

Proposed Battery Storage Facility Burghfield Road, Southcote

Landscape & Visual Appraisal



Landscape Architecture

Landscape & Visual Assessment

Arboriculture

Ecology

Project:

Battery Storage Facility, Burghfield Road, Southcote, Reading

Client:

Renepower

Job No:

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2			
3			
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5			

Introduction

The following study has been undertaken by Chris Nichols CMLi, BA (Hons), BLA Manchester Metropolitan University, Principal Landscape Architect of ISL Associates Ltd (Ian Stemp Landscape Associates) on behalf of the client. Chris has been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute since 1998.

Landscape and visual effects are two of the key environmental issues associated with developments on the urban edge of settlements, and the assessment of such effects is an important part of the process for determining the suitability of such developments within a particular location. The purpose of the study is therefore two-fold: firstly, to assess and record the character and components of the landscape and their susceptibility to being affected by the proposed change of use; and secondly, to predict how visible the proposed Development would appear within its landscape setting, and how this might affect existing views towards the site.

To inform the above it was necessary to :

- Investigate and review any extant assessments of landscape character that have been carried out and published for the context of the site;
- Record the existence of any sensitive landscape features or sites of special landscape significance on or near to the site;
- Undertake a landscape appraisal of the site and its surroundings, with particular reference to landform, vegetation and land-use;
- Determine the potential visibility of the proposed Development on the site within its landscape context;
- Consider the consequences on the site's contextual landscape character and visual amenity of developing the site for commercial use in accordance with the proposals;
- Recognise possible conservation and enhancement measures that could be incorporated as part of the Development scheme, and to suggest forms of mitigation to reduce any potential impact/effects* on landscape and visual amenity, if there are found to be any. (*Note: *Impact* is defined as the action being taken; *effects* are the result of the action.)

Methodology

The methodologies adopted for this Landscape Character and Visual Assessment are based on guidance given in the publication 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' by the L.I. and I.E.M.A.' (Third Edition) 2013, and 'Landscape Character Assessment: Guidelines for England and Scotland' by Scottish National Heritage and The Countryside Agency (Natural England) 2002.

An important part of the assessment has been the on-site work, which involved landscape survey on site and in the walking of footpaths and traversing of roads

within the vicinity of the site. Views to the site from publicly accessible places within the surrounding countryside and from close to nearby residential properties were given particular attention, and a series of photographs taken where appropriate.

The majority of the photographs were taken with an Apple iPhone 14 Pro with the lens fixed at a digital focal length equivalent to an analogue 50mm lens. These photographs are for illustrative purposes only and are not an exact representation of human field of view.

The landscape survey work was undertaken in the summer season when the trees and hedgerows were in full leaf cover. The potential decrease in the screening effects that the established vegetation may present, by the absence of leaves on deciduous trees and hedges in the winter period, will need to be taken into consideration.

Location and Context

The site is situated within the county of Berkshire within the local administration of Reading Borough Council. It lies approximately 4.6km to the southeast of the centre of Reading.

The landscape is dominated by the river Kennet, its associated floodplains, and the extensive flooded gravel workings. Despite its proximity to major urban areas and the M4 motorway, the landscape is generally tranquil. The landscape within which the site sits is designated a Major Landscape Feature within the Reading Local Plan.

Due to the heavily treed nature of the surrounding landscape views of urban structures and settlement edges of the urban areas are not common.

The area is dissected by Burleigh Road, which runs in a roughly north south direction from Burghfield to the southwest, past the site, through Southcote and connecting to the Bath Road into Reading.

