Horsham District Council Screening Assessment
HDC Reference: EIA/25/0002
Site: Land South West of Picts Lane, Cowfold, West Sussex

Development Proposal: Solar Farm installation (30MW) and a BESS (47.5MW), covering a site of 48ha.

EIA Regulations	
Is the proposed development listed in Schedule 1?	**No**
Is the proposed development listed in Schedule 2?	**Yes**. – Item 3 (a) industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water. The site extends to approximately 48ha, exceeding 0.5ha threshold set under 2017 EIA Regulations. This means the proposal could constitute Schedule 2 development subject to the selection criteria as identified in Schedule 3 of the Regulations.
Is the proposed development within or adjacent to a sensitive area as defined in Regulation 2 (SSSI, National Park, property on World Heritage List, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, AONB, SPA or SAC)	**YES** - Adjacent to High Weald National Landscape

Schedule 3 EIA Regs 2017 – Selection Criteria for Screening Schedule 2 Development

1. Characteristics of Development	**Description (include permanent / temporary impacts, positive and / or negative impacts / likelihood of impact as applicable)**	**Significance (direct and indirect)**
a) **Size and design of development** *(e.g. site area, scale)*	There are various land parcels (8) which make up the entirety of the 48ha site area, which is all currently undeveloped in nature and in use for agriculture (arable). Also included within any application would be the cable run to connect to the substation at Bolney to the east of the site (approx. 4.8km south-east of the site). The site lies directly south of Picts Lane, within the setting of the High Weald National Landscape, and a number of residential and farming properties adjacent to the site boundaries. Picts Lane is a rural road, single width along most of its length, connecting with the A281 in the west, and the A272 in the south, with both A-roads being major distributors within the highways network. The site would extend up to the High Weald National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) which abuts the northern side of Picts Lane. Within the High Weald, the priority towards appropriate renewable solutions leans towards smaller installations such a roof-mounted arrays, or within residential gardens or brownfield sites, rather than the introduction of 'solar fields'. The NPPF (para 189) sets out that National	Significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated in EIA terms, arising from the proximity of the site to the High Weald National Landscape to the north. Consideration of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024 – 2029 to be had. Further details

	Landscapes benefit from the highest protection in relation to their conservation and enhancement. Development within the settings of such areas should accordingly be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise the resulting impact. The panels would be mounted in fixed linear rows throughout the site, orientated with their highest sides to the north, indicated at some 2.4m in height. In addition to the panels, the site area would include associated infrastructure, including a transformer / stations switchgear kiosk, DNO substation and a general storage unit, access tracks and a BESS compound (Battery Energy Storage System) located in parcel 4 within containers. The entire site would be defined by a 2.4m high deer-proof fence and monitored by CCTV cameras along its perimeter. Two Vehicular access points off Picts Lane are indicated, with the BESS access from the internal access tracks of the wider Solar parcels. New BNG and landscape mitigation areas are shown on the indicative plans, providing buffers along exposed edges of the site, or adjoining residential properties. The solar farm and BESS are envisaged for a duration of 40 years, after which they would be decommissioned and removed from site, meaning that the infrastructure to support the development is ultimately temporary in nature with some of the effects on the landscape reversible. However, 40 years is a significant period of time in human terms.	required with application: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), Heritage Assessment, Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Imposition of appropriate conditions may be required to control and mitigate against any impacts. arising from the development.
b) **accumulation with other existing or approved development**	Other solar / renewable energy developments within a 5km radius of the site comprise permission granted to the west of Cowfold for a solar farm (Cobwood – DC/23/2172, permitted May 2024) and the substation for the Rampion 2 offshore wind farm, NSIP development (permitted April 2025) located to the south of the site and A272. Also within 5km is the existing Bolney Substation at Wineham Lane, covering an area of some 22ha, and located in Mid Sussex District. Permission has also been granted by Mid Sussex District Council for the following energy-related developments close to the Bolney Substation: - the development of a BESS site immediately to the south of the Bolney Substation, with a capacity of up to 200MW of energy storage on a 7.2ha site (DM/21/2276, permitted Sept 2024). - The development of a BESS site to the east of the Bolney Substation, with a capacity of up to 100MW of energy storage on 1ha site (DM/23/1184, permitted Jan 2025).	Significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated. Additional sites required to be included within the cumulative effects assessment to include the Rampion 2 substation

