

Peartree Hill Solar Farm

Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) Non-Technical Summary



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Appendix A: Location plan Appendix B: Proposed operational layout plan Appendix C : Environmental features plan



1 Introduction

1.1 What is the context of this non-technical summary?

- 1.1.1 RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited is seeking to obtain development consent for the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of Peartree Hill Solar Farm, located in East Riding of Yorkshire.
- 1.1.2 To inform statutory consultation as part of the planning process, a Preliminary Environmental Information Report has been prepared to provide the information reasonably required for interested parties, including the public, to understand the likely significant effects of Peartree Hill Solar Farm on the surrounding environment and residents, as understood at this stage.

1.2 What is environmental impact assessment?

1.2.1 Environmental impact assessment is the process that identifies the key environmental effects resulting from the construction, operation and, where relevant, decommissioning of a proposed development. It suggests ways that these effects can be avoided, reduced or managed. Environmental impact assessment is a requirement of United Kingdom law for certain developments that have the potential to cause significant environmental effects.

1.3 What is the purpose of this document?

- 1.3.1 The Preliminary Environmental Information Report outlines the environmental assessment work undertaken to date, the likely significant environmental effects identified to date, proposed 'embedded' mitigation¹ and 'additional' mitigation², and likely residual significant environmental effects based on the environmental baseline information currently available and the current design of Peartree Hill Solar Farm. The Preliminary Environmental Information Report is split into four volumes:
 - **Volume 1**: Preliminary Environmental Information Report (main text)
 - Volume 2: Supporting figures
 - Volume 3: Supporting reports
 - Volume 4: Landscape figures

¹ Mitigation measures that are incorporated in the design of Peartree Hill Solar Farm

² Mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or manage any significant adverse effects that remain after embedded mitigation has been taken into consideration



- 1.3.2 The Preliminary Environmental Information Report has been prepared to enable interested parties (including members of the public, local planning authorities and statutory bodies) to develop an informed view of the likely significant environmental effects of Peartree Hill Solar Farm and to help inform their consultation responses during this statutory consultation stage.
- 1.3.3 The design of Peartree Hill Solar Farm, as presented in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report, has been informed by the ongoing environmental assessment process and responses to consultation and engagement to date. **It does not represent the final design**. Ongoing survey and design work is currently being undertaken which, along with feedback received from statutory consultation, will inform the further development of the design of Peartree Hill Solar Farm.
- 1.3.4 This document provides a non-technical summary of the environmental assessments presented in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report. Further details can be found in **Volumes 1** to **4** of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report. Below is an overview of where details on each environmental assessment can be found in **Volume 1**:

Section of Volume 1 of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report	Environmental assessment
Section 6	Air quality
Section 7	Biodiversity
Section 8	Climate
Section 9	Cultural heritage
Section 10	Land, soils and groundwater
Section 11	Landscape and visual
Section 12	Noise and vibration
Section 13	Population
Section 14	Transport and access
Section 15	Water
Section 16	Glint and glare
Section 17	Other environmental considerations
Section 18	Cumulative effects



2 Peartree Hill Solar Farm

2.1 Where is Peartree Hill Solar Farm?

2.1.1 Peartree Hill Solar Farm is located within the administrative boundary of East Riding of Yorkshire Council. As shown on **Appendix A: Location plan**, the northernmost section of Peartree Hill Solar Farm is located north-west of Leven, with the remainder of Peartree Hill Solar Farm located between the villages of Tickton, Riston, Wawne, Weel and Woodmansey.

2.2 What is Peartree Hill Solar Farm?

- 2.2.1 Peartree Hill Solar Farm is a proposed solar photovoltaic electricity generating and storage facility with an export capacity of 320 megawatts and associated infrastructure.
- 2.2.2 Peartree Hill Solar Farm comprises several areas of land ('Land Areas A to F'), which are connected by a series of underground cables (see Appendix B: Proposed operational layout plan). Peartree Hill Solar Farm will connect to the National Grid Creyke Beck Substation via underground cables.
- 2.2.3 The main elements of Peartree Hill Solar Farm comprise the following:
 - Solar photovoltaic modules and associated mounting structures;
 - On-site supporting equipment including inverters, transformers and switchgear;
 - A Battery Energy Storage System;
 - Two on-site substations to connect the solar photovoltaic modules to distribution and transmission networks;
 - Low voltage and 33 kilovolt interconnecting cabling within the Land Areas to connect the solar photovoltaic modules together and to connect the solar photovoltaic modules to the two on-site substations.
 - 132 kilovolt underground cabling connecting the Land Areas to the National Grid Creyke Beck Substation;
 - Associated infrastructure including access tracks, parking, security measures, gates and fencing, lighting, drainage infrastructure and storage containers;
 - Works at the National Grid Creyke Beck Substation to facilitate the connection of the 132 kilovolt cabling to the substation;
 - Highways works to facilitate access for construction vehicles;



- Environmental mitigation and enhancement measures; and
- Temporary development during the construction phase including construction compounds, parking and temporary access roadways.
- 2.2.4 The export capacity of Peartree Hill Solar Farm would exceed 50 megawatts. Therefore, it is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and will require a Development Consent Order under the Planning Act 2008.

