



# **Newark & Sherwood Local Development Framework**

## **Draft Solar Energy**

### **Supplementary Planning Document**

**JULY 2024**

## Document Passport

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**Title:** Newark and Sherwood Draft Solar Energy Supplementary Planning Document

**Status:** Consultation document

**Summary:** This Draft Solar Energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides guidance on the application and interpretation of local and national policy on major stand-alone ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) developments in Newark & Sherwood District, with special consideration given to protected local features.

As an SPD the draft document provides further guidance on policies within the Council's Adopted Core Strategy but does not develop new ones. When adopted this SPD will become part of the Council's Local Development Framework and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

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**Consultation Summary:** The consultation will seek views from local residents, landowners, developers, town & parish councils and other interested parties.

**Date of Approval for Consultation:** ADD DATE

**Route of Approval for Consultation:** Planning Policy Board 8 July 2024, Cabinet 23 July 2024

**Proposed Consultation period:** ADD

Copies are to be deposited at the main Council office at Castle House, Great North Road Newark NG24 1BY (open between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday), the District's libraries and the Council's website: [www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/affordablehousingspd/](http://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/affordablehousingspd/)

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**After the consultation:** The District Council will consider the responses made to this document and, taking these into account, prepare a finalised Solar Energy SPD which will be reported to the relevant Committee for adoption as part of the Local Development Framework

**Estimated Date of Final Adoption:** ADD DATE

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## Contents

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Introduction	1
2. Background	3
3. National Policy and Guidance	4
4. Local Policy	9
5. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects	11
6. Material Considerations	14
7. Protected Local Features	26
8. Landscape Character Assessment	30
9. Environmental Impact Assessment	32
10. Planning Application Process	33
11. Glossary	34
Appendix 1 - Information to be included in a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	37

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document is intended to provide guidance on the application and interpretation of local and national policy on major stand-alone ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) developments in Newark & Sherwood District, with special consideration given to protected local features. These developments will be referred to as solar farms. Major solar farm developments are those with a site area of 1 hectare or more, as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) England Order 2015.
- 1.2 This document is not intended to identify any preferred sites for major solar farm development or to address issues relating to small scale solar energy developments. Links are provided to other documents where relevant.
- 1.3 As a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), this document provides guidance on policies but does not develop new ones. This document is part of the District Council's Local Development Framework and will be a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications. As well as SPDs, the Local Development Framework is made up of the Amended Core Strategy (ACS):

[amended-core-strategy-DPD.pdf \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](#);

the Allocations & Development Management Development Plan Document (ADMDDPD):

[Newark & Sherwood Allocations & Development Management DPD \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](#);

the Policies Map:

[policies map](#);

and, in some parishes, Neighbourhood Plans:

[Neighbourhood Plans](#).

Other Newark & Sherwood District Council Supplementary Planning Documents can be seen here:

[Supplementary planning documents](#).

This SPD should be read alongside the documents listed above.

- 1.4 The ADMDDPD is currently being reviewed to ensure that the allocations and policies it contains continue to be appropriate, up-to-date, and effective. The Amended Allocations & Development Management DPD (AADMDDPD), along with its supporting documents, has now been submitted to the Secretary of State to be examined by an independent Planning Inspector. The Submission Version of the AADMDDPD and its supporting documents can be viewed here:

[PLAN-REVIEW-PUB-STAGE-2.pdf \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](#).

Information about the Plan Review can be seen here:

- 1.5 Newark & Sherwood District Council has committed to having a study carried out that will look in detail at the sensitivity of the District's landscape to further solar energy developments. This will take account of all major solar farms that have planning permission, have been developed or are under construction throughout the District and in neighbouring areas. It will also analyse the different landscapes throughout the District and use all this information to provide an indication of the sensitivity of different areas. This will be referred to as the Landscape Sensitivity Study.
- 1.6 This SPD is designed to be read by the general public as well as by developers, planners, and District, Town and Parish Councillors. A Glossary is provided in Chapter 11, and although the language used is intended to be easily understandable, the use of certain technical terms is unavoidable. Consultation responses are welcomed from anyone with an interest in the District or in solar energy developments. The District Council is keen to understand how local residents feel about the issues discussed in this SPD.

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In the Climate Change Act 2008, the UK Government set a legally binding target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050, compared with 1990 levels. In 2019, the Government raised the 80% target to a 100% target by 2050. This is referred to as the net zero target. To meet this target, the Government has set the aim of a fully decarbonised, reliable and low-cost power system by 2025 which would be composed predominantly of wind and solar energy. The aim is to achieve 70 gigawatt (GW) of solar power by 2035 (up from 15.7 GW at the end of 2023).
- 2.2 Solar farms are installations of multiple solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, usually on a frame fixed to the ground. They generate electricity at a large scale to feed into the grid and to supply power to domestic and commercial consumers. The construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning phases of solar farm projects should all be considered when assessing applications for planning permission. Associated development may include equipment such as inverters, transformers and switchgears; substations; cabling; fencing; and biodiversity and landscaping enhancement measures.
- 2.3 A climate emergency was declared by Newark & District Council on 16 July 2019. The District Council has committed to measures to try and reduce its own carbon footprint as well as that of the local community.

## 3 NATIONAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 3.1 This chapter discusses the most relevant aspects of national policy and guidance for major solar farms.

### The National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines the purpose of the planning system as being to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which is described as having three objectives: economic, social and environmental. The environmental objective is ‘to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.’
- 3.3 Chapter 14 of the NPPF, ‘Meeting the challenge of climate change flooding and coastal change’, is of particular relevance to the development of solar farms. Here it is stated that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat plans should, amongst other things, provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources that maximises the potential for suitable development; and consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development.
- 3.4 When deciding on applications for solar farms, the NPPF makes clear that local authorities should:

‘a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to significant [sic] cutting greenhouse gas emissions;

b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas; and

c) in the case of applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site, and approve the proposal if its impacts are or can be made acceptable.’

- 3.5 The NPPF provides direction that must always be taken into account when assessing the material considerations set out in Chapter 6, including but not limited to, landscape and visual impacts; biodiversity, habitats and green infrastructure; and historic environment and heritage assets.

### Planning Practice Guidance

- 3.6 National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on [Renewable and low carbon energy](#) provides useful advice on how to consider applications to develop solar farms. Other

PPG may also be relevant, including that on the [Natural Environment](#). The PPG on renewable and low carbon energy includes, at the time of writing, sections on:

- How can local planning authorities develop a positive strategy to promote the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy?
- How can local planning authorities identify suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy?
- Do criteria based policies have a role in planning for renewable energy?
- Are buffer zones/separation distances appropriate between renewable energy development and other land uses?
- What are the particular planning considerations that relate to large scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic farms? and
- Battery Energy Storage Systems.

#### National Policy Statements

3.7 National Policy Statements (NPS) set out Government Policy on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) (see Chapter 5) including how applications for energy infrastructure will be assessed, and the way in which impacts and mitigations will be judged.

3.8 The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1):

- outlines the policy context for the development of nationally significant energy infrastructure;
- explains the urgent need for significant amounts of large-scale energy infrastructure in meeting government's energy objectives;
- sets out the general policies for the submission and assessment of energy infrastructure applications; and
- outlines generic impacts which arise from the development of all types of energy infrastructure covered by the energy NPSs.

3.9 EN-1 can be seen at:

[EN-1 Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

3.10 The National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) provides advice specific to renewable energy sources including solar PV, and generic impacts covered by EN-1 with further considerations that are technology specific. Matters covered include:

- irradiance and site topography;
- network connection;
- proximity of a site to dwellings;
- agricultural land classification and land type;
- accessibility;
- public rights of ways;
- security and lighting;
- capacity of a site;
- site layout design, and appearance;
- project lifetime;



- decommissioning ;
- flexibility in the project details;
- biodiversity, ecological, geological conservation and water management;
- landscape, visual and residential amenity;
- glint and glare;
- cultural heritage; and
- construction including traffic and transport noise and vibration.

3.11 EN-3 can be seen at:

[National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure \(EN-3\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114122/national-policy-statement-renewable-energy-infrastructure-en-3.pdf).

3.12 The National Policy Statement for electricity networks infrastructure (EN-5) should be read alongside EN-1 and has additional policy on relevant matters including:

- factors influencing site selection and design;
- biodiversity and geological conservation;
- landscape and visual;
- noise and vibration;
- Electric and Magnetic Fields; and
- Sulphur Hexafluoride.