	- The development of a BESS site to the north-east of the Bolney Substation, with a capacity of up to 350MW of energy storage on 4ha site (DM/23/0769, permitted Oct 2024). Other large solar farms that have been built within the district, lie some 7km to the south-west of the site at: DC/13/2381 – Priors Byne Solar Farm DC/13/2310 – Ford Solar Farm Significant cumulative landscape effects are anticipated given the proximity of the development to other permissions already extant (but not yet implemented) for a solar scheme and the development comprising a new on-shore substation (Rampion 2), along with the approved consents for BESS development within 5km of the site. Cumulative visual effects are also likely to be experienced but the significance of these will be subject to mitigation and without the full assessment of this aspect of the proposal, it is not certain if adverse impacts can be mitigated or addressed. Whilst it is considered that sufficient landscape features, topography and distance would create adequate separation so as to not read the combined cumulative developments within one view, receptors travelling through the area may still experience sequential cumulative effects. In relation to the potential sensitive receptors in close proximity to the site (residential properties), the indicative site layout shows the panels located away from boundaries, and/ or separated by intervening landscape blocks.	
c) **use of natural resources, in particular soil, water and biodiversity** *(e.g. land, water, materials, energy – non renewable or in short supply?)*	The proposed installation of the solar farm would involve limited on-site works, with the panels fixed to slender supporting frames, and the inverter/ substation units placed on concrete plinths little larger than the units themselves. The operational phase of the proposed solar development would then generate renewable energy to an envisioned amount of some 30MW a year, for a 40-year lifespan, and removable thereafter, along with land restoration. The installation process involved in the BESS would likely involve the transportation to site of the pre-fabricated BESS containers, housing the individual batteries on racks, which would likely be placed on a stable sub-base of concrete. The operational phase of the proposed BESS development would then enable the storage of renewable energy on site before being released to the National Grid when needed, capable of the storage of up to 47.5MW, for a 40-year lifespan, with no operational waste or emissions anticipated.	No significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated. Clarification on the agricultural land Grade prior to submission will determine the extent of the land to be used. Water Neutrality Statement to set out any increased water use over and above existing baseline.

	It is noted that the application land comprises primarily Grade 3 (good-moderate quality) land, with a section of Grade 4 (poor quality) land alongside the river corridor which bisects the application site (Parcels 7 and 8). For the purposes of the ALC designation, Grade 3 land is not split into 3a (good) and 3b (moderate), and it is acknowledged that the submission does not assess the land quality in any greater detail. Therefore, it is anticipated that further assessment will be required as part an application to provide further clarification on the exact land quality and designation and distinction between Grade 3a and 3b to ensure that the proposal would not adversely affect productive farming land. The proposal would make use of sunlight as a renewable resource to generate electricity rather than fossil fuels, and enable the storage of any energy generated at source. The agricultural land between the solar array panels could still be used for grazing during the life of the solar farm and the land is capable of reversion to its wholly original use as agricultural land after the 40 year proposed period of use and de-commissioning of the solar farm on site. For the BESS site, the land would be taken out of agricultural se throughout its envisioned life span. Although no details are available, it is likely that the concrete bases could be taken up after decommissioning, and the land restored, although it is unlikely that it would be to the same agricultural quality as the existing site pre-development. The use of natural resources at the development site, should not be significant and would not result in the use of resources which are considered to be in short supply. Parts of the site lie within areas identified by West Sussex County Council for the potential of Horsham Stone and Brick Clay extraction, requiring the submission of a Minerals Assessment Report in order to consider whether the proposal would lead to the sterilisation of the identified minerals. The Natural England Position Statement dated 14 September 2021 declaring that water abstraction for drinking water supplies is having a negative impact on the wildlife sites in the Arun Valley. Therefore, all development sites are expected to demonstrate a water neutral position. Whilst no operative are to be stationed at the site on a permanent basis, with regular maintenance visits carried out each month, it is expected that the solar panels would normally involve a programme of washing to ensure optimum efficiency of the array. Water sources for this cleaning regime should be clarified in the event that a mains connection is required. In relation to the BESS, details of the stored water required for a continuous period of fire fighting, would need to demonstrate the origins of the stored water, particularly given the	Submission of a Minerals Assessment Report to set out potential for the development to prevent future extraction of the identified minerals. Indicative details are advised to be submitted to demonstrate the decommissioning works, particularly to the proposed BESS considering the extensive nature of ground works required to form this part of the development.

