

<b>Application</b>	<b>3</b>
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<b>Application Number:</b>	22/02528/FULM
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<b>Application Type:</b>	Full (major) Planning Application
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<b>Proposal Description:</b>	Installation of a ground mounted solar PV system comprising of 2640 x Canadian Solar 380w solar panels.
<b>At:</b>	Red House Farm Doncaster Road High Melton Doncaster DN5 7SU

<b>For:</b>	Mr Woolhouse
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<b>Third Party Reps:</b>	16 letters of objection, 20 letters of support	<b>Parish:</b>	High Melton Parish Council
		<b>Ward:</b>	Sprotbrough

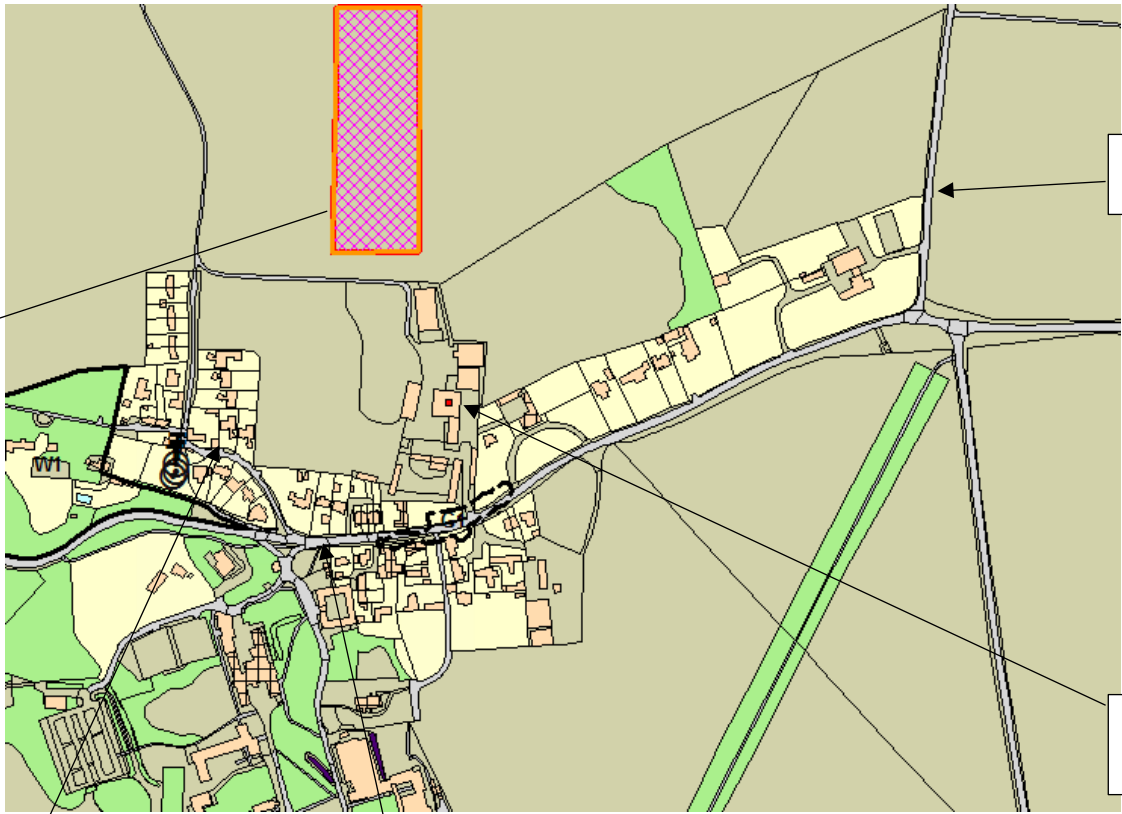
<b>Author of Report:</b>	Alicia Murray
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## SUMMARY

The proposal seeks full planning permission for the installation of a solar farm, with an installed power capacity of up to 1.03MW.

The application site is located within the Green Belt, and technically represents inappropriate development as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework. Whilst the development would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt, very special circumstances have been provided to justify the development, in respect of the renewable energy the scheme would deliver, and the resultant carbon emission savings. The application has also been assessed in terms of its impacts upon ecology, visual impact, agricultural land, highways and other technical matters and, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions to deliver mitigation where required, is considered to be acceptable.

**RECOMMENDATION: GRANT planning permission subject to conditions**



Location of Solar PV array

Sheep Lane

Barns at Red House Farm

Hangman Stone Lane

Doncaster Road

## 1.0 Reason for Report

- 1.1 The application is being presented to Members due to the application being a departure from the development plan and due to the level of public interest.

## 2.0 Proposal and Background

- 2.1 The submitted application seeks full planning permission for the installation of a Solar PV array at Red House Farm, Doncaster Road, High Melton. The solar PV would supply up to 1.03MW. The solar PV would consist of 2,640 Canadian Solar 380W panels, covering an area of 4,790sqm and would be split into 60 tables. The 60 tables would be arranged into 30 rows of 3 tables, each table contains 44 solar panels arranged in 4 rows of 11 panel's landscape. The panels at their highest point would be 2.4m.
- 2.2 The power generated from the Solar PV array would be utilised solely by the applicants' business on site. The array would reduce their carbon footprint by approximately 265 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum. The solar PV system would work in conjunction with the existing ground source heat pump (approved under 20/01025/FUL) by generating a portion of the power the heat pump requires.

## 3.0 Site Description

- 3.1 The site is Red House Farm, located within High Melton, Doncaster. M&T Haylage supply hay and haylage to equine and animal industries. The farm includes fields, agricultural buildings and offices. The solar PV would be situated on an agricultural field to the north of the main farm buildings, the PV would be located centrally within the field leaving 18m from each boundary as a buffer. Vehicle access is from the existing access on Doncaster Road for the equipment drop off and maintenance vehicles.
- 3.2 To the south east and south west of the site are residential dwellings and agricultural fields to the north leading to Melton Woods Country Park. Sheep Lane is located to the east. Part of the farm to the south is inside the High Melton Conservation Area and the original farmhouse (since under separate ownership) nearby is listed. The new barn is considered sufficiently far away/screened not to impact the setting of either heritage asset although it will be slightly closer to properties on Hangman Stone Lane which towards the farmstead and those properties are inside the Conservation Area.
- 3.3 The site is situated within the Green Belt and has an agricultural land classification grade of 2 (good). The site is located within Flood Zone 1 so low risk from main river flooding.

## 4.0 Relevant Planning History

Application Reference	Proposal	Decision
15/00142/FUL	Formation of hardstanding to store agricultural produce	Planning permission granted 10.04.2015
16/00038/FUL	Demolition of agricultural cart shed within a conservation area (part retrospective)	Planning permission refused 10.05.2016

19/01941/FUL	Proposed installation of ground source heat pump for existing adjacent grain store.	Planning permission granted 08.10.2019
19/02658/FUL	Installation of ground source heat pump for existing adjacent grain store (being resubmission of application 19/01941/FUL, granted on 08/10/19) including substation	Planning permission granted 23.12.2019
20/01025/FUL	Installation of ground source heat pump for existing adjacent grain store	Planning permission granted 11.05.2020
20/01423/AGR	Prior notification for the erection of a hay/grain store.	Prior approval refused 06.07.2020
20/01734/FUL	Demolition of the remainder of existing barn and erection of replacement building for use as farm office.	Planning permission granted 09.10.2020
20/02080/FUL	Proposed Erection of Hay Store (36.81m x 27.1m) and provision of new farm access track from Sheep Lane.	Planning permission granted 23.12.2020
22/00401/FUL	Erection of a hay store and formation of a vehicle access from Sheep Lane (revised scheme of approval application ref: 20/02080/FUL)	Planning permission granted 13.04.2022
22/01274/PRIOR	Notification to determine if prior approval is required for Installation of 158.8W roof mounted PV system comprising of 418 x Canadian Solar 380w modules	Planning permission not required 13.09.2022
22/02151/PRIOR	Application to determine if prior approval is required for the proposed Installation of other Solar Photovoltaics (PV) equipment on the roof of existing barn.	Prior approval not required 30.09.2022

## 5.0 Site Allocation

5.1 The site is identified as Green Belt as defined by the Doncaster Local Plan. The site is also located within Flood Zone 1.

