PARKGATE SOLAR FARM

| PROMOTIONAL DOCUMENT |

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Qair

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Contents

Document Control	
Document Number	1032-RPC016-TE01
Revision	V1
Date	28/08/2025
Author	JW / GH
Approved By	JS

Introduction

This Promotion Document has been prepared by RPC on behalf of Qair UK to promote a site located along Parkgate Road to the north of Chester for an energy scheme consisting of solar and battery storage. The document responds to the consultation of Cheshire West and Chester for new site suggestions to inform their Land Availability Assessment which runs in tandem with Regulation 18 (The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) for the preparation of a new Local Plan. The consultation runs from the 4th July – 29th August 2025 and is supported by an 'Issues and Options' report.

A timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan is set out in the Local Development Scheme 2025 and summarised below:

Stage	Description	Timing
Preparation (Regulation 18)	Initial consultation on the scope and issues and engagement of stakeholders	Summer 2025
Publication (Regulation 19)	Statutory public consultation (6 weeks) prior to submission of the Local Plan for examination	Autumn 2026
Submission (Regulation 22)	Submit document to Secretary of State for examination	December 2026
Examination hearings (Regulation 24)	Independent examination into the soundness of the document	Spring / Summer 2027
Adoption (Regulation 26)	Document adopted and published	Summer / Autumn 2027

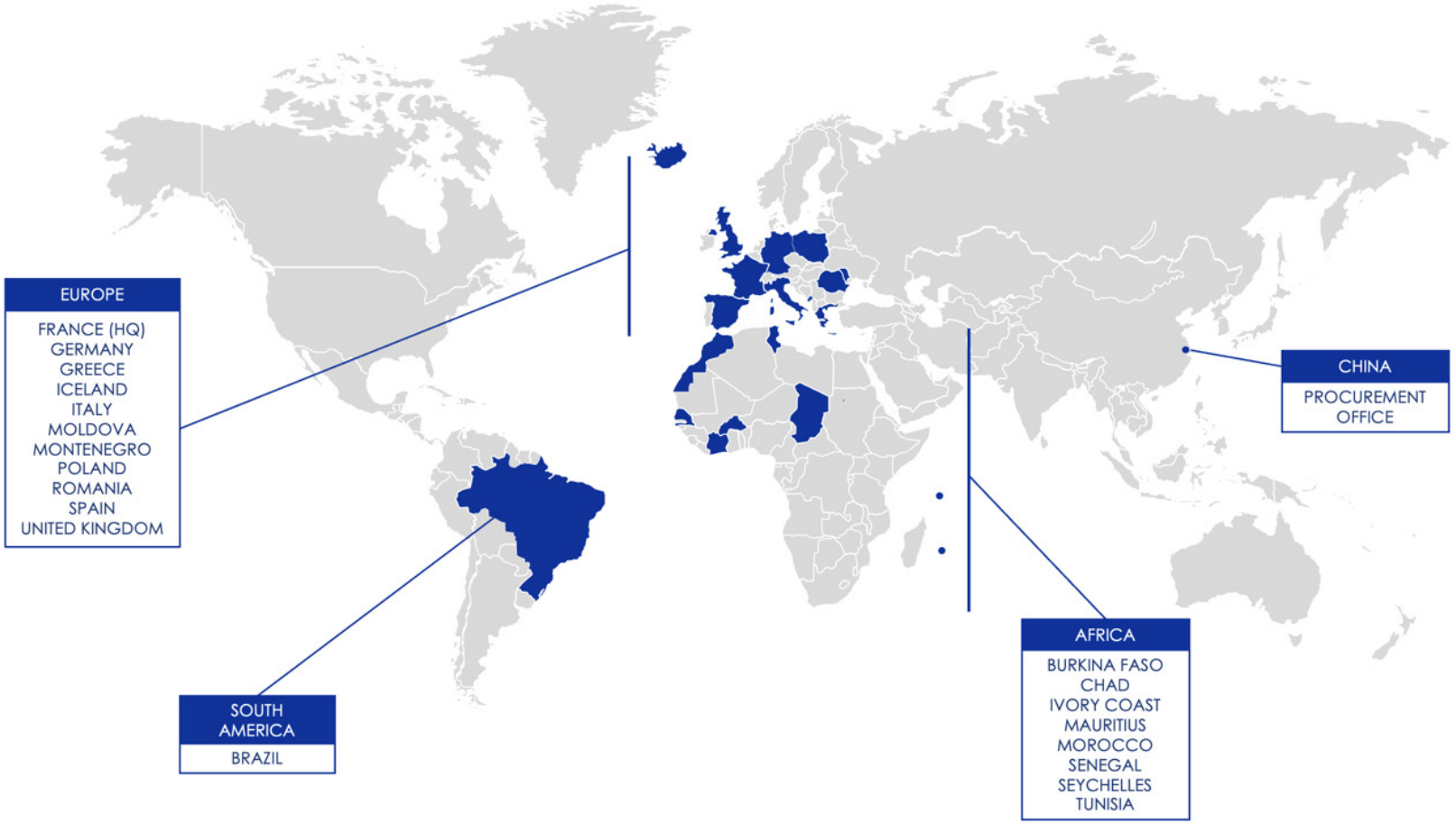
This document outlines how a proposed solar and battery storage development is appropriate and deliverable in this location. It sets out how the proposed site should be allocated for the identified purpose in the Local Plan to aid the LPA in achieving their renewable energy and climate change targets.

About Qair UK

The land promoter and developer, Qair UK, are experts in renewable energy, specialising in solar, wind and battery storage development across the UK. Qair work with landowners across the country to deliver renewable technologies, which aim to help the UK achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Qair UK are part of the wider Qair Group who operate in 20 countries around the world.

Qair currently have 1.7GW of assets in operation or construction with a further 34GW in the development pipeline.