3.13 EN-5 can be seen at:

[Electricity Networks National Policy Statement - EN-5 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114122/national-policy-statement-electricity-networks-infrastructure-en-5.pdf)

#### Other documents

3.14 Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan

Updated on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023, this document states that Government seeks large scale ground-mounted solar deployment across the UK. It wants development to take place mainly on brownfield, industrial and low and medium grade agricultural land. It sets out that solar and farming can be complementary, supporting each other financially, environmentally and through shared use of land, and encourages deployment of solar technology that delivers environmental benefits, with consideration for ongoing food production or environmental improvement.

3.15 This document can be seen at:

[Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114122/powering-up-britain-energy-security-plan.pdf)

3.16 British Energy Security Strategy

This states that the Government will support the effective use of land by encouraging large scale projects to locate on previously developed, or lower value land, where possible, and ensure projects are designed to avoid, mitigate, and where necessary, compensate for the impacts of using greenfield sites. The Government will also support solar that is co-located with other functions (for example, agriculture, onshore wind generation, or storage) to maximise the efficiency of land use. This document can be seen at:

[British energy security strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/british-energy-security-strategy)

3.17 The Sixth Carbon Budget: The UK's path to Net Zero

The Climate Change Committee, the UK Government's independent advisor on emissions targets and climate change, published their 'The Sixth Carbon Budget: The UK's path to Net Zero' in December 2020. This sets out the actions the UK will need to take to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The report highlights that a portfolio of zero and low-carbon energy generating technologies will be needed to meet future electricity demands including expanding new solar generating technology capacity by 3,000MW on average every year to 2030 and beyond.

3.18 In early 2025 the Climate Change Committee (CCC) has committed to advising the UK on the level of its Seventh Carbon Budget, the legal limit for UK net emissions of greenhouse gases over the years 2038 to 2042. The Sixth Carbon Budget can be seen at:

[Sixth Carbon Budget - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](https://theccc.org.uk/our-work/sixth-carbon-budget/)

3.19 Energy White Paper Powering our Net Zero Future

This was published in December 2020. Although this document contains little discussion of solar farms, it states that the electricity sector has decarbonised the fastest and will be the bedrock of decarbonising the whole UK economy. The White Paper plans for a doubling of electricity demand as transport and heat switch from petrol/diesel and gas respectively to electricity. It also commits to a fourfold increase in low-carbon generation. Onshore wind and solar are regarded as 'key building blocks of the future generation mix'. This document can be seen at:

[Energy white paper: Powering our net zero future - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/energy-white-paper)

3.20 National Infrastructure Assessment

Published on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023, the second National Infrastructure Assessment by the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) recognised the significant progress the UK has made in boosting renewable electricity generation. It also highlighted the key challenges ahead in decarbonising energy and achieving net zero emissions. This document can be seen at:

[National Infrastructure Assessment - NIC](https://www.nic.org.uk/national-infrastructure-assessment/)

3.21 Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener

This was published in October 2021 and puts forward policies and proposals for meeting the UK's carbon emissions reduction targets and sets out our vision for a decarbonised economy by 2050. The Net Zero Strategy can be seen at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

3.22 The National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS)

The National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS) was published on 25 November 2020. It discusses the government's plans to improve the quality of the UK's infrastructure

move towards the UK having net zero emissions by 2050. This document can be seen at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-infrastructure-strategy>

- 3.23 Not all the documents listed above will apply to every proposal to develop solar farms, and documents not referred to may be of relevance.

## 4 LOCAL POLICY

4.1 The District Council policies most relevant to the assessment of proposals for solar energy development are Core Policy 10 'Climate Change' of the Amended Core Strategy, and Policy DM4 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation' of the Allocations & Development Management DPD. Spatial Policy 3 'Rural Areas' of the Amended Core Strategy and Policy DM8 'Development in the Open Countryside' deal with development outside the main settlements, but do not specifically address renewable energy schemes. Proposals should be assessed against all relevant policies, including those concerning transport, biodiversity, landscape character, the historic environment, design and sustainable development. Appropriately located community energy projects will be welcomed as part of solar energy developments.

### 4.2 Core Policy 10

Core Policy 10 states that the District Council is committed to tackling the causes and impacts of climate change and to delivering a reduction in the district's carbon footprint. The District Council will work with partners and developers to promote energy generation from renewable and low-carbon sources through supporting new development where it is able to demonstrate that its adverse impacts have been satisfactorily addressed. This policy explains that Policy DM4 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation' provides the framework against which the appropriateness of such proposals will be assessed.

### 4.3 Policy DM4

As stated in the introduction, the Allocations & Development Management DPD is, at the time of writing, being reviewed and an amended version has now been submitted to the Secretary of State to be examined by an independent planning inspector. The only proposed amendment to the relevant section Policy DM4 is to insert the text underlined below.

4.4 Policy DM4 says that planning permission will be granted for renewable and low carbon energy generation development, as both standalone projects and part of other development, its associated infrastructure (including battery storage) and the retrofitting of existing development, where its benefits are not outweighed by detrimental impact from the operation and maintenance of the development and through the installation process upon:

1. The landscape character or urban form of the district or the purposes of including land within the Green Belt arising from the individual or cumulative impact of proposals;
2. Southwell Views as defined in Policy So/PV or the setting of the Thurgarton Hundred Workhouse, as defined in Policy So/Wh;
3. Heritage Assets and or their settings;
4. Amenity, including noise pollution, shadow flicker and electro-magnetic interference;

5. Highway safety;
6. The ecology of the local or wider area; or
7. Aviation interests of local or national importance.

## 5 NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- 5.1 Some solar farms are so large in scale that they are considered to be of national importance and therefore they are regarded as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). These are decided on by the relevant Secretary of State rather than the local authority or local authorities in whose areas they are proposed. NSIPs that generate electricity are dealt with by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. For onshore solar farms, the threshold above which a proposal is regarded as an NSIP is a generating capacity of more than 50 megawatts (MW).
- 5.2 The planning process for dealing with proposals for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) was established by the Planning Act 2008 ('the 2008 Act'). The 2008 Act process, as amended by the Localism Act 2011, involves an examination of major proposals relating to energy, transport, water, waste and wastewater, and includes opportunities for people to have their say before a decision is made by the relevant Secretary of State. The Planning Inspectorate manages many aspects of the 2008 Act process (the NSIP planning application process) on behalf of the Secretary of State.
- 5.3 Local Impact Report (LIR) and the 2008 Act Process
- As part of the 2008 Act process, the relevant local authorities will be invited to submit a local impact report (LIR) giving details of the likely impact of the proposed development on the authority's area.
- 5.4 Local authorities are encouraged to discuss and work through the issues raised by NSIP proposals with prospective applicants well before the application is submitted, and to engage with applicants in the preparation of statements of common ground. Local authorities will also be involved in considering the statement of community consultation, commenting upon the quality of the applicant's consultation process, producing an LIR and making their own representations on the application.
- 5.5 Once an application has been accepted for examination, the relevant Secretary of State will appoint an 'Examining Authority' to examine the application. The Examining Authority will be from the Planning Inspectorate and will be either a single Inspector or a panel of three or more Inspectors. As part of the examination process, the Examining Authority will invite relevant local authorities to submit LIRs by a given deadline.
- 5.6 After the examination has been concluded, the Examining Authority will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will make the decision on whether or not to make a development consent order (DCO) authorising the project. In coming to a decision, the Secretary of State must have regard to any LIRs that are submitted by the deadline. Local authorities are therefore strongly encouraged to produce LIRs when invited to do so.
- 5.7 Relevant local authorities should prioritise preparation of their LIR irrespective of whether the local authority considers the development would have a positive or

negative impact on their area. The local authority will be able to submit a separate written representation if it wishes to express a particular view on whether the application should be granted. Where a number of relevant local authorities are involved, local authorities might consider a joint LIR submission.