## 5.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021)

5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy

Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions and the relevant sections are outlined below:

- 5.4 Paragraph 2 states that planning law requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.5 Paragraphs 7 – 11 establish that all decisions should be based on the principles of a presumption of sustainable development.
- 5.6 Paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 5.7 Paragraph 47 reiterates that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.8 Paragraphs 55 and 56 states that Local Planning Authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations. Planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition. Planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only be imposed where necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects
- 5.9 Paragraph 57 states planning obligations must only be sought where they meet all of the following test:
  - (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
  - (b) directly related to the development; and
  - (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 5.10 Paragraph 84 states that development should enable the sustainable growth of rural businesses, enable the diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses, allow for sustainable rural tourism and retain/develop local services.
- 5.11 Paragraph 111 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 5.12 Paragraph 138 states that the green belt serves 5 purposes including controlling urban sprawl, prevent neighbouring towns merging, safeguarding the countryside, preserving the character of historic towns, and assist urban regeneration.
- 5.13 Paragraph 147 states inappropriate development is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

- 5.14 Paragraph 148 states when considering any planning application, LPAs should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt and very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 5.15 Paragraph 151 states when located in the Green Belt elements of renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development and developers would need to demonstrate very special circumstances. The very special circumstances may include wider environmental benefits associated with increased energy production from renewable sources.
- 5.16 Paragraph 158 states when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, LPAs should 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 cutting greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5.17 Paragraph 174 states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, including preventing new and existing development from being put at unacceptable risk from land instability.
- 5.18 Paragraph 183 states planning policies and decisions should ensure that a site is suitable taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from land instability and contamination.
- 5.19 Paragraph 184 states where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner.

### **Local Plan**

- 5.20 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for Doncaster consists of the Doncaster Local Plan (adopted 23 September 2021). The following Local Plan policies are relevant in this case:
- 5.21 Policy 1 sets out the Settlement Hierarchy for the Borough. It seeks to concentrate growth at the larger settlements of the Borough with remaining growth delivered elsewhere to support the function of other sustainable settlements and to help meet more local needs taking account of existing settlement size, demography, accessibility, facilities, issues and opportunities.
- 5.22 Policy 13 relates to sustainable transport within new developments. Part A.6 states that proposals must ensure that the development does not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or severe residual cumulative impacts on the road network. Developments must consider the impact of new development on the existing highway and transport infrastructure.
- 5.23 Policy 29 states proposals will only be supported which deliver a net gain for biodiversity and protect, create, maintain and enhance the Borough's ecological networks.
- 5.24 Policy 30 deals with the need to value biodiversity and assets will be protected through the following principles:

A) All proposals shall be considered in light of the mitigation hierarchy in accordance with National Policy.

B) Proposals which may harm designated Local Wildlife Sites, Local Geological Sites, Priority Habitats, Priority Species, protected species or non-designated sites or features of biodiversity interest, will only be supported where:

1. they use the DEFRA biodiversity metric to demonstrate that a proposal will deliver a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity;
2. they protect, restore, enhance and provide appropriate buffers around wildlife and geological features and bridge gaps to link these to the wider ecological network;
3. they produce and deliver appropriate long term management plans for local wildlife and geological sites as well as newly created or restored habitats;
4. they can demonstrate that the need for a proposal outweighs the value of any features to be lost; and
5. if the permanent loss of a geological site is unavoidable, then provision will be made for the site to first be recorded by a suitably qualified expert.

C) Proposals which may impact Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas or RAMSAR Sites will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that there will be no likely significant effects and no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites.

D) Proposals that may either directly or indirectly negatively impact Sites of Special Scientific Interest will not normally be supported.

5.25 Policy 32 states that proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that woodlands, trees and hedgerows have been adequately considered during the design process, so that a significant adverse impact upon public amenity or ecological interest has been avoided.

5.26 Policy 33 states proposals will be supported that take account of the quality, local distinctiveness and the sensitivity to change of distinctive landscape character areas and individual landscape features. Development will not be permitted where there is significant harm to the distinctive setting of, and relationship between, settlements and buildings and the landscape including important views.

5.27 Policy 39 refers to development affecting archaeology.

5.28 Policy 41 relates to character and local distinctiveness and states that development proposals will be supported where they recognise and reinforce the character of local landscapes and building traditions; respond positively to their context, setting and existing site features as well as respecting and enhancing the character of the locality. Developments should integrate visually and functionally with the immediate and surrounding area at a street and plot scale.

5.29 Policy 42 requires proposals to reflect and respect character and local distinctiveness. In all cases, the components of a development must be designed

and assessed to ensure that, amongst other things, it provides safe and secure private property, public areas and the adoptable highway ensuring access points.

- 5.30 Policy 48 states that development will be supported which protects landscape character, protects and enhances existing landscape features, and provides a high quality, comprehensive hard and soft landscape scheme.
- 5.31 Policy 55 deals with the need to mitigate any contamination on site.
- 5.32 Policy 56 requires the need for satisfactory drainage including the use of SuDS
- 5.33 Policy 58 deals with low carbon and renewable energy within new developments.

#### **Other material planning considerations and guidance**

- 5.34 Doncaster Council's previous suite of adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) have been formally revoked in line with Regulation 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, following the adoption of the Local Plan. A Biodiversity Net Gain SPD was adopted in September 2022 in line with the new Local Plan.
- 5.35 The Transitional Developer Guidance (April 2022) provides guidance on certain elements, including design, during the interim period, whilst new SPDs to support the adopted Local Plan are progressed and adopted. This guidance is attached limited weight.
- 5.36 Other material considerations include:
  - National Planning Practice Guidance (ongoing)
  - National Design Guide (2019)
- 5.37 Other Council initiatives include:
  - Doncaster Green Infrastructure Strategy 2014 – 2028
  - Doncaster Environmental and Sustainability Strategy
  - Doncaster Delivering Together
- 5.38 Launched in September 2021, Doncaster Delivering Together (DDT) is the Council's new 10 year Borough Strategy. DDT is about everyone being able to thrive and contribute to thriving communities and a thriving planet. This strategy does not form part of the adopted development plan but it is important that the policies of the Doncaster Local Plan achieve the aims and objectives of DDT strategy. The DDT has identified 8 priorities to deliver for Doncaster over the next ten years.

1. Tackling Climate Change
2. Developing the skills to thrive in life and work
3. Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs
4. Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all
5. Creating safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs
6. Nurturing a child and family - friendly borough
7. Building transport and digital connections fit for the future
8. Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting and heritage opportunities



## 6.0 Representations

6.1 This application has been advertised in accordance with Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015 by means of site notice, council website, press advertisement and neighbour notification.

6.2 Twenty letters of support have been received outlining the following reasons:

- Does not contribute to merging neighbourhoods
- Limited visual impact on openness of the green belt
- Not widely visible from the highway or footpaths, can be seen from the bridal paths, which you can also see electricity pylon and wind turbines
- The farmer uses digestive that is a green product and has increased the yield crop. This goes a long way to offset the small amount of landed needed for this development.
- Benefits the community, global community and future generations
- Special circumstances can be applied as any negative inappropriateness in green belt can be outweighed by the environmental benefits e.g. increasing energy production with renewable energy.
- This farm has done tremendous work and continues to support sustainability and reduces the carbon footprint of the farm.
- Helps contribute to green/sustainable energy, reduces carbon footprint at the farm.
- Non-material comments regarding the objectors and number/types of objections received.
- Provides green energy without negative impact on community.
- Has a positive impact towards global warming
- Provides green energy and reduces costs for the business to allow further support to the community
- Does not constitute inappropriate development as solar panels can be considered as a building. If it's not inappropriate, consideration does not have to be given to paragraph 151 of the NPPF. Paragraph 158 is applicable and states when determining applications for renewable energy, local authorities should approve the application if its impacts can be made acceptable; this proposal is clear cut.

6.3 Sixteen letters of objection have been received outlining the following reasons:

- The site is within Green Belt, it will degrade the Green Belt.
- Located within the Conservation Area
- Farming land is grade 2, misuse of a valuable resource
- Development would benefit applicant and bring no public benefit
- Panels in full view of conservation area, Melton Wood Country Park, and surrounding bridal paths, cycle routes etc. Visual impact would be significant.
- Cumulative effect of all the development
- Potential noise from wind moving through the panels
- No very special circumstances
- Already is a ground source heat pump and 2 large barns with solar panels on the roof, how much more do they need
- Losing land to create a digestate lagoon
- Solar panels less productive than wind turbines and creation of them contributes to greenhouse gases

- Wild flower borders are not as described
- Spoil the views for the residents to the rear of the village
- Non-material comments relating to village residents and comments raised.
- Carbon impact of the production of solar panels, the scale of this solar farm would not offset carbon costs.

## 7.0 Town/Parish Council

7.1 High Melton Parish Council have objected to the application on the following grounds:

1. The application is in the protected green belt and contrary to the council's policy 1 of the local plan (part 6) which states that the openness of the Green Belt will be preserved and the general extent retained.
2. Within the Green Belt, national planning policy will be applied including presumption against inappropriate development except in very special circumstances. The Parish Council do not consider this application to have established any special circumstances.
3. The application is a clear encroachment into the green belt.
4. The application is on grade 2 agricultural land.
5. The application is directly adjacent the conservation village of High Melton.
6. The application is yet another attempt to introduce step-by-step encroachment which the Parish Council considers to be inappropriate development within the green belt surrounding High Melton.