2.3 What is the existing use of the Site?

2.3.1 The Site comprises approximately 1,461 hectares of land. The land within the draft Order Limits (the maximum area of land that would be required for the construction, operation and maintenance of Peartree Hill Solar Farm, which may be subject to change) predominantly consists of agricultural fields interspersed with hedgerows, small woodland blocks, farm access tracks, wet ditches and some of the many drains and dykes in the area.

2.4 Are there any environmental designations within or near the Site?

2.4.1 There is some variation in the environmental features immediately surrounding and within each of the Land Areas and cable route options within the Site and a range of environmental designations, as shown in **Appendix C: Environmental features plan**.

Ecology and biodiversity

- 2.4.2 No statutory ecological designations lie within the Site.
- 2.4.3 There are five international statutory designations covering three sites within 10 kilometres of the Land Areas:
 - Hornsea Mere Special Protection Area (approximately 5.8 kilometres east);
 - Humber Estuary Ramsar/Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation (approximately 9.3 kilometres south); and
 - Greater Wash Special Protection Area (approximately 9.5 kilometres east).
- 2.4.4 There are two statutory nationally designated sites within 2 kilometres of the Land Areas:
 - Tophill Low Site of Special Scientific Interest (approximately 400 metres north of Land Area A); and



- Leven Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (approximately 900 metres south of Land Area A).
- 2.4.5 There are seven non-statutory designated sites, all local wildlife sites, within 1 kilometre of the Land Areas. One of these, Cote Wood Local Wildlife Site, lies adjacent to Land Area D, though on the other side of a ditch.
- 2.4.6 There is one area of ancient semi-natural woodland within 1 kilometre of the draft Order Limits. This is Cote Wood Local Wildlife Site, as described above.

Landscape

- 2.4.7 The draft Order Limits are not covered by any statutory landscape designations, nor are there any within 3 kilometres.
- 2.4.8 The Site is located in the centre of National Character Area 40 Holderness³.

Water resources

- 2.4.9 There are five Main Rivers within or in close proximity to the draft Order Limits: The River Hull and the Beverley and Barmston Drain run outside the draft Order Limits to the west of Land Area A, while Holderness Drain, Monk Dike, Meaux and Routh East Drain run through or adjacent to the Site.
- 2.4.10 The Site occupies predominantly low-lying land which relies on a network of drainage systems including ditches, culverts and pumping stations.
- 2.4.11 Large parts of the Site fall within Flood Zones 2 (between a 0.1% and 1% annual probability of river or sea flooding) and 3 (a 1% or greater annual probability of river or sea flooding) based on the Environment Agency's flood map for planning.

Geology

- 2.4.12 Bedrock geology across the Site is recorded as chalk. The bedrock deposits underlying the Site form a principal aquifer.
- 2.4.13 Large sections of the Site belong within a Source Protection Zone⁴

³ A National Character Area is an area defined by Natural England as having a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity

⁴ A Source Protection Zone is an area of land through which water infiltrates into a public potable groundwater abstraction site. Source Protection Zones are defined and subject to protection by the Environment Agency to safeguard drinking water quality.



Cultural heritage

- 2.4.14 There is one designated asset located within the draft Order Limits, a Grade II listed bridge along West Street, Leven.
- 2.4.15 Within 5 kilometres of the draft Order Limits there are 43 Scheduled Monuments, three Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens, 33 Conservation Areas and 707 Listed Buildings (of which 17 are Grade I Listed and 52 are Grade II* Listed). Of these, the following lie within 100 metres of the draft Order Limits:
 - Three Scheduled Monuments: Bowl barrow, Site of Meaux Cistercian Abbey Scheduled Monument and Meaux duck decoy.
 - One Grade II* Listed Building and six Grade II Listed Buildings.
- 2.4.16 No Registered Battlefields or World Heritage Sites lie within 5 kilometres of the draft Order Limits.

2.5 Why is Peartree Hill Solar Farm needed?

2.5.1 Peartree Hill Solar Farm would contribute towards the achievement of the Government's net zero targets and a United Kingdom energy supply that is secure, low carbon and low cost. This is in line with the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1), published in November 2023, which states that "*a secure, reliable, affordable, net zero consistent system in 2050 is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar*". It also states that low-carbon energy infrastructure, including solar and Battery Energy Storage Systems, is a "*critical national priority*".

2.6 What alternatives have been considered?

What alternative sites have been considered?

