the land within the 32-hectare boundary would be used with appropriate setbacks incorporated to avoid shading effects from existing hedge lines and trees. In this regard, the layout would maintain a margin along each boundary and appropriate setback from any nearby receptors.
- 3.10 The Project layout and context is provided at Appendix 1.

Grid Connection

- 3.11 The proposed development will require a grid connection to the local distribution network of the National Grid.
- 3.12 Development associated with connections to the local distribution network and National Grid is normally covered by permitted development rights. The permitted development rights recognise the essential nature of utility provision and the need for power as part of modern living and the rights enjoyed by every household and business. The provision of connections to and from the grid and the network itself are essential infrastructure and, as such, the principle of development is generally considered appropriate in both urban and rural settings.

- 3.13 Connections to the grid are generally undertaken by the statutory undertaker utility company under permitted development rights set out in Part 15 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order (2015).
- 3.14 At this juncture, it is the intention of the Applicant to submit a separate planning application for the cable route which will connect the proposed solar energy farm to the nearby substation. This will provide the Applicant with flexibility in how the cable route is constructed and will help to mitigate against any time delays associated with the statutory undertaker.

4.0 Administrative Process

- 4.1 This Request for a Scoping Opinion is submitted in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, which states that a person minded to make an application for an EIA development may ask the relevant planning authority to state in writing their opinion as to the scope and level of detail of the information to be provided in the Environmental Statement (ES).
- 4.2 Regulation 15 requires the Applicant to submit the following information to assist the planning authority in providing the Scoping Opinion:
- (i) a plan sufficient to identify the land;*
 - (ii) a brief description of the nature and purpose of the development, including its location and technical capacity;*
 - (iii) an explanation of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment; and*
 - (iv) such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make.*
- 4.3 It is expected that as a result of the submission of this Scoping Request, Erewash Borough Council will issue guidance on whether the range of topics identified and the related issues are appropriate and identify such other matters which should be included in the resulting EIA process. The EIA process will be undertaken alongside the preparation of a planning application and the results of the process will inform and help shape the development proposed.
- 4.4 A planning application accompanied by an ES will follow a 16-week determination period. Copies of the ES and other relevant documents will be available for inspection at Erewash Borough Council's offices and will be made available electronically by the Applicant for wider distribution.
- 4.5 As part of the EIA, the Applicant proposes to consult with the relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees.
- 4.6 It is also intended that local residents will be consulted through community engagement as part of this and the accompanying application process, which will help to inform the ES over those issues of concern to local people and to inform mitigation to be included as part of the proposed development in advance of the submission of the application.
- 4.7 Wherever practicable, the views received within the relevant period will be taken into account in carrying out the EIA, and where relevant will be reported within the ES and help shape the proposed development.

5.0 Scoping

- 5.1 In accordance with the EIA Regulations, consideration should be given to the main effects of the proposed development on the environment. Confirmation of the proposed scope of the EIA is sought, together with the methods proposed to be adopted and the outputs from the EIA process.
- 5.2 Under the EIA Regulations, all applications for planning permission for development above certain threshold criteria and with the potential to give rise to significant environmental effects are required to be accompanied by an ES presenting the results of an EIA. This ensures that significant environmental issues associated with the proposed development are considered as part of the planning application process and taken into account in any decision taken by the relevant authority.
- 5.3 The ES should be viewed alongside the corresponding planning application on which it is based and the Planning Statement that sets out in more detail the development proposed, the relevant planning policy context, the need for the development and other matters relevant to its consideration. The application will, wherever possible, include the recommendations or mitigation arising from the ES.
- 5.4 Regulation 18(3) of the EIA Regulations defines an Environmental Statement as follows:

"...a statement which includes at least:

- (a) a description of the proposed development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the development;*
- (b) a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment;*
- (c) a description of any features of the proposed development, or measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;*
- (d) a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment;*
- (e) a non-technical summary of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (d); and*
- (f) any additional information specified in Schedule 4 relevant to the specific characteristics of the particular development or type of development and to the environmental features likely to be significantly affected."*

- 5.5 The EIA will be undertaken independently by Union4 Planning on behalf of IBE Hixons Ltd. The EIA will involve inputs from a range of specialist consultants, who will assist with the definition of baseline conditions in the Project area and the potential negative and positive impacts resulting from Project construction, operation, decommissioning and closure.
- 5.6 The EIA will consider the main potentially significant environmental effects that are likely to arise as a result of the proposed development.
- 5.7 The proposed development will be assessed with reference to the construction phase, the operation phase, and any relevant decommissioning phase, and post-closure restoration.
- 5.8 The EIA will consider in-combination effects of one or more impacts. Where there are cumulative effects arising as a result of the presence of other existing operations on the site and relevant commitments in the local area, these will be assessed.
- 5.9 The EIA will inform the preparation of the planning application and the detailed design of the development. The application will evolve from this initial iterative process and, where practicable, will incorporate all of the relevant recommendations from the ES that are designed to protect the environment.