Site Context and Background

The site is located approximately 1km to the north of Mollington. The site consists of 2 parcels, one to the north of Coalpit Lane located adjacent to the M56/ A494 and off Parkgate Road. The other parcel sits to the south of Coalpit Lane.

The entirety of the land is currently in arable use however, should the existing planning application be consented then 5 hectares of the land would be associated with the battery storage development upon discharge of the conditions and implemention of the permission.

The Site is flat and slightly south facing, with the surrounding landscape also relatively flat, with little differentiation in elevation to the Site itself. Notable changes in the topography are manmade and small in scale, such as the highway cuttings and embankments along the A494.

The site measures approximately 45 hectares, of which 5 hectares is associated with the battery storage development and the remaining 40 hectares will be used for the solar development along with additional landscaping and biodiversity net gain. The existing site boundaries are well screened through the provision of existing woodland and hedgerow planting. There are existing residential properties that are located adjacent to the site however, in all instances, the site is well screened and additional planting would further mitigate these views.

The Site is crossed by two public rights of way (PRoW) identified as Footpath Mollington FP2 and FP3. This footpath connects Coalpit Lane with the A494 westbound slip road, and then south from Coalpit Lane down to Townfield Lane. There are no other rights of way that sit within or on the border of the site.

The proposed point of connection will be to Capenhurst substation located approximately 2.5km to the north of the site.

Planning History

- 25/00132/FUL - Battery energy storage facility and associated infrastructure including access onto Parkgate Road.
- Historic aerial imagery of the Site appears to show that northern parts of the site were used as laydown areas for the construction of the A494 / M56 link road, between approximately 2006 and 2010.

National Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. For the context of renewable energy development and the location of the site within the Green Belt, the following policies apply.

NPPF Paragraph	Policy Text
Paragraph 20	Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places and make sufficient provision for: b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
Paragraph 32	The preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up to-date evidence. This should be adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned, and take into account relevant market signals.
Paragraph 143	Green Belt serves five purposes: a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
Paragraph 153	When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
Paragraph 155	The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply: a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan; b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed; c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework;
Paragraph 160	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.
Paragraph 161	The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050
Paragraph 165	To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should: b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development;

Paragraph 168	When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should: a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future;
Paragraph 169	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.
Annex 2 – Glossary	Grey belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

Local Policy Context

Cheshire West and Chester have prepared a Local Plan Issues and Options (Regulation 18) Consultation document which acts as the first formal consultation phase in the preparation of the new Local Plan. The Document sets out potential policies and the proposed evidence base to inform the preparation of new Local Plan policies.

The indicative policies and responses to the questions posed relevant to the proposal are outlined below:

Issues and Options Policy	Policy Text and Response to Questions
Evidence Base (Question IN 1) Do you agree that this is the right evidence that we need to inform the new Local Plan? Is there further evidence that you think will be required?	The evidence base proposed does not include a new renewable energy sensitivity study. Given the change in Green Belt policy and the incorporation of Grey Belt in the NPPF this would be expected to inform any renewable energy policy. Furthermore, the previous study is almost a decade old, in which time both the technology and policy context have significantly changed. For example, the renewable energy study does not recognise the declaration of the climate change emergency by Cheshire West and Chester in 2019. Furthermore, technology has significantly progressed along with the need for renewable energy developments. A 25-hectare solar farm is not considered to be 'very large' in modern day solar development. Given the significant need for renewables, the declaration of a climate change emergency, the updated Green Belt policy context, it would be expected that 'suitable' areas for renewable energy development are identified as part of the emerging Local Plan.

Chapter 4 – Sustainable Development	The Evidence Base includes the 'Tyndall Centre Climate Emergency Report (2019)' within which it states: CO2 emissions in the carbon budget related to electricity use from the National Grid in Cheshire West and Chester are largely dependent upon national government policy and changes to power generation across the country. It is recommended however that Cheshire West and Chester promote the deployment of low carbon electricity generation within the region and where possible influence national policy on this issue. This acts as another reason why the LPA needs to designate suitable areas for renewable energy development taking into account the location of grid connections and should feed into an updated report on sensitivity to renewable energy development.
GB1 – Green Belt and Countryside	The current Local Plan (Part One) policy STRAT 9 may need to be updated if required to set out approach to grey belt and to reflect Green Belt review evidence (to be prepared).
Question GB1	Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards Green Belt and countryside, as set out in GB 1 'Green Belt and countryside' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended. Any Green Belt Assessment should consider the contribution of all areas of the Green Belt not just areas relating to settlements. The new Green Belt evidence base should incorporate a Grey Belt Assessment covering all parcels not just those considered relevant for residential or commercial development. This will assist in determining suitable areas for renewable energy assets as set out in paragraph 165 of the Framework.

Section 28 – Energy	Paragraph 28.3 refers to the threshold for energy developments to be considered under the Planning Act 2008. The threshold stated is 50MW however, as of 31st December 2025 this will be increased to 100MW and should be noted. The Evidence Base regarding landscape sensitivity and Renewable Energy Study will be over a decade old upon preparation of the Draft Plan. The evidence documents refer to out of date policy requirements and do not look appropriate in the preparation of new planning policies for example, the document refers to the 'draft NPPF' and there is no inclusion of detailed guidance contained within the National Policy Statements (EN-1 and EN-3). The Energy Opportunity Map for the LPA does not show the suitability of solar, it only includes hydropower and wind sites. This should be updated to better accord with paragraph 165 of the Framework. Paragraph 5.3 of the Landscape Sensitivity Study sets out the thresholds for the size of solar schemes, notable 'very large solar farms' are considered to be anything over 25 hectares in size. This is no longer the case, 25 hectares nowadays would be considered small to medium. Very large sites would likely be over 100 hectares as these sites could still be in the TCPA regime.