	quantities required.	
d) **production of waste** *(e.g. demolition, construction, operation and decommissioning?)*	The site is on green field land and there are no built structures requiring demolition. As with nearly all construction, the proposed development will result in some generation of waste materials from the preparation and undertaking of works, albeit expected to be limited. Works associated with the BESS development are likely to require additional land levelling, topsoil removal and the creation of impermeable bunds to retain waste water run-off in the event of an emergency. The applicant will be encouraged to ensure that construction waste is reused and recycled where possible. Construction waste would be managed in accordance with all applicable legislation and disposed of in line with best practice. Operational waste would be disposed of in line with HDC requirements and managed in accordance with all applicable legislation.	No significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated. Further details required with application: Site Waste Management Plan may be required
e) **pollution and nuisances** *(e.g. potential for noise, dust, vibration, light, odours, production of substances / emissions which may damage environment -construction, operation and decommissioning)*	It is noted that the Cowfold Air quality Monitoring Area (AQMA) lies approximately 1km to the east of the site access on Picts Lane. Construction traffic may need to travel through the AQMA to reach the site if travelling from the west. Furthermore, during the construction phase there is likely potential for effects to arise from installation it works, in terms of noise and vibration, traffic disturbance and any dust from site preparation/ground works. Any impact will be local to the site area and its immediately locality. Any impact will be short-term and temporary, and can be mitigated through adherence to a Construction Management Plan providing for noise and dust suppression measures, and a plan to identify the access route (the submission, approval and implementation of which can be secured by a planning condition). It is anticipated that construction vehicles would reach the site from the west via the A272 and then turning onto Picts Lane. The size of the site means that the site layout for construction works has the capacity to be arranged to ensure that machinery and dust causing activities are located as far away from sensitive receptors as possible. There may be some minor adverse impacts on habitat within the scheme, which could be minimised through sensitive master-planning. BNG would be mandatory for this site. A CEMP, to be agreed with HDC and the Local Highways Authority, and secured through a suitable planning condition, can be submitted in support of the planning application to ensure construction contractors use best practice measures to prevent land and water contamination, as well as effects on construction workers and nearby residents.	No significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated, subject to assessment of submitted noise assessments. Imposition of appropriate conditions may be required to control and mitigate against any impacts arising from the development. Further details required with application Noise Report Transport Assessment Environmental Risk Assessments Phase 1 (desktop study) Phase

	There would also be minimal emissions associated with the operational phase of the proposed development, by way of regular maintenance visits, estimated to be around 1 -2 visits each month. On account of the nature of the proposal, the associated ongoing vehicular movements are anticipated to be minimal. Ongoing noise impacts within a quiet rural environment, particularly during the night-time hours, arising from the transformer stations would be a consideration and subject to noise impact assessments. Noise impacts from BESS installations arise from the need or near-continuous cooling of the battery storage units to ensure they remain at a stable temperature. Again, these likely impacts would be dealt with through the supporting planning application material ensuring that appropriate mitigation is included.	2 (Intrusive Investigation) contaminated land reports Construction Management Plan Air and dust pollution Assessment Noise and Vibration Assessment
f) **the risk of major accidents and/or disasters** *(including those caused by climate change)*	During the construction phase, the contractor(s) would implement measures in accordance with Health and Safety legislation/requirements, and best practice to minimise the risks of accidents that would have effects on people or the environment. All such measures would form part of the CEMP. There are no anticipated significant risks of major accidents and/or disasters, including those caused by climate change, during the operation of the development. The development would adhere to highway safety standards. The solar farm is not anticipated to lead to an increased risk of major accidents or disasters, on account of the nature of the proposed development. BESS installations, however, can present ongoing risks is association with the use of Lithium-Ion batteries used for the storage of energy. The compounds used in Lithium-Ion batteries can be particularly volatile if exposed to heat, and can lead to toxic plumes. Furthermore, any waste-water used in fire-fighting can be highly contaminated and cause harmful pollution if reaching rivers or other water sources, including boreholes used for water abstraction. Appropriate fire-fighting accesses should therefore be available providing access from at least two directions, along with an adequate on-site supply of water for sustained fire-fighting, and a contained water catchment that prevents the spread of contaminated water beyond the site and into nearby water sources. The identified surface water flood risk and river flooding, affects the access between parcels 7 and 8. As a result, the need for a Sequential Test for flooding would be triggered.	Although no significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated, the BESS installation will need a robust fire prevention and management plan to be submitted which sets out how any emergencies at the BESS site will be monitored, responded to and contained.