Proposed Topics to be Included in the Environmental Statement

- 5.10 As highlighted by the National Planning Practice Guidance ('the PPG'), when considering the scope of an EIA, the decision-maker "*...should limit the scope of assessment to those aspects of the environment that are likely to be significantly affected*" (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 4-002-20140306. Rev. date 06.03.2014).
- 5.11 The EIA will therefore consider the main potentially significant environmental effects that are likely to arise as a result of the proposed development. The ES will comprise a statement of findings, together with a Non-Technical Summary which will be reproduced separately for free distribution.
- 5.12 This scoping exercise has been informed by a desktop study, a review of the scheme proposals, and the Council's Screening Opinion. Taking these finding into account and advice within the 'Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) - A handbook for scoping projects', the table overleaf sets out a summary of the potential receptors of impact and what topics may be capable of being scoped out.

Potential receptors of impact		Activities and potential impacts			Scoped In/Out on basis of likelihood of significant impact
		Construction Phase	Operations phase/ ongoing site maintenance	Post-operation/ decommissioning phase	
WATER	Surface Water/Hydrology	Yes	Yes	Yes	In
LAND	Landscape and visual impact	Yes	Yes	No	In
	Soils	No	No	No	Out
	Land quality, geotechnical and contamination	No	No	No	Out
AIR	Local Air Quality	Yes	No	No	Out
	Regional air quality	No	No	No	Out
FLORA AND FAUNA	Ecology	Yes	Yes	Yes	In
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT	Socio-economic	Yes	Yes	Yes	In
	Land use, health and well being	No	No	No	Out
	Climate change and sustainability	No	No	No	Out
	Noise and vibration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Out
	Archaeology and cultural heritage	Yes	Yes	Yes	In
	Transport	Yes	No	Yes	In
	Waste Management	Yes	No	No	Out

5.13 It is proposed that the ES will present the results of the EIA in the following individual sections or chapters (topics proposed to be scoped out struck through):

Section 1:	Introduction
Section 2:	Site Location and Description
Section 3:	Proposed Development
Section 4:	Assessment of Environmental Effects
Section 5:	Alternatives
Section 6:	Socio-Economics
Section 7:	Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
Section 8:	Ecology (including Biodiversity)
Section 9:	Hydrology (including Flood Risk Assessment)
Section 10:	Noise
Section 11:	Landscape and Visual Impact
Section 12:	Transport
Section 13:	Cumulative Effects and In-Combination Impacts
Section 14:	Residual Impacts and Mitigation
Section 15:	Summary and Conclusions

5.14 It should be noted that a Planning Statement, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Report, and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Metric will be submitted as separate standalone documents alongside the planning application.

5.15 The individual assessments that comprise the EIA and which will be summarised in the ES will follow a methodology which, where relevant, identifies and describes the following:

- Introduction;
- Methodology;
- Existing baseline information;
- Potential and predicted impacts;
- Alternatives considered;
- Appropriate impact minimisation, mitigation, compensation and/or enhancement;
- Consideration of residual impacts; and

- Summary and conclusions.
- 5.16 In each of the sections, where relevant, the impacts will be assessed according to their potential degree or magnitude, their importance and significance, so that a reasoned judgement can be made as to the potential importance and severity of any impacts and, wherever possible, options will be adopted which seek to minimise any adverse effects and maximise any positive effects arising from the development.
- 5.17 The planning application will evolve from this initial iterative process and, where practicable, will incorporate all of the relevant recommendations from the ES that are designed to protect the environment.

6.0 Overview of Potential Environmental Effects

- 6.1 The legal requirements relating to the content of Environmental Statements are contained within the EIA Regulations.
- 6.2 In addition, Government guidance contained in the National Planning Practice Guidance ('the PPG') provides further advice on those impacts which should be considered for inclusion within an Environmental Statement.
- 6.3 For the Environmental Statement to achieve its objective of incorporating environmental considerations into the decision-making process, 'potentially significant' environmental impacts must be addressed. Appropriate adjustments to the development or mitigation measures will need to be provided to ameliorate any adverse impacts which are considered likely to arise.
- 6.4 The development proposed has, therefore, the potential to impact on a range of topic areas. In each case, these are defined as temporary impacts associated with construction, as well as more permanent impacts associated with the post-construction period during which the solar farm and plant will operate.
- 6.5 The topics to be considered as part of the EIA process are set out below.

Socio-Economics

- 6.6 The EIA will consider the socio-economic impacts arising from the proposed development. The consideration of the potential and predicted impacts on humans is a requirement of the EIA process. This will be considered in other sections of the ES where it relates to the environment or amenity. However, it is also necessary to consider the impact of the development on social and economic structures.
- 6.7 An understanding of the human environment, its characteristics and inter-relationships is helpful to the understanding of the physical environment.
- 6.8 The main potential and predicted socio-economic impacts associated with the proposed development may include the following:
- The achievement of a zero-carbon economy through the production of electricity from renewable sources which is critical in tackling climate change.
 - The continuing development of a UK based solar renewable energy supply which will substantially reduce the reliance on imported energy, as well as reducing the carbon impact associated with fossil fuels from other jurisdictions.