EN 1 – Energy Supplies and Energy Related Development	Proposals for developments providing new energy supplies or energy related development will be supported where they meet the following criteria: 1. Wherever possible, schemes should be located on previously developed land and/or in industrial areas and in areas close to existing users/demand or supplier of the energy, fuel and/or heat. 2. The proposals do not limit the range and choice of employment land in the area; 3. The proposals do not adversely impact on neighbouring land users, or on the commercial / operational requirements of surrounding businesses; 4. Where development is proposed on agricultural land, site investigations must be undertaken and the best and most versatile land must be avoided in favour of lesser quality land. Proposals must demonstrate how the site can be reinstated to its previous use and condition once the operational lifespan of the development has been reached; 5. The cumulative impacts of existing and proposed developments on the landscape, natural environment and surrounding users will be acceptable; 6. Wherever possible, the proposals use existing power lines, structures and infrastructure. Where it can be demonstrated that this is not possible and new power lines and pipelines are proposed, their impact on the landscape must be minimised; 7. Associated developments such as access roads, security fencing, lighting and any buildings must be designed to minimise visual impact, whilst ensuring that the development causes no risk to public safety; 8. Where biomass is proposed to be used for energy generation, it must be sustainably sourced. Applicants will be required to provide information about the type and source of material to be used in the biomass plant. Proposals for biomass installations will not be permitted within or adjacent to Air Quality Management Areas; and 9. Proposals include appropriate arrangements for decommissioning and reinstatement of the site when its operational lifespan has ended.

Question EN 1 Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards energy, as set out in EN 1 'Energy supplies and energy related developments' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?	Taken in turn, the following comments are made regarding the outlined criterion: 1. There is no mention of the role of an available grid connection which is the main driver behind the location of renewable energy development. If the LPA wants to prioritise PDL and industrial areas, a guide as to available sites and their distance from the nearest point of connection would be highly recommended. Otherwise, it is a restrictive criterion with a very low likelihood of compliance for new projects. 2. This conflicts with criterion 1 which looks to prioritise industrial areas which are those most likely to retain employment designations. This reinforces the need for an evidence document identifying available PDL parcels and their proximity to a point of connection. If they are designated for alternative uses then they should not be considered 'available or deliverable'. 3. See points 1 and 2. 4. This is not consistent with national policy. Paragraph 187 of the Framework only requires the 'economic and other benefits of BMV land to be recognised' this is not a blanket requirement to avoid all BMV land. Furthermore, there should be recognition that agricultural land practices can still continue on the land for some renewable energy development.

Question EN 2 - How can food production be protected by ensuring the continued viability of farm holdings?	All recent research shows that the biggest threat to food production, viability, food security etc. is climate change. Research from the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) suggests the wet winter of 2023-24 has reduced the UK's ability to feed itself by nearly a tenth. This is the biggest challenge of a generation and there are demanding targets to hit for solar installation (45 – 47 GW of solar by 2030 and approx. 70GW by 2035). It is widely known and reported of the difficulties delivering this quantum of solar on rooftops given technical/ suitability issues, ownership issues, fire and insurance risk etc. To achieve the targets set, there requires a mix of both ground mounted and rooftop solar. In delivering these targets it is considered that less than 1% of all UK farmland would be temporarily required. Solar farms are only temporary development which often allow for continued agricultural use, their impact on food production is negligible as outlined in the Food Security Strategy issued by the UK Government. Food production can be best protected by responding to climate change and allow for diversification of farms to allow a dual income to stabilise their finances. Previous years have seen the most dramatic seasonal weather with severe droughts and flooding attributed to the impacts of climate change. Allowing farmers to diversify their income is the best way to ensure viability of farm holdings. Solar farms offer the potential for long-term, stable revenue, allowing farmers to lease parts of their land for renewable energy production without compromising their ability to farm. There is no requirement in planning terms for farmers to farm the land for food production as represented by multiple appeal decisions. The weight to be afforded to this issue is therefore minimal. It would be more productive for the authority to promote diversification of farms and agrivoltaics, promoting the use of renewable energy and food production within the same farm holding.	To reinforce this point NFU have backed the solar sector and condemned "sensationalist" claims about food security referencing that it is a small amount of land being taken out of production. Furthermore, this question does not recognise the significant environmental benefits by taking land out of intensive agriculture which has previously led to a substantial decline in biodiversity. The benefits of solar farms on biodiversity are now widely reported and understood and therefore this needs to also be a part of the discussion when assessing the impacts of solar farms on available farmland. It should be recognised in Local Plan policy. Ground mounted solar developers are led entirely by the grid when determining the location of development. This should be recognised when considering the impact on BMV land. In most instances there are simply no alternatives then to use an element of BMV land. Indeed, when approaches are made to farmers they often guide the most appropriate locations for solar development so they can retain the best agricultural land parcels for food production.

Policy EN 3 – Solar Energy	Proposals for ground mounted solar energy developments will be supported where they meet the following criteria (in addition to relevant criteria in EN 1 'Energy supplies and energy related developments'): 1. Proposals take account of the Landscape Sensitivity Study and Guidance on Wind and Solar Photovoltaic Developments (2016). They should be directed to the least sensitive locations and avoid areas identified as highly sensitive to the proposed scale of solar development. They must have regard to the general design principles set out in appendix B of the study; 2. Proposals minimise and adequately mitigate glint and glare effects; 3. Where development is proposed on greenfield land, the land around the structures should be used for livestock grazing, other agricultural use or another use beneficial to the environment or biodiversity. Use of agri-voltaics will be supported; 4. The application is supported by a landscape appraisal or, in the case of development requiring Environmental Impact Assessment, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, the scope of which should be agreed at the outset with the Council. Any cumulative impacts of renewable energy schemes should be carefully considered as part of this assessment; 5. Hedgerows, trees, field patterns and strong boundary features are used where possible, to mitigate visual impacts. Proposals for building mounted solar energy developments will be supported where the solar equipment is designed and sited, so far as is practicable, to minimise the effect on the external appearance of the building and the amenity of the area.