g) **The risks to human health** *(e.g. due to water contamination or air pollution)*	Any associated risks to human health arising from the proposed solar farm would be dealt with through the supporting planning application material ensuring that appropriate mitigation is included within the proposed development. Appropriate measures, in accordance with all relevant legislation, should be used to prevent accidental spillages of contaminants during the construction of the BESS development and throughout the ongoing operational phase. This should include appropriate drainage design and bunds to prevent contaminants entering waterbodies in the event of emergency fire-fighting at the BESS compound. A CEMP can be submitted in support of the planning application to ensure construction contractors use best practice measures to prevent land and water contamination, as well as effects on construction workers. The site layout for construction works has the capacity to be arranged to ensure that machinery and dust causing activities are located as far away from sensitive receptors as possible. The nature of BESS installations can present potential health risks to humans in the event of a major fire by way of a toxic plume and contaminated run-off entering the local or nearby water supply/ boreholes. Appropriate emergency mitigations and management plans should be submitted as part of any planning application.	No significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated

2. Location of Development: the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered having regard, in particular to:	**Description** (include permanent / temporary impacts, positive and / or negative impacts / likelihood of impact as applicable)	**Significance**
a) **the existing and approved land use**	The principal land use will change from undeveloped agricultural land, largely designated by Natural England as Grade 3 Agricultural Land (good to moderate quality), to land used for solar energy generation. There would be changes to the site during the construction phase by way of the solar panel frames, deer-proof fencing up to 2.4m in height and associated CCTV, which form a near-permanent enclosure of the various parcels, all of which would endure for the envisaged 40-year lifespan. It may be that incidental grazing between the panels would assist with land management and retain an agricultural element of use within the solar farm, though not within the BESS compound. It is not currently known what extent of the overall land holding the proposed development would occupy, and how this might impact on the	Significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated. Further information required with application Preliminary Ecological (PEA) and clarification /
b) **the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area and its underground** *(common land use? Quality of land / designations / protected species –*		

would development lead to irreversible loss of key qualities or resources in the area?)	viability of the ongoing farming business. Allowing the land to lie fallow for the duration of the solar installation can provide beneficial impacts to soil quality and future productivity of the land.	justification of the land quality in respect of the Grade 3 land, Minerals Assessment Report Evidence of joining the District Licensing Scheme or surveys in relation to the presence of Great Crested Newts will be required.
c) **the absorption capacity of the natural environment.**	A block of Ancient Woodland (Horse Wood) adjoins the southern side of parcel 8 and an area covered by a Tree Preservation Order extends up to the western edge of parcel 8. Furthermore, the parcels include a number of mature specimen trees which are likely to be remnants of former historic field boundaries, and lines of hedgerows crossing through. As such, it would be expected that a comprehensive Tree Survey, hedgerow survey, and Arboricultural Report would be submitted with a future planning application. A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) would also be required to be submitted with a planning application, particularly noting the proximity of the site to the High Weald National Landscape. Green (low risk), Amber (suitable habitat) and Red (high risk / most suitable) areas of Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones cover the site, which would need to be covered by way of surveys or an application to NatureSpace, who operate the District Licensing Scheme in Horsham. Parts of the site lie within areas identified by West Sussex County Council for the potential of Horsham Stone and Brick Clay extraction, requiring the submission of a Minerals Assessment Report in order to consider whether the proposal would lead to the sterilisation of the identified minerals. During construction, potential adverse effects to the roads and air (including airborne noise) can be minimised through the implementation of the CEMP. Such effects will be temporary. Once operational, the proposed development would include new and enhanced landscaping and planting. Further details can be included in the landscape strategy which will be submitted with a future planning application. The Landscape Strategy/GI Strategy document should set the overarching principles proposed as part of the scheme. This should include detail on mitigation measures (highlighted in the LVIA), retained landscape features, landscape enhancements and demonstrate how new green infrastructure links to existing GI/habitat corridors. This should be accompanied by a detailed plan for long term management that details vegetation management techniques such as grazing, mowing and strimming. At the end of the envisaged 40 year lifespan of the development, all equipment and infrastructure would be removed and the land can be returned to its former agricultural	