## 8.0 Relevant Consultations

- 8.1 **CDC Minerals Policy Officer** – The proposal would result in less than 1% of the farm land impacted by the array, therefore the concerns over the amount of grade 2 agricultural land lost by the proposal are not significant. No objections.
- 8.2 **Doncaster Sheffield Airport** – No objections.
- 8.3 **NATS** – No objections.
- 8.4 **CDC Ecology** – No objections to the surveys and outcomes of such but requested the DEFRA 3.1 metric be submitted along with a bio-diversity net gain report. This was submitted and reviewed by the Ecology Officer, who offer no objections and no requirement for conditions.
- 8.5 **CDC Tree Officer** – No objections and no conditions required.
- 8.6 **CDC Internal Drainage** – Requested a condition in relation to drainage maintenance.
- 8.7 **CDC Policy (Countryside)** – Very special circumstances need to be demonstrated to the case officers satisfaction, in order to prove wider environmental benefits

associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources; in line with paragraph 151 of the NPPF.

- 8.8 **CDC Environmental Health** - No objections.
- 8.9 **CDC Highways Development Control** – Requested some points for clarification and requested conditions. The points raised have been clarified and the highways officer is now content with the proposal and has recommended a construction management condition.
- 8.10 **Yorkshire Water** – No objections subject to condition.
- 8.11 **CDC Design Officer** – Following the submission of a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (as requested at the initial consultation response), the Urban Design Office does not object to the application. The change to the landscape by the proposed development are considered to be low and proposed planting for this scheme will also help to screen the site from sensitive view points from the surrounding footpaths closest to the site.
- 8.12 **CDC Conservation** – No objections, harm is minimal from this location.
- 8.13 **CDC Pollution Control** – No objections or conditions required.
- 8.14 **CDC Area Manager** – No objections.
- 8.15 **Police Designing out Crime Officer** - Requested a 2.4m W pale fence be used along with other security measures such as CCTV. A condition is recommended to ensure secure by design measures are implemented on site.
- 8.16 **Ward Members** – No comments received.

## **9.0 Assessment**

9.1 The proposal seeks permission for the installation of a ground mounted solar PV system comprising of 2,640 x Canadian Solar 380w solar panels. The solar PV array would generate 1.03MW of energy. In considering the proposal the main material planning considerations are outlined below:

- The Principle of Development
- Landscape/Visual Impact
- Agricultural Land
- Ecology and Biodiversity
- Highways
- Drainage
- Financial contributions

9.2 For the purposes of considering the balance in this application the following planning weight is referred to in this report using the following scale:

- Substantial
- Considerable
- Significant
- Moderate
- Modest

- Limited
- Little
- No

### Principle of Development

- 9.3 The application site comprises of land totalling approximately 1.5ha, and predominantly rural in character to the rear of the small rural village of High Melton, and is wholly within the Green Belt as defined by the Local Plan. In terms of judging the principle of development, Policy 58 deals with low carbon and renewable energy. The Local Plan defers to national guidance held within the NPPF in terms of development within the Green Belt.
- 9.4 In terms of national policy, Section 6 of the NPPF refers to the economy and paragraph 84 in particular states that in supporting a prosperous rural economy planning decisions should enable the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural business. Paragraph 158 sets out that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should 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 cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

At a national level, the UK's renewable energy policies are in line with international policy objectives, namely to ensure that the global economy will need to be zero-carbon by the second half of the 21st Century. Nationally, the policies seek;

- The reduction of CO2 emissions to tackle climate change;
  - The promotion of competitive energy markets in the UK;
  - Affordability to customers; and
  - Security of decentralised energy supplies
- 9.5 To help to achieve the net zero target, the government is seeking to transition from dependence on fossil fuels to increasing the amounts of secure, renewable and low carbon energy, which of course includes solar and hydrogen.
- 9.6 Announcements by the Government in 'The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution' (November 2020), the 'National Infrastructure Strategy' (November 2020), Energy White Paper (December 2020), hosting of the international climate summit, COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, and changes in law to reduce carbon emissions by 78% by 2035 further reinforce the requirement for change.
- 9.7 In addition to this the Energy White Paper of December 2020 puts net zero and the UK Governments effort to fight climate change at its core. Whilst the report does not target a particular generation mix for 2050, the report goes on to state that a low-cost, net zero consistent system is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar.
- 9.8 In planning policy terms, the NPPF states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the

conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

- 9.9 At a local level, in September 2019 Doncaster Council joined a growing number of local authorities who have declared a climate and biodiversity emergency. Doncaster Council has pledged to become carbon neutral by 2040. An Environment & Sustainability Strategy 2020 - 2030 has been developed by Team Doncaster having the backing of the Council and builds on the work of the Council's Climate and Biodiversity Commission. Importantly, this strategy provides a priority for Doncaster to increase energy production for sustainable sources and to "maximise the large-scale and small-scale renewable energy generation". The strategy also seeks to increase the proportion of land given over to wildflower grassland to support greater biodiversity and improve soils.
- 9.10 Within the Local Plan, Policy 58 seeks to increase the supply of low carbon and renewable energy generated in the borough. Amongst others, it states that proposals will be supported which give priority to heat or power generation from light, water, waste and other low carbon sources. The policy sets out criteria to allow such proposals to be supported, including community engagement and demonstrable environmental, social and economic benefits, no adverse effects on amenity and air quality, highways and infrastructure, and the built and natural environment. The applicant has presented at the Parish Council meeting providing information and answering any questions. The other specific points mentioned will be assessed within the report.
- 9.11 On this basis, it is clear that from both a national and local policy position, there is support generally for the form of development proposed. Specifically however, the proposed development site is located on land allocated as Green Belt within the Local Plan, and as such the scheme needs to be assessed of its impact in those terms.

#### Green Belt

- 9.12 As a starting point, Policy 1 (Settlement Hierarchy) of the Local Plan sets out the Council's approach to development within the Green Belt. The policy states that;
- "The openness and permanence of Doncaster's Green Belt (as indicated on the Key Diagram) and defined on the Policies Map will be preserved."
- "The general extent of the Green Belt will be retained. Within the Green Belt, national planning policy will be applied including the presumption against inappropriate development except in very special circumstances."
- 9.13 As such, the Local Plan document defers to the NPPF with regards to Green Belt Policy. Para 147 of the NPPF states that "inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances." Para 148 goes on to state that "When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. '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."

9.14 In terms of inappropriate development, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, subject to a number of exceptions. It goes on to outline a number of forms of development that are not considered to be inappropriate in the Green Belt (provided they preserved the openness), however none of these exceptions are applicable to the development proposals.

9.15 Paragraph 151 of the NPPF specifically mentions renewable energy development within the Green Belt, and states;

“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.”

9.16 On this basis, the Authority must consider the impact of the proposal upon the openness of the Green Belt, and whether very special circumstances justify the development in the Green Belt.

9.17 The NPPF at para 138 sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt;

- 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.

9.18 In order to assist the decision making process, Planning Practice Guidance provides advice on the factors that can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development upon openness of the Green Belt. The guidance advises that the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include;

- Openness is capable of having both spatial and visual impacts – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;
- The duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness;
- The degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic.

9.19 In terms of this proposal, it is prudent to assess the scheme against the 5 objectives of the Green Belt to guide the judgement of impact upon openness. With regards to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas, it is not considered that the scheme would result in such sprawl. Solar arrays in fields are not a form of development typically thought of or associated with “urban sprawl”, and increasingly are no longer an unusual feature in rural locations, as it is often only possible to locate solar farms of this type of scale of land which is typically greenfield land in the countryside. Furthermore, the proposed solar farm would have a lifespan of 25 years, after which it would be decommissioned and the land restored in an agreed manner, and so any harm would be of a temporary and reversible nature.