Question EN 4: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards energy, as set out in EN 3 'Solar energy' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?	Taking the criterion in turn: 1. Agree that a landscape sensitivity assessment should be a consideration for a planning application. However, this assessment should be updated to better represent updated policy considerations along with increased technical efficiencies of the technology. Whilst the landscape may not have significantly changed, the policies relating to it have. The inclusion of Grey Belt within the framework and the increase in size of solar developments are a consideration which needs to be incorporated into any sensitivity study. Appendix B of the landscape sensitive study refers to the Low Carbon and Energy Study (2012), this should also be updated taking into account the now, better understood, constraints associated with new energy development such as proximity to point of connection etc. 3. Agree with this policy and should replicated or represented in policy EN 1. Potential for agrivoltaics to be given materially beneficial weight in the determination of a planning application to further encourage it.

Need for Development

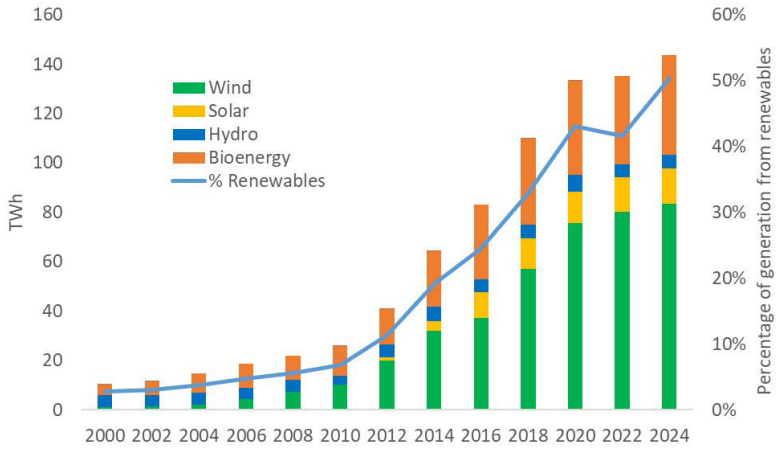
There has been a myriad of climate and energy policy/ legislation which outline the significant need for new renewable energy development across the UK. This is set out in the table below.

Climate Change Policy/ Legislation	Summary
Climate Change Act 2008	The Act establishes a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 from 1990 levels.
Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019	On 27 June 2019 the UK Parliament approved the 'Net Zero Target' in law, thereby changing the original target of 80% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050 to 100%. The aim is to meet the target through UK domestic effort, without relying on international carbon units (or 'credits'). It has been accepted that to meet this Net Zero Target will require major and urgent investment in new technologies and prioritisation of sustainable energy and cleaner power generation, including the use of solar.
Clean Growth Strategy (2017)	The Clean Growth Strategy was published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in October 2017. It anticipates that emissions from the power sector will need to be zero by 2050 and that an interim target of an 80% reduction by 2032 from 2017 levels. This is expected to be achieved through growing low carbon sources of energy such as renewables and nuclear and phasing out unabated coal power.
Environmental and Climate Change Emergency (2019)	On 1st May 2019 the UK government declared an Environmental and Climate Change Emergency following the finding of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change that to avoid more than 1.5°C rise in global warming, global emissions would need to fall by around 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching net zero by around 2050.
Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future	The White Paper was published in December 2020, within the foreword the Minister stated: "The UK has set a world–leading net zero target, the first major economy to do so, but simply setting the target is not enough – we need to achieve it. Failing to act will result in natural catastrophes and changing weather patterns, as well as significant economic damage, supply chain disruption and displacement of populations." The foreword goes on to state: "The way we produce and use energy is therefore at the heart of this. Our success will rest on a decisive shift away from fossil fuels to using clean energy for heat and industrial processes, as much as for electricity generation." The White Paper recognises the importance of increasing the deployment of renewable technologies including solar where it states: "Onshore wind and solar will be key building blocks of the future generation mix, along with offshore wind. We will need sustained growth in the capacity of these sectors in the next decade to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions in all demand scenarios."
UK government press release (2021)	In April 2021, the UK Government committed to set in law by end of June 2021 the world's most ambitious climate change target, cutting emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

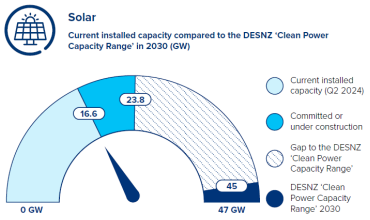
Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021)	This publication established the requirement for the UK to be entirely powered by clean energy by 2035, subject to security of the supply. This has brought the target for a fully decarbonised power system forward by 15 years and, at the same time the government is forecasting a 40-60% increase in demand. With regard to the 'Power' Sector the government commits to accelerating the deployment of low-cost renewable generation, such as wind and solar. They go on to state that another key commitment is 'to ensure the planning system can support the deployment of low carbon energy infrastructure'. To meet this challenge, the Government states that a low-cost, net zero consistent electricity system is most likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar generation. The Government further indicates that a sustained increase in the deployment of land-based renewables (and specifically identifying solar) will be required in the 2020s and beyond. If consented, the proposed development will significantly contribute towards the deployment of low carbon energy infrastructure. The proposed development has an agreed Grid Connection allowing for quick deployment and expediated generation.