- 5.8 The Examining Authority is responsible for setting the procedure for the examination and the deadline for the LIR, taking into account the complexity of the application and other relevant matters and bearing in mind the overall timetable in the 2008 Act for examining the application.
- 5.9 The Examining Authority will hold a preliminary meeting before the commencement of the examination. After the preliminary meeting the Examining Authority will circulate a procedural note concerning the details and timetables in respect of various aspects of the examination to all interested parties. This will specify the deadline for the submission of LIRs, and the period within which interested parties will have the opportunity to make written comments on them.
- 5.10 Local authorities should not, however, wait for the deadline to be set following the preliminary meeting to commence work on the LIR. This is because the preliminary meeting is likely to take place a few weeks after the application is accepted, whereas the LIR will be required early in the examination period. The deadline given for the submission of the LIR following the preliminary meeting is likely to be short.
- 5.11 Local authorities are strongly encouraged to use the pre-application period to start their own evaluation of the local impacts of the proposal. Local authorities should then begin to compile the LIR as soon as the application has been accepted formally by the Secretary of State and they have been invited to submit an LIR. This approach will enable the LIR to be produced within the deadlines.
- 5.12 In practice, local authorities will know about the application some time before it is submitted, through the pre-application consultation carried out by the applicant. At this stage they should ensure that they gather sufficient information about the scheme to enable them to commence work on their evaluation of the proposal. This will have the added benefit of enabling them to focus their responses to the applicant's consultation when the application is being prepared.
- 5.13 Local authorities should ensure any necessary internal authorisation processes are in place to meet the timetable. It is entirely a matter for local authorities to determine whether or not an LIR requires approval by Members and in what form.
- 5.14 The 2008 Act process timetable is summarised below, as well as how LIRs fit into that timetable:

*The 2008 Act Process*

1. **Pre-application: No time limit** Applicant develops proposal and carries out pre-application consultation.
2. **Acceptance: Up to 28 days** Secretary of State has 28 days to review application and decide whether to accept or reject it.

3. **Pre-examination: 2-3 months** Examining Authority appointed to assess issues and hold preliminary meeting. Preliminary meeting – procedural decision on how application is to be examined.
4. **Examination: Up to 6 months** 6 months to carry out examination.
5. **Report and recommendation: Up to 3 months** 3 months to issue report and recommendation.
6. **Decision: Up to 3 months** 3 months to issue decision and statement of reasons.
7. **Post decision: 6 weeks** 6 week window for legal challenge.

*How the local authority fits in*

1. **Pre-application: No time limit** Local authorities for site area consulted by applicant on statement of community consultation and participate in pre-application discussions. Local authorities begin evaluation of the local impacts of the proposed scheme.
2. **Acceptance: Up to 28 days** Local authorities and neighbouring local authorities make representations to Secretary of State regarding the adequacy of the consultation carried out by the applicant.
3. **Pre-examination: 2-3 months** Examining Authority proposes draft deadline for the submission of LIRs.
4. **Examination: Up to 6 months** Examining Authority invites and sets deadline for the submission of LIRs. Local authorities submit LIR within specified deadline and make other representations if they wish to do so.



## 6 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 This section discusses key material considerations that are likely to be of relevance when assessing applications for major solar farm developments. Not all these considerations will apply to every solar farm application, and in some cases other matters not discussed below may be relevant.

### 6.2 Landscape and visual impacts

Given the scale of major solar farms, landscape and visual impacts are likely to be potentially significant and should be carefully considered at an early stage of the planning application process. Applications for major solar farms should include a thorough assessment of these impacts. This could be either a Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) or a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), if the proposal is regarded as EIA development.

6.3 Assessments of landscape and visual impacts should take account of the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), discussed in Chapter 8. When available, the Landscape Sensitivity Study will also inform assessments and assist the consideration of cumulative landscape and visual impacts. Guidance on the information which should be provided within a LVIA from the Building Research Establishment (BRE) document 'Planning guidance for the development of large-scale ground mounted solar PV systems' is reproduced in Appendix 1, with minor changes to make it specific to Newark & Sherwood District. This is also applicable to LVAs.

6.4 The forthcoming Landscape Sensitivity Study should, when available, be considered a key document in assessing the landscape and visual impacts of proposed solar developments, including cumulative impacts.

6.5 Solar farms can cover a significant surface area so the selection of suitable sites and the use of appropriate screening such as hedgerows are important to ensure that the area of a zone of visual influence can be minimised. Associated infrastructure such as substations or battery energy storage systems should be located within the development site to minimise landscape and visual impacts.

### 6.6 Biodiversity, habitats and green infrastructure

Newark and Sherwood District contains an impressive range of habitats and species. The District also has a number of sites which receive specific protection because of their international, national or regional importance for nature conservation. These include Birklands and Bilhaugh special area of conservation (SAC), Sherwood Forest national nature reserve (NNR), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), local nature reserves, and Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs), also known as sites of interest for nature conservation (SINCs). More information about these is available at the address below, and the SAC and the NNR are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

[Biodiversity and landscape | Newark & Sherwood District Council \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk)

6.7 Core Policy 12 of the ACS and Policy DM7 of the ADM DPD set out how development proposals in Newark & Sherwood District should protect and enhance biodiversity,

including through the provision of new or improved green infrastructure. Green infrastructure (GI) in Newark & Sherwood District should be viewed as a network of greenspaces, landscapes and natural elements including bodies of water sometimes referred to as blue infrastructure. To aid the delivery of this network, the District Council has produced a Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) that puts forward a range of strategic interventions and also more specific area-based interventions. The GIS can be seen at the address above this paragraph.

- 6.8 Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework (GIF) helps local planning authorities and developers meet requirements in the NPPF to consider GI in local plans and in new development. It helps to target the creation or improvement of GI, particularly where existing provision is poorest. The GIF sets out principles and standards for good quality GI, offers design guidance and provides mapping of environmental and socio-economic datasets. This document can be seen here:

[Green Infrastructure Home \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk)

- 6.9 The NPPF makes clear that when considering planning applications, if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. It is also stated that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

- 6.10 Under the Environment Act 2021, all major projects granted planning permission in England, including solar farms, must deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG). BNG means managing land through development in a way that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. It is intended to ensure that through enhancing habitats, developments increase biodiversity and create new green spaces for local communities to enjoy. It should be noted that 10% is a minimum, but not a suggested maximum, and projects delivering a higher percentage of BNG are welcomed. Solar farms often have the potential to contribute a significantly greater BNG without jeopardising the viability of the project, and this will be sought by the District Council where possible. The Environment Act 2021 can be seen here:

[Environment Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

- 6.11 Newark & Sherwood District Council have worked collaboratively with other local authorities and organisations including Natural England and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust to produce ‘A Biodiversity Net Gain Framework for Nottinghamshire and Nottingham’. This provides detailed information about how BNG should be delivered in Nottinghamshire and sets out over-riding principles to guide development. The BNG Framework can be seen here:

[insert link here]

- 6.12 The Environment Act 2021 builds upon the Government’s: A Green Future: Our 25 Year Environment Plan to Improve the Environment (25 YEP), launched in January 2018. The 25 YEP, amongst other things, commits to the development of a Nature Recovery

Network (NRN) providing 500,000 hectares of additional wildlife habitat, more effectively linking existing protected sites and landscapes, as well as urban green and blue infrastructure. The 25 YEP can be seen here:

[25-year-environment-plan.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

- 6.13 Provisions introduced by the Environment Act 2021 require the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) across England. These will set out priorities for biodiversity outcomes, and the actions that need to be undertaken to achieve these outcomes. LNRS will be key to the development of the NRN. At the time of writing, the Nottinghamshire LNRS is being developed collaboratively by local authorities and environmental organisations. Once produced, the LNRS will facilitate the enhancement of habitats to increase biodiversity through development proposals.
- 6.14 The production of the LNRS will draw upon Nottinghamshire’s Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). The LBAP, among other things, identifies targets for species and habitats appropriate to the county, and provides a basis for monitoring progress in biodiversity conservation at both local and national levels. The LBAP has been developed by Nottinghamshire’s Local Biodiversity Action Group, who have also produced Biodiversity Opportunity Maps (BOMs) across the county, including for Newark & Sherwood District. BOMs provide a spatial vision of how biodiversity can be improved by focussing on areas where action to enhance, enlarge, expand and link up habitats would have the most benefits.