	purposes, details of which (decommissioning and restauration proposals) will be submitted with a future planning application. The proposed development is therefore considered to be reversible at the end of its lifespan, even with the removal of the concrete sub-bases, and the gravel access tracks, although the resulting land quality may not be the same as the pre-development agricultural land. However, it is noted that the BESS would require a larger area of hard-standing to form a stable base for the containers, thus leading to additional ground works for the removal of the bases and subsequent remediation. Any land remediation would be subject to planning conditions.	
i) **wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths** *(e.g. floodplains, impacts on drainage, aquifers)*	The site is at high risk of river flooding between parcels 7 and 8, along the southern boundaries of parcels 5 and 7, and the western boundaries of parcels 1, 6 and 7. Furthermore, there are areas at risk of surface water flows and ponding throughout the site, both now and accounting for climate change. A stretch of around 100m of the access track between parcels 7 and 8 are subject to the Flood Risk. A sequential test for flooding and Flood Risk Assessment would be expected to be provided with a future planning application, but prior to this.	Subject to appropriate mitigation, no significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated.
ii) **coastal zones and marine environments** *(any potential for the scheme to impact on coastal areas e.g. runoff etc)*	N/A	N/A
iii) **mountain and forest areas** *(impacts on wooded areas, including any designated areas of ancient woodland / TPOs).*	There are a number of trees within the site itself. Wooded areas adjoin the site boundaries and further hedgerows and other vegetation is present within the site parcels and along the site boundaries. There are areas of ancient woodland within close proximity to the site. A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Report would be expected to be submitted with a future planning application. In addition, the proposed development is likely to include areas of new landscape planting, including native shrubs. A landscape strategy can be submitted with a future planning application.	Subject to appropriate mitigation, no significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated. Imposition of appropriate conditions may be required to control and mitigate against any impacts arising from the development: Further information required with application: Arboricultural Impact

		Assessment
iv) **nature reserves and parks** *(e.g. any impacts on designated nature conservation sites / other areas of nature conservation importance?)*	The site is not located within the High Weald National Landscape, but it does adjoin the High Weald National Landscape along its northern boundary where it adjoins Picts Lane. As such the proposed development is likely to have an impact on the scenic qualities (Aesthetic & Perceptual Qualities, which are a defining component of natural beauty) of the designated National Landscape or its setting. There are several SSSI's identified at around 7km distance from the site, but the site lies outside of any defined SSSI Impact Risk Zones. It is not considered that there would be any significant environmental effects on designated nature sites.	Significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated in relation to the High Weald National Landscape. Without assessment of this aspect of the proposal, it is not certain if adverse impacts can be mitigated or addressed.
v) **European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation** *(this includes areas designated pursuant to Directive 79/409/EEC (conservation of wild birds) and Directive 92/43/EEC (conservation of habitats and fauna and SSSI's) (In particular the Arun valley SPA and The Mens -Barbastelle bat flightlines are a key consideration here. Any other European protected species present that can be affected?)*	The application site itself does not constitute a 'sensitive area' as defined by the EIA Regulations. The site is located outside any designated Bat Sustenance Zones. A Phase 1 Habitat Survey should be submitted with the planning application. Best practice ecological mitigation measures can be implemented to include using tree protection during construction and undertaking scrub/vegetation removal outside of the bird breeding season to avoid the potential for damaging bird nests. Species surveys for other protected species including Dormice, Badgers, Breeding Birds, Reptiles, and Hedgehogs will also be required and relevant mitigation is expected to be proposed to ensure the development will avoid significant impact on protected or priority species. In relation to Great Crested Newts, the site straddles red and amber zones indicated high and good suitability for GCN habitat (District licensing Scheme). Horsham District is supplied with water by Southern Water from its Sussex North Water Resource Zone. This supply is sourced from abstraction points in the Arun Valley, which includes locations such as Amberley Wild Brooks Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Pulborough Brooks SSSI and Arun Valley Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation and Ramsar site. Details relating to potential water use would therefore be	Subject to mitigation (including a demonstration of water neutrality), no significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated. The proposal will require separate consultation with NatureSpace in relation to Great Crested Newts.