- 2.6.1 The proposed Site has been selected following an in-depth site selection process.
- 2.6.2 The Site is of a large enough scale to deliver sufficient wattage, i.e. greater than 50 megawatts, to help deliver as much solar energy as possible to meet Government targets. RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited did not consider sites that could only deliver smaller scale projects.
- 2.6.3 The site selection process considered a number of factors, including:
 - Aspect and topography preference was given to sites with a south facing aspect and flatter topography.



- Network connection preference was given to sites near to the National Grid Creyke Beck Substation, where RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited has secured a grid connection. Utilising existing connections instead of building new ones helps maximise existing infrastructure and minimise costs, delivery timescales and environmental impacts. A search area of 10 kilometres from the National Grid Creyke Beck Substation was set.
- **Proximity of site to dwellings** the site selection process sought to avoid sites in close proximity to residential dwellings or where it would not be possible to appropriately mitigate visual impacts or glint and glare impacts.
- Agricultural land classification and land type the site selection process sought to minimise the impact on best and most versatile agricultural land. No brownfield land of an adequate area to accommodate a large-scale solar project was identified within the search area.
- **Accessibility** the Site is well serviced by the rural road network. Areas which could not be accessed by the existing road network were discounted.
- **Public rights of way** the site selection process sought to avoid and minimise the visual impact from public rights of way.
- Security and lighting the site selection process sought to minimise the landscape and visual impact of security measures such as lighting.
- 2.6.4 Other considerations include environmental and spatial constraints (e.g. avoiding direct impacts on designated ecological and geological sites, historic designations and nationally designated landscapes), site size and land assembly (e.g. identifying sufficient adjoining areas of land for Peartree Hill Solar Farm to be economically viable), and land availability (e.g. identifying willing landowners with large scale land holdings).

What alternative solar technologies have been considered?

2.6.5 The main options available for solar technologies are a fixed panel system or a tracking panel system, the latter meaning solar photovoltaic panels that track the sun's movement throughout the day. Assessments to date have been based on a worst-case scenario, depending on which type of panel system is deemed to have the most potential to lead to likely significant effects for each environmental discipline. RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited intends to further assess these options before finalising the design of Peartree Hill Solar Farm.

What alternative layouts have been considered?

2.6.6 The current design and layout of Peartree Hill Solar Farm (shown on **Appendix B: Proposed operational layout plan**) has resulted from an iterative process



informed by ongoing environmental assessment and taking into consideration the design principles, non-statutory consultation feedback and stakeholder engagement. The layout will continue to be developed with regard given to statutory consultation responses and further environmental assessments and stakeholder engagement.

2.6.7 Modifications to the design and layout of Peartree Hill Solar Farm up to this point include the removal of solar photovoltaic development and associated infrastructure from certain areas and refinement of the locations of proposed Battery Energy Storage System components and substations and the cable route options in response to the findings of environmental assessments. See Section 2.8 of this Non-Technical Summary for more details.

2.7 How will Peartree Hill Solar Farm be built?

- 2.7.1 Subject to obtaining development consent, the earliest construction could start is 2026 and would take a maximum of 24 months, with completion potentially by early 2028. The Environmental Statement will provide further details of the proposed construction activities and their assumed duration, along with an assumed programme of each phase of works.
- 2.7.2 Construction access to the Site is expected to be via the A1035, the A165 and existing local roads, subject to their suitability for heavy goods vehicles. The requirement for highways improvements will be determined following completion of further assessments, but possible highways improvement locations have been identified.
- 2.7.3 Construction compounds are expected to be established in each Land Area for the storage of materials, plant and equipment. Any live construction areas would be closed to the public throughout the construction phase to ensure public safety.

2.8 How has the design considered environmental constraints and opportunities?

Environmental constraint or opportunity	Design response
Potential effects on biodiversity	 The design is expected to avoid any development on Habitats of Principal Importance.
	 The design is expected to incorporate a minimum offset of 10 metres from existing trees, hedgerows, watercourses and ditches.



Environmental	Design response		
constraint or			
opportunity	 The design is expected to incorporate mitigation and enhancement areas for ground nesting and wintering birds. Where reasonably practicable, existing habitat is expected to be retained and any access tracks, security fencing and cable routes will be designed to use existing agricultural tracks and breaks in hedgerows as much as is practicable. The design is expected to incorporate animal gates to allow 		
Potential impacts on climate	 animals to continue to travel across the Land Areas. The use of concrete would be minimised where reasonably practicable. 		
Potential impacts on below-ground archaeology	• No solar infrastructure is expected to be erected in areas of probable below-ground archaeology, with a 20-metre buffer zone also in place around identified below-ground remains.		
Potential impacts to the setting of scheduled monuments	 A buffer zone of 100 metres is expected to be incorporated to the south of Meaux Abbey Scheduled Monument. No solar infrastructure is expected to be erected in fields which border Meaux duck decoy Scheduled Monument. 		
Potential impacts on land, soils and groundwater	• Where not used for solar photovoltaic development, and where reasonably practicable, areas that are not best and most valuable land have been prioritised for areas of environmental mitigation and enhancement.		
Potential impacts on residential	 The design is expected to incorporate a minimum offset distance of 50 metres from residential properties. 		
properties and users of public	 The design is expected to incorporate a minimum offset distance of 10 metres from all public rights of way. 		
rights of way	 No public right of way is expected to require permanent closure. The design is expected to incorporate planting around large infrastructure to provide screening. 		
Potential landscape and visual impacts	• The design is expected to incorporate a minimum offset of 10 metres from landscape features identified in landscape character studies.		
	• The design is expected to protect existing long-range and panoramic views from public rights of way wherever reasonably practicable, with low-level planting that is set back from routes.		