More information about the LBAP can be seen here:

[LBAP – Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group \(nottsbag.org.uk\)](#)

More information about Nottinghamshire BOMs can be seen here:

[Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping – Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group \(nottsbag.org.uk\)](#)

The Newark & Sherwood District BOM (April 2022) can be seen here:

[The Sherwood Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping Project \(nottsbag.org.uk\)](#)

- 6.15 Interconnections between valuable habitats are an important aspect of biodiversity enhancement and contribute significantly to its effectiveness. Where possible, newly created or enhanced habitats should be connected with other nearby areas that meaningfully support biodiversity, and existing connecting routes for wildlife should be enhanced. Measures to protect and enhance biodiversity can contribute to a number of objectives such as BNG net gain, the provision of GI, the LNRS and the NRN at the same time.
- 6.16 Historic environment and heritage assets

Newark and Sherwood District has a rich historic environment with its own distinctive identity. This includes more than 1,300 buildings, structures and monuments that are regarded to be of national significance and designated as listed buildings. There are more than 70 scheduled monuments including a wide range of archaeological types, from medieval castle remains to prehistoric mounds and civil war fortifications. There are 47 conservation areas and 4 registered parks and gardens:

- [Newark Castle Gardens \(Grade II\)](#)
  - [Rufford Abbey](#) (Grade II)
  - [Thoresby Park](#) (Grade I)
  - [Thurgarton Hundred Workhouse](#) (Grade II\*)
- 6.17 Detailed information about conservation areas including in some cases their character appraisals can be seen here:
- [Conservation areas | Newark & Sherwood District Council \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](#)
- 6.18 The District also features a range of non-designated heritage assets, identified by the District Council as having a degree of significance because of their local heritage interest. They are not otherwise protected by formal designation. These may include:
- buildings and structures
  - local character areas
  - archaeological sites
  - landscapes or landscape features
- 6.19 More information about heritage conservation in Newark & Sherwood District can be seen here:
- [Heritage and tree conservation | Newark & Sherwood District Council \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](#)
- 6.20 Core Policy 14 of the ACS and Policy DM9 of the ADM DPD set out how development proposals in Newark & Sherwood District with the potential to impact on the historic environment will be considered.
- 6.21 PPG advises that great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large-scale solar farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large-scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset.
- 6.22 Ground mounted solar development has potential to impact on archaeology through ground disturbance from the construction process including the digging of foundations, and the erection of fencing. If a proposed development site includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, developers must submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
- 6.23 Desk-based archaeological assessments should follow standards and guidance set out by the [Chartered Institute for Archaeologists](#). Newark & Sherwood District Council also

recognises the [Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook](#), which sets out practical guidelines for a consistent approach to the historic environment.

6.24 Significant archaeological locations in the Newark and Southwell areas have individual policies in the emerging AADM DPD which set out how the particular site circumstances that should be considered. NUA/AR/1 concerns the Farndon & River Devon Ice Age Landscape, NUA/AR/2 deals with archaeology deriving from the Civil War around Newark and So/AR/1 covers Southwell Roman Villa. Only limited weight can be attached to these policies at the time of writing, because they have not yet been examined or adopted.

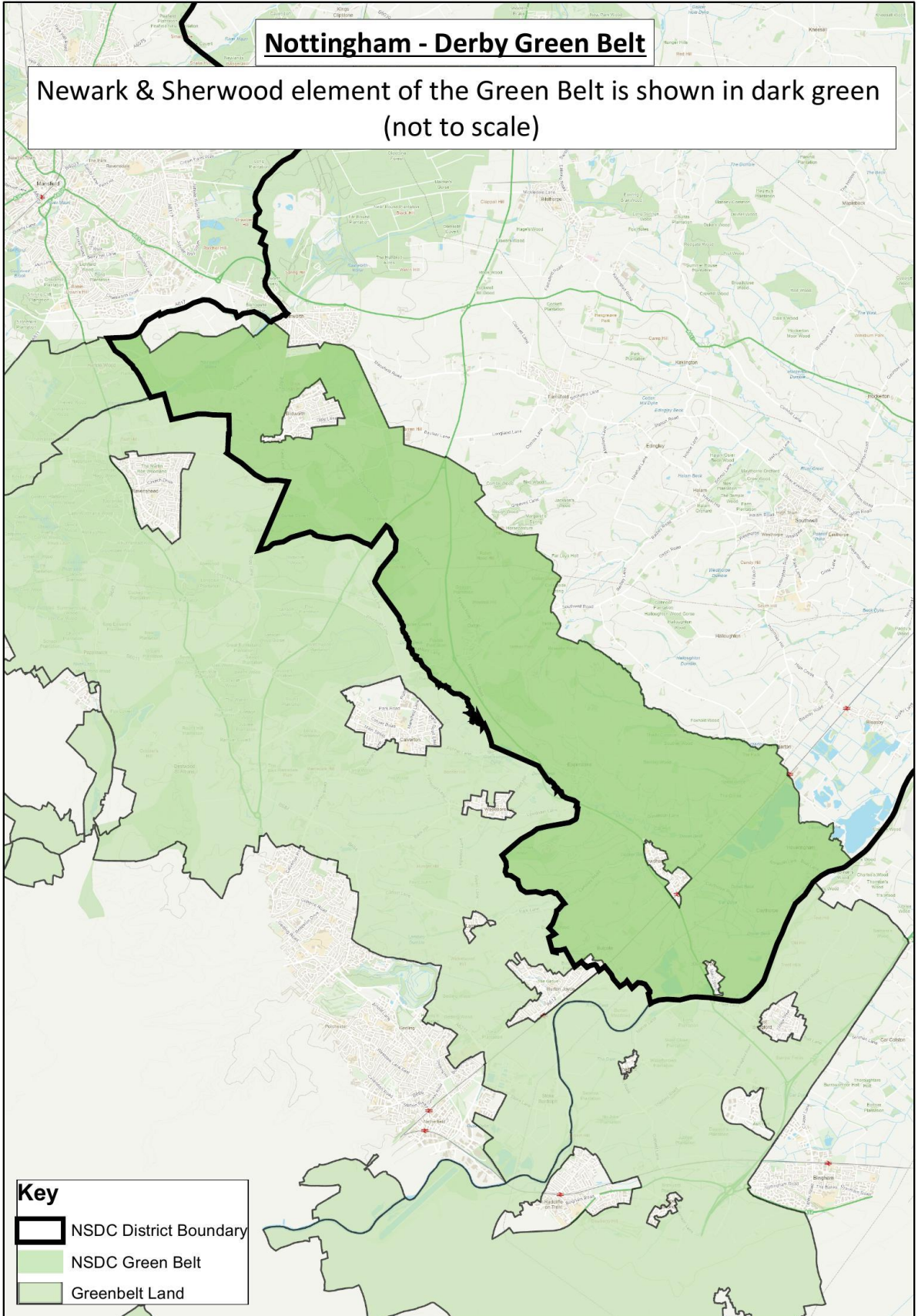
6.25 Certain heritage assets are discussed in more depth in Chapter 7.

6.26 Green Belt




The extent of the Green Belt in Newark & Sherwood District is shown below:

# Nottingham - Derby Green Belt

Newark & Sherwood element of the Green Belt is shown in dark green (not to scale)



**Key**

-  NSDC District Boundary
-  NSDC Green Belt
-  Greenbelt Land

- 6.27 Spatial Policy 4B of the ACS, 'Green Belt Development' defers to national policy for the assessment of certain types of applications in the Green Belt that would include major solar farms. National policy, as set out Chapter 13 of the NPPF, has the potential to be a significant constraint on major solar farm developments in the Green Belt.
- 6.28 The NPPF states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- 6.29 National policy makes clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases, developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.
- 6.30 Flooding and drainage
- Areas in Newark & Sherwood District are particularly vulnerable to flood risk from local rivers, including the River Trent. In line with Core Policy 9 of the ACS and Policy DM5 of the ADM DPD, solar farm developments should make a positive contribution to flood risk mitigation and water management including, where feasible, the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems. Solar farms should be designed in such a way that the risk of surface water flooding is not increased and is where possible reduced. All proposals to develop major solar farms must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment, as set out in footnote 59 of the NPPF.
- 6.31 A Flood Risk Assessment provides a site-specific analysis of how a development affects flood risk and proposes suitable mitigation measures which could be incorporated into the scheme (if applicable). For a development to gain planning permission, a Flood Risk Assessment should demonstrate that the site will remain safe in the future, taking into account the effects of climate change.
- 6.32 Cumulative impacts
- The impacts of major solar farm development proposals cannot be fully considered in isolation. The assessment of such applications in Newark & Sherwood District should take into account other consented, under construction and developed schemes that are of a similar nature, or otherwise contribute to a cumulative effect, both in the District and in neighbouring areas.
- 6.33 In Paragraph 160, the NPPF states that while plans should provide a positive strategy for the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, they should also ensure that adverse impacts are addressed appropriately including cumulative landscape and visual impacts. Cumulative impacts relating to highways, flood risk, pollution, residential amenity and other relevant matters may also be material considerations.
- 6.34 The forthcoming Landscape Sensitivity Study will be valuable in assisting the assessment of cumulative impacts. It will provide a baseline by creating a detailed picture of the development of solar energy schemes in Newark & Sherwood District

and neighbouring areas, and it will also assess the sensitivity of landscapes to further such development in the light of existing cumulative impacts.