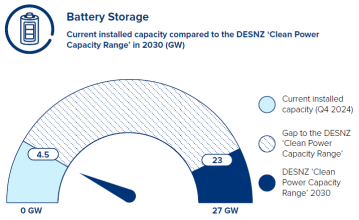
British Energy Security Strategy (April 2022)	As a response to war in Ukraine, the UK government recognised that accelerating the transition away from oil and gas depends critically on how quickly we can roll out new renewable energy schemes. The strategy calls for the need to build a British energy system that is much more self-sufficient. The Strategy says there is currently 14GW of solar capacity in the UK split between large scale projects to smaller scale rooftop solar and calls for a five-fold increase (70GW) in deployment by 2035. Specifically in respect of ground-mounted solar, the Strategy explains that consultation on amending planning rules will take place to strengthen policy in favour of development of non-protected land, while ensuring communities continue to have a say and environmental protections remain in place. For context, this equates to the target delivery of 80+ MW solar every week to meet the required targets. The Strategy goes on to state that: "for ground-mounted solar, we will consult on amending planning rules to strengthen policy in favour of development on non-protected land".

Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan (2023)	The Government published a suite of documentation under the Powering Up Britain policy in March 2023. Within this plan the Government states that 'Low cost renewable generation will be the foundation of the electricity system and will play a key role in delivering amongst the cheapest wholesale electricity in Europe'. The Energy Security Plan (ESP) continues to examine the role of solar reaffirms the Government's commitment to aim for 70GW of ground and rooftop capacity by 2035. It again states that this amounts to a fivefold increase on current installed capacity. The ESP then concludes on this matter: 'We need to maximise deployment of both types of solar to achieve our overall target'. Significant importance should be attached to this statement as it recognises the need for deployment of ground mounted solar if the fivefold increase in solar PV is to be achieved. The ESP goes on to say that meeting energy security and climate change goals is 'urgent' and 'of critical importance to the country'.
Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics (July 2025 Edition)	This Digest, also referred to as DUKES, is an essential source of energy information providing figures on the UK's overall energy performance, production and consumption. The digest is published annually and the latest edition was published in July 2025. The salient points of the report are: • Overall energy demand increased on last year's low but remains lower than pre-pandemic levels • Energy production fell by 6 per cent to a record low level. Wind, solar and hydro reached a record high but currently forms under 10 per cent of UK production. • Overall trade volumes were broadly stable on last year, with a 2 per cent increase in imports and 6 per cent fall in exports compared with 2023. • Renewable sources accounted for 50.4 per cent of generation in 2024. Generation from wind reached a record high, solar output matched last year's record high.



Clean Power 2030 Action Plan	The Clean Power Action Plan sets out new targets and a roadmap to the roll out of renewable energy over the next 5 years. The solar target includes 45-47GW of operational capacity by 2030 along with a further 23-27GW of battery storage.





Cheshire West and Chester Climate Emergency Response Plan	The Council will support the borough to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. Within the energy systems analysis provided by Anthesis, the scale of change required in the delivery of renewable energy is set out. • To provide sufficient solar power to support the decarbonisation of the grid, 0.3 gigawatts (GW) of installed capacity is required by 2025, prior to the delivery of 0.8 GW by 2050. This would represent a 25x increase in installed capacity, based on current capacity of 0.032 GW. • The report also references the need to significantly increase wind capacity, at a 20.4x increase by 2050. • A 52.6x increase in bioenergy capacity – from 5 MW to 263 MW, is required, alongside a 681x increase in installed solar thermal capacity for the provision of hot water. The stock of natural capital, our biodiversity, wildflowers, forests, and rivers has been significantly depleted during the twentieth century. This depletion needs to be reversed to achieve climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits and support long-term natural and economic prosperity.

As of the end of 2023 Cheshire West and Chester had an installed capacity of 53.7MW (0.054GW) of solar pv. This is approximately 250MW behind their initial target for 2025 and 750MW behind their target for 2050. (source https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/regional-renewable-statistics).

Total installed capacity for renewable energy is 140.2MW. There is evidently a significant need to boost the supply of renewable energy capacity within the Local Authority especially as the Climate Emergency Response Plan does not incorporate the targets of the government Clean Power 2030 plan.

Site Opportunities and Constraints

Landscape

The site contains numerous field parcels, bordered primarily by mature hedgerows and individual trees, providing a visual barrier into the site from local viewpoints.

The site is located within NCA Profile 59: Wirral. The NCA describes the area as rural areas scattered with former large country estates, natural coastal scenery and wooded sandstone ridges. The site is located across an area of undulating plains with some distant visibility achieved from elevated sections of the site.

There are no Sensitive Areas (as defined within the NPPF) within the site boundary and there are no views of the site from National Parks or National Landscapes (formerly AONB). The site is located within the Green Belt, where there is a requirement to protect openness. A case has been made that the site is located within the 'Grey Belt' as defined by National Policy.

Two Public Rights of Way (PRoW) cross through the site, connecting north to south however, Strava heatmap data suggests they are not commonly used. The site is divided by Coalpit Lane, which passes through the centre of the site, from east to west. The road is bordered on both sides by mature hedgerow planting with individual trees scattered throughout. The hedgerows offer reasonable visual screening, though occasional gaps will be strengthened through additional planting.

The western boundary predominantly borders onto the rear of private properties accessible via Parkgate Road. A planting buffer, made up of trees and scrub planting, provides reasonable screening of views. This border also has the potential to be reinforced with additional planting to screen views further.

The M56 runs along the site's northern boundary, separated only by a narrow strip of vegetation. As a result, connectivity to the north is limited, and motorway noise is likely to be experienced across much of the site, diminishing the rural or tranquil experience for Public Rights of Way users. Additionally, a prominent overhead power line supported by pylons crosses the site from east to west, introducing an industrial element that further detracts from any sense of remoteness or tranquillity.