Environmental	Design response		
constraint or opportunity			
Potential noise and vibration impacts	 The two on-site substations are not expected be within 250 metres of residential properties or any environmentally designated site. 		
Potential impacts on	 Where necessary, passing places are expected to be provided for heavy goods vehicles to pass. 		
access	 Construction works would be phased, which is intended to minimise the overall impact of construction vehicles on the local road network. 		
Potential impacts on water (flood risk and water quality)	• Electrical infrastructure (e.g. substations, inverters) is expected to be sited in locations at low risk of flooding and/or set at the necessary minimum ground levels determined by the Flood Risk Assessment.		
	• The design would include an easement of 9 metres from the top of watercourse banks and 8 metres from flood defences.		
	 Access tracks are expected to be designed to allow water to percolate, for example being formed from permeable materials. 		
	 For hard surfaces, runoff is expected to be directed to the ground locally via gravel beds. 		
Potential glint and glare impacts	• The solar photovoltaic modules are designed to absorb rather than reflect light as much as possible.		
Potential impacts on utilities	 Offsets are expected to be implemented as required. 		
Opportunities for enhancement	• The areas discounted for solar photovoltaic development are retained within the Site for potential mitigation, enhancement or retained agricultural use.		
	 Wildflowers and meadow grassland are expected to be planted underneath suitable solar photovoltaic modules. 		
	 The design is expected to include new permissive paths. 		

2.8.1 The table above outlines only a few of the ways in which the design has responded to environmental constraints and opportunities that have been identified up to this point.



3 Environmental impact assessment process

3.1 What is the environmental impact assessment process?

3.1.1 Environmental impact assessment is a systematic process that examines the likely significant effects (beneficial or adverse) on the environment resulting from the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of a proposed development. The environmental impact assessment process is shown on **Image 1: Main stages of the environmental impact assessment process**. The Preliminary Environmental Information Report is the third stage in this image.



Image 1: Main stages of the environmental impact assessment process

3.1.2 The Environmental Statement, once it has been produced, will be submitted as part of an application for development consent and is used to report to decision makers, consultees and stakeholders on the likely significant environmental effects of a development and helps the decision maker (in the case of a Development Consent Order, the Secretary of State) determine the application.



4 Assessment findings

4.1 Air quality

Would dust and emissions generated during construction and decommissioning affect nearby properties and ecological receptors?

- 4.1.1 Dust and emissions released via construction works and construction traffic movements have the potential to adversely affect air quality and impact on nearby sensitive human and ecological receptors (e.g. Cote Wood ancient woodland). The same applies during the decommissioning phase, but to a lesser extent.
- 4.1.2 Site-specific dust mitigation measures would be proposed based on the results of a pre-mitigation dust impacts assessment to be undertaken. Mitigation measures, e.g. relating to construction site management and operation of machinery, will be documented in an Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan and an Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan. Measures to manage the impact of construction traffic emissions, such as minimising the use of sensitive routes by heavy goods vehicles, are expected to be documented in an Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan. These outline plans will be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application.
- 4.1.3 With mitigation measures in place, the effects of dust and emissions during construction and decommissioning are predicted to be **not significant**.

Would air quality in the area worsen because of the operation of the Proposed Development?

4.1.4 No site activities that generate significant emissions are anticipated during the operational phase and there would be minimal vehicle movements (e.g. maintenance vehicles) during operation. Therefore, impacts of Peartree Hill Solar Farm on air quality during the operational phase are not considered further in the preliminary assessment.

4.2 Biodiversity

Would Peartree Hill Solar Farm affect any designated sites?

4.2.1 There are five international statutory designated sites within 10 kilometres (designated for wintering or breeding bird assemblages), two national statutory



designated sites within 2 kilometres (noted for wintering birds and wetland plants respectively) and seven non-statutory designated sites within 1 kilometre of the Land Areas.

