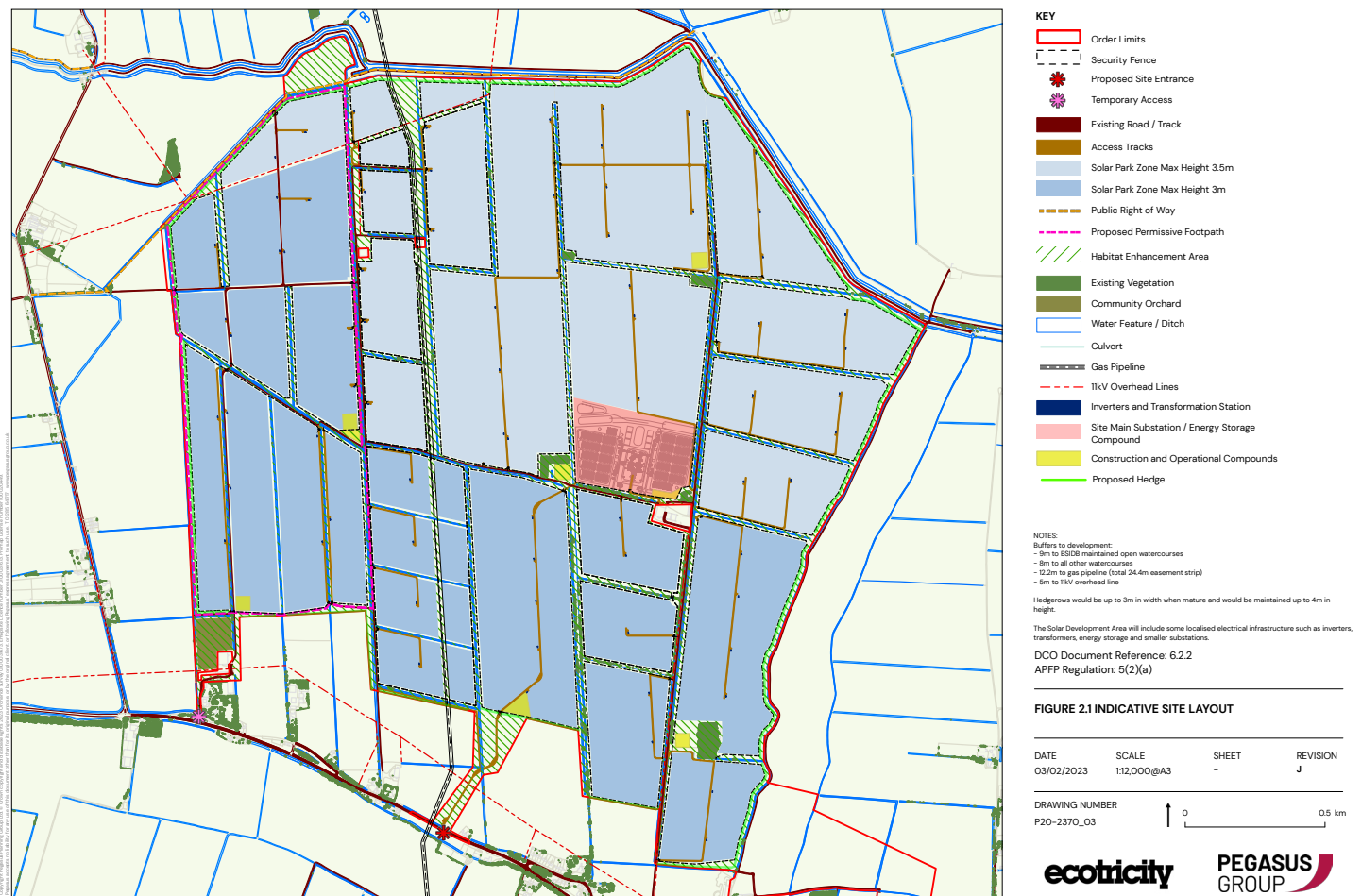


Heckington Fen Solar Park – Indicative Site Layout



Video transcript

Hi, I'm Laura and I am the Project Manager at Ecotricity for our proposed Heckington Fen Solar Park.

I am here to show you the updated design following consultation and engagement throughout 2022 for our solar park and energy storage facility.

We would like to thank everyone who provided feedback and attended our public exhibitions.