#### 6.35 Glint and glare

As stated in EN-3, solar panels are specifically designed to absorb, not reflect, sunlight. Solar panels may, however, reflect the sun's rays at certain angles, causing glint and glare. Glint is defined as a momentary flash of light that may be produced as a direct reflection of the sun in the solar panel. Glare is a continuous source of excessive brightness experienced by a stationary observer located in the path of reflected sunlight from the face of the panel. The effect occurs when the solar panel is stationed between or at an angle of the sun and the receptor.

6.36 Applicants should identify potential receptors to assess possible glint and glare issues and determine if a glint and glare assessment is necessary. When such an assessment is necessary, applicants are expected to consider how glint and glare could affect receptors and provide an assessment of potential impacts including the duration of the effect and the intensity of the reflection. It may be necessary to consider impacts on aviation.

6.37 The extent of reflectivity analysis required to assess potential impacts will depend on the specific project site and design. There may be a need to account for panels on solar trackers if they are proposed as these may cause differential diurnal and/or seasonal impacts. Solar trackers are support structures that allow solar panels to follow the path of the sun and absorb more solar radiation.

6.38 When a glint and glare assessment is undertaken, the potential for solar PV panels, frames and supports to have a combined reflective quality may need to be assessed, although the glint and glare of the frames and supports is likely to be significantly less than the panels.

#### 6.39 Agricultural Land Classification

Agricultural land is graded from 1 to 5, with Grade 3 subdivided into 3a and 3b. The 'Best and Most Versatile' land (BMV) is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a. Applicants for major solar farm developments should undertake an Agricultural Land Classification survey including appropriate justification or mitigation if any BMV land is to be used.

6.40 PPG advises that effective use of land should be encouraged by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land (provided that it is not of high environmental value). As Newark & Sherwood District is largely rural in character, it is unlikely that there will be enough previously developed land available to accommodate large scale solar farms, but where feasible the use of non-agricultural land should be prioritised.

6.41 When the use of agricultural land is proposed, it should be demonstrated that this is necessary, and that where possible poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land. Planning authorities should consider whether the proposed development would allow for continued agricultural use and if it could enhance biodiversity. Proposals that use land for agricultural purposes at the same time as solar power generation will be welcomed where appropriate.



6.42 EN-3 advises that while land type should not be a predominating factor in determining the suitability of the site location for solar farms regarded as NSIPs, applicants should, where possible, utilise suitable previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land and industrial land. Where the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land avoiding the use of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land where possible.

6.43 Community consultation and benefits

Developers of solar farms will be expected to demonstrate that they have engaged in meaningful consultation with local communities before submitting their application. This will allow communities to gain a better understanding of the project and its potential impacts, and also to make suggestions which the developer can consider when finalising their proposals. It is recommended that community consultation continues throughout the lifetime of the project. Applicants for NSIPs are legally required to carry out pre application consultation on proposed developments in line with a Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC) which relevant local authorities will have the opportunity to comment on. The application must include a Consultation Report setting out how they have complied with the statutory pre-application consultation requirements, and that they have had regard to the responses. The Planning Inspectorate will consider the Consultation Report, alongside any adequacy of consultation representation made by a local authority and the other application documents, before deciding whether or not to accept the application for examination.

6.44 Community benefits associated with solar farms can be used to mitigate the impacts of the development and alleviate the concerns of local residents. Applicants are encouraged to outline the benefits of their proposal within their planning application. For community benefits to be secured through planning obligations known as section 106 agreements they must be directly related to the development; necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposal.

6.45 Separately but alongside any planning process the District Council will negotiate on behalf of communities within the District to secure the most generous benefits possible for them. Where appropriate, the District Council will seek to secure benefits on behalf of partner organisations such as the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The District Council will normally seek to secure community benefits throughout the full length of a solar farm project, not just the operational phase.

6.46 Decommissioning and restoration

Although solar farms can typically be expected to operate for up to 40 years, they are usually temporary structures and how they will be decommissioned should be considered as part of any planning application. Where appropriate, the District Council may impose a condition limiting the operational life of the development. This would mean that for a solar farm to operate beyond the period specified in the condition, a new planning application would need to be granted permission. The District Council would prefer that decommissioning takes place in accordance with approved details

within a Section 106 agreement, but this could also be controlled by planning conditions.

6.47 Any application to develop a solar farm should be supported by information about how the project will be decommissioned and how the land used will be, at a minimum, restored to its previous condition. Any landscape improvements, biodiversity enhancements and community benefits should be retained. No later than 12 months prior to the expiry of the planning permission, or within 18 months of the cessation of electricity generation or storage on the site, whichever is the sooner, a decommissioning scheme shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The decommissioning scheme shall include a programme and a scheme of work and shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details. The operator shall notify the local planning authority in writing within five working days following the cessation of electricity generation or storage. All buildings, structures and associated infrastructure shall be removed within 12 months of the approval of the decommissioning scheme, and the land restored, in accordance with the approved details.

6.48 Grid connection

To supply power to consumers, solar farms need to be connected to either the transmission or the distribution network. This requires approval from the licensed distribution network operators (DNOs), National Grid or both. The connection voltage, availability of network capacity, and the distance from the solar farm to the existing network can have a significant effect on the commercial feasibility of a development proposal.

6.49 To maximise existing grid infrastructure, minimise disruption and reduce overall costs, applicants may choose a site based on nearby available grid export capacity. Where this is the case, applicants should consider the cumulative impacts of siting a solar farm in proximity to other energy generating stations and infrastructure. Major solar farm applications should include details of all the infrastructure required including cabling. Cabling should normally avoid areas of high landscape, ecological or archaeological sensitivity, and should be designed so as not to be overly extensive or visually intrusive.

6.50 Battery energy storage systems

Battery energy storage systems (BESS) can help to maximise the efficiency of an installation by allowing energy to be stored. PPG states that where planning permission is being sought for development of battery energy storage systems of 1 MWh or over, and excluding where battery energy storage systems are associated with a residential dwelling, applicants are encouraged to engage with the relevant local fire and rescue service before submitting a planning application. This is so matters relating to the siting and location of BESS, prevention of the impact of thermal runaway, and emergency services access, can be considered before an application is made.

6.51 Minerals safeguarding

The Development Plan for Newark & Sherwood District includes the Nottinghamshire Minerals Local Plan which identifies Minerals Safeguarding Areas. Within these areas,

consideration of the impact of a proposed development on minerals resources may be required in line with the provisions of that Plan. The Minerals Safeguarding Areas are shown on the Policies Map. The Nottinghamshire Minerals Local Plan can be seen at the address below:

[Minerals Local Plan | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

6.52 Site security

Planning applications for solar farms should include details of all site security measures such as perimeter fencing, CCTV cameras and lighting. It is recognised that such measures will usually be necessary. Consideration should be given to potential impacts including those upon habitats and biodiversity, landscape, heritage assets, public rights of way and residential amenity. How potential impacts might vary according to the time of day or the season of the year should be taken into account. Security measures, in particular fencing and lighting, should not be excessive and may require justification.

6.53 Access, traffic and transport

Spatial Policy 3 of the ACS states that new development in rural areas should not have an undue impact on local infrastructure including the transport network. The most significant traffic impacts of solar farms are usually at the construction stage, with only limited access required during the operational phase, often for maintenance. Given the largely rural nature of Newark & Sherwood District, the suitability of access routes access for the delivery of the components of a solar farm and the machinery necessary for its construction should be assessed at the earliest stage possible.

6.54 If the proposed development of a solar farm has the potential to affect the operation of the Strategic Road Network (SRN), applicants should consult National Highways, preferably at the pre-application stage. Information should be provided on possible trips generated during the construction and the operational phases of development. As any solar farm development in Newark & Sherwood District is likely to impact the local road network, applicants should consult Nottinghamshire County Council, which is the highways authority for roads not part of the SRN. Detailed assessment of potential traffic impacts is likely to be required.

6.55 Developers will usually need to construct on-site access routes for operation and maintenance activities, such as footpaths, earthworks, or landscaping. In addition, sometimes access routes will need to be constructed to connect solar farms to the public road network. Applications should include the full extent of the access routes necessary for operation and maintenance and an assessment of their effects.

6.56 Residential Amenity

It should be demonstrated that there will be no unacceptable impacts on residential amenity during the construction of a solar farm. In order to minimise disturbance, it may be necessary to impose conditions that control the routes taken by construction vehicles and/or restrict the hours of construction.

6.57 During the operation of solar farms, ancillary equipment such as invertors, transformers or sub-stations may produce noise. These should be sited far enough

away from any nearby dwellings that there are no significant impacts on residential amenity.