The site lies within Landscape Character Area 9d: Saughall to Waverton Plain, as defined by Cheshire West and Chester Council. The Saughall to Waverton Plain character area lies to the immediate east and north of Chester City urban area, in a large arc of well-populated countryside characterised by larger villages and transport infrastructure. Its northern edge is defined by the urban edge of Ellesmere Port and the Enclosed Farmland LCT. The landscape sensitivities are determined as 'A diverse landscape with significant urban influences on its rural character'.

Cumulative visual effects from this development are unlikely due to the intervening landform and screening features, including the M56 motorway.

Ecology

The Site has historically been utilised for arable and pasture uses, with the large majority of land comprising agricultural parcels. Habitats of importance on Site includes ponds, treelines, hedgerows, woodland, ditches and streams.

There are no statutory designations of international, national or local importance within or adjacent to the site, the nearest being River Dee and Bala Lake SAC c. 5km to the south. Furthermore, there is no ancient woodland onsite or within a 2km buffer and no priority habitats on site.

Further survey efforts would need to be undertaken to confirm the relevant species surveys that should be undertaken for example wintering bird surveys. However, as witnessed with multiple solar developments and as now widely accepted, solar farms provide significant biodiversity benefits through providing ecological refuges from the pressures of intensive agriculture. Details of which are set out in Solar Habitat 2025.

Solar proposals can deliver over 100% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as part of their proposed benefits.

Heritate and Archaeology

Designated Heritage Assets - There are no designated heritage assets within the Site. Within 1km of the Site there are two Grade II Listed Buildings, including Gibbet Windmill (NHLE 1115414) located c.590m to the northwest of the Site, and Fruit Farm Cottages (NHLE 12645526) located c.226m to the west. It is considered that the proposal would have low/ neutral impact upon their setting with regard to heritage significance.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets and Archaeological Potential - A key asset recorded within the Site is the projected line of the Chester to Wirral Roman Road (CHER 2010/1/0). However, the alignment as presented in the HER is academic, with no physical evidence to its precise location having been identified in the vicinity of the Site. Despite previous intrusive works as part of the A494/M56 road upgrade bounding the north of the Site, no evidence has been recorded. Historic agricultural activity compounded by ground disturbance to the north of the Site likely removed any trace of it across the majority of the site. Medieval to post-medieval agricultural earthworks including former field boundaries and ridge and furrow are recorded to the south of the Site, though are of lower significance. Further investigations will be undertaken as to the potential survival of sub-surface archaeological features.

Highways

Access to the site will be taken from the A540 to the west of the site which has sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed vehicular movements throughout construction and decommissioning phases.

The proposed construction phase is likely to last between 6 and 9 months comprising:

i. Months 1 and 2 – Site Setup, laying of access track, and fencing;
ii. Months 3 – 6 – Solar Farm construction;
iii. Month 7 – Commissioning

The below table sets out the predicted HGV vehicular movements per day for each phase:

	Months 1 – 2	Months 3 – 6	Month 7
Two-Way HGV movements per day	13	6	N/A

Throughout the operational phase there is expected to be negligible traffic movements with a predicted 1 or 2 movements per month.

Flooding and Drainage

The site is entirely located within Flood Zone 1 at lowest risk of flooding. The site does retain an element of surface water flooding especially in the northern field parcel. A proposed drainage strategy will be prepared to ensure that the proposal doe not increase the chance of flooding on, or near to, the site.

The proposed solar panels only have a very small impact upon the land consisting of piled metal posts into the ground. The majority of the infrastructure sits above the ground and will have no impact upon flooding and drainage impacts.

Glint and Gare

The proposed site is located to the south of the M56 and the proposed panels would be south facing with their back to the motorway and the main road arterial roads. There is unlikely to be any impacts as a result of glint and glare upon users of the surrounding road network.

Enhanced landscape screening would likely eliminate any potential for glint and glare for surrounding residential properties.

Agricultural Land

The predictive agricultural grading for the land is grade 3 (undifferentiated) meaning that the site is likely to contain an element of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land. An agricultural land classification survey will be undertaken to determinate the quality of the soils and the percentage of BMV land within the site. The predictive mapping does show that much of the wider area consists of grade 3 land and that there would be no lower quality land within suitable proximity of the grid connection at Capenhurst.

As part of the solar farm, the remaining land between the panels will be used for grazing as well as new species-rich planting as supported by DEFRA. The proposal will be temporary and the agricultural land would be fully reinstated following the decommissioning of the site.

Site Selection and Key Benefits

Site Selection

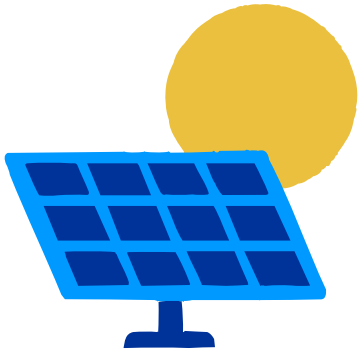
The irradiance of the area is very good with a rating of over 950 kWh/kWp/year meaning that the development will provide a significant contribution to the installed capacity and generation of renewable energy within the LPA.

Reference should also be made to the Site Constraints Plans (pages 20-21), which has informed the site selection process.

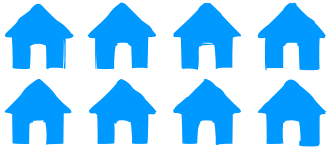
Benefits of Development

The predicted benefits will include:

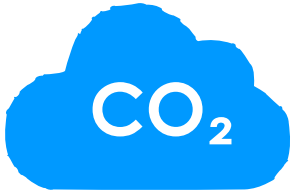
- Approximate export of 35MW of renewable energy providing sufficient energy to power 13,627 homes per year and saving 4,567 tonnes of CO2 per year responding to the climate change emergency.
- Significant biodiversity gains responding to the biodiversity emergency across the UK. The proposal will remove the site from intensive farming providing sub panel planting and other landscape enhancements.
- Contribution towards energy security to reduce the reliance on important energy which is typically more expensive.