- 9.20 The second objective seeks to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another. The application site is located on a former landfill site between the settlements of High Melton, Melton Brand, and Sprotbrough. The fields themselves are separated from the settlements, and the existing gaps between the settlements and application boundary will be retained. Furthermore, given the nature of the proposal, with relatively low solar panels (no taller than 2.5m) and existing field hedgerow boundaries to be retained and additional to be planted, the scheme will ensure that the settlements will not have visual appearance of merging. The applicants have provided a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), which concludes that there would be no significant changes in views from within any of the settlements.
- 9.21 The third objective is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It is recognised that the siting of solar panels into vacant fields would change the character of the area, and so would represent encroachment of development within the countryside. The development does however have a lifespan of 25 years after which it will decommissioned, and as such any harm through encroachment will be of a temporary and reversible nature. In terms of the landscape and visual effects of the proposal, the LVIA recognises that that the scheme would have a moderate/minor adverse impact upon views from a public right of way, used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders that utilise the public footpaths and motorists using Sheep Lane. The impacts upon these views would be mitigated slightly by the establishment of proposed landscape enhancements. As such, it is considered that the impact of views is relatively limited and there would be no significant impacts more broadly on landscape character or views in the local area.
- 9.22 The fourth objective is to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. Given the location and surroundings of the proposed development, it is not considered that the proposals would impact upon the setting or special character of any historic towns. The site is located within close proximity to High Melton Conservation Area but not within it, the LVIA submitted again states that the impact is moderate and will reduce over time as the planting is maturing.
- 9.23 The final objective is to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. It cannot be argued that the proposal will assist in contributing to urban regeneration, however neither would it hinder or discourage urban regeneration in Doncaster.
- 9.24 Having assessed the proposal against the five objectives of the Green Belt, as per Para 147 of the NPPF, it must be demonstrated that very special circumstances exist to permit the granting of what is considered to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Case law holds that the decision maker must first decide whether very special circumstances exists, before then determining whether those very special circumstances outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt.
- 9.25 As previously mentioned, Para 151 of the NPPF does state that “very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources”. The very special circumstances outlined in this application is directly relating to the environmental benefits of the proposal. The proposal would produce approximately 882456 kWh of electricity per annum, 25% of that generated is potentially surplus and will be fed back into the grid and can be utilised to power other homes and businesses with the Doncaster area. 882456kWh equates to a carbon saving of 256 tonnes per annum. The applicant currently has 270kW solar panel generation on the roofs of

some of the farm buildings, combined the two systems would generate 201050kWh, which equates to a 257 tonnes per annum. This is a positive step in the reduction of the need for non-renewable energy resources; reducing the demand on fossil fuels would improve air quality with the reduction in carbon generated at the site. Renewable energy scheme, providing low carbon, clean energy, the proposed development will make a valuable contribution towards the reduction of carbon emissions and increase the renewable energy capacity in Doncaster. Further environmental benefits are resting the land owner the 25 years life span of the solar panels. The benefit of this is recovering the nutrients and improving the soil compaction caused by farm machinery. Significant bio-diversity improvements are also proposed. The landowner proposes planting a mixture of wildflowers, wild bird cover, and grass margin. Along with the hedgerow planting which is ongoing, the mosaic habitat will be enhanced further by providing winter food, chick food, and shelter for farmland birds. Furthermore the reduction in energy costs will enable further bio-diversity improvements for the farm, as the applicant is undertaken a significant amount of bio-diversity improvements beyond the scope of this planning application. On balance, the benefits of the scheme outweigh the limited harm that it would cause to the Green Belt.

### Sustainability

- 9.26 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) sets out at paragraph 7 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
- 9.27 There are three strands to sustainability, social, environmental and economic. Para.10 of the NPPF states that in order sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

### **SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

#### Impact on Residential Amenity

- 9.28 The nearest residential property outside the applicant's ownership is approximately 122m to the southwest of the site on Hangman Stone Road and the closest property outside the applicants ownership on Doncaster Road is 153m away to the south, The buildings directly abutting the site are the barns for Red House Farm. The predominant neighbouring uses are residential in nature.
- 9.29 Local Plan Policy 46 states that development will be supported provided that it does not result in unacceptable negative effects on the amenity of neighbouring land uses or the environment.
- 9.30 Substantial planting of hedgerow along the western boundary, screening the development from the neighbouring land uses. The neighbouring buildings are relatively low lying meaning they wouldn't be affected by glint and glare from the PV array. The properties on the southern boundary are a significant distance away and would have an agricultural field acting as a buffer to the PV array. The Environmental Health Team have not objected to the proposal.



## **Conclusion on Social Impacts.**

- 9.31 The proposal has been able to adequately demonstrate that residential development can be achieved on the site without adversely affecting the residential amenity of neighbouring properties. The development complies with Policy 46 of the Local Plan and is given moderate weight in the determination of the application.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

### Landscape and Visual Impact

- 9.32 One of the core principles of the NPPF is that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised. Planning Practice Guidance notes issued by the government states that the deployment of large-scale Solar Farms can have a negative effect on the rural environment, particularly in very undulating landscapes. However, it states that the visual impact of a well-planned and well screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively. This guidance also stresses that local topography is an important factor in assessing whether a large-scale solar farm could have a damaging impact on the landscape.
- 9.33 Policy 58 also states that low carbon and renewable energy proposals will be supported whether they have no unacceptable adverse impacts, including cumulative impacts, on the built and natural environment (including landscape character).
- 9.34 More specifically, Policy 33 of the Local Plan is concerned with Landscape at a strategic level. Proposals will be supported that take account of the quality, local distinctiveness and the sensitivity to change of distinctive landscape character areas and individual landscape features. The Policy goes on to state that where developments will most likely result in a significant impact upon the Borough's landscape, the proposals should assess the potential impact (including cumulatively) and propose how any negative effects will be minimised.
- 9.35 As part of the application, the applicant has submitted a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The assessment takes into account both the alteration the development would introduce to the landscape, and the sensitivity of the site and its current surroundings. The LVIA has concluded in terms of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to accommodate the Solar PV array, it is considered that the modern features of the line of pylons within the immediate adjoining landscape to the north of the Site, as well as the existing large barns at the edge of the farmyard to the south of the site reduce the susceptibility of the site to the type of change resulting from a relatively small solar PV scheme. In the localised and wider landscape setting the ridgeline landform to the west and north-west and land cover to the north create containment to the site from these directions. Along Sheep Lane to the east new planting will mature in time and help to provide visual containment from this direction. It is therefore considered that the landscape character of the site has capacity to accommodate a solar PV scheme. The susceptibility of the landscape resource to change of the type proposed is considered to be Low.
- 9.36 The site and immediately adjoining landscape is used for intensive arable agriculture and does not include any landscape features. The PROWs provide are well used and lead to a well-used Country Park. The site is located close to the High Melton Conservation Area 125m to the south however the northern edge of the Conservation Area comprises development predominantly from the late 20th

Century, with little heritage association. The Council's Conservation Officer has offered no objections to the proposal and considers the harm to be minimal. The LVIA concludes that the landscape value of the site and its immediate setting is low. The LVIA further concludes that the site and immediate adjoin landscape is of low sensitivity. With regard to the localised and wider rural landscape to the north, east and west the established vegetation structures, limestone ridgeline and rolling topography provide positive landscape features. The village, Melton Hall, and park are designated as a conservation area and Melton Wood is a country park, there are a number of local wildlife sites within the area. Given this the wider landscape is of a medium/high value.

- 9.37 The solar panels will have a light touch on the landscape; they do not move, emit noise or light pollution and the panels are only temporary (25years). Furthermore, the landscape and bio-diversity enhancements and mitigation proposals provide long term benefits to the landscape. The landscape features will help the solar PV integrate into the wider landscape. As a result will not have significant impact upon the wider landscape character.
- 9.38 The visual assessment undertaken confirms that the topography of the landscape creates contains the site; there are no views from the country park and very limited views from the publicly accessible areas within the Conservation Area or within the park and garden of local historic interest. The partial and close-range views from the PROWs will mostly be of the back of the solar panels, making them less prominent. Furthermore the landscape proposals will soften the development and enhance the landscape. It is acknowledged that there would be some views from upper floor windows in houses to the north of Hangman Stone Road, however these houses are not within the conservation area.
- 9.39 The LVIA has been reviewed by the Council's Urban Design Officer and they are satisfied that the proposal would not result in a significant harm to the landscape character of the area or harm the wider landscape. The development is considered to be in accordance with Policies 33 and 48 of the Local Plan. In turn resulting in no impact to the openness of the Green Belt. Furthermore, solar PV arrays are no considered a common part of the rural landscape character as the country moves towards renewable energy generation.

### Ecology

- 9.40 Policy 30 of the Local Plan is concerned with Biodiversity, which seeks to ensure that all proposals are considered in light of the mitigation hierarchy in accordance with National Policy. Furthermore, proposals will only be supported where:
1. They use the DEFRA biodiversity metric to demonstrate that a proposal will deliver a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity;
  2. They protect, restore, enhance and provide appropriate buffers around wildlife and geological features and bridge gaps to link these to the wider ecological network;
  3. They produce and deliver appropriate long term management plans for local wildlife and geological sites as well as newly created or restored habitats;
  4. They can demonstrate that the need for a proposal outweighs the value of any features to be lost; and
  5. If the permanent loss of a geological site is unavoidable, then provision will be made for the site to first be recorded by a suitably qualified expert.