6.58 Public Rights of Way

Newark & Sherwood District contains a number of Public Rights of Way (PROW) which connect settlements and offer opportunities for non-motorised transport. On these paths, people are permitted to walk dogs on a lead or under close control; use a pushchair or wheelchair; and take a short route around an illegal obstruction or move it to get past. Nottinghamshire County Council is the local highway authority and is therefore responsible for PROW in Newark & Sherwood District. The creation of new PROW will be welcomed as part of planning applications for solar energy developments.

6.59 There are four kinds of PROW, which in Nottinghamshire are marked by different coloured arrows:

- Footpaths are marked with yellow arrow and can only be used by walkers.
- Bridleways are marked with blue arrows and can only be used by walkers, horse riders and cyclists.
- Restricted byways are marked with burgundy arrows and can only be used by walkers, horse riders, cyclists and horse and cart users.
- Byways are marked with red arrows and can be used by walkers, horse riders, cyclists, car users, motorcyclists and horse and cart users.

6.60 Applicants for solar farm developments will need to demonstrate to Nottinghamshire County Council that any PROW affected will remain accessible and usable. If any PROW needs to be temporarily or permanently diverted, an Order securing the diversion of the path must be agreed with both the District and County Councils. The new route should be available to the public before the existing route is rendered unusable. More information about PROW can be seen here:

[Rights of way \(public paths\) | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

## 7 PROTECTED LOCAL FEATURES

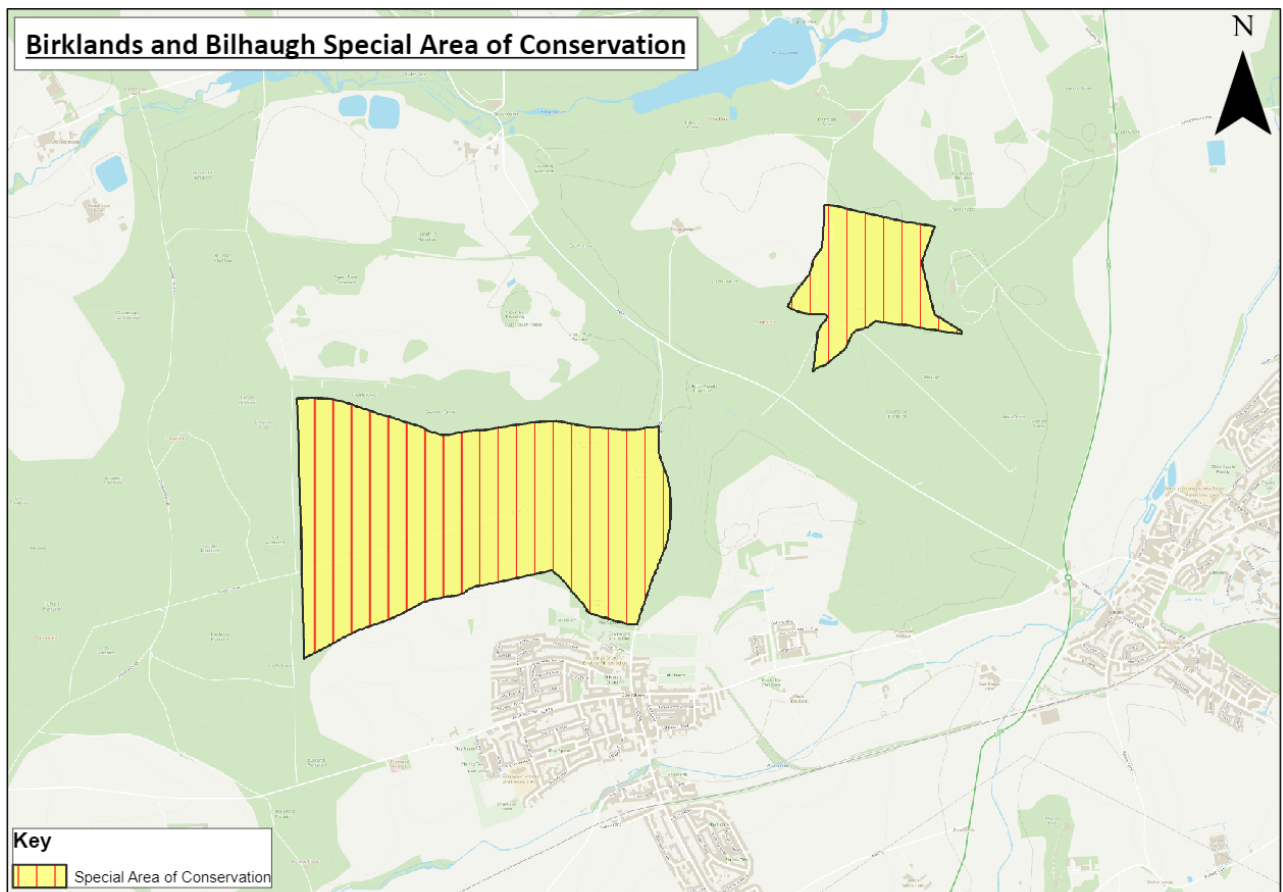
7.1 Newark & Sherwood District has a number of unique protected features, some of which are discussed below. Impacts upon habitats, biodiversity and heritage assets, whether in areas mentioned in this chapter or not, should be carefully considered throughout the District and in neighbouring areas.

### 7.2 Birklands and Bilhaugh Special Area of Conservation

One of the key environmental assets in Newark & Sherwood District is Birklands and Bilhaugh Special Area of Conservation (SAC). SACs are protected areas designated under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The SAC consists of two discrete parcels, with one in the southern part of Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve (NNR) and the other, smaller, component located within the privately owned and administered Thoresby Estate, to the north-east.

7.3 The SAC supports extensive areas of old acidophilous oak woodland which was managed for hundreds of years as an extensively grazed wood pasture. This habitat is slowly reverting to high forest woodland and heath following the cessation of traditional livestock grazing. The SAC is particularly notable for its remnant ancient and decaying oak trees which support a wide variety of invertebrates and fungi, some of which are rare.

7.4 Air pollution is a problem for the SAC and has already caused a decrease in lichen diversity. Due to its location, the SAC is subject to recreational pressure, which can damage its fragile habitat. A map of the SAC can be seen below:



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**7.5 Sherwood Forest Possible Potential Special Protection Area**

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are protected areas for birds in the England and Wales also classified under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and Natural England (NE) recommend to the Government areas to be classified as SPAs. While Government considers this step, the area is called a potential or proposed SPA (pSPA) and the site is provisionally afforded protection until a final decision is made. If the Government decides to follow the recommendation and to classify the area, it will become an ‘SPA’ and protection will continue to be in place.

7.6 Parts of Sherwood Forest are important habitats for nightjars and woodlarks, and the significance of this should not be underestimated. No conclusion has yet been reached about the possible future classification of parts of Sherwood Forest as a SPA for its breeding nightjar and woodlark populations, but Natural England advise that these should be regarded as a possible potential Special Protection Area (ppSPA).

7.7 This recommendation follows a decision in 2011 to refuse to grant planning permission for an Energy Recovery Facility at Rainworth where the potential impacts on nightjars and woodlarks and their habitats was given significant weight. In light of this decision, Natural England recommend that a precautionary approach should be adopted which ensures that reasonable and proportionate steps have been taken in order to avoid or minimise, as far as possible, any potential adverse effects from development on the breeding populations of nightjar and woodlark in the Sherwood Forest area. This means that, in effect, Natural England expect to see the same approach to

development potentially affecting the ppSPA as would be taken with development potentially affecting a pSPA.

- 7.8 Natural England's Advice Note to Local Planning Authorities regarding the consideration of likely effects on the breeding population of nightjar and woodlark in the Sherwood Forest region, which contains a map showing the areas of greatest ornithological interest for breeding nightjar and woodlark, can be seen at the address below:

[Natural England's Advice Notes on the Sherwood ppSPA \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](http://newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk)

- 7.9 It should be noted that there are a number of SPAs that are within 40km of the District, and any development proposal with the potential to affect any of these should be supported by evidence that its impacts will not be unacceptable.

7.10 Southwell Protected Views

Key to the distinctive character of Southwell are the views of and across the principal heritage assets of Southwell Minster, the Archbishop's Palace, Thurgarton Hundred Workhouse and the Holy Trinity Church. These views are protected under Policy So/PV of the ADMDPD and Thurgarton Hundred Workhouse is also specifically protected under Policy So/Wh of the ADMDPD.