Approximate export of 35 MW of renewable energy



Enough to power 13,627 homes per year



Saving 4,567 tonnes of CO2 per year

Green Belt Assessment

Green Belt Purpose	Contribution of the Proposed Site
a) Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	The Proposed Development does not represent an extension to one of the existing larger settlements in the area (Ellesmere Port, Chester, etc…) The nearest large built-up area is Ellesmere Port located 1.7km to the north east of the site. Additionally, the nature of the Proposed Development does not encourage other forms of development commonly associated with areas of settlement, as retail/leisure would with residential and vice versa, nor is it located in proximity to any large built-up areas. As such, the Proposed Development is not considered to impede on the North Cheshire Green Belt's ability to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
b) Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	The Proposed Development is located away from nearby towns, adjacent to the A494, and would not result in any towns merging into one another. There is not a well delineated Green Belt boundary to nearby settlements, and therefore the Proposed Development would not be perceived as extending nearby settlements, and would not result in coalescence. As such, there would be no harm to this purpose of the Green Belt as a result of the Proposed Development.
c) Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The Site is located adjacent to the A494 with a line of high voltage pylons to its south, and with other small- to large-scale land uses alongside the A494 and M56. It is therefore within a part of the countryside that has already been encroached by infrastructure and development. To mitigate its impacts, the Proposed Development incorporates woodland planting for screening and the provision of diverse, ecological corridors to enhance the countryside characteristics around its boundaries. The level of harm to the Green Belt by reason of encroachment generated by the Proposed Development will therefore be limited harm, and temporary for the lifespan of the development.
d) Preserve the setting, and special character of historic towns	The Site is not within or adjacent to a historic town, nor does this section of the Green Belt provide the setting to any historic towns. Accordingly, the Proposed Development would result in no harm to this purpose of the Green Belt.
e) Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Re-use of previously developed land is achieved consistently through the application of Green Belt policy. Therefore no assessment is made against this criterion. Given the size of the development and the allocation of PDL for alternative uses, it is considered that there would be no suitable, alternative sites for the development proposal which utilises brownfield land. The proposal would not conflict with purpose e) of the Green Belt.

Wider Area - Opportunities and Constraints Plan

Key

- Site Boundary
- 3km Buffer
- Green Belt
- Conservation Areas
- Scheduled Monuments
- Flood Zone 3
- National Cycle Network
- PRoW (Footpaths)
- Listed Buildings
- Shotwick Solar Park
- National Roads

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 0 - 20%
- 20 - 40%
- 40 - 60%
- 60 - 80%
- 80 - 100%

(ZTV based on Site Boundary where % represents amound of site potentially visible)