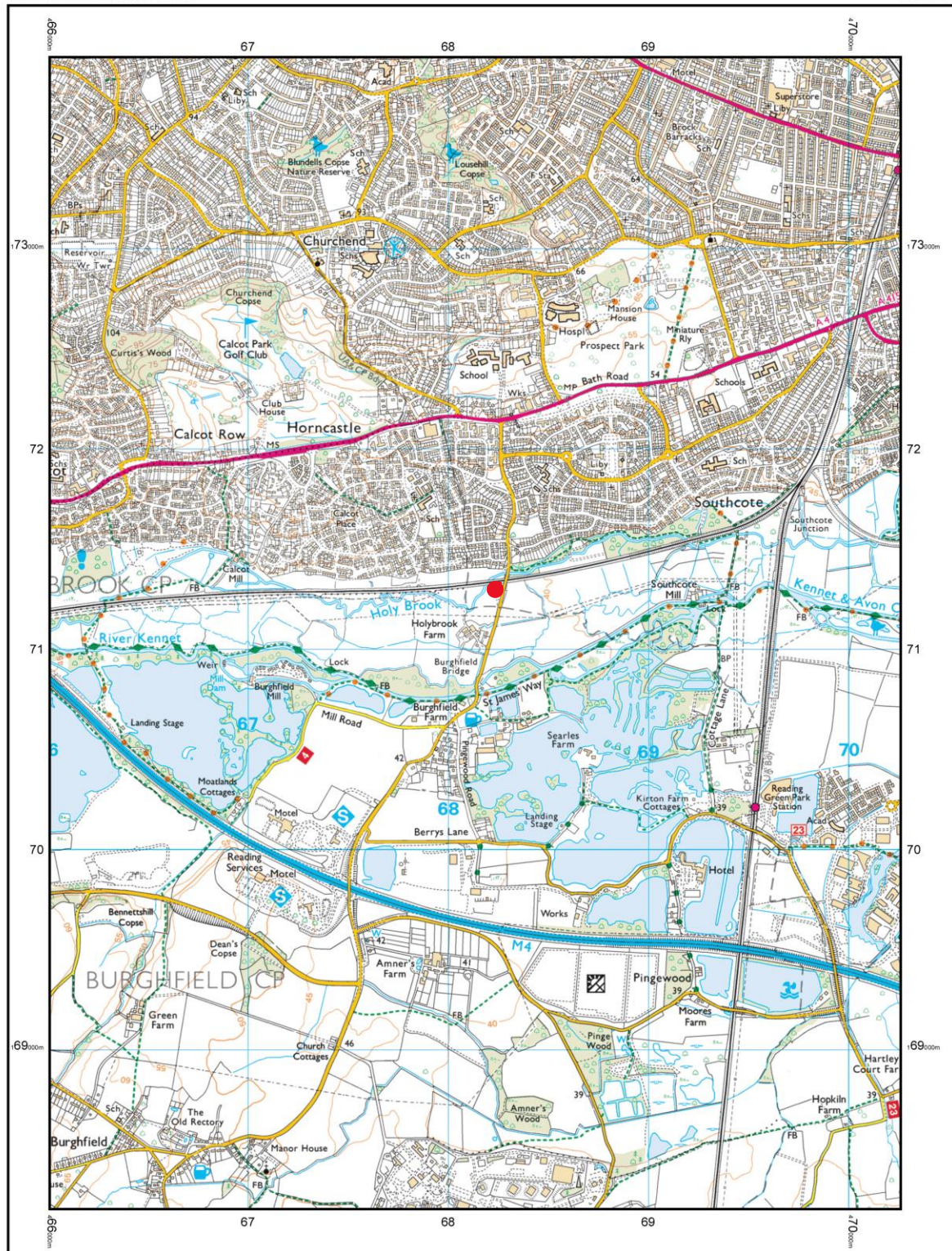


*Aerial Image of landscape
Red Dot denotes site.*

The landscape is confined to the north by the Reading-Taunton Rail line and the residential areas of Southcote to the north and by the M4 motorway to the south.

Between the rail line and the river Kennet the landscape is predominantly an attractive, agricultural grazing pasture landscape with mature trees and hedgerows.

B1 HOLYBROOK FARM, BURGHFIELD BRIDGE, BURGHFIELD, READING, RG30 3RA
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0m 1cm = 250m 1250m
 Scale 1:25000



Location Plan

The presence of the rail line, overhead cables, and phone masts, however, intrude into the tranquillity of the landscape.

Field boundaries are generally hedgerows with some recent timber or post and wire fences evident. The hedgerows are usually well-trimmed, but in some areas have become sparse due to modern management techniques. The shrub species within the hedgerows of the countryside are mixed native, dominated by Hawthorn but also with Elm, Elder and Hazel. Oaks are the predominant hedgerow tree, with some large amounts of Willow, as well as some Ash, Sycamore and Field Maple, and Hawthorns that have been left to grow as individual tree specimens.

Between the river Kennet and the M4 motorway the landscape is dominated by flooded gravel extraction pits, which have created large expanses of open water. The area is heavily treed and long-distance views are limited. Between the flooded pits, which are used for various recreation activities, there are areas of commercial activity. Willows and Alder are the predominant tree species in this area.

There are no Conservations Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens or Battlefields within the study area. There are no Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings within the study area.

There are several commercial sites within the area, Mill Road, 690m to the south and Green Lane/Pingewood Lane North, an extensive area of commercial businesses, approximately 800m to the south of the site. All these areas are well screened by extensive area of mature vegetation.

The Cuning Man public house lies approximately 600m to the south of the site alongside the river Kennet.

Residential properties within the area are mostly within the residential areas of Southcote, a suburb of Reading, to the north of the site. They are however, physically, and visually separated from it by the railway, the Holy Brook and the extensive vegetation that lies along them both.

There is a small residential area sited around Pingewood Close some 800m south of the site, it is separated visually from the site by topography and extensive mature vegetation.

An additional property is found at Holybrook Farm approximately 200m south of the site, which is understood to be in the ownership of the landowner of the proposed site.

There are several Public Rights of Way (PROW) within the study area, however most all are separated from the site by distance and topography.

Public Rights of Way which may potentially be affected are the St. James's Way Long Distance Footpath which runs to the south of the site alongside the River Kennet, and the PROW which runs east adjacent to the site along side the Holy Brook.

Additionally there is a linear park to the north of the site, and although not a public right of way contains a permissive footpath, which runs alongside the Holy Brook.

Site Description

The proposed site for the battery storage facility lies off an existing access track off the western edge Burghfield Road as shown below.



The site and its immediate context

The development area is predominantly overgrown bramble and scrub, with a small section of the adjacent agricultural field also being utilised.

The northern boundary is formed mostly by the existing electricity sub-station, with the rail line and Holy Brook beyond. The sub-station contains several large transformer blocks and is surrounded by galvanised steel fencing approximately 2.4m high. The fencing is prominent in views from the south. The Holybrook is heavily vegetated with mature trees which form a green backdrop to the site when viewed

from the south. As the rail line crosses the Holybrook, a large bridge structure is visible from the linear park side, although filtered heavily by vegetation.

The eastern boundary is formed by the existing access track to the sub-station and beyond by a mature native hedgerow on a raised embankment. The hedge is between 4 and 5m high and contains large amounts of Elm, it effectively screens any views from Burghfield Road. Along the access track to the sub-station there is also a mobile telephone mast approximately 5m in height as can be seen in the photograph below.



Existing access track to sub-station

The southern boundary is formed by the existing access track to the sub-station and part of the adjacent agricultural field.