- The proposed development will generate employment during a construction process which is anticipated to take up to 24 months, together with providing knock-on economic benefits for local business and suppliers.
- 6.9 It is predicted that the construction of the solar farm will have positive socio-economic effects, including the provision of construction-related employment for a period of up to 6 months and the associated spending on local businesses within the area.
- 6.10 The construction phase is unlikely to impact on human health, as the effects of noise, air quality and vehicular traffic are predicted to be minor and localised.
- 6.11 During the operational phase, the proposed development will provide a new sustainable energy generation facility which will support the transition to a low carbon economy.
- 6.12 Significant impacts are not anticipated during operation due to the separation distance between the proposed development and the nearest residential receptors. The operational phase is unlikely to have any effects on human health or amenity, as noise, air quality and vehicular traffic are predicted to be minor and localised. The proposed solar farm will not require any staff on-site during its operation, but it will support the employment of maintenance staff during its operational lifetime.
- 6.13 The planning application will include a Planning Statement which will consider the socio-economic and human health effects of the proposed development in line with the adopted planning policies at national and local level.
- 6.14 With reference to the criteria set out in the EIA Regulations, it is considered that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to any significant effects on socio-economics or human health. Notwithstanding this it is proposed to include this topic within the ES to consider the impacts of the proposed development. In this regard, the Socio-Economics chapter of the ES will assess the population and demographics within the region and consider the range of potential socio-economic impacts associated with the proposed development.

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

- 6.15 The level of previous ground disturbance within the application site is unknown at this stage, and therefore there is potential for buried archaeological remains.
- 6.16 The proposed development of the site has the potential to impact on the historic environment. There may be some direct impacts and also indirect setting impacts.
- 6.17 There are no statutory or non-statutory heritage assets within the site, including Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, listed buildings and Conservation Areas. Within the wider Study Area of 5km from the site, there are a number of Listed Buildings, and Scheduled

Monuments. No other designated assets such as World Heritage Sites or Registered Battlefields were identified.

- 6.18 The closest heritage assets are the Grade II Listed Grove Farmhouse on Dale Road and the Grade II Boyah Grange, on Potato Pit Lane. These, however, would not be visible from the site. It is not considered that the proposals would cause any significant harm to the setting of these heritage assets.
- 6.19 It is considered that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to any significant effects on cultural heritage.
- 6.20 The Archaeology and Cultural Heritage chapter of the ES will include data received from the Historic Environment Record (HER). In this regard, the potential for impacts on designated and non-designated archaeological remains/features will be appropriately considered as part of any heritage assessment accompanying the planning application.

Ecology

- 6.21 The EIA will assess the relationship between the proposed development and Ecology. This chapter of the ES will draw on the information obtained from the walkover surveys and the species-specific surveys of the site.
- 6.22 The assessment will draw on existing baseline data from relevant nature conservation bodies, together with site surveys being carried out to inform the application submission. Baseline data is also being collated and collected to reflect seasonal variations.
- 6.1 The application site comprises greenfield, arable land which is currently in agricultural use and contains a number of mature trees, hedges and vegetation around the perimeter. Natural England's mapping system indicates that the site is relatively unconstrained by statutory ecological designations.
- 6.2 It is understood that there is a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) in proximity of the Site, but the exact position is unclear.
- 6.3 There are no Priority Habitats within the site or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) located within the site. In this regard, it is unlikely that there will be any direct impacts on any protected areas.
- 6.4 There is a Local Nature Reserve called Pioneer Meadows approximately 1km northeast of the site. There are also Local Nature Reserves at Straws Bridge and Pewitt Carr, but these are approximately 2.5km to the nearest point.
- 6.5 The site would require minimal lighting as it is not normally manned with scheduled maintenance visits that would occur during daylight hours.

- 6.6 Mitigation measures will include consideration of avoidance, reduction or compensation where practical and relevant.
- 6.7 The proposed development is also being designed to achieve a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) with the over-riding objective of maximising the opportunities for BNG across the application site.

Hydrology (including Flood Risk)

- 6.8 The EIA will consider the impacts of the proposed development on the hydrology of the site, which will include the preparation of a Flood Risk Assessment.
- 6.9 This section of the ES will include an analysis of the current surface water, in order to assess the potential impacts of the proposed development.
- 6.10 The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 which is defined as land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding (<0.1%).
- 6.11 Fluvial flood risk to the site, based on the Environment Agency Online Flood Maps for planning, is considered to be low.
- 6.12 The Environment Agency Online Flood Maps for planning provide an indication of the surface water flood risk across the site. The site is generally considered to be at a low risk of flooding from a surface water source.
- 6.13 The majority of the site is within Flood Zone 1 with a low chance of flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment will be required to demonstrate the development is not at risk, that surface water runoff is properly managed and that the development does not reduce flood storage capacity within the floodplain.
- 6.14 In summary, the risk of flooding from fluvial, tidal surface water, artificial and groundwater sources is considered to be low.
- 6.15 There may be minor changes in the drainage regime across the site, but there will be no discernible increase in impermeable area within the site.
- 6.16 The Hydrology chapter of the ES will consider the changes in the drainage regime and any cumulative impacts associated with planned and committed developments in the surrounding area.