	required to demonstrate that the operational phase of the solar farm and BESS would not lead to increased water abstraction over and above the site's existing baseline (Water Neutrality Statement).	
vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet environmental quality standards laid down in Union legislation or in which it is considered that these is such a failure (any areas already subject to pollution or damage – include impact on any AQMAs).	The Cowfold AQMA is around 150m to the south-west of the extent of parcel 8. However, vehicular access routing is indicated from the east off the A272, then along Picts Lane to the site. Any dust generation during the construction phase would be managed in accordance with standard best practice measures, enforced through a CEMP and is not anticipated to generate significant adverse effects. The site layout has the capacity for construction works will be arranged to ensure that machinery and dust causing activities are located as far away from sensitive receptors as possible.	No significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated
vii) **densely populated areas** *(size of population affected, changes to demography, lifestyles, employment etc)*	The site is located in a rural area, which exhibits a predominantly rural character although the presence of a number of adjacent and nearby residential properties are noted, along with the Built-up area of Cowfold some 70m off the south-western corner of the site Given the nature of the proposal, it is unlikely to result in a significant change to the lifestyle or character of people living in the wider vicinity.	No significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated
viii) **landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance**	The High Weald National Landscape designation of land to the north of the site is one of cultural, or historic significance, and forms a protected landscape. Several Archaeological Notification Areas are located within 1km of the site, with the closest area situated directly to the northern side of Picts Lane (Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age Lithic Working Site). There are the following Registered Parks and Gardens within 5km of the site: - Leonardslee around 1.6km to the north - Sedgwick Park around 4.8km to the north-west - Knepp Castle around 5.4km to the west The site is not located within a Conservation Area, although the Cowfold Conservation Area is located some 380m to the south-west for parcel 8. There are a number of Grade II listed buildings located around the site and adjoining the site boundaries: - Picts Farm, Picts Lane	Significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated in relation to the High Weald National Landscape. Without assessment of this aspect of the proposal, it is not certain if adverse impacts can be mitigated or addressed. Further information required with application: Landscape

	- Frithknowle, Picts Lane - Cotlands, Horsham Road - Brookhill House, Horsham Road - Brookhill Cottage, Horsham Road - Allfreys, Bolney Road A Heritage Statement should be submitted to assess the likely impact on designated heritage assets occurring as a result of the proposal.	and Visual Impact Assessment; ZTV assessments; Glint and Glare Assessments; Arboricultural Survey & Report, Planting Plan, Biodiversity Net Gain measures, Heritage Statement
3. Types and Characteristics of the potential impact: The potential significant effects of development must be considered in relation to criteria set out under 1 & 2, having particular regard to:	**Description**	**Significance**
a) **the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact** (geographical area and size of the affected population)	The impacts are largely confined to the site and the land immediately adjacent, including the A272, Picts Lane, the High Weald National Landscape, visual receptors along the identified PRoW, and existing dwellings at the site, or close to the site. Residents closest to the site will be affected by the development during the construction phase, however, adverse effects would be temporary and minimised through the implementation of a CEMP. The public rights of way which run through and along the site boundaries are acknowledged as follows: - 1756 (parcel 1) - 1755 (parcels 1, 6 and 7) - 1752 (parcels 3, 5, 6 and 7) - 1749 (parcels 1, 3, 5, 6 and 8) - 1753 (parcel 4) These paths enable users to experience the rural landscape and the setting of the High Weald National Landscape to the north. The proximity of these paths to the solar installation, the access tracks, the BESS and the perimeter fencing will be a fundamental consideration of any planning application. The site plan shows these paths weaving in and out of the red line site boundary, with no indication at this stage to perimeter fence lines or access gates which are likely to be required.	Significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated in relation to the High Weald National Landscape. Without assessment of this aspect of the proposal, it is not certain if adverse impacts can be mitigated or addressed.