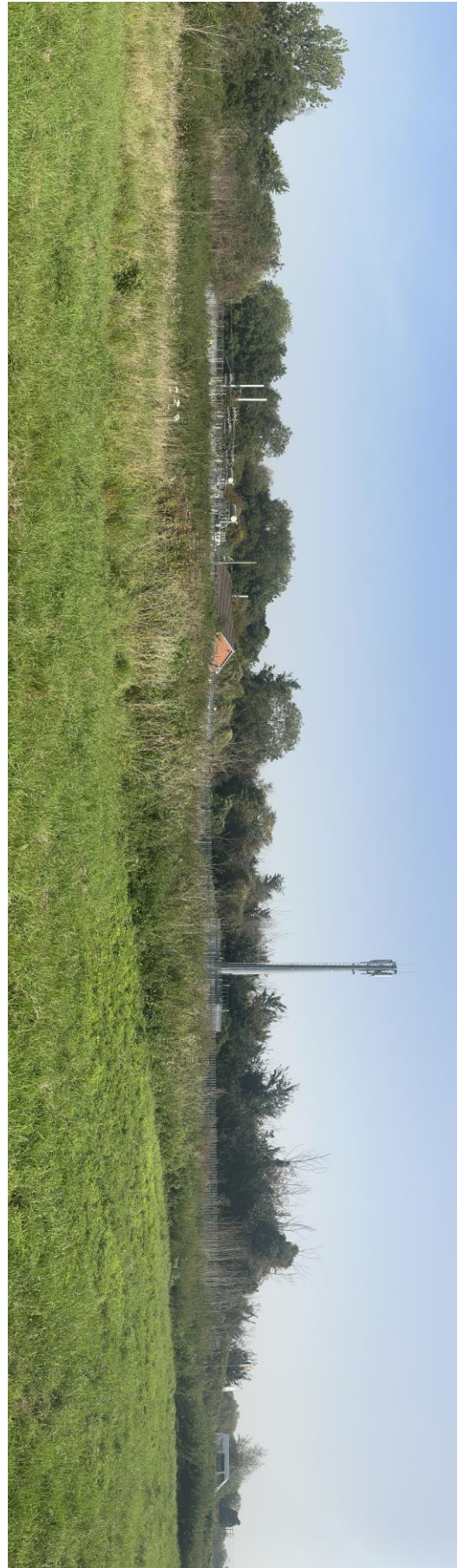
The western boundary is formed by an area of overgrown scrub and mostly dense thicket of brambles, which form an edge to the adjacent mature trees along the Holybrook.



The site viewed from the adjacent agricultural field.



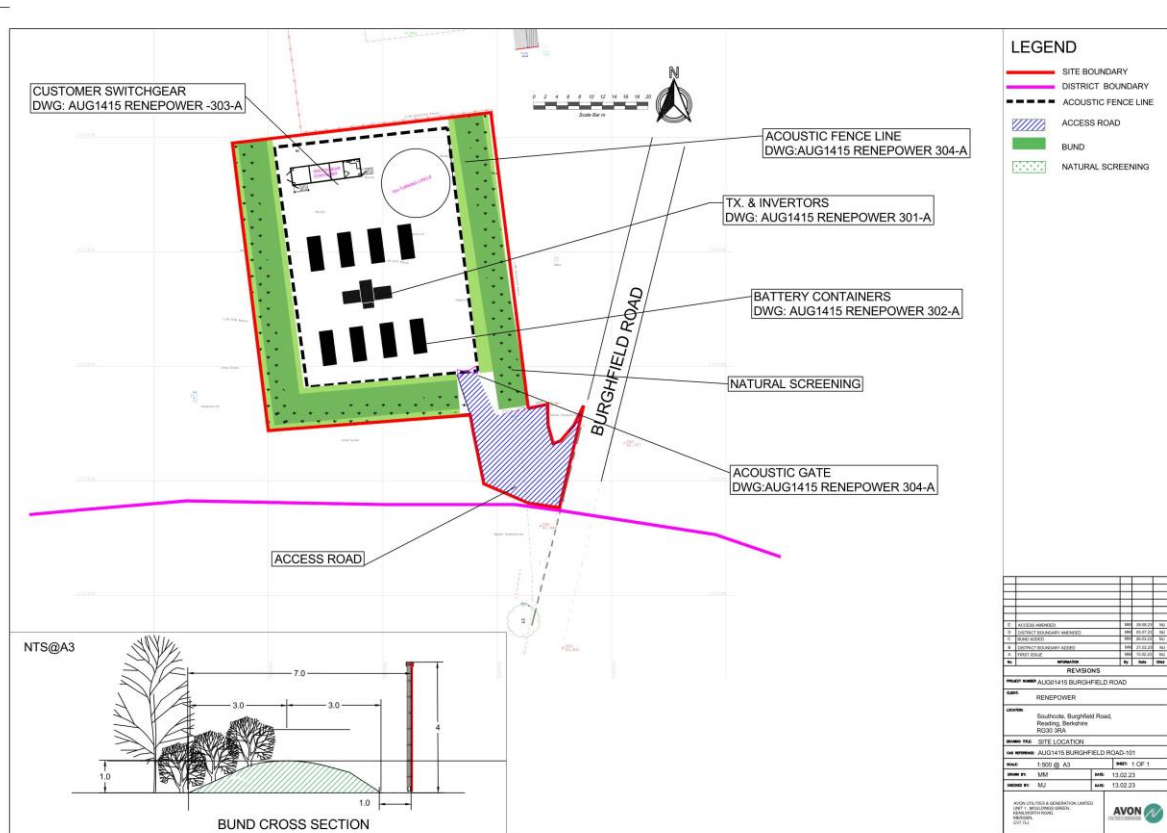
The site viewed from Burghfield Road



Panorama of the development site

Development Proposals

The proposed battery storage facility and associated infrastructure, including new road access are set out in the plan below.