Noise

- 6.17 The EIA will assess the impact of noise from the proposed development, both during the construction phase and the operational phase.

- 6.18 The site is located within a predominantly rural location and, as such, it is understood that the baseline noise climate is mainly comprised of vehicles travelling along neighbouring roads. Noise relating to farming activities may also be present at certain times of the year.
- 6.19 The proposed solar farm and associated plant will generate low levels of operational noise, which is unlikely to be audible beyond the boundaries of the site. The degree to which operational noise may be perceptible is dependent on the level of background noise that is measured, as operational noise is more likely to be discernible in environments where background noise levels are low. It is expected that operational noise can be controlled such that there would not be any significant effects.
- 6.20 The Noise chapter of the ES will inform the design of the proposed solar farm and will include details of any necessary mitigation measures which will be embedded in the design.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 6.21 The EIA will include an assessment of the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development. Consideration of the landscape and visual impacts was the main point raised in the Scoping Opinion issued by Erewash Borough Council.
- 6.22 The Study Area for an assessment of landscape and visual impacts extends to a distance of 5km from the site and does not include any statutory landscape designations (e.g. National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or any other International Designations that may inform landscape value (e.g. World Heritage Sites).
- 6.23 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens or battlefields within proximity to the application site.
- 6.24 Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings and Conservation Areas, whilst not specific landscape designations, may reflect landscape value and sensitivity; however, none are located within the site.
- 6.25 The site is within proximity of heritage assets and a Scheduled Monument. The closest heritage assets are the Grade II Listed Grove Farmhouse on Dale Road to the northeast of the site and the Grade II Boyah Grange, on Potato Pit Lane to the southwest of the site. Located in Hermitage Wood is the Hermitage Scheduled Monument.
- 6.26 Moving further away from the site, there are a cluster of heritage assets to the west in the Hamlet of Dale Abbey including the Grade I Abbey Ruins, the Grade II listed Abbey Manor House and Dale Abbey Ancient Monument. The wider area surrounding the Ancient Monument is a Conservation Area. The intervening landscape means the setting of these heritage assets is unlikely to be affected by the proposed development.

- 6.27 Mitigation would include new/enhanced hedgerows and woodland belts. In addition to reducing visual effects, it would align with landscape character assessment guidance. There may also be opportunities to enhance habitats and landscape value through species-rich grassland on existing pastoral land.
- 6.28 Visual amenity comprises the overall pleasantness of views that people (receptors) enjoy of their surroundings. Based on desktop research and site observations, key receptors are likely to include:
- Residential receptors from nearby housing would be limited,
 - Road receptors, mainly along Hixon's Lane and No Man's Lane, although it should be noted that these are not major highways.
- 6.29 There are likely to be temporary impacts during the construction process with construction vehicles, plant and machinery visible for a period of up to 6 months.
- 6.30 Significant or important landscape effects may arise due to the introduction of solar arrays and supporting infrastructure within an arable landscape and temporary impacts during construction. It is likely that these effects would reduce rapidly with distance, due to existing screening and limited wider perceptual influences. The introduction of supplementary landscape planting is also likely to mitigate impacts from surrounding viewpoints.
- 6.31 Significant visual effects may arise for a small number of residential receptors. However, these will be subject to the final site design and review of further site survey information. Appropriate mitigation should reduce these effects.
- 6.32 Mitigation would include new/enhanced hedgerows and woodland belts. There may also be opportunities to enhance habitats and landscape value through species-rich grassland on existing pastoral land.
- 6.33 The Landscape and Visual Impact chapter of the ES will provide a comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts and include details of any proposed mitigation. The assessment will fully consider the effects of the development on the landscape character and visual quality of the area, as well as the visual effects of the development on visual amenity and on key views, taking account of any mitigation proposed. In this regard, the assessment will be accompanied by a series of photomontages from key viewpoints within the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). The assessment will also include the impact of the proposed development on any historic landscapes or settings, although none have been identified to date.
- 6.34 Particular attention will be paid to the relationship of the development area to adjacent land uses and buildings and to areas of designated landscape importance. Consideration will also be given to the degree of interaction with other issues, such as ecology and the overall design of the proposed development.

- 6.35 Any resulting in-combination effects and cumulative effects will be considered with reference to existing and permitted developments, both within the site and the surrounding area.
- 6.36 The assessment will include recommendations for mitigation, compensation and enhancement during the development process and for the long-term.