- 9.41 The application site is not located within any non-designated statutory sites for nature conservation.
- 9.42 The main habitats within the application site currently comprises of cropland for cereal crops. The Council's Ecologist has been consulted as part of the application process and is satisfied with the level of information provided.
- 9.43 Policy 30 of the Local Plan requires that developments will deliver a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity. The applicants have provided a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, which the Council's ecologist has confirmed has been carried out using both national standard guidance and from the Council's own Biodiversity Net Gain SPD. As is generally the case when arable land is being developed for a use such as solar arrays, it is possible to produce a significant surplus of biodiversity net gain habitat and hedgerow units. The submitted assessment shows that the mitigation hierarchy and the best practice principles of net gain have been demonstrated as required by the SPD. Through the proposed conversion of this habitat type to Cropland-arable field margins game bird mix it has raised its distinctiveness from low to medium and this ensures that the biodiversity net gain 3.1 metric trading rules are satisfied. In respect of biodiversity net gain policy the change in these habitat types through enhancement delivers a biodiversity net gain net gain of 116.15 % which significantly surpasses the +10% net gain as required through Local Plan policy 30B.
- 9.44 The proposed planting scheme will utilise the 7m spacing between the rows of panels which is usable land and in total comprises almost 0.8 hectares of land. Crops cannot be grown due to the equipment required to facilitate harvesting however a planting scheme has been proposed in order to deliver food and shelter for farmland birds on the UK Birds of Conservation Concern Red List such as Grey Partridge, Yellow Hammer and Corn Bunting. The proposed planting scheme will have a mosaic of habitats between the arrays including a mix of wildflower planting, partridge grass mix and winter feed mix. Around the north, east and south a 7m margin of tall grasses is proposed and to the west a 14m margin is proposed. These margins will provide nesting cover for birds as well as contributing towards screening for sensitive receptors on the surrounding PRow's. The Council's Ecologist considers that much thought has gone into providing a feeding and breeding resource and for birds that will make an addition to local ecological networks through:

*A) being of an appropriate size, scale and type in relation to their location within and impact on the ecological network;*

*B) maintaining, strengthening and bridging gaps in existing habitat networks;*

*C) planting native species and creating new, or restoring existing, national and local priority habitats and/or species.*

The development is therefore compliant with Local Plan policy 29.

- 9.45 Overall, the Council's Ecologist raises no objections to the scheme, the Ecologist has requested the planting scheme plans are secured via the approved plans condition.
- 9.46 The Council's Trees and Hedgerows Officer has also been consulted and raises no objections to the scheme.

## Agricultural Land

9.47 National planning guidance states a preference focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land. Where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays. Policy 60 of the Local Plan states that proposals on non-allocated sites that involve the significant loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a) will only be supported where:

1. there are no other suitable alternative locations on lower quality agricultural land (or non-agricultural land) available; or
2. the land can be reinstated back to its previous state (where possible).

9.48 In both cases, there is a clear intention to ensure that proposals avoid the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land. As previously discussed, the site currently utilised as arable agriculture, and the applicants have provided agricultural land classification information to confirm the quality of the land. The land is wholly classified as Grade 2, which can be considered amongst the best and most versatile. Technically, using this classification of agricultural land is contrary to the provisions of Policy 60, however the applicants have made the case that no other land within their ownership surrounding the main farmstead is in a lower classification. Furthermore, the applicants have confirmed that the farm is 174 hectares in size, and the area of the proposed solar array plus intervals is 1.2 hectares; based on the size of the farm and the area for the solar array the estimated loss of agricultural land equates to 0.9% of the total farm. Additionally, the spacing between the rows will provide 0.8ha of mosaic habitat with wildflowers, wild bird cover and grass margins, and the solar array will therefore be taking up 0.5% of the total farmland.

9.49 Set against this, Doncaster as a whole has a higher proportion of very good agricultural land (Grade 2) in comparison with the England as a whole. Furthermore, although long term, the development is temporary and its impacts fully reversible. The management of the land under the panels over the life of the development can improve soil health, increase biodiversity and improve soil structure. It is proposed that following the decommissioning of the solar farm, the land would revert back to its former use. As quoted above, part 2 of Policy 60 of the Local Plan does make provision for the loss of such land where it can be reinstated back to its previous use.

9.50 On this basis, and on balance, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of its effect on agricultural land. Whilst the scheme is not sited on the worst quality land, it will only result in a less than 1% of the farmland affected by the array. The location of the proposal has been chosen because of the proximity to the private electricity supply to which it will be connected in to, and therefore the reduction in the amount of ancillary infrastructure needed to support the scheme; thus resulting in a lesser amount of agricultural land lost. Together with the amount of energy capable of being produced and the carbon savings, are significant benefits which are considered to outweigh the relatively small loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. Furthermore, the land could be returned to its original state at the end of the development, in accordance with Policy 60. Coupled with the

significant benefits the scheme would bring forward, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impacts upon agricultural land.

### Glint and Glare

- 9.51 Part B of Policy 58 seeks to ensure that in all cases, low carbon and renewable energy proposals allow for the continued safe and efficient operation and growth of Doncaster Sheffield Airport. In order to protect any potential commencement of commercial flights from Doncaster Sheffield Airport, the airport safeguarding team have been consulted. There is no objections to the proposal. Given the position of the solar PV array there would be no impact to road users or residential properties. To ensure any impact is minimal a condition is proposed to ensure the panels have a non-reflective coating. Furthermore, most panels are made specialist glass, which has a much lower reflectivity than conventional glass, and the strength of reflection is much lower than other features commonly seen such as glasshouses, glass fronted buildings and calm reservoirs. The panels are obviously fixed, and so reflections can only be directed to one area of the sky at any one time. This point slowly moves across the sky as the sun moves during the course of a day. The maximum extent of any glint is only the size of the proposed solar farm and as such an aircraft moving at high speed will cross this point very quickly. The potential for glint will also be reduced where cloud, rain or other weather events obscure the sun from the panels.
- 9.52 It is therefore unlikely that the proposed solar farm will have any significant effect on the impact of the radar system or aviation safety through glint or glare and the proposal is therefore compliant with policy 58 of the Local Plan and the Planning Practice Guidance.

### Highways and Construction

- 9.53 The applicant has provided a statement regarding the suitability of the access. The farm currently received articulated trailers and 40ft high cube containers due to the nature of the business. A 16m articulated lorry would deliver the solar panels, mounting kit and an ancillary delivery for equipment such as inverters. Approximately 3 lorry deliveries would be required along with standard contractor vans. There would be 5-6 workers on site during construction and existing welfare facilities can be used, the materials can be stored in the existing barns. The site can be accessed by Doncaster Road or Sheep Lane accesses. A 5m gap will be left between boundaries of the field and the solar PV array to allow for access and to avoid shading. This should provide sufficient maintenance, ensuring they'll be no impact to accessibility of the highway, cycle paths, and footpaths. Tracking has been provided which shows sufficient space for vehicle manoeuvrability. The main farmstead area also has sufficient room to accommodate the parked contractor vans.
- 9.54 The Council's Highways team have been consulted and raise no objections to the proposals. Further clarification was sought over the access and tracking of the Lorries. The applicants have provided appropriate responses to the points raised, and as such there are no objections to the proposals. A condition requiring a detailed construction traffic management plan will be imposed upon the permission.
- 9.55 In terms of the operational phase of the development, traffic associated with the proposal will be extremely limited, expected that the site will be visited once a month by a small van.

- 9.56 In addition, no objections have been received from the Council's Environmental Health team to the proposals.

#### Flooding and Drainage

- 9.57 The application site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1, which is defined as having a low risk of flooding from main rivers. NPPF Annex 3: flood risk vulnerability classification, places the use of a Solar Farm as 'essential infrastructure', being appropriate in Flood Zone 1. The site is not considered to be at risk of flooding from groundwater, sewers, reservoirs or other artificial sources.
- 9.58 The submitted information assesses the development against the risk of increased rainwater runoff. There is no concreting or other removal of grass area required to support the installation. The system is secured using ground spikes that reduce the ground area by less than 0.1%. The rainwater runoff will have the existing opportunity to drain beneath the next row of panels and the intervening ground. To mitigate runoff further the existing drainage courses near the installation will be maintained to be clear of obstructions and dig out where necessary.
- 9.59 Furthermore, the displacement of equipment during a flooding event has also been assessed. The panels shall be installed to industry standard, with regards to earth protection and similar devices to ensure automatic safe disconnection of the system in the event of flooding. The PV system is designed to operate under a harsh external conditions and area designed to work in very wet environments. Additional care will be taken with armoured cable runs etc. to ensure safe operation. Finally, the PV array will be located downhill from the nearest building and therefore the installation of a solar PV array will not increase the risk of flooding in these areas.
- 9.60 No objections have been received from consultees. Yorkshire Water have recommended a condition to ensure an adequate outfall of surface water runoff is provided. The Council's Drainage Team have requested a condition relating to drainage maintenance protective strip either side of water main within the site.

#### Other Issues

- 9.61 With regards to rights of way, there are no formal public rights of way recorded across the site. High Melton 1 bridleway runs to the western boundary of the site leading to Melton Wood Country Park, its main use is by pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists. Other public rights of way are located to the north and east of the site. None of these public rights of way are affected by the proposal. The applicant will be planting a significant amount of hedgerow along the boundary with High Melton 1 bridleway; however this is outside the red line boundary of the site and does not form part of the consideration of this application. It is advised that nothing should overhang this bridleway to ensure there is no obstruction to a user on horseback.
- 9.62 No objections have been received from other consultees to the application.