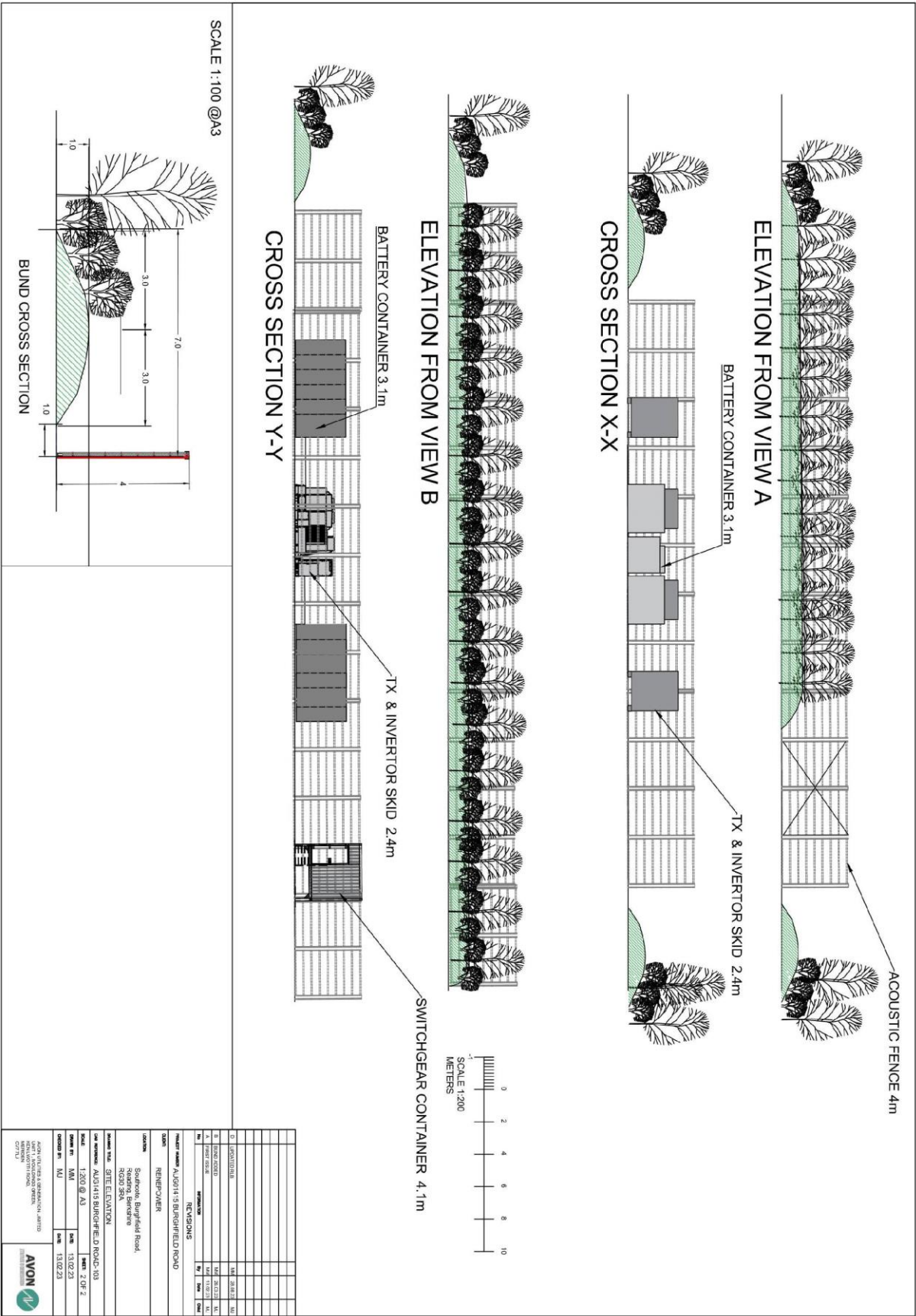
Overall Site Plan with access track

The proposed plan includes for the layout of battery containers, invertors and customer switchgear.

The proposed access to the storage facility will be from the existing adjacent sub-station access track from Burleigh Road.

The development requires the installation of a 4m high acoustic fence to the perimeter of the storage area. To the east, south and west the acoustic barrier will be surrounded and screened by a 7m wide and 1m high bund that will be planted with native trees and shrubs.

Overleaf are shown elevations of the proposed facility, showing the battery containers, invertor skids and switchgear containers, within the context of the acoustic barriers and associated bund and infrastructure planting.



Site Elevations

Planning Status

The National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), was amended in July 2021 and contains several policies which refer to the consideration of landscape and the built environment in planning decisions.

Paragraph 20 states that:

“Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for: ...d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.”

Paragraph 174 states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;...”*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

The Reading Local Plan was adopted in 4th November 2019.

Relevant policies are as follows;

Policy EN12 Biodiversity and the Green Network.

The identified Green Network, the key elements of which are shown on the Proposals Map, shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. Permission will not be granted for development that negatively affects the sites with identified interest or fragments the overall network. The Green Network comprises:

- Sites with identified biodiversity interest - Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, protected and priority species and their habitats, Priority and Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, and the River Thames and all its tributaries (including the River Kennet and the Kennet & Avon Canal); and
- Areas with potential for biodiversity value and which stitch the Green Network together – designated Local Green Space and open green spaces, and existing and potential Green Links.

New development shall demonstrate how the location and type of green space, landscaping and water features provided within a scheme have been arranged such that they maintain or link into the existing Green Network and contribute to its consolidation. Such features should be designed to maximise the opportunities for enhancing this network. All new development should maximise opportunities to create new assets and links into areas where opportunities are as yet unidentified on the Proposals Map.

On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. Development should:

- Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and
- Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.

In exceptional circumstances where the need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site, and it is demonstrated that the impacts cannot be: 1) avoided; 2) mitigated or; 3) compensated for on-site; then new development will provide off-site compensation to ensure that there is “no net loss” of biodiversity. Provision of off-site compensation shall be calculated in accordance with nationally or locally recognised guidance and metrics. It should not replace existing alternative habitats, and should be provided prior to development.

Policy EN13 Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature. The following areas, as shown on the Proposals Map, are defined as Major Landscape Features:

- The Thames Valley;
- The Kennet and Holy Brook Meadows;
- The West Reading wooded ridgeline;

- The East Reading wooded ridgeline; and
- The North Reading dry valleys and Chilterns Escarpment.

Development which affects the setting of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that demonstrates that there is no detrimental impact on the North Wessex Downs or Chilterns AONBs in terms of scale, design, layout or location. None of Reading Borough falls within an AONB, but where the urban area meets the Chilterns AONB is shown on the Proposals Map.