Transport

- 6.37 The EIA will include a Transport chapter which will provide an assessment of impacts associated with the proposed development, including the impacts on the highway network during the construction phase and the longer-term operation of the development.
- 6.38 The assessment will include new and up-to-date traffic surveys of the local highway network, which will help to quantify any percentage increase or decrease in vehicular traffic arising from the proposed development.
- 6.39 Access to the site is currently via Hixon's Lane and No Man's Lane along the western and southern boundaries respectively. The proposed development will utilise either or both of these points for access and egress to the proposed solar farm.
- 6.40 The main transport impacts associated with the proposed development will be during the construction of the solar farm. It is anticipated that the construction phase will take between 4 and 6 months to complete. It is considered that there is ample space within the site for a temporary construction compound and the parking of staff vehicles.
- 6.41 A Construction and Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be prepared prior to the commencement of development and will clearly set out the level of traffic generation during the construction phase of the solar facility. The CTMP will include details of how traffic will be managed, including the scheduling of HGV deliveries to minimise traffic impacts during the AM and PM peak periods and to minimise associated noise impacts. The CTMP will also consider any relevant cumulative effects, which might impact on the local highways network, as well as the need for any mitigation to facilitate access for construction vehicles. We would expect that the CTMP would form a planning condition attached to any planning permission.
- 6.42 The operational phase of the development will generate a low level of traffic. The solar farm will not require staff on-site, which means that the only vehicular traffic generated will be during construction and by maintenance staff visiting the site. In this regard, the operation of the proposed solar farm is likely to have an imperceptible impact on the local highway network.
- 6.43 Potential impacts to be considered in the preparation of the ES include the effects of light and heavy goods vehicles entering and exiting the application site via the local road network, traffic movements associated with those employed at the site, and any cumulative effects arising in parallel with consented or development projects nearby.

6.44 In summary, the Transport chapter of the ES will include the identification of existing baseline conditions; assessment of the significance of proposed traffic effects; assessment of environmental consequences of traffic effects; and consideration of mitigation required or proposed, including any in-combination or cumulative effects.

Cumulative Effects and In-Combination Impacts

6.45 The EIA will include an assessment of the cumulative effects arising as a result of the presence of other existing operations on the site and relevant commitments in the local area. This will include existing and permitted developments, which may give rise to cumulative effects. The cumulative effects are particularly relevant in terms of traffic generation on the local highway network and the impact of emissions on designated ecological sites and sensitive habitats.

6.46 We would invite Erewash Borough Council to specify within the Scoping Opinion the relevant developments and projects which should form part of the assessment of cumulative effects.

6.47 The individual assessments within the EIA will each consider the potential in-combination impacts that might arise from the proposed development. At this juncture, and taking account of the topics proposed to be scoped out, the principal interactions and in-combination impacts are likely to be as follows:

- Ecology and Landscape and Visual Impact;
- Ecology and Hydrology;
- Hydrology and Landscape and Visual Impact;
- Transport and Ecology;
- Transport and Noise;
- Cultural Heritage and Landscape and Visual Impact.

7.0 EIA Approach and Methodology

- 7.1 The following section sets out the key stages to be considered as part of the EIA process relevant to the application. Each of the individual assessments summarised in the previous section of this document will broadly follow the same methodology, which accords with the EIA Regulations and principles of best practice.
- 7.2 Each assessment will therefore include the following stages, which will be reflected in each section of the ES:
- Introduction;
 - Methodology;
 - Existing baseline description;
 - Potential and predicted impacts of the development options;
 - Recommended design, mitigation, compensation or enhancement;
 - Residual impacts and conclusions.
- 7.3 Each relevant section will, where appropriate, set out any significant cumulative impacts and will identify construction and operational impacts.
- 7.4 Each section will set out the significance criteria used. The methodology will assess the degree of significance and scale of any impacts, where relevant, according to recognised standards and each will, wherever possible, be summarised in a relevant table of impacts.
- 7.5 Although it is not necessary in every case to consider alternatives, these will be outlined in the ES with particular reference to the feasibility, masterplan and design evolution of the project.
- 7.6 The main areas of interaction between the above will be identified and reported where they raise any issues of significance.
- 7.7 The findings of the EIA, based on the above methodology for each issue, will be reported in an ES for the project.
- 7.8 It is intended, that the ES will comprise of sections reflecting the topics identified in Section 8 of this Scoping Request and, in addition, an introduction, methodology and overall conclusions.
- 7.9 A separate Non-Technical Summary which will summarise in plain English the technical information contained in the ES will be prepared in a form more readily capable of wider distribution to the public.
- 7.10 Subject to agreement on the topics to be scoped out, the overall structure of the documentation, which it is intended to submit to Erewash Borough Council will be as follows:

- **Volume 1** – Planning application, including the Application Form and Certificates, Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, and plan drawings.
 - **Volume 2** – Environmental Statement.
 - **Volume 3** – Non-Technical Summary.
- 7.11 Volume 1 will comprise the planning application, whilst Volumes 2 and 3 will be information pertaining to the EIA.
- 7.12 It should be noted that Volume 1 of the planning application will include a range of application documents and supporting reports, which do not fall within the scope of the EIA but are necessary for the purposes of the planning application. The relevant application documents and supporting reports include the following:
- Application Form and Certificates;
 - Covering Letter;
 - Planning Drawings;
 - Planning Statement;
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment;
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Metric;
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment;
 - Agricultural Land Classification Report.
- 7.13 As part of any EIA process, the Applicant and Project Team will be consulting with the respective statutory and non-statutory consultees as part of the engagement with relevant stakeholders, as set out in Section 4 of this Scoping Request.
- 7.14 Consideration is also being given to a community engagement programme to be undertaken prior to in parallel with the planning application process. Any views received will be taken into account in carrying out of the EIA process and hence in shaping the development.