The site, outlined in red, is bounded by the Head Dike to the north, by the A17 to the south, a watercourse to the east, and Sidebar Lane to the west.

There are a number of properties along Sidebar Lane and the A17.

The areas to the south and west previously included as biodiversity net gain areas have been removed from the order limits. This design iteration aims to address concerns about agricultural land being used for ecological improvements.

The area under the panels will be set to grassland, which will be grazed. The sheep will be moved around the site, so areas will be allowed to flower, and birds to nest. Further habitat improvements will come from the areas where there are no panels, including setback from ditches.

Fencing is shown as the dashed line around the perimeter of the site. The maximum height of the fencing is proposed to be 3m. The fencing will be screened with planting, including some 8.5 kilometres of new hedgerow – shown in green.

In the south west of the site you can see an olive-green area, this is a community orchard. The orchard will be available for use by the new school at Elm Grange, and community groups and the parish councils by arrangement.

A temporary construction access will use the existing Elm Grange entrance, shown as the pink star, until the new access is completed further along the A17, shown as the red star. Once the new access is completed all construction traffic will use this, and will be required to turn left-in, left-out.

The existing gas pipeline crosses the site in this location also and will not be impacted.

Moving northeast, to the right as you look at the plan, you can see a pink area – this is proposed for the main substation and energy storage compound. We have considered a worst-case scenario and assessed the noisiest equipment available, as the exact technology is not yet decided. To reduce the potential noise and visual impact, we have opted for a single, central substation and energy storage located further away from properties.

The energy storage facility will comprise a series of units similar in form to shipping containers. We have reduced the physical size of the equipment, including energy storage containers, inverters and transformers, but have increased the overall numbers, these will sit within the pink area. Storage tanks and a lagoon have also been included in case water is required. Overhead lines have been ruled out of the site layout.

Flood modelling has concluded that some parts of the site could be under 1.5m of water in a worst case 1 in a 1,000-year flood event, including a 20% margin for climate change. To ensure the panels can still operate in this extreme flooding event, they will be around 1.5m above ground level. The overall height of some of the panels will therefore be around 3.5m, compared to the 4.5m previously assessed, with others that are 3m high in lower risk areas. The panels will be fixed, rather than rotating which was an option during statutory consultation.

The yellow areas represent the temporary construction compounds. Once the site is constructed these areas will be used for solar panels, storage containers, and gatehouses. Construction is expected to last 30 months, followed by a 40-year operational life of the project. Decommissioning is expected to take 6-18 months.

There is a small block in the centre of the site, and a further three smaller areas which are outside the red line boundary, these relate to farm buildings and the gas pipeline.

Along the northern border we have another area to be provided for biodiversity, and an existing overhead line that crosses the site. In this northwest corner we are proposing a circular permissive path, shown as the pink dashed line, to connect into the existing footpath network, which runs along the northern boundary, shown as the orange dashed line. At the moment the footpath ends at the ditch rather than following along the Head Dike, however we are proposing to develop a 5km circular permissive route if the scheme progresses.

Whilst the site is listed as Grade 1 and 2 on Natural England's Agricultural Land grading system, over 450 soil samples have been taken onsite and the result is much more mixed. The land is predominantly Grade 3, with 80% of the samples showing this, and over 50% of the site is the lower Grade 3b. Smaller pockets of Grade 1 and 2 are found across the site, as well as areas of Grade 3a, but

due to constraints such as blackgrass and drainage issues the site is farmed as a single block predominantly used to grow wheat for animal feed.

Archaeological work onsite has found evidence of salt working and pottery which will be subject to further excavation prior to construction.

To connect the energy park to the Bicker Fen substation, underground cabling will be required. The area we are considering for this grid connection extends to the east, crossing Viking Link, Triton Knoll, before heading south and crossing the A17, the South Forty Foot Drain and the railway. The underground cables will then run south to Bicker Fen where a new bay within the National Grid substation will be constructed in the southwest corner. Directional drilling will be required to cross key features on the route. Two options into Bicker Fen are shown, the preference is to follow the western most route and discussions with the solar park operators approved in this area are ongoing.

Please let us know if you have any questions, or you would like to receive a hard copy of the above information, you can contact us on our freephone number, by freepost address or by email. The details of which are on your screen or on the webpage. Thank you for listening.

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