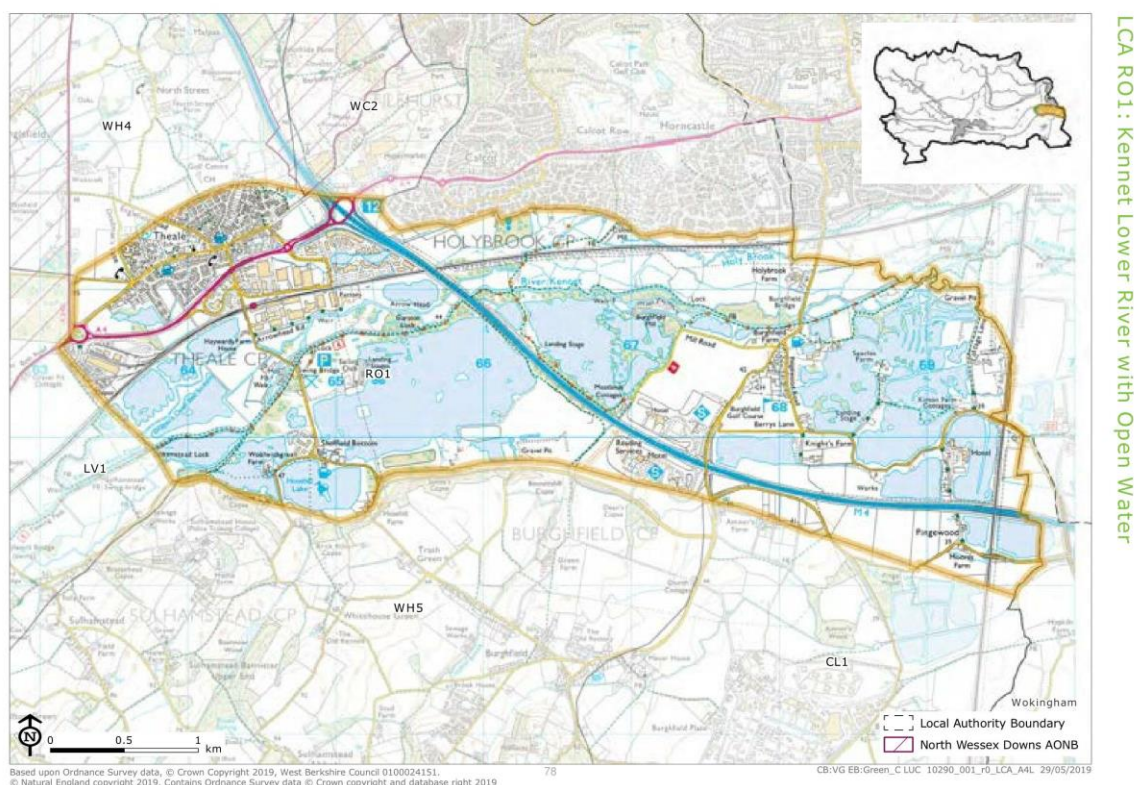
Policy EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended. The quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced. New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is located, to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change. Measures must be in place to ensure that these trees are adequately maintained.

Published Landscape Character Assessments

West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment

Reading Borough Council does not have a published landscape character assessment for the area within which the site falls, however the proposed development lies just outside of the R01:Kennet Lower River with Open Water Landscape Character Area and is considered appropriate as it covers most of the developments potential visual envelope and the area of landscape within the curtilage of Reading Borough Council is identical in character.



The overall character and qualities of the landscape are described as follows;

This part of the Kennet valley river corridor is characterised by large expanses of open water created in former gravel pits and sand extraction workings. The historic settlement of Theale is located in the west; elsewhere settlement is limited to historic farmsteads, although adjacent urban development to the north impacts on landscape character. Industry including factories and sewage treatment works and major transport infrastructure including the M4 motorway and mainline railway are dominant features. The landscape is important for informal recreation with visitors attracted by numerous rights of way, the Kennet and Avon Canal, and more formal recreation at a sailing club and golf course.

The northern edge of the character area is defined by the urban edge of Reading. The southern boundary marks the transition of the valley to higher ground. The District boundary defines the area to the east and a railway line also crosses the landscape at this point. In the west, around Theale, the valley becomes less clearly defined and opens out to a broad floodplain of the Kennet. The valley edge to the south west is defined by a low tree lined escarpment.

The Key Characteristics are as follows;

1) Broad, open valley of the River Kennet, underlain by chalk geology with gravel and sand deposits

A broad and open river valley, following the River Kennet and Holy Brook. The underlying geology of the character area is chalk and Reading beds bedrock. Historically there were large deposits of gravel and sands which have been exhausted through extraction and now form substantial lakes.

2) Land use dominated by gravel pit lakes, industry and transport infrastructure

Land use is characterised by the former gravel pits, the majority of which are now open water. Some of the remaining gravel pits are still active, while others have been infilled. Amongst the lakes are pockets of isolated agricultural land and a number of small woodland blocks and belts, mostly plantation or secondary regeneration on former meadows and fields. Other land uses include Arlington Business Park, south of Theale, with its ornamental landscape setting, transport infrastructure, including Reading motorway service area and a disused golf course.

3) Former gravel pits and flood plain habitats are locally important for wildlife

Restored gravel pit lakes and associated woodland are important for wildlife and some have been designated as Local Wildlife Sites e.g. Hosehill Lake Local Nature Reserve and Theale Lake Gravel Pits. Pockets of deciduous woodland and floodplain grazing marsh adjacent to the river are also of ecological importance.

4) A modern landscape dominated by transport corridors and gravel extraction with surviving small scale heritage features

Past intensive industrial activity in this area has resulted in the loss of much of the time-depth within the landscape. A number of heritage features remain, including Listed farmhouses and locks and bridges along the Kennet and Avon Canal. Sheffield Lock is designated as a Scheduled Monument and lies within the Sheffield Bridge Conservation Area. There are three conservation areas located in the core of Theale and which contain numerous listed buildings including the distinctive Grade I Listed Church of the Holy Trinity.

5) Settlement in the area is sparse, excepting the large historic village of Theale

The character area is influenced by the dense urban development within Reading to the north. Within the character area itself settlement is sparse; development consists of isolated farmsteads, thatched cottages, mill buildings and recreational centres. The largest settlement in the character area is the historic village of Theale which has expanded across the valley slopes. Other development includes large structures associated with industry and buildings within Reading motorway services and commercial development at Arlington Business Park.