8.0 Planning Policy

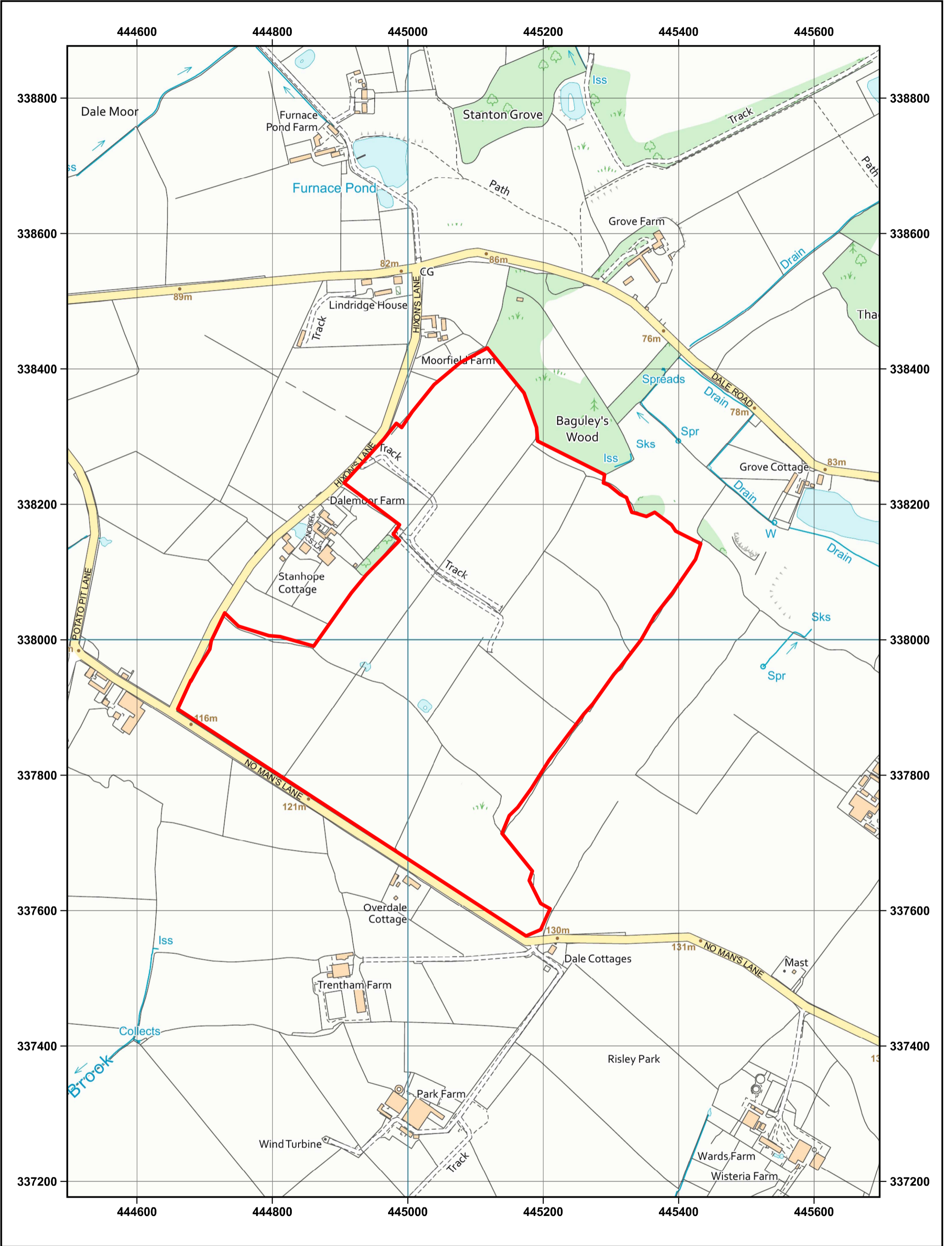
- 8.1 The planning application will include an extensive analysis of how the proposed development relates to planning policy at the national and local levels. This analysis will be set out in detail in the Planning Statement to be included in Volume 1 of the application.
- 8.2 The policy context includes the following documents:
- National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024);
 - National Planning Practice Guidance (December 2024);
 - Erewash Core Strategy 2011-2028 (March 2014);
 - Erewash Borough Council Core Strategy Review – Submission Version November 2022, submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 30 November 2022;
 - EBC16 - Council's response to Inspector's 2nd Post-Hearing Letter (INS10) – indicating a timetable for further work extended to 14 August 2025.