#### **Conclusion on Environmental Issues**

- 9.63 Para. 8 of the NPPF (2021) indicates, amongst other things, that the planning system needs to contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, helping to improve

biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

- 9.64 In conclusion of the environmental issues, it is considered that there have been no significant issues raised which would weigh against the proposal that cannot be mitigated by condition. As such significant is weight attached to this in favour of the development through the achievement of BNG offsetting on site and the provision of renewable energy for a business resulting in a significant carbon saving. Whilst the array will be visible from some locations, it is considered that the landscape can accommodate the development and the landscaping in place once matured along with the proposed planting will soften the array and temper the impact over time. The scheme is acceptable in terms of drainage and flood risk, and no objections have been received in respect of ground conditions.

## **ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY**

### Employment

- 9.65 There would be some short-term economic benefit to the development of the site through employment of construction workers and tradesmen connected with the build of the project. This is however a temporary benefit, and so carries limited weight in favour of the application.

### Energy Costs

- 9.66 Wholesale energy costs were recently at an all-time high, which has resulted in government intervention to support customers and brought into sharp focus the issue of energy security and how we source our energy. As such, the need for alternative and reliable energy sources are required in order to move away from the reliance on gas and the impacts of the market price. This development would produce around 882,456kWh of electricity per year. A portion of what is generated but not utilised (around 25%) will be exported back to the grid and can be utilised by the public. This means that the public will benefit from zero emission locally generated electricity, albeit at a small scale. Over time, this development would reduce the energy costs for the business enabling it to grow further and continue to invest in the development of the mosaic habitat program the applicant is undertaking.

### Rural Diversification

- 9.67 Rural diversification has become an important source of support and income for a large proportion of UK farms. DEFRA figures show that 46% of farm businesses in England have some diversified activity, and a report by the NFU found that 29% of already diversified farms chose renewable energy. The importance of supporting a prosperous rural economy is highlighted within the NPPF at para 84, stating that development should enable the sustainable growth of rural businesses, enable the diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses, allow for sustainable rural tourism and retain/develop local services. To provide a source of diversification will ensure the long-term viability of the farm and the associated benefits for the local rural economy.

## **Conclusion on Economic Issues**

- 9.68 Para 8 a) of the NPPF (2021) sets out that in order to be economically sustainable developments should help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
- 9.69 Whilst the economic benefit of the proposal in terms of job creation is temporary, the numbers of employees is not insignificant, however limited weight is afforded to this benefit overall. Moderate weight is however given in terms of the benefits the proposals brings with respect to the rural economy and carbon savings and usage of renewable energy sources for the business.

## **10.0 PLANNING BALANCE & CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 In accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF (2021) the proposal is considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Whilst the development would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt, very special circumstances have been provided to justify the development, in respect of renewable energy generation for the business in order to achieve significant carbon emission savings. Furthermore, the LVIA submitted demonstrates that whilst there would be some impacts upon the visual character of the surroundings initially, over time additional planting would soften this and lessen those impacts
- 10.2 It is considered that the benefits the scheme delivers, namely the carbon emissions savings, green energy generation, and biodiversity enhancements weighs heavily in its favour. Coupled with this, the scheme is temporary (although a significant period) in nature, and the land can be returned to its original use at the end of its life. The scheme is considered to be acceptable in terms of ecology and will deliver a substantial net gain on site. The scheme will also ensure further planting across the site and provide much needed habitat for a number of red listed species, providing winter food supply and shelter.
- 10.3 This proposal is considered to be small scale energy generation for a private business, it is not considered necessary to refer this decision to the national case work unit. Whilst being a departure from the NPPF, given its location within the green the harm is not considered to be significant.

## **11.0 RECOMMENDATION**

### **11.1 GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:**

**The above objections, consideration and resulting recommendation have had regard to Article 8 and Article 1 of the First Protocol of the European Convention for Human Rights Act 1998. The recommendation will not interfere with the applicant's and/or objector's right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.**



01. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.  
REASON  
Condition required to be imposed by Section 91(as amended) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
02. The development hereby permitted must be carried out and completed entirely in accordance with the terms of this permission and the details shown on the approved plans listed below:  
  
Location Plan - received 16.11.2022  
Site Plan - received 16.11.2022  
Table Mounting Plan - received 16.11.2022  
Block Plan (table separations) - received 28.11.2022  
Table Plan - received 01.12.2022  
Table Spacing Plan - received 28.02.2023  
Proposed Planting Scheme Site Plan - received 28.02.2023  
Proposed Planting Scheme (types) - received 28.02.2023  
Landscape Visual Impact Assessment - received 25.04.2023  
Planting Practicalities Statement - received 28.02.2023  
REASON  
To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application as approved.
03. Within 18 months of the cessation of the generation of renewable energy, a scheme for the proposed restoration of the land within the application site, including removal of all solar panels, associated equipment, fencing and other infrastructure shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Within 6 months of the cessation of the generation of renewable energy, solar panels, associated equipment, fencing and other infrastructure shall be removed and the ground re-instated in accordance with the approved restoration scheme.  
REASON  
To ensure that the site is appropriately restored.
04. No piped discharge of surface water from the application site shall take place until works to provide a satisfactory outfall, other than the existing local public sewerage, for surface water have been completed in accordance with details previously submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.  
REASON  
To ensure that the site is properly drained and in order to prevent overloading , surface water is not discharged to the public sewer network
05. No construction works shall take place until full details of offsite highway works have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning authority within a Construction Traffic Management Plan. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details and cover the following points, expanded on as required

- Volumes and types of construction vehicles
- Site Compound area incl. Welfare Facilities, Parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors.
- Loading, unloading and storage of plant and materials
- Identification of delivery routes;
- Identification of agreed access point and routing within the site
- Contractors method for controlling construction traffic and adherence to routes.
- Construction Period
- Temporary signage on the Highway
- Measures to control dust and dirt during construction including Wheel Wash facilities
- Timing of deliveries

**REASON**

To safeguard the living conditions of neighbouring residents and in the interests of highway safety

06. The approved solar panel structures shall be applied with a non-reflective coating, details of which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Unless otherwise agreed in writing, the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON**

In the interests of residential amenity.

07. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, details of the drainage management and maintenance plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage system for surface water drainage shall be retained, managed and maintained for the lifetime of the development in accordance with the approved drainage management and maintenance plan.

**REASON:**

To ensure the drainage apparatus of the site is adequately maintained for the lifetime of the development and to accord with Para. 169 c) of the NPPF (2021).

**INFORMATIVES**

01. **INFORMATIVE**  
The applicant is advised to seek to implement security measures into the development in order to achieve the 'Secured By Design' accreditation from South Yorkshire Police.

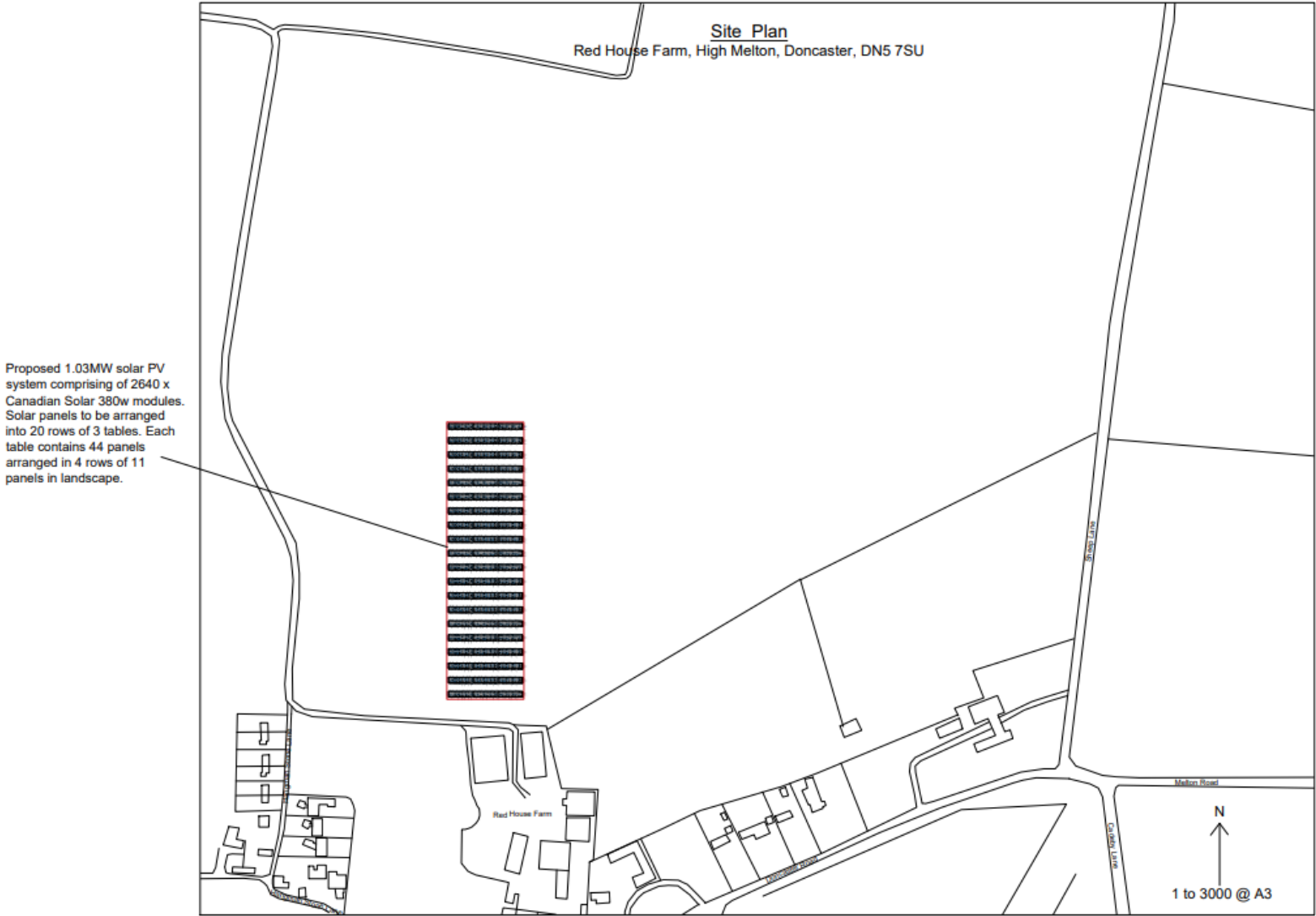
**STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ARTICLE 35 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE ORDER 2015**