6) Transport links are a dominant feature, particularly the M4, railway and canal

The character area is defined by the presence of large transportation routes, which cut through the area. These include the Kennet and Avon Canal, the mainline railway to London and the M4. In the western part of the area the railway line divides the more urban area to the north from the more rural area to the south. The M4 is elevated on an embankment and forms a large visual intrusion on the otherwise flat landscape. Minor roads cross between the gravel pit lakes and have often been upgraded to accommodate HGV traffic.

7) Destination for formal and informal recreation activity

The proximity of this area to Reading means it is a popular recreation destination for pedestrians, cyclists and boat users, particularly the locally popular Sheffield Bridge with picnic area. Public rights of way include the towing path along the canal (which also forms part of National Cycle Route 4). Formal recreational facilities include a sailing club and a golf course.

8) Often visually enclosed by woodland, with views opening out over the lakes

Woodland along roads and surrounding the gravel pit lakes generally screens views and creates visual enclosure. The M4 motorway embankment is a visually prominent feature in the valley. Views over the lakes are open and expansive. Overhead electricity infrastructure is visible above the tree line.

9) Tranquillity is limited by the motorway and nearby urban development

Noise and movement from the major transport routes limit levels of tranquillity, along with urban influences from the adjacent urban area of Reading. Traffic and associated lighting from the M4 creates considerable noise and light pollution that have had a significant urbanising effect on much of the area although there are pockets of more tranquil areas such as Sheffield Bridge Conservation Area and Sheffield Bottom.

The Landscape Strategy for the area is as follows;

1) Continue to promote the appropriate restoration of former gravel pits

Enhance this maturing landscape through the opportunities presented through the further restoration of former gravel pits. They present an

opportunity for recreation and nature conservation enhancement through the diversification of habitats as well as improving the visual character of the area.

2) Conserve and enhance hedgerows, woodland strips and remaining areas of pasture

Conserve features which are valued semi-natural habitats and which provide visual and audial screening of transport corridors. Planting may also act as a tool for reducing air pollution from the major transport infrastructure which crosses through the character area. Remaining areas of pasture land along the river corridor should be conserved, with pasture land restored/created where appropriate.

3) Respect the setting of historic features within the landscape

Ensure that any changes in land use or new development do not detract from the integrity of the heritage features within the landscape, including the historic farm buildings, areas of settlement designated as Conservation Areas and the Kennet and Avon Canal.

4) Maintain distinction and sense of separation between the settlements of Theale and Calcot

The distinction between the separate settlements of Theale and Calcot and the role of the landscape as a setting to the character of those individual settlements should be respected.

5) Mitigate the adverse influence of major transport infrastructure and maintain character of rural lanes

Seek to further screen the M4 and railway into the landscape. Minimise road improvements that may degrade the rural quality of the area and avoid the use of standardised and intrusive urban materials, street furniture, lighting and signage measures wherever appropriate.

Visual Assessment

The visual appraisal has concentrated on assessing the degree to which the proposed development is likely to be seen from publicly accessible places and private residences within the study area, taking into account distances from the site, topography and the screening and/or filtering effect of buildings and vegetation. The places where views of the development might be possible – i.e. visual receptors – are categorised into the following groups where relevant, with an indication of the relative sensitivity each category is considered to have to changes in visual amenity:

Receptor Category	Relative sensitivity to change*
• Vehicular routes & transport Links	Low
• Public rights of way & tourist lanes	Medium
• Public places or visitor sites	Medium
• Heritage Sites*	Medium
• Long-distance footpaths/cycleways	High
• Residential properties	High

*The assessment of relative sensitivity is arrived at by professional judgement and drawn from the perceived amenity value of the receptor category and its susceptibility to the type of change proposed.

Magnitude of change

The magnitude of change for visual effects is categorised as being High, Medium, Low or Negligible as illustrated by the table below.

Table 3: Measuring the Magnitude of Change	
Predicted Changes Brought About by the Development	Magnitude of Change
Total loss or major alteration to key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions such that character/ composition/ attributes of the baseline will be fundamentally changed. These notable changes may occur over an extensive area, or be intensive over a more limited area.	High
Partial loss or alteration to key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions such that the character/ composition/ attributes of the baseline will be partially changed.	Medium
Minor loss or alteration. Change arising from the loss/ alteration will be discernible but the underlying character/ composition/ attributes of the baseline condition will be similar to the pre-development circumstances/ patterns.	Low
Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline conditions. Changes will be barely distinguishable, approximating to a 'no change' situation.	Negligible

However, it is recognised that for some developments in certain locations there may be combinations of factors that do not comply with the range of effects set out in the table. In these situations professional judgement is used to define the level of landscape effects.

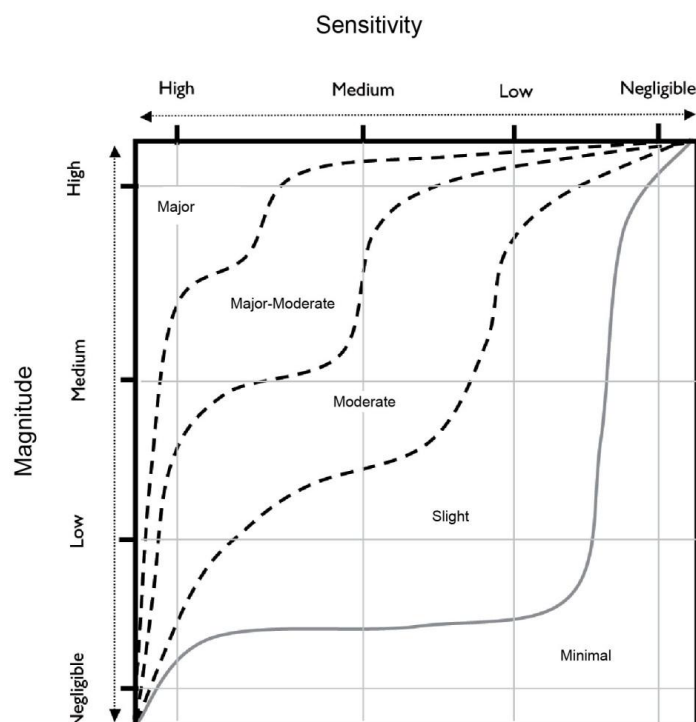
Significance of Effect

It is necessary in LVIA studies to assess whether the proposed Development is likely to have a *significant (important)* effect on the landscape or visual amenity of the area in which the Site lies. The baseline information gathered has been measured against the proposed Development and an assessment made as to how much of an impact, and resultant effect, there might be.