- 7.11 Areas called 'view cones' have been defined on the Policies Map. Any development proposal within these areas must demonstrate that there will be no negative impact on the views of the heritage assets. The view cones are not intended to definitively define the extent of views or settings and development proposals which fall outside of them may still present the potential for detrimental impacts. The Policies Map for Southwell can be seen in the ADMDPD.

- 7.12 Any proposal with the potential to impact upon the protected views should take account of the Southwell Landscape Setting Study which can be seen here:

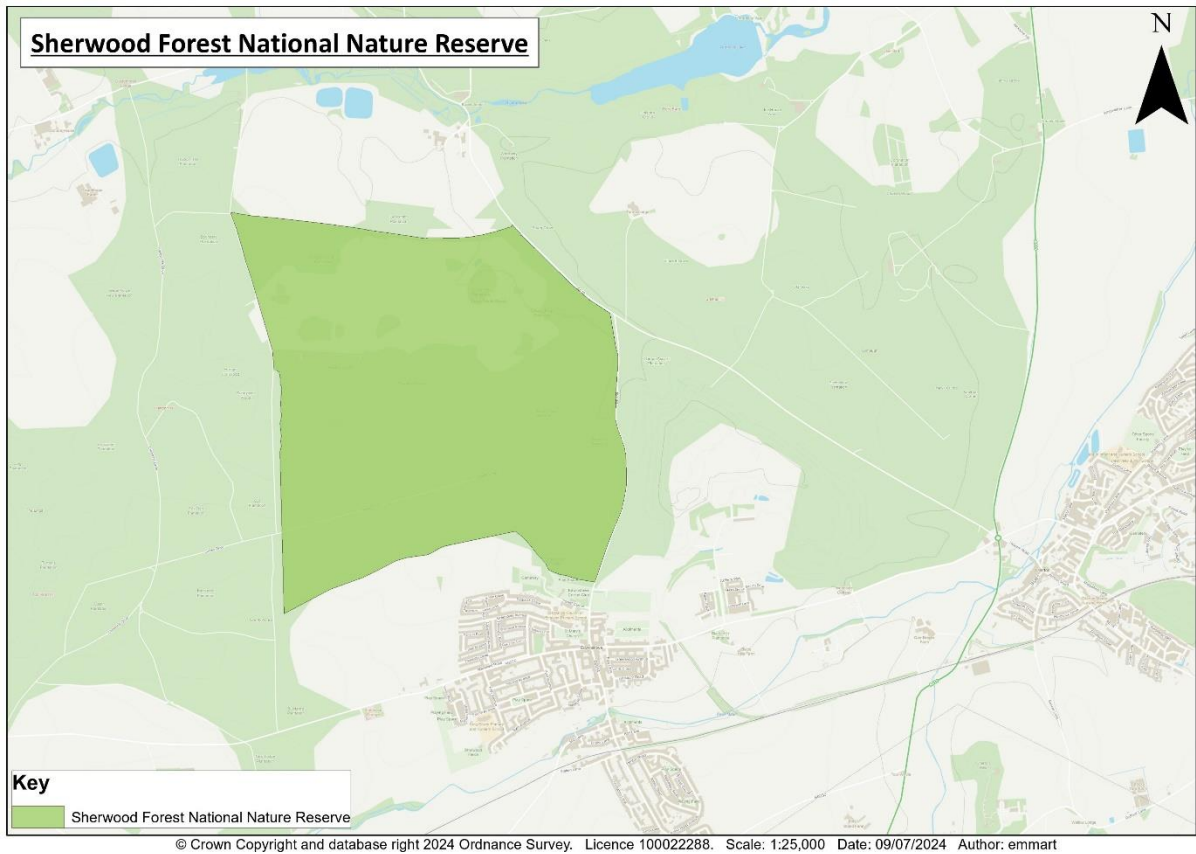
[insert link here]

7.13 Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve

Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve (NNR) includes the ancient forests of Birklands and Budby South. NNRs in England are designated by Natural England as key places for wildlife and natural features. They were established to protect the most significant areas of habitat and of geological formations.

- 7.14 Sherwood Forest NNR contains more than a thousand ancient oaks most of which are known to be more than 500 years old. The most famous of these, the Major Oak, may be nearly twice that age. Other trees common here include silver birch, rowan, holly and hawthorn.

- 7.15 ShAP 1 of the ACS commits the District Council to maintaining and enhancing the ecological, heritage and landscape value of the Sherwood Area. This includes ensuring that development does not have a detrimental impact on national, regional, county and locally designated sites. A map of Sherwood Forest NNR can be seen below:



### 7.16 Laxton open field system

Laxton is the last remaining village in England that operates an open field system of farming under the supervision of a manorial Court Leet. The historic landscape around Laxton and a Conservation Area are identified on the Policies Map and it is intended that these will be protected by Policy ShA/L/1 of the emerging AADMDPD. This policy requires that development proposals do not detrimentally impact on Laxton’s heritage assets and the special character of the Conservation Area unless public benefits outweigh the detrimental impact. The historic landscape around Laxton is shown below:





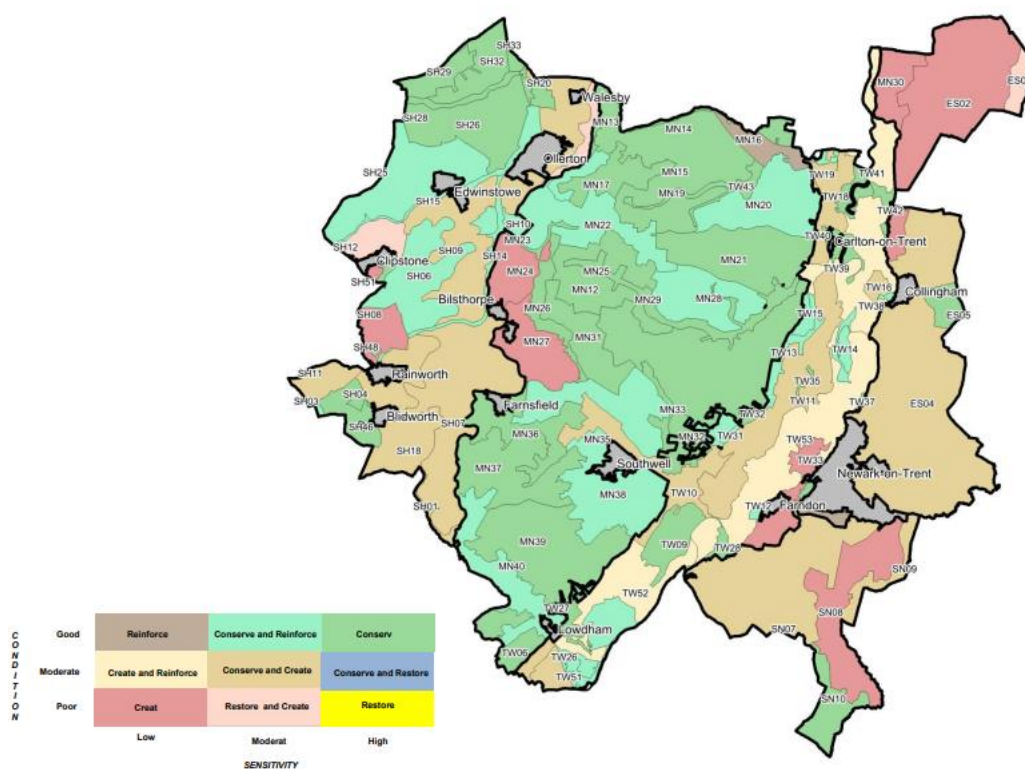
## 8 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

8.1 To assist with the protection and enhancement of local landscapes and the natural environment, the District Council has had comprehensive assessment of landscape character undertaken. The Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) SPD can be seen here:

[Landscape character assessment SPD | Newark & Sherwood District Council \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](http://newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/landscape-character-assessment-spd)

8.2 This document provides an objective assessment of the varied landscape in Newark and Sherwood. It also gives a greater understanding of what makes different areas of the District locally distinctive. Specific Landscape Policy Zones (LPZs) are identified and related actions recommended, providing a basis for considering landscape issues as part of decisions over new development. Landscape Policy Zones and Landscape Actions for each Policy Zone can be seen below:

### Landscape Policy Zones and Landscape Actions for each Policy Zone



8.3 As a supplementary planning document, the LCA SPD can be a material consideration within the planning process. It is expected that development proposals will positively address the implications of the LPZs and demonstrate that the aims and objectives for that area would be contributed to.

8.4 Core Policy 13 of the ACS commits the District Council to working with partners and developers to ensure that new development makes a positive contribution to the

relevant LPZ(s) and is consistent with the defined landscape conservation and enhancement aims.