- 4.2.2 Construction activities are not anticipated to have a direct impact on any designated sites. However, construction activities could potentially disturb or displace species associated with the designated sites, such as breeding and wintering bird species, although relatively low numbers of wintering birds were recorded on Site. There is also potential for local wildlife sites to be indirectly impacted by pollution runoff during construction.
- 4.2.3 In some cases, the distance between Peartree Hill Solar Farm and the designated sites means no significant noise, lighting or visual disturbance is anticipated. Where this is not the case, appropriate buffers would be in place between the works and the boundary habitats and measures documented in a Construction Environmental Management Plan would be followed to reduce the risk of potential impacts during construction. An Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan will be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application. Further assessments of potential impacts on any international statutory designated sites will be undertaken through a Habitats Regulations Assessment, which will be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application.
- 4.2.4 With mitigation, during the construction phase for the Land Areas likely effects on designated sites are anticipated to be **not significant**. During the operational phase, no direct impacts on designated sites are anticipated as maintenance work during operation would be limited. There is potential for **beneficial effects significant at the local level** since planned environmental mitigation and enhancement areas are expected to improve the area for species associated with the designated sites, particularly wintering birds.

Would Peartree Hill Solar Farm affect habitats and species?

- 4.2.5 The majority of the Site consists of species-poor arable and grassland habitats, which would be directly modified by the construction phase of Peartree Hill Solar Farm. However, these habitats are of little intrinsic biodiversity value and there are large amounts of similar habitat in the surrounding area. Other existing habitats, mostly located along field margins, include woodland, scrub, reedbeds, ponds, rural trees and boundary habitats. The majority of these are expected to be retained and field boundaries would be managed to enhance biodiversity. Appropriate buffers to watercourses would be applied.
- 4.2.6 Species potentially supported by the Site and surroundings include wintering and nesting birds, invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles, bats, riparian mammals, badger, brown hare, hedgehogs and other small mammals. Construction and



decommissioning of Peartree Hill Solar Farm could cause disturbance and lead to a short-term loss of foraging and/or breeding habitat for these species. During decommissioning, effects could potentially be greater than during construction due to the higher biodiversity value of the proposed habitats that will be created in comparison with the existing habitats. However, the majority of existing habitats are expected to be retained, and measures such as maintaining buffers from sensitive habitats and utilising permeable security fencing that is not dug into the ground should retain foraging opportunities and connectivity.

- 4.2.7 An Environmental Clerk of Works, an independent environmental specialist, would be appointed during the construction phase to advise on how to protect valued biodiversity features and comply with environmental legislation. The Outline Construction and Decommissioning Environmental Management Plans will document best practice measures to avoid or minimise potential impacts to species and habitats, including reducing the risk of pollution to watercourses. The Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan is also expected to specify any pre-construction surveys and checks to be undertaken and whether any Species Protection Plans are needed.
- 4.2.8 During operation of Peartree Hill Solar Farm, no direct impacts on retained habitats are anticipated. Habitat creation and enhancement measures, such as planting under and between solar photovoltaic modules, strengthening hedgerows, and implementing environmental mitigation and enhancement areas, are expected to provide habitat and connectivity opportunities. The principles of retention, creation, enhancement and management of habitats within the Land Areas will be documented in an Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan. An Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan will be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application and is expected to include measures that are required during maintenance works, such as regular checks of animal fencing to ensure no species have become trapped.
- 4.2.9 With mitigation, the majority of likely residual effects on biodiversity during all phases of Peartree Hill Solar Farm are anticipated to be **not significant**. There are anticipated to be **beneficial effects significant at the local level** due to proposed habitat creation and enhancement.
- 4.2.10 There is potential for likely **significant** effects to remain for displacement and loss of habitat for foraging bats. These effects are expected to be reduced by the proposed mitigation but a full assessment will be undertaken in the Environmental Statement. Other ecological surveys are also planned where information gaps exist, for example a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal survey of cable routes, and this information will be presented within the Environmental Statement.
- 4.2.11 Opportunities for enhancement, such as providing bat and bird boxes on trees, would be considered during the detailed design of Peartree Hill Solar Farm.



Habitat creation and enhancement measures will be assessed in a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Calculation that will be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application.

4.3 Climate

What impact would Peartree Hill Solar Farm have on climate?

- 4.3.1 Peartree Hill Solar Farm has the potential to affect the global climate through the addition or avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions. Greenhouse gas emissions could occur directly from construction, operation and decommissioning activities (e.g. fuel consumption), but emissions occurring outside of the draft Order Limits must also be considered, such as those resulting from the extraction, manufacture and transportation of materials to the Site during construction.
- 4.3.2 The Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan will document measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the construction phase. Such measures could include decreasing fuel use by maximising energy efficiency, promoting sustainable fuels and recycled materials, and using locally sourced materials as much as is practicable.
- 4.3.3 During the operational phase, significant greenhouse gas savings are anticipated due to the displacement of fossil-fuel derived electricity within the National Grid. Proposed planting could increase the carbon sequestration potential of the land.
- 4.3.4 Overall, Peartree Hill Solar Farm is anticipated to have a **significant beneficial** effect on the climate.

How resilient would Peartree Hill Solar Farm be to climate change?

- 4.3.5 There is potential for climate hazards (e.g. fluctuating temperatures, increased rainfall, flooding) to affect elements of Peartree Hill Solar Farm.
- 4.3.6 The Outline Construction and Decommissioning Environmental Management Plans will include measures to manage climate change risks during the construction and decommissioning phases, such as the provision of welfare facilities and Emergency/Incident Response Plans. During the operational phase, assets would be regularly assessed and maintained.
- 4.3.7 Most climate hazards are judged to pose a **negligible or minor risk** to Peartree Hill Solar Farm. The only one that poses a **moderate risk** is river flooding.



4.4 Cultural heritage

4.4.1 A desk-based assessment, site visit and geophysical survey have been undertaken. The development layout is being finalised and assessments are ongoing (such as geophysical surveys of the cable routes), meaning uncertainty remains about the impacts on some heritage assets. At the current design stage, and without consideration of additional mitigation, 10 designated heritage assets and 13 non-designated heritage assets of up to medium importance could potentially be at risk of significant effects.

Would Peartree Hill Solar Farm physically impact on heritage assets?

- 4.4.2 Physical impacts to heritage assets could include damage to below- and/or above-ground archaeological remains and listed buildings during the construction or operation phases. The Site layout has been designed to avoid directly impacting on heritage assets as much as is practicable.
- 4.4.3 Mitigation measures to protect the physical remains of in-situ designated heritage assets will be included within the Outline Construction, Operation and Decommissioning Environmental Management Plans, and could include the installation and maintenance of fencing around assets during construction works. Toolbox talks to inform site contractors of the procedure to follow in case of archaeological remains being exposed would also be produced.
- 4.4.4 With mitigation in place, **no likely significant effects** are anticipated regarding physical impacts on heritage assets both within and outside of the draft Order Limits.

Would Peartree Hill Solar Farm affect the setting of heritage assets?

- 4.4.5 Impacts on the setting of a heritage asset could include temporary loss of tranquillity during construction or partial loss of surrounding undeveloped land during operation.
- 4.4.6 No development would take place in sections of certain fields to reduce impacts on the settings of certain heritage assets, such as Meaux Abbey and Meaux duck decoy Scheduled Monuments. Some adverse residual setting effects would occur due to increased noise, dust and/or lighting associated with construction and decommissioning activities. However, as these setting effects would be temporary and fully reversible, they are considered to be **not significant**.



4.4.7 Opportunities for enhancement will be explored as the detailed design is developed, such as the installation of information boards and new permissive paths to improve public access to heritage assets.

4.5 Land, soils and groundwater

Would Peartree Hill Solar Farm lead to any contamination?

- 4.5.1 During construction and decommissioning, there is a risk of soil contamination from spills when refuelling or operating equipment. A Preliminary Risk Assessment did not identify any significant sensitive receptors relating to land contamination.
- 4.5.2 Construction and decommissioning activities could cause minor damage to field drains, which may affect groundwater quality in the underlying aquifer (particularly in the areas of the Source Protection Zone). Spillages or leaks of fuels, oils, and chemicals and silt run-off, for example from construction activities or from maintenance works during operation, could potentially pollute the underlying aquifer. The likelihood of significant effects is lower during operation compared to construction and decommissioning, as fewer activities are involved. The presence of hard surfaces, for example for the substations, could affect groundwater infiltration rates.
- 4.5.3 The Outline Construction, Operation and Decommissioning Environmental Management Plans would include procedures to mitigate against land contamination and effects to groundwater, including emergency procedures to manage accidental spillages and leaks.
- 4.5.4 With mitigation, the effect on land contamination and on groundwater is anticipated to be **not significant** for all phases of Peartree Hill Solar Farm.

How would soils and agricultural land be affected by Peartree Hill Solar Farm?

- 4.5.5 Construction activities could cause compaction and deterioration of the soil. However, handling and moving of soil would be limited and avoided where practical. During decommissioning, it is assumed that below ground cabling would be left in situ, therefore limiting the disturbance and impact to soil quality.
- 4.5.6 The Site has been identified as predominantly Grade 3 agricultural land, with areas of Grade 2. The site selection and design of Peartree Hill Solar Farm has sought to minimise the use of best and most valuable land. Other embedded mitigation includes optimising existing tracks, crossings and gaps in the



hedgerows for access tracks and cable routes wherever practicable, and running cabling alongside access tracks as much as possible to avoid wider excavations.

- 4.5.7 An Outline Soil Management Plan will be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application to document measures to manage any potential impacts to the soil (and agricultural land), which is expected to include guidance on restoring the land to its pre-construction condition at the end of the lifetime of Peartree Hill Solar Farm.
- 4.5.8 Soil health could be enhanced during operation through the implementation of a Soil Management Plan and the proposed permanent cover of grassland and wildflowers, which would help reduce soil erosion. These will be detailed in the Environmental Statement.
- 4.5.9 With mitigation, the effect on soils and agricultural land is anticipated to be **not significant** during operation and decommissioning. However, potentially **significant adverse** effects on soils and agricultural land could occur during the construction phase.
- 4.5.10 A Minerals Safeguarding Assessment⁵ will be undertaken to inform the design of Peartree Hill Solar Farm and will form part of the Planning Statement submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application.

4.6 Landscape and visual

How would Peartree Hill Solar Farm affect landscape character?

- 4.6.1 The landscape is open with wide views of exposed farmland. However, there are no focal points on which these views focus. The 12 turbines of Hall Farm Wind Farm are prominent vertical features in the local landscape. No part of the Site or its immediately surrounding context falls within a nationally designated landscape.
- 4.6.2 Embedded mitigation of landscape and visual effects includes retention of existing trees and hedgerows as much as is practicable, offsets of solar infrastructure from residential properties and public rights of way, new planting, use of underground cables, and use of existing access tracks wherever practical.
- 4.6.3 With embedded mitigation, **significant adverse** landscape character effects are only anticipated on Landscape Character Area 'Central Holderness Open

⁵ An assessment of land to identify the potential future extraction of minerals and whether this creates a conflict with a proposed development, i.e. the minerals could not be extracted due to construction of the development



Farmland' within 1 kilometre of Peartree Hill Solar Farm during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases.

Would Peartree Hill Solar Farm have a visual impact?

- 4.6.4 Visual receptors include local residents, users of public rights of way and users of the local road network. The relatively flat landscape means that there can be long-distance views but also that fairly low-level planting, such as hedgerows, can provide significant screening for low-level developments.
- 4.6.5 A comprehensive landscape scheme (the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan) would be developed in accordance with the design principles to integrate Peartree Hill Solar Farm into the landscape and to mitigate visual effects as far as practicable. The landscape scheme would be complementary to any biodiversity and other environmental objectives.
- 4.6.6 Likely visual effects on local settlements and on the River Hull are anticipated to be **not significant** during all phases of Peartree Hill Solar Farm.
- 4.6.7 After mitigation, visual effects during the construction and decommissioning phases are anticipated to be **not significant** for most key routes and recreational routes, however **significant adverse** visual effects are anticipated on two public rights of way during construction and decommissioning. Regarding the operation phase, **significant adverse** visual effects are anticipated on Meaux Lane and seven public rights of way during year 1 of operation (while planting establishes), with the **significant adverse** effects continuing into year 10 of operation for four of the public rights of way.
- 4.6.8 A Residential Visual Amenity Assessment will be undertaken and submitted alongside the Environmental Statement to assess residential properties identified as potentially experiencing significant effects on visual amenity.

4.7 Noise and vibration

Would noise generated during construction and decommissioning affect nearby properties and ecological receptors?

4.7.1 Details of noise emitting construction plant and equipment are not available at this stage, therefore a qualitative assessment has been undertaken based on professional judgement. An increase in daytime noise and vibration levels due to construction and decommissioning phase activities and an increase in daytime noise levels from construction traffic could cause potential disturbance to nearby occupants of residential properties and ecological receptors, such as Tophill Low Site of Special Scientific Interest.



- 4.7.2 During the construction and decommissioning phases, Best Practicable Means as defined by the Control of Pollution Act 1974 would be implemented to reduce noise and vibration impacts on residential properties located near the works. Noisy operations would be undertaken outside of nesting and breeding seasons to minimise ecological impacts. These, and other measures, would be documented in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan.
- 4.7.3 With mitigation, residual effects at residential receptors and Tophill Low Site of Special Scientific Interest are anticipated to be **not significant** during construction and decommissioning.

Would noise levels in the area worsen because of Peartree Hill Solar Farm?

- 4.7.4 Fixed plant is expected to be designed and positioned to comply with noise limits at all receptor locations. As part of the Environmental Statement, an operational phase noise assessment will be undertaken to identify any requirements for additional mitigation measures, such as noise barriers or enclosures.
- 4.7.5 With mitigation, residual effects of noise generated by operational fixed plant on local residents and Tophill Low Site of Special Scientific Interest are anticipated to be **not significant**.

4.8 **Population**

Would Peartree Hill Solar Farm adversely affect population?

- 4.8.1 The population assessment covers the following:
 - **Private property and housing** no properties are at risk of demolition to accommodate Peartree Hill Solar Farm and none of the Site is allocated for residential development. Therefore, no impacts to property or housing are anticipated.
 - **Community land and assets** Peartree Hill Solar Farm largely covers agricultural land and no community assets are located within the draft Order Limits. Therefore, no impacts to community land and assets are anticipated.
 - Agricultural land holdings, development land and businesses there are eight farming operations in and around the Site, of which all landowners have voluntarily agreed to be a part of Peartree Hill Solar Farm with renumeration agreed accordingly. Two tenant farmers will receive compensation in lieu of the loss of ability to farm.
 - Walkers, cyclists and horse riders where possible, public rights of way would be retained. Where temporary or permanent diversions are required,



the level of impact is expected to be not significant. New permissive paths are also proposed in the design. An Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan will be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application, which will detail mitigation measures to minimise impacts to public rights of way.

- 4.8.2 Following implementation of the Public Rights of Way Management Plan, likely residual effects on users of public rights of way during construction of Peartree Hill Solar Farm are anticipated to be **not significant**. The level of effects during decommissioning is expected to be similar to or less than that during construction. During operation, no public rights of way are anticipated to be permanently diverted, therefore **no likely significant effects** are anticipated for users of public rights of way.
- 4.8.3 For other receptors in the bullet point list above, no likely significant effects on population due to Peartree Hill Solar Farm are expected prior to mitigation, so it is anticipated that **no likely significant effects** would remain.

4.9 Transport and access

Would construction and decommissioning traffic adversely affect the transport network?

- 4.9.1 Total vehicle and heavy goods vehicle flows have been calculated for each road link that connects the Site to the wider road network, based on anticipated construction traffic routes and worst-case assumptions of construction traffic volumes. Predicted construction traffic flows are generally shown to only result in a small percentage increase to the expected baseline traffic flows.
- 4.9.2 For access routes that are narrow and do not normally accommodate heavy goods vehicle movements, passing places, signage and temporary speed reductions are expected to be implemented to reduce any potential significant effects.
- 4.9.3 Additional mitigation measures to reduce likely significant effects of construction traffic on the local road network will be documented within an Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan to be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application. The plan is expected to include details such as arrangements for access, parking, and loading and unloading of plant and materials, and a scheme for routing and control of construction traffic. An Outline Travel Plan will be prepared and is expected to set out strategies for encouraging the use of sustainable transport for the construction workforce.



- 4.9.4 Effects during the decommissioning phase are assumed to be no greater than the construction phase. The management of movement of decommissioning traffic will be documented within an Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan, which will be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application.
- 4.9.5 The preliminary assessment has identified that some severance effects are anticipated to be **significant** and will require further assessment before the Development Consent Order application is submitted. As the design of Peartree Hill Solar Farm develops, further assessments of severance effects (along with assessments of driver/pedestrian delay, amenity, fear and intimidation and road safety) will be undertaken and reported in the Environmental Statement and the Transport Assessment.

4.10 Water

Would Peartree Hill Solar Farm increase flood risk?

- 4.10.1 The Site is predominantly located in Flood Zones 2 and 3 but benefits from the presence of flood defences, such as the River Hull Tidal Surge Barrier. During early engagement, the Environment Agency confirmed that it did not consider the Site to be at significant risk of tidal flooding.
- 4.10.2 Solar photovoltaic modules and vulnerable infrastructure are expected to be raised above modelled flood levels to avoid any risk to Peartree Hill Solar Farm. The addition of such infrastructure would not have a significant effect on floodplain storage or off-site flood risk, meaning the likely effect of Peartree Hill Solar Farm on flood risk is anticipated to be **not significant**. Buffers are proposed between infrastructure and watercourse banks (9 metre buffer) and existing flood defences (8 metre buffer).
- 4.10.3 A Flood Risk Assessment will evaluate flood risk posed to the Site, including an assessment of climate change effects for Peartree Hill Solar Farm's lifetime.

Would Peartree Hill Solar Farm affect water quality?

- 4.10.4 There is a potential risk of increased runoff from hard surfaces or containerised infrastructure. Limiting or dispersing such infrastructure and using permeable materials for Site access tracks would promote rainfall percolation as per the existing Site. A formal drainage strategy will help manage runoff rates and is expected to include mitigation to protect surface and groundwater.
- 4.10.5 Where cable routes need to cross watercourses, horizontal directional drilling is expected to be used to minimise impacts on the watercourses.



- 4.10.6 The stopping of existing agricultural activities would lead to less compaction and therefore improvements in soil structure. A reduction in herbicide and fertilizer use would result in a reduction of pollution to groundwater and surface water resources.
- 4.10.7 Residual risk may include localised compaction caused by vehicle movement or the spillage of harmful substances. However, the flat topography of the Site means negative impacts would be limited to a small area and would have little to no effect on the water quality of the local watercourse network.
- 4.10.8 The Outline Construction and Decommissioning Environmental Management Plans are expected to document how the risk of increased runoff would be mitigated during construction and decommissioning. Possible mitigation measures include constructing and using access tracks early in the programme, planting riparian vegetation early in the programme where possible, and appropriate storage of pollutants.
- 4.10.9 Any residual effects on the water environment during the construction and decommissioning of Peartree Hill Solar Farm would be **not significant**. The operation of Peartree Hill Solar Farm has the potential to have a beneficial, but **not significant** effect on the water environment.

4.11 Glint and glare

Would glint