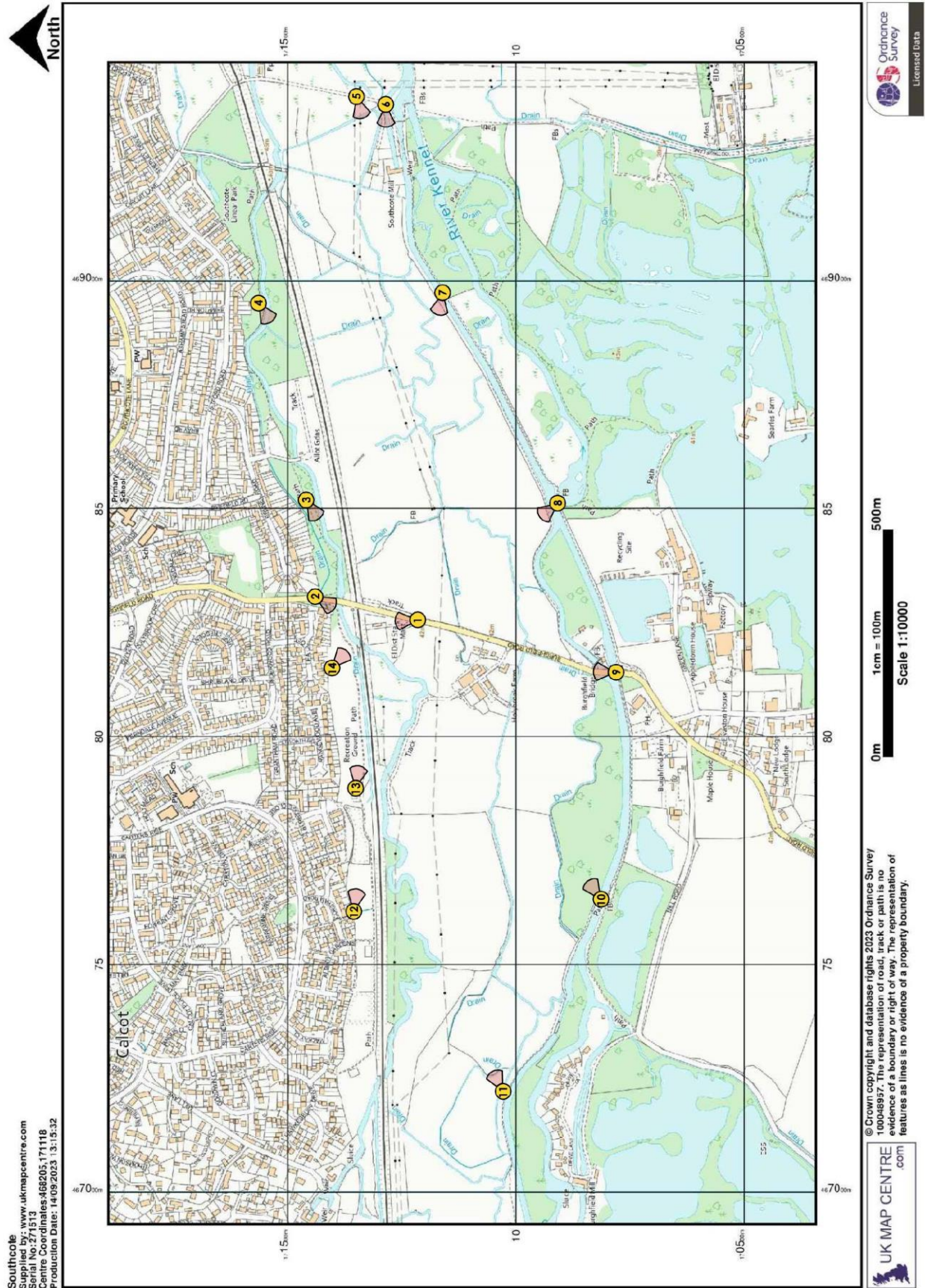
The significance of impact or effect is determined by combining the sensitivity of the landscape resource or visual receptor with the magnitude of change likely to be caused by the proposed Development. The following chart explains how the elements of sensitivity and magnitude combine to arrive at a significance rating of minimal, slight, moderate, major-moderate or major.

Effects may be adverse, neutral or beneficial. Adverse landscape or visual effects would be accrued if the proposed Development were to be harmful to the valued features of the Site or the character or attractiveness of its surroundings; but if the proposed Development includes elements that add value to the landscape or subdue the effects of existing features that degrade the landscape and reduce its potential, then the effects of the proposed Development could be beneficial. Where effects are not considered to be adverse or beneficial, or where beneficial effects counter-act adverse ones, they are assessed as being neutral.

Chart showing how the significance of effect is derived.



Photographs from each viewpoint are shown in the following pages with descriptions of the visual impact of the proposed development for each viewpoint. Where possible, all photographs taken at a 50mm equivalent focal length to represent human field of view. The green dashed line indicates Public Rights of Way.



Local Photo Locations and Direction of View

**View 1 From Burghfield Road south of site.**

The development will lead to a partial loss of key characteristics of the baseline condition in the short term, where the proposed acoustic fence will be visible in the field of view, compared to the existing predominantly view of trees and along the adjacent river. Over time the proposed planting will screen the fencing and views will be limited mostly to the gated access. Most views are from receptors in moving vehicles and hence will be fleeting.