0 1,000 2,000 3,000 m

N

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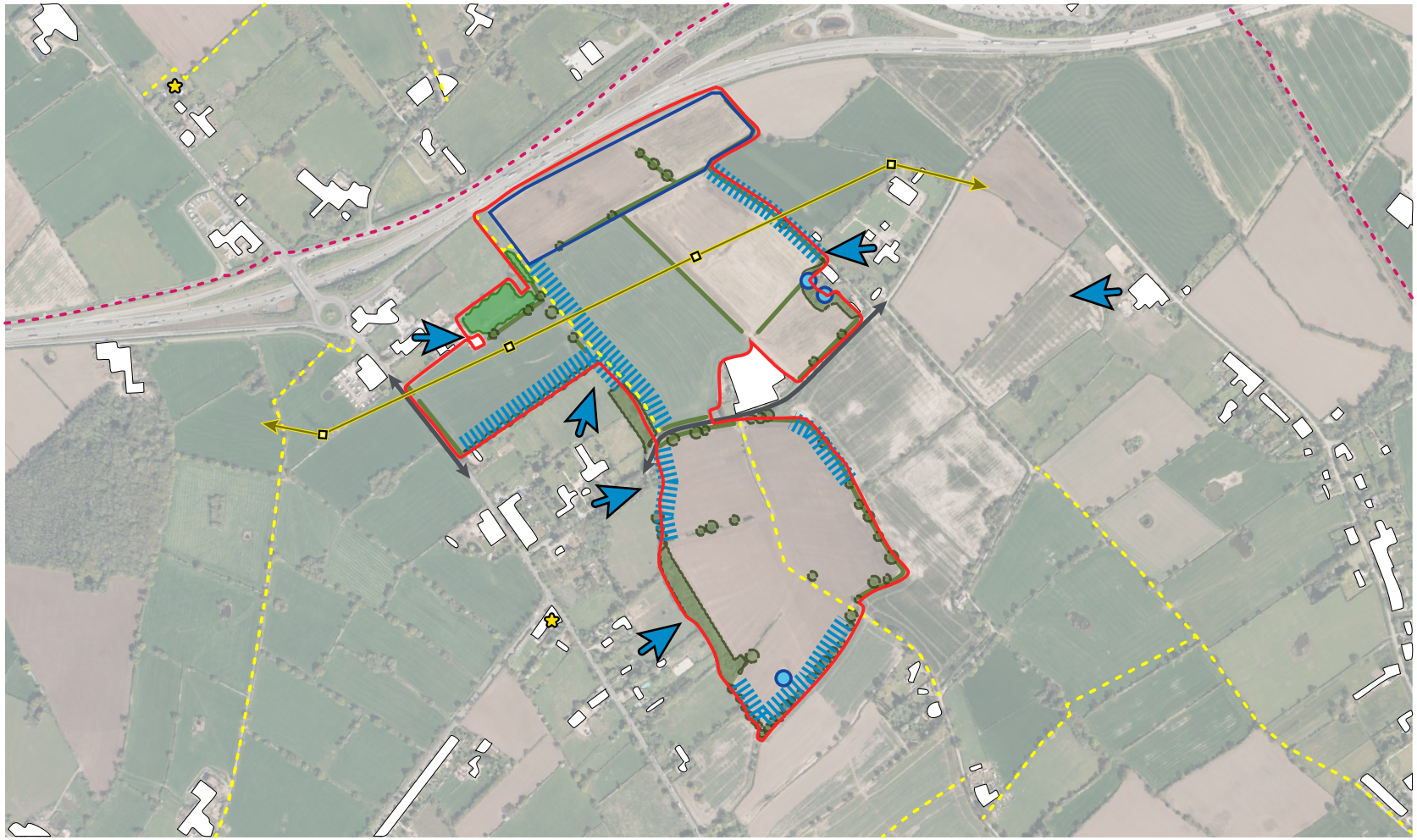
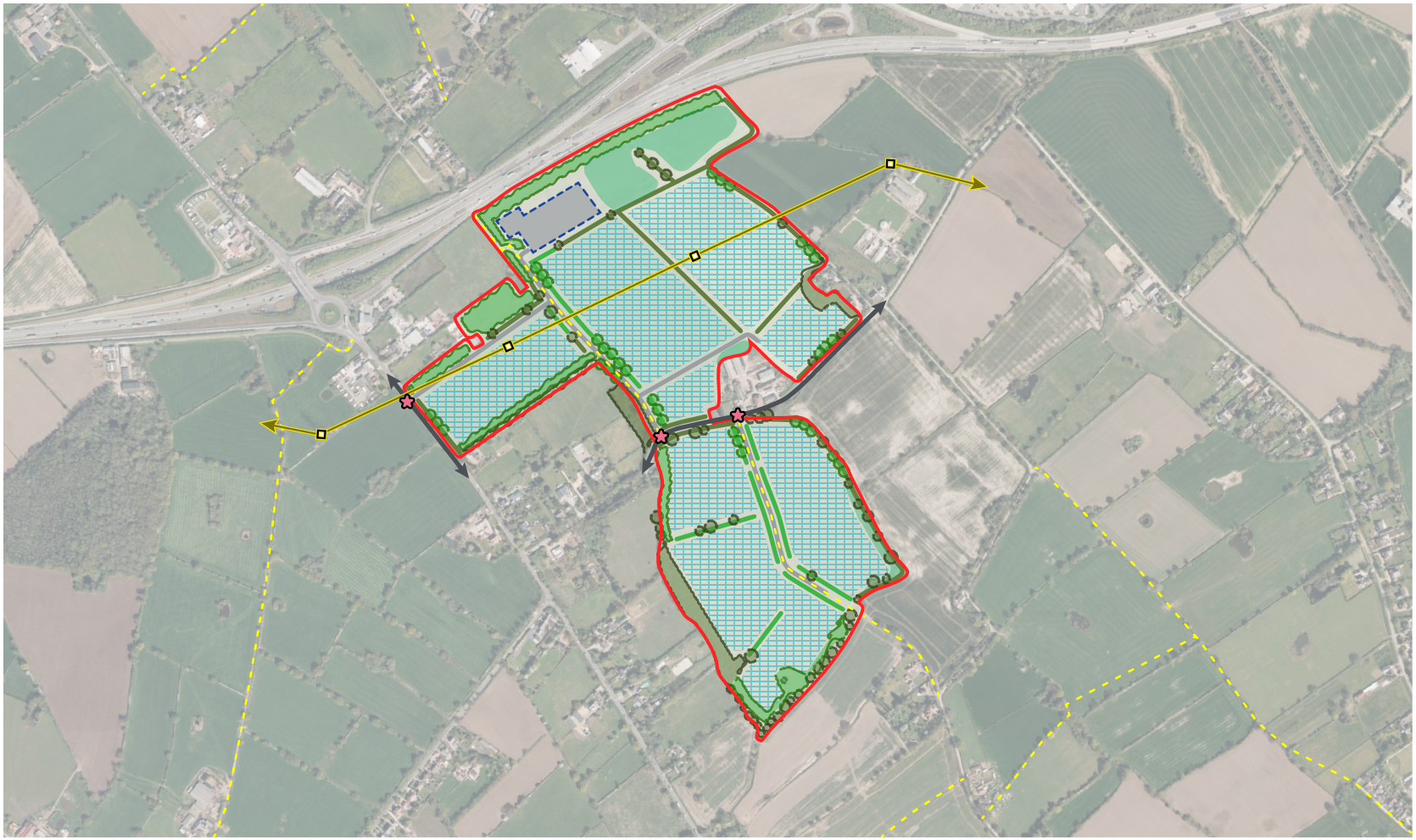
Site Specific - Opportunities and Constraints Plan



Concept Plan

Key

- Site Boundary
- Existing Roads
- PRoW (Footpaths)
- Overhead Poweline
- BESS Development Area
- Solar Panels
- Proposed Access Roads
- Existing Vegetation
- Proposed Vegetation
- Existing Hedgerows
- Proposed Hedgerows
- Grassland for Grazing under solar panels
- Areas for Biodiversity Enhancement
- Site Access



0 100 200 300 400 500 m

N

Timescales and Delivery

A planning application can be submitted within the next 12 – 18 months or at any point throughout the Local Plan preparation process. Upon the receipt of planning consent it would take approximately 6 – 12 months to discharge all planning conditions. Following which, construction will take between 9 – 12 months at which point the site will be operational and connected to the grid.

Stage	Estimated Timescale
Await draft allocation	Autumn 2026
Submit Detailed Planning Application	Winter 2026
Discharge all Conditions	Spring 2028
Construction	Summer 2028
Operation and Connection to the Grid	Summer 2029

Qair

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