- 8.5 The LCA will inform the production of the Landscape Sensitivity Study. When the Study is available, it should be read alongside the LCA in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effects of proposed or consented solar farm developments on the District's landscape.

## 9 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Major solar farm developments fall under Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. This means that such developments may need to be screened by the District Council to determine whether they constitute Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development.
- 9.2 Applicants for major solar farm developments are advised to apply to the District Council for an EIA Screening Opinion before submitting their planning application. If a particular development proposal is considered to be EIA development, the planning application must be accompanied by an Environmental Statement that has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 18 of the EIA Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- 9.3 If a proposed development is considered to require an EIA, detailed advice can be requested by submitting an EIA Scoping Opinion to the District Council.

## 10 PLANNING APPLICATION PROCESS

- 10.1 It is recommended that developers of major solar farms seek pre-application advice. This will provide an initial assessment of whether the proposal is likely to be acceptable although no guarantee can be offered that permission will be granted. It is beneficial to both the applicant and the District Council to consider at this stage what supporting assessment work will be required to accompany the application and what level of detail will be necessary. Information about pre-application advice in Newark & Sherwood District can be seen here:

[Our pre application service | Newark & Sherwood District Council \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/our-pre-application-service)

- 10.2 Details of how to submit a planning application to the District Council can be seen here:

[Submitting an application | Newark & Sherwood District Council \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/submitting-an-application)

- 10.3 Upon receipt of a planning application, the District Council will cross check the information submitted against the planning application requirements, as set out in the validation checklist:

[Validation checklists | Newark & Sherwood District Council \(newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk\)](https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/validation-checklists)

## 11 GLOSSARY

AADM DPD	An amended version of the Allocations & Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) (see below). This has, at the time of writing, been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate prior to an Examination in Public. After this, it is expected that the document will be adopted and will supersede the current Allocations & Development Management DPD.
ACS	The Amended Core Strategy, which sets out the District Council's spatial policy framework for delivering the development and change needed to realise the District Council's vision for the District up to 2033. It is a key part of the Development Plan.
ADM DPD	The Allocations & Development Management Development Plan Document. This document sets out allocations of land for new housing, employment and other development in the main settlements in the District. It also sets out development management policies for use in the consideration of planning applications. It is a key part of the Development Plan.
Battery energy storage systems	Battery energy storage systems (BESS), are devices that enable energy from renewable sources, like solar and wind, to be stored and then released when the power is needed most.
Brownfield	Previously developed land.
Climate Change Act 2008	An Act of Parliament setting out the UK's approach to combatting and mitigating climate change.
Distribution network operators	Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) in the UK manage the electric power and gas distribution systems which deliver to end users.
DPD	A Development Plan Document.
EN-1	The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy.
EN-3	The National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure.

EN-5	The National Policy Statement for electricity networks infrastructure.
Gigawatt (GW)	One billion watts.
Greenfield	Land that has not been previously developed.
Irradiance	Irradiance refers to the amount of radiant power per unit area received from a radiation source. In the case of solar energy schemes, this source is the sun.
Landscape Character Assessment	The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a District level assessment of landscape character which forms part of the wider assessment for Nottinghamshire. The document provides an explanation of the differences between landscapes that is based around a sense of place, local distinctiveness, characteristic wildlife, and natural features. By identifying specific Landscape Policy Zones (LPZs) and related actions the LCA plays an important role in the planning framework and in decisions over new development.
Landscape Sensitivity Study	A study that assesses the ability of a landscape to accommodate change arising from specified types of development such as solar energy schemes.
Megawatt (MW)	One million watts.
Neighbourhood Plans	Neighbourhood plans set out policies to help shape and deliver new development in a specific area.
National Grid	The system operator for Great Britain's electricity and gas supply.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.
Photovoltaics	Photovoltaics is a way of turning sunlight into electricity using special materials that absorb and release electrons when exposed to light. The materials are called semiconductors and they form the core of solar cells, which are the building blocks of solar panels or modules.
Planning practice guidance (PPG)	Planning practice guidance (PPG) provides detail on the interpretation and implementation of national policy relevant to various areas of the planning system.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory document that must be prepared by local planning authorities. Legislation requires that this document must set out the authority's policies to facilitate involvement of those persons and organisations who have an interest in the preparation of a local plan, other planning policy documents, neighbourhood plans and the consideration of planning applications.
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides detail on the interpretation and implementation of policies within the District's Development Plan.
Sulphur hexafluoride (SF <sub>6</sub> )	Sulphur hexafluoride (SF <sub>6</sub> ) is a synthetic, odourless gas that is used in the electricity industry to keep networks running safely and reliably. SF <sub>6</sub> is a 'greenhouse gas' that has long played a part in global warming, similar to that of carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ). SF <sub>6</sub> has historically been used in a variety of applications, from metal smelting to filling double-glazing panels, but the electricity industry is one of the few where it is still used today, due to the technical challenges of replacing it.



## **Appendix 1. Information to be included in a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**

### **1. Description of the development**

- The need for the development set within local, regional and national strategies;
- The timescale for construction, operation and decommissioning.
- The site's location and overall layout;
- Solar panel design and specification, method of construction/installation;
- Reasonable estimates of quantity and type of traffic which will be generated through construction and operation of the development.

### **2. Site Description**

- Description of the main reasons for the site selection and any alternatives in site design or layout which have been considered;
- Area of proposed land which the panels will occupy, clearly described and indicated on a map or diagram;
- Illustrated description of the land use of the surrounding area;
- Description of the policies plans and designations which are relevant to the site;
- Evaluation of the direct, indirect, secondary and cumulative, short medium and long term effects resulting from the existence of the development.

### **3. Landscape Baseline Conditions**

- The current condition of the landscape;
- Use Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment to provide the framework landscape character information, supplemented by a study to assess the specific impact of the development;
- Relationship of the site to any designated areas of landscape at a national, regional or local level, and to areas of landscape value or scenic quality.
- Description of all baseline data sources, and methods used to supplement this information;
- The landscape baseline should be evaluated in relation to its sensitivity and importance. The sensitivity evaluation of each landscape element should reflect its quality value, contribution to landscape character and the degree to which the particular element or characteristic can be replaced or substituted.

### **4. Predictions of Impact**

- Assessment of the scale, or magnitude of change to the landscape and visual elements as a deviation from the baseline conditions. Consideration will need to be given to visitor and resident populations, and seasonal variations;
- Provide a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) diagram for the development indicating as a minimum 1km, 2km, and 4km radii from the site;

- The methods used to establish the magnitude should be clearly described and be appropriate and reasonable in relation to the importance of the landscape and visual impact;
- Where assumptions or unsupported data has been used in the predictions, these should be highlighted and accompanied by an indication of the reliability / confidence of those assumptions or data;
- Evaluation of the direct, indirect, secondary and cumulative, short medium and long term effects resulting from the existence of the development.

#### 5. **Impact Significance**

- Clearly describe the judgements which underpin the attribution of significance;
- The assessment of significance should consider the impact's deviation from the established landscape baseline condition, the sensitivity of the landscape and receptors and the extent to which the impact will be mitigated or is reversible;
- The range of factors which are likely to influence the assessment of significance should be clearly identified;
- Provide detail of how these variables will affect the significance of the impacts over the life of the development;
- Identify the significance of impacts that remain following mitigation.

#### 6. **Mitigation**

- Describe the measures proposed to avoid, reduce and if possible, remedy significant adverse impacts on both landscape character and visual amenity;
- Provide an indication of the effectiveness of the stated measures;
- Clearly indicate how the mitigation measures will be implemented.

#### 7. **Presentation of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**

- The document should be clear and logical in its layout and presentation and be capable of being understood by a non–specialist;
- It should be a balanced document providing an unbiased account of the landscape and visual effects, with reasoned and justifiable arguments;
- A glossary of all technical terms and full reference list should be provided;
- Plans, diagrams and visual representations should be provided to assist in the understanding of the development and its impact, and should be clearly labelled with all locations reference in the text.

#### 8. **Non-Technical Summary**

- A stand-alone document to be available to a non-specialist reader, to enable them to understand the landscape and visual impacts of the proposal;

- To include a summary description of the development; the aspects of landscape character and visual amenity likely to be significantly affected; the likely significant effects; the mitigations measures to be implemented;
- Include as a minimum the plans, maps and other visual representations which illustrate the location of the application site, the footprint of the development, and the location of key features.

**Source:** Appendix A of the BRE '[Planning guidance for the development of large scale ground mounted solar PV systems](#)'