Magnitude of Change - Medium

Significance of Effect on High Sensitivity Receptors - Major-Moderate



View 2 From Burghfield Road north of site adjacent to Lea Close

Filtered views of the facility may be possible in winter months when leaves are absent from trees. However, these would mostly be from moving vehicles and views would be fleeting.

Magnitude of Change - Negligible

Significance of Effect on High Sensitivity Receptors - Minimal



View 3 From Public Right of Way alongside Holy Brook east of site.
No views will be possible.



View 4 From Public Right of Way alongside Holy Brook east of site.
No views will be possible.



View 5 From Public Right of Way east of site.
No views towards the site are possible.



View 6 From Public Right of Way on elevated bridge over River Kennet/Kennet and Avon Canal

No views to the site or proposed facility would be possible.



View 7 From Public Right of Way alongside River Kennet

Views of the site and the proposed facility are not possible due to the intervening topography and vegetation.



View 8 From Public Right of Way alongside River Kennet

Views of the site and the proposed facility are not possible due to the intervening topography and vegetation.



View 9 From Burghfield Bridge south of site.

Views of the site and the proposed facility are not possible due to the intervening topography and vegetation.



View 10 From Public Right of Way on elevated footbridge across River Kennet

Views of the site and the proposed facility are not possible due to the intervening topography and vegetation.



View 11 From Public Right of Way alongside River Kennet southwest of site.

Views of the site and the proposed facility are not possible due to the intervening topography and vegetation.



View 12 From Linear Park west of site.

Views from this elevated area are not possible due to distance, topography, and dense mature vegetation.



View 13 From Linear Park west of site.

Views from this elevated area are not possible due to distance, topography, and dense mature vegetation.



View 14 From Linear Park opposite proposed facility to the north.

In summer views from the park and adjacent residential areas are restricted by mature trees and hedgerows. However, distant views are likely of upper parts of the acoustic fence in winter, these are likely to be filtered by the bare branches.

Magnitude of Change - Negligible

Significance of Effect on High Sensitivity Receptors - Minimal

Impact Assessment, Conclusions and Recommendations

Impact on Visual Amenity

Assessing impacts on visual amenity is the analysis of the potential visual impacts to the landscape and landscape views resulting from a proposed development and people's perception of them.

Following a detailed survey and appraisal of the surrounding area in the preceding pages it is considered that the site is visually well contained and the development of the site for the proposed battery storage facility would not adversely affect the visual amenity of the local area to a significant extent.

The proposed development site is visually contained on three sides by mature woodland and trees and views of the site are not possible from further than a few metres past the site boundary as shown by the above appraisal.

Direct views of the development will only be had as receptors pass the site from the south on Burghfield Road. Views following construction will comprise the proposed acoustic fencing, bunding and gate only. This view of the acoustic fencing will replace the current view of the sub-station and its security fence, although it is likely that it will be more visually prominent immediately following construction. Following the maturation of the proposed structural planting over time, the visual impact will be negligible and an overall enhancement over the existing situation.

Some views may be possible of the upper elevations of the acoustic fence from the linear park, immediately north of the site. However, these would be seen against the existing sub-station fencing, railway line. Views would not be possible when the trees are in leaf and even in winter would be heavily screened by branches.

No other views of the proposed development are likely from publicly accessible places, including public rights of way along the Holybrook or St. James's Way along the river Kennet and consequently the visual setting of the Major Landscape Feature identified within the Local Plan.

No views will be possible from adjacent residential areas.

There is no visual impact to Conservation Areas or other areas considered to be visually sensitive.

Impact on Landscape Character

Landscape character is defined as the distinct, recognisable, and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape. It is these patterns that give each locality its 'sense of place'.

Although the development introduces a new structure into the landscape and means the loss of a small section of agricultural field, it is consistent with the existing development in the vicinity, where existing structures such as the electricity sub-station and mobile telephone mast.

The development does not impact on areas of existing woodland, individual trees or native hedgerows. It does not impact any wetland or other sensitive habitats. Neither does it impact on the perception and setting of any historic villages or protected landscapes.

The development is not situated within the AONB landscape or Green Belt, it is however located within the Major Landscape Feature identified within the Reading Local Plan. The planting of new native hedgerows and trees around the development would enhance the local landscape character by providing screening to both the proposed development and the existing electricity sub-station, enhancing the landscape overall.

Conclusion

The appraisal shows that the development will not be in detriment to planning policies relating to the Reading Local Plan in relation to the Major Landscape Feature and is in accordance with recommendations within the Landscape Character Assessment.

The development does not impact any significant natural features on or adjacent to the site and enhances the landscape further with new native tree and shrub planting, screening both the proposed and existing structures.

The development site is well screened by mature vegetation on three sides and the visual envelope is limited to the immediate site environs and when approaching from the south along Burghfield Road. The proposed screening to the proposed and existing structures is considered beneficial to the overall landscape setting and visual amenity.

The development does not impact the visual amenity of any other areas.

Overall, this appraisal has demonstrated that, in terms of landscape character, impact on the Major Landscape Feature and general visual amenity overall, that the site is suited for the development as proposed with appropriate mitigation as set out below.

Proposed Mitigation, Conservation and Enhancement Measures

The proposed facility is designed to careful proportions and heights to minimise visual impact to the surrounding landscape.

However, as outlined within this assessment, views of the development and the existing electricity sub-station will still be possible when approaching from the south along Burghfield Road. To mitigate for these effects, so that they are neutralised in the longer term, the following measures are to be incorporated into the scheme:

1. Subject to detailed arboricultural recommendations, retain all existing boundary vegetation for screening, conservation, and amenity value;
2. Add native hedge and native structural planting to the northern, eastern and southern aspects of the acoustic fence to mitigate any potential views into the development and in accordance with local authority objectives to enhance the landscape.
3. Under sow the proposed native structural planting with native seed mixture to enhance biodiversity.
4. The lighting proposals for the development should incorporate luminaires with full horizontal cut-off shields to reduce light spill and the brightening of the night sky, thus reducing night-time visual intrusion;