9.0 Summary and Conclusions

- 9.1 In summary, this Scoping Request is submitted to Erewash Borough Council on the basis that the Council has issued a Screening Opinion stating that the proposed development requires an EIA under the terms of Town and Country (Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations) 2017.
- 9.2 The proposed scope of the EIA is set out in Section 6 of this document with an overview of the potential environmental impacts provided in Section 7 of the document.
- 9.3 The EIA is proposed to be undertaken in accordance with the details and methodology outlined in this Scoping Request following agreement on which topics can be scoped out. The results of the EIA process will be set out in the form of an Environmental Statement and Non-Technical Summary which will comply with the requirements of the EIA Regulations and set out the key aspects of the assessment relevant to the determination of the application.
- 9.4 It should be noted that in addition to the EIA, the planning application will be supported by a suite of documents and specialist inputs which do not form part of the EIA but will assist in assessing the potential impacts and mitigation measures proposed.
- 9.5 The view of Erewash Borough Council is, therefore, invited on the scope of the proposed EIA and the matters to be considered.

Appendix A

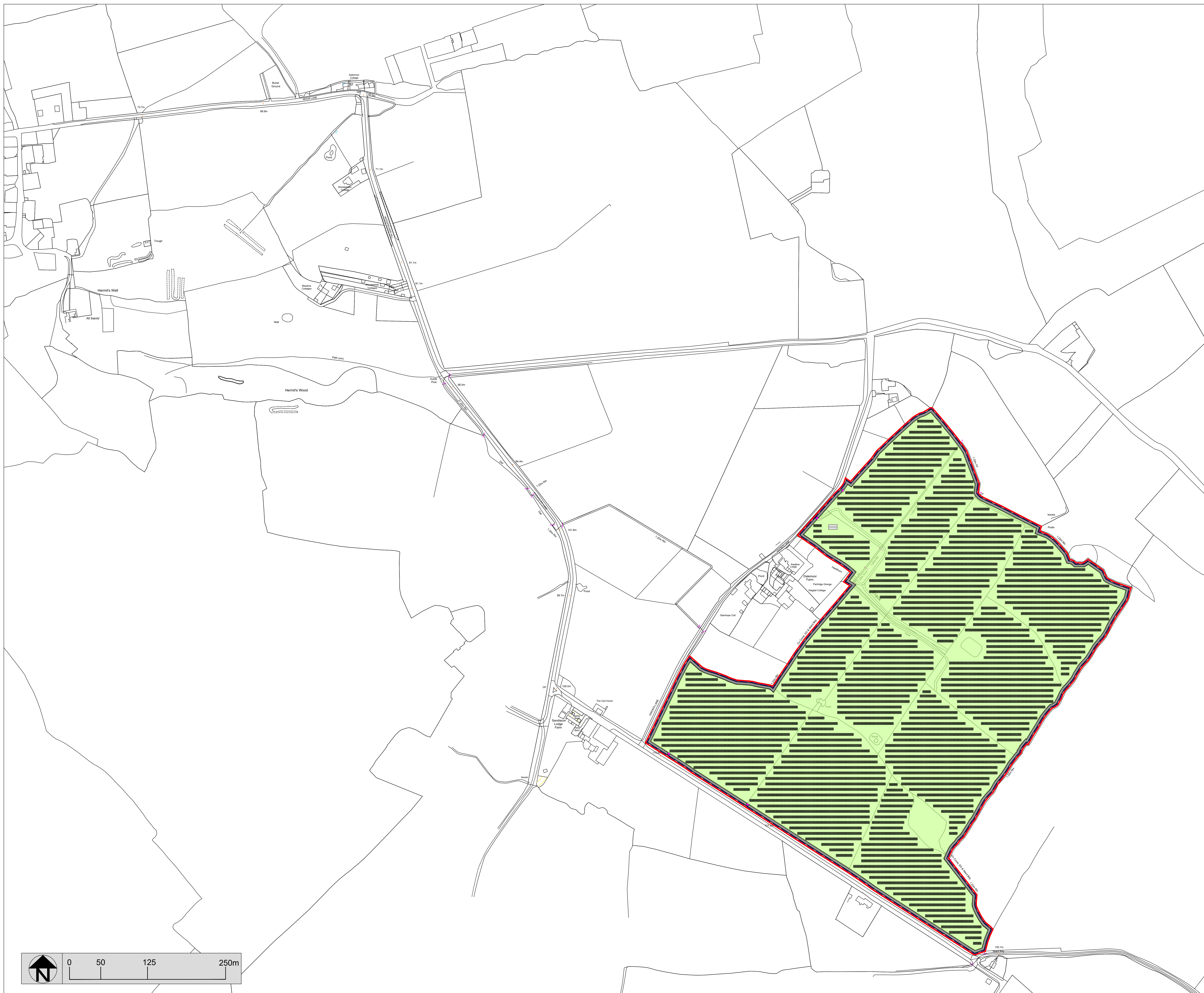
Location Plan



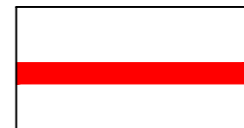
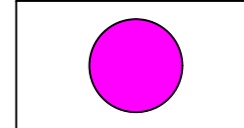
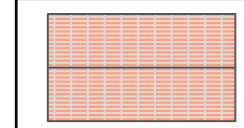
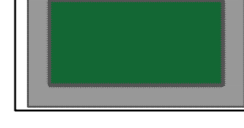
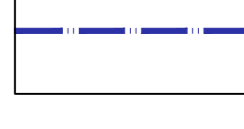