In dealing with the application, the Local Planning Authority has worked with the applicant to find solutions to the following issues that arose whilst dealing with the planning application:

- Ecological Enhancements
- Green Belt justifications
- Agricultural Land Assessment
- Access arrangements

**The above objections, consideration and resulting recommendation have had regard to Article 8 and Article 1 of the First Protocol of the European Convention for Human Rights Act 1998. The recommendation will not interfere with the applicant's and/or objector's right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence**

# Appendix 1: Location Plan



## Appendix 2: Site Plan



### Block Plan Red House Farm, High Melton, Doncaster, DN5 7SU

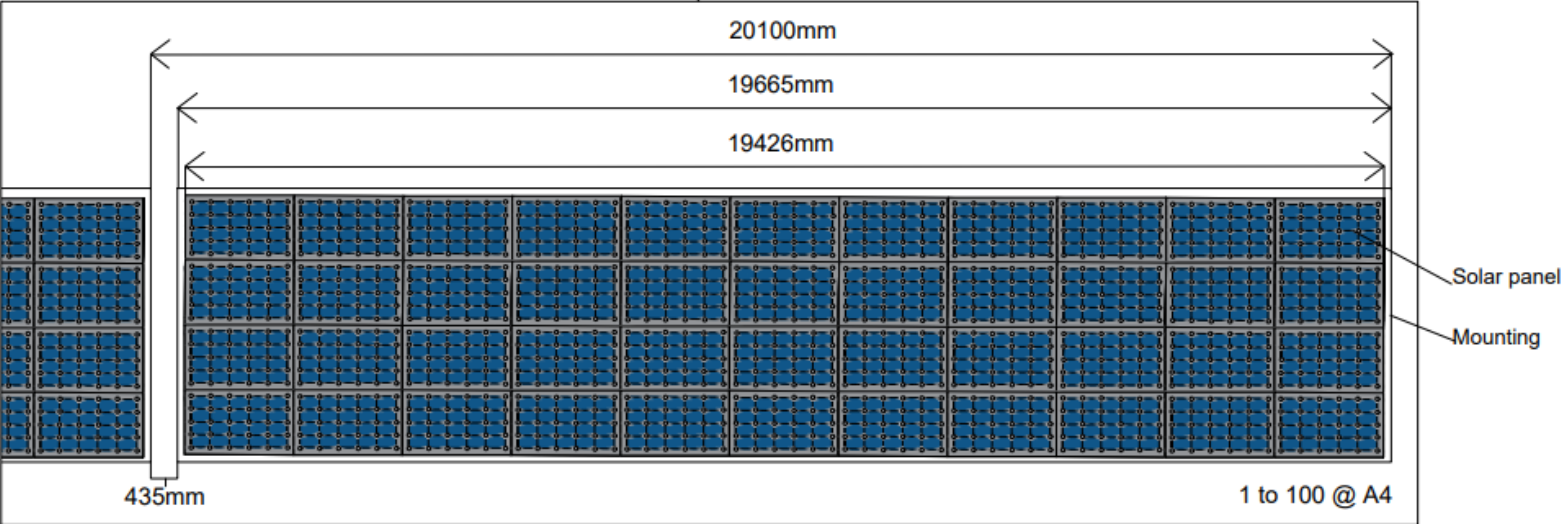
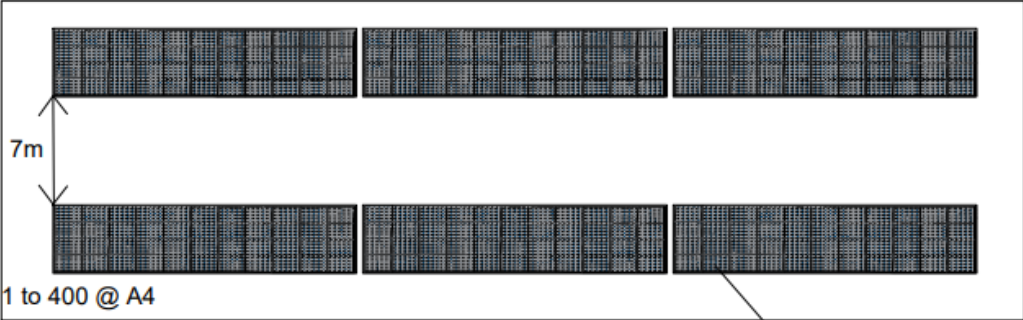
Proposed 1.03MW solar PV system comprising of 2640 x Canadian Solar 380w modules. Solar panels to be arranged into 20 rows of 3 tables. Each table contains 44 panels arranged in 4 rows of 11 panels in landscape.