	With regards to Landscape character, the significant impacts are likely to be confined to the site itself due to the loss of openness, remoteness/ tranquillity and rural qualities. Most of the landscape elements such as trees and hedgerows are likely to be retained, save for access routes. The landscape character areas in which the site is located LCA, M1 and J3 to a lesser extent will also be directly and adversely impacted, although appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures could ameliorate this concern.	
b) **the nature of the impact**	The scale of development across the number of field parcels has the potential to lead to impacts on landscape character and visual amenity, and potentially affecting available views of, from, and the setting itself, of the High Weald National Landscape to the north. The proposals are also likely to adversely affect the natural beauty of the NL, not only on views to and from but also the perceptual qualities and on interconnected habitats within and outside the boundary that have a functional relationship. The development is likely to cause adverse change to the existing baseline conditions and therefore likely to be of a negative nature. Other environmental impacts would include noise and disturbance during construction (albeit temporary), and additional noise and emissions from vehicles during the operational stage, especially in respect of the nearby Cowfold AQMA. Impact may arise to natural habitat, particularly given the identification of the amber and red impact zones for potential Great Crested Newt habitat. Whilst the nature of the proposed solar farm development has a very small footprint and resulting ground disturbance., more impact may arise from the proposed BESS on account of the ground works needed to forma stable and level base for this part of the proposal. Although some vegetation clearance may result, it should be possible to secure compensatory habitats through on site mitigation.	Significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated in relation to the High Weald National Landscape Without assessment of this aspect of the proposal, it is not certain if adverse impacts can be mitigated to an acceptable level . Further information required with application Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; ZTV assessments; Glint and Glare Assessments
c) **the transboundary nature of the impact** (any international impacts?)	The effects of the scheme would contribute to achieving nationwide net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and local climate targets by 2030 and 2050. The solar farm and BESS would provide climate change benefits that extend beyond the district's boundaries, whilst wider visual impacts are acknowledged to occur at a more local level and immediate to the site.	N/a

d) **the intensity and complexity of the impact** (e.g. overall size, scale, combination of impacts)	The environmental impact of development of this site for a solar farm installation covering some 48ha of land, is likely to be felt most acutely by those in the immediate surrounds: walking the PRoW, travelling along the public highways, living in adjoining and nearby properties, and farming the wider land parcels around the site. The site subject to this assessment is likely to be seen in the context of its rural undeveloped surrounds. Equally complex, is the combined effects of the various development of similar type in the area. At this stage, an assessment of the impact is difficult to judge as the applicant has not provided a full suite of supporting information (i.e. LVIA etc), As a whole, given its location within a rural area, the development of this site for solar energy generation is likely to significantly change the wider environmental conditions, and as such, the proposal would need to be carefully considered in its landscape context. It is likely that the scale and location of the proposal would result in a high/ moderate landscape impact which would require appropriate mitigation. The specific impacts will be assessed in full at planning application stage, where any necessary mitigation can be sought.	Significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated. Imposition of appropriate conditions may be required to control and mitigate against any impacts arising from the development: Further information required with application: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) Transport Assessment Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; Arboricultural Survey & Report and Planting Plan
e) **the probability of the impact** *(e.g. overall probability of impacts identified above)*	Loss of greenfield land and associated landscape impacts are highly probable in the event that development takes place. During the operational and decommissioning phases, lighting and noise impacts are possible, as well as air and dust pollution. It is not known how long construction activities would take, but access routes are indicated from the east, via the A272 and Picts Lane. It is advised that a Construction Traffic Management Plan setting out the effect of the construction phase on the highway network, noting the narrowness of Picts Lane, and other relevant information to allow further consideration of any future application, will be submitted with any forthcoming application. Details of the cable run should also be provided, as this section of the work is likely to affect a significant stretch of narrow rural lanes that serve many residential properties and land holdings. Cumulative impacts from traffic generation are also highly likely during construction works using the narrow rural lanes. Other impacts such as impacts on protected species and noise levels experienced at sensitive receptors during quiet night-time periods, will be advised by relevant surveys and assessments, and may be managed through appropriate controls	Significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated in relation to the High Weald National Landscape. Without assessment of this aspect of the proposal, it is not certain if adverse impacts can be mitigated or addressed. Further information required with