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Appendix B

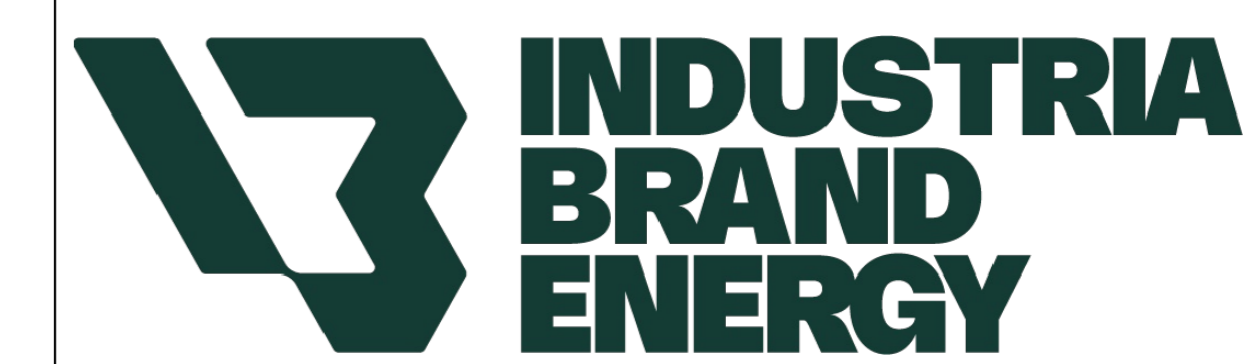
Indicative Site Plan



Legend

-  Boundary: Site Area
-  Site Access Point
-  Substation
-  Inverter
-  Security Fencing
-  PV Module Block

Location: Ilkeston
 Postcode: DE7 4PG
 Coords: Lat (52°56'19"N), Long (001°19'48"W)



Site	
Hixons	
Drawing Name	
Indicative Site Layout Plan	
Date	Scale
Dec 2024	1:2,500 @A0
Reference	
BG3033/BG3034 DRAFT	

Appendix C

Copy of Screening Opinion



Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017

“Screening Opinion” in respect of the following development:-

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR ENERGY FARM LAND AT HIXON’S LANE, DALE ABBEY, DERBYSHIRE

A Screening Request report from UNION4 PLANNING dated November 2024 received by email on 18 November 2024 requires the council to adopt a Screening Opinion as to whether the above development is EIA development requiring the submission of an Environmental Statement.

The development proposed does not fall within Schedule 1 of the Regulations where an assessment is mandatory. However the development falls within Schedule 2, Category 3 (a), “Industrial installations for the production of electricity” with the area of development, approximately 32 hectares, exceeding the 0.5 hectare threshold.

In respect of Schedule 2 development, an assessment will only be required if the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. Regard must be had to Schedule 3 of the Regulations when considering whether an Environmental Assessment should be required.

The National Planning Practice Guidance: Environmental Impact Assessment; Considering and Determining Planning Applications that have been subject to and Environmental Impact Assessment; Annex: Indicative Screening Thresholds suggests:

- That EIA for energy generation projects could be required for development which exceeds 0.5ha and has a visual impact.

In assessing the proposal in the context of the above, the Council’s view is that a proposed solar farm covering some 32 hectares of open countryside would have an impact on landscape and visual amenity. Due to the size of the proposed installation, the undulating terrain on which it is proposed (of which a substantial part of the site consists of a north-facing slope), and the high degree of visibility from public vantage points including surrounding roads (Hixon’s Lane and No Man’s Lane) and public footpaths, the impact is likely to be significant.

The submissions provided suggest that a Landscape Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be undertaken and submitted as part of a planning application. It is advised that this LVIA will provide a comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts and include details of any proposed mitigation. Notwithstanding this, the screening request submission concludes that the impact of the proposed development on the landscape and visual amenity / effects is not likely to be significant. This is considered an unrealistic position to adopt in relation to a 32ha solar farm in the location proposed, and for the reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph.

On the basis of the above, the council is of the view that the development is likely to have a significant impact on landscape and visual amenity. It exceeds the thresholds in Schedule 2. The council therefore concludes that the development requires an Environmental Statement with the planning application.

Signed: ***Steven Burgoyne***

Steven Burgoyne
Senior Planning Officer

Date: 20 December 2024