-7m to be left between rows of tables  
-435mm gap between tables



# Appendix 3: Table Design

Block Plan  
Red House Farm, High Melton, Doncaster, DN5 7SU

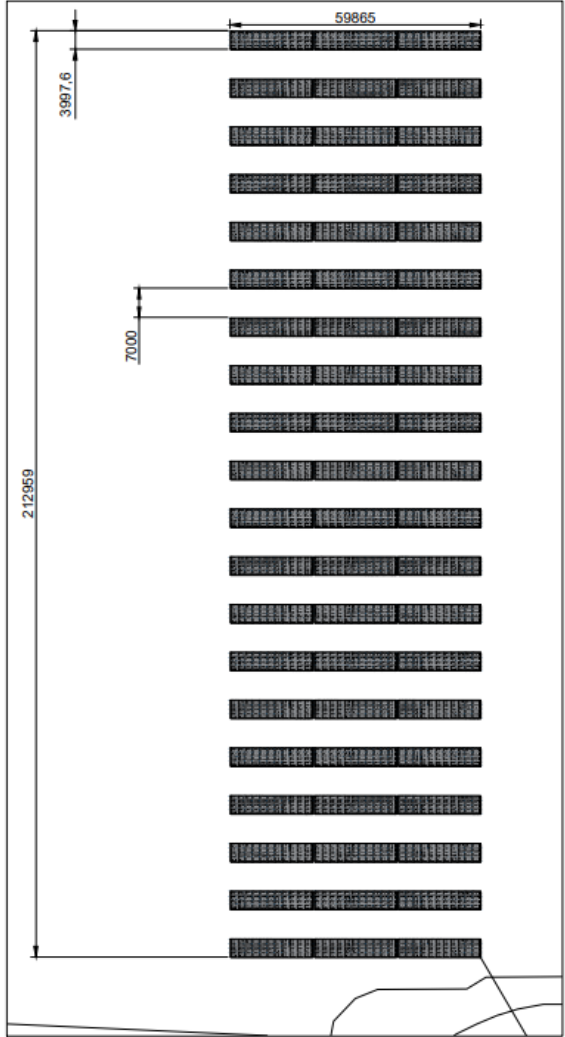


# Appendix 4: Table design and spacing

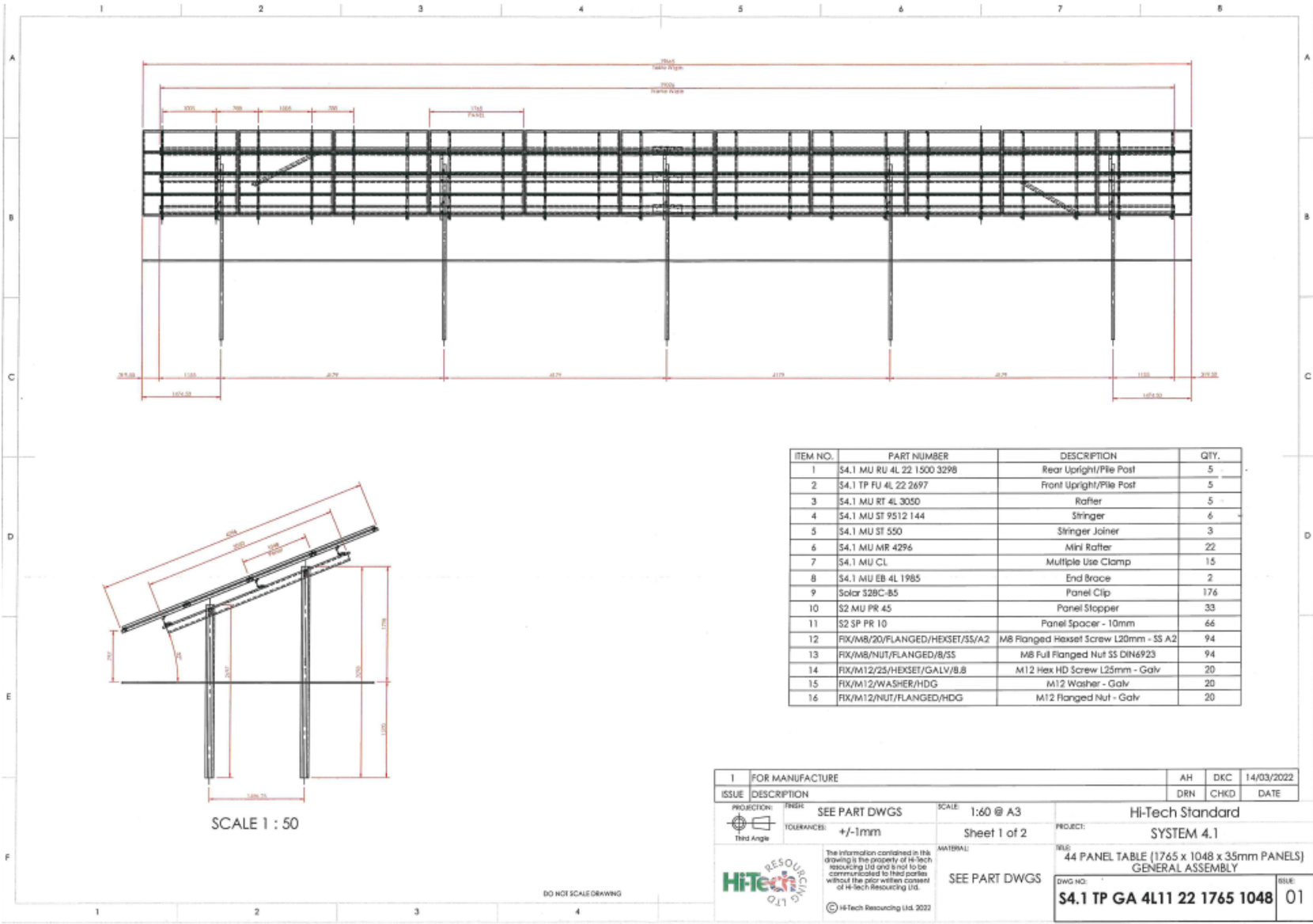
Total area of array (including spacing between rows)  
 =  $212,959\text{mm} \times 59,865\text{mm}$   
 =  $212,959\text{m} \times 59,865\text{m}$   
 = **12,748.37m**

Total area of spacing between rows:  
 =  $7000 \times 59,865\text{mm} \times 19$   
 =  $7\text{m} \times 59,865\text{m} \times 19$   
 =  $419,055\text{m} \times 19$   
 = **7,962.04m**

Total area of solar panels:  
 =  $3997,6\text{mm} \times 59,865\text{mm} \times 20$   
 =  $3,9976\text{m} \times 59,865\text{m} \times 20$   
 =  $239,316324\text{m} \times 20$   
 = **4,786.33m**



# Appendix 5: Solar Panels/Mounting Details

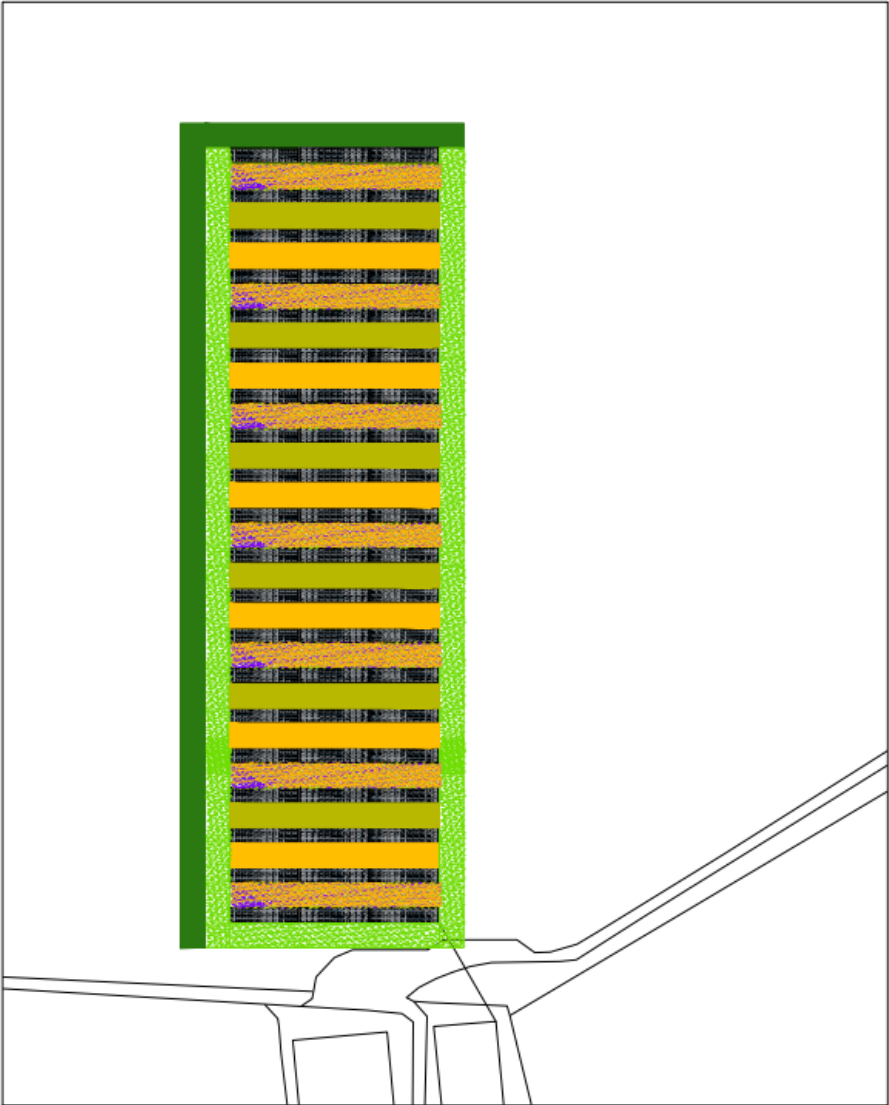


1	FOR MANUFACTURE	AH	DKC	14/03/2022
ISSUE	DESCRIPTION	DRN	CHKD	DATE
PRODUCTION:	FRS: SEE PART DWGS	SCALE:	Hi-Tech Standard	
Third Angle	TOLERANCES: +/-1mm	1:60 @ A3	PROJECT: SYSTEM 4.1	
		Sheet 1 of 2	MATERIAL: SEE PART DWGS	
			REV: 44 PANEL TABLE (1765 x 1048 x 35mm PANELS) GENERAL ASSEMBLY	
			DWG NO:	ISSUE
			S4.1 TP GA 4L11 22 1765 1048	01

DO NOT SCALE DRAWING



# Appendix 6: Planting Scheme



Proposed Planting Scheme  
 Red House Farm, High Melton, DN5 7SU

- Tall Winter Bird Food: This would provide nesting cover as well as screening from residential properties (Eg. Oakbank Grass Weed Buster)
  
- Thick Tussocky Grass: This would provide nesting and small mammal habitat and insects as well as hunting for owls, bats etc
  
- Rich Flower Planting: This would attract nectar feeding insects. (Eg. Pro Flora 8 Country Meadow Mix)
  
- Advanced Partridge Mix. This would provide nesting and brood rearing cover. (Eg. GWCT Advanced Partridge Mix)
  
- Winter Feed Mix: This would provide food for small birds and winter habitat (Eg. GWCT Partridge WBM)
  
- Solar array