	exercised through the imposition of conditions as required. Mitigation measures at planning application stage may be used to appropriately manage impacts arising from the development (plus any cumulative impact that may arise owing to the adjacent strategic development).	application: Transport Assessment Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; Arboricultural Survey & Report and Planting Plan Air & Dust Pollution Assessment Noise and vibration Assessment
f) **the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact** *(demolition, construction, operation and decommissioning)*	Construction effects would be temporary and short term in duration, and the operational effects would be limited to the envisaged 40 year lifespan of the installation, following which, the land can be reverted back to its former agricultural use. Temporary impacts of noise and disruption would be likely during the construction and de-commissioning time, on account of vehicular movements and other on-site activities. Once operational there would be limited vehicle visits each month by a transit style van accessing the site from the A272, and then Pict Lane. It is advised that a LEMP would be submitted with any application to demonstrate how the land would be managed throughout the operational phase of the development, in a way that would deliver significant biodiversity net gains. Other impacts such as potential impacts on protected species in the surrounding habitats are unknown and still require further investigation.	No significant and/or residual environmental impacts anticipated. Imposition of appropriate conditions may be required to control and mitigate against any impacts arising from the development. Further information required with application: Noise Report Construction Management Plan Transport Assessment Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; Arboricultural Survey & Report and Planting Plan Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) Air & Dust Pollution Assessment Noise and vibration Assessment
g) **the accumulation of the impact**	The main consideration with regard to cumulative environmental impact of this development	Significant and/or

with the impact of other existing and/or approved development	is on landscape impact arising from other consented renewable energy developments, of which there are a number that have been granted planning permission and which remain extant at the current time. It is recognised that a cluster of these other consented developments involve BESS sites, located close to the existing Bolney sub-station on Wineham Lane (within Mid-Sussex District Council authority). A large solar farm development is noted to have been consented on lands to the west of Cowfold, straddling both sides of the A272. Although visually separated from these other sites, this proposed development would form a sizable additional renewable energy development in close proximity to the Bolney substation and the overhead power line that runs through the site along the line of the river corridor. There are no allocated sites for housing development contained within the Cowfold neighbourhood plan in proximity to the site.	residual environmental impacts anticipated
h) **the possibility of effectively reducing the impact**	During the construction phase, adverse effects would be temporary and likely to be minimised through the implementation of a CEMP and best practice measures. Various studies and statements, such as BNG, Water Neutrality Statement, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, land levels / topographical surveys, Ecology Assessment and appropriate species surveys, including considerations of Great Crested Newt / District Licensing Scheme, are expected to be submitted with a future planning application to ensure the provision of appropriate mitigations on site in view of a number of consideration such as biodiversity, noise, environmental hazards, floodrisk, land levels. The Council will expect the applicant to ensure that measures to reduce the impact of the proposal on climate change, and ecology will be integrated into the proposals where possible. Conditions would be imposed to secure the provision of any necessary mitigations. The assessment of the impact and any mitigation measures on the landscape character and visual amenity of the area as well as the setting of the High Weald National Landscape will need to be assessed through a LVIA.	

Results of any relevant EU environmental assessment that is reasonably available	None applicable	

Conclusion

EIA Required?	**Yes**
Statement of reasons	The threshold outlined in Schedule 2 of the EIA regs. (2017) for overall site area is exceeded by the proposal (0.5ha); the environmental effects of the proposed development as a whole **are** considered to be sufficiently significant to require an Environmental Statement (ES). The location of the site within a rural area, and directly abutting a protected National Landscape area is likely to have effects on the landscape character, visual amenity, and setting, noting a number of PRoW through and close to the site. The significance of this would be a matter for consideration at application stage by way of an Environmental Statement, whereby landscape effects would be assessed, and the suitability and effectiveness of proposed mitigation would be judged. The screening assessment for this proposal has identified that other impacts on the environment could be satisfactorily addressed with mitigation measures incorporated within the design of the proposed development, and that significant effects are not considered likely, either alone or in combination with other development. However ,on account of the proximity of the High Weald National Landscape and the scale and nature of the proposed development, it is considered that this proposal constitutes EIA development as defined by the EIA Regulations, and that an EIA is required as a result.
Date	**Nic Pettifer** 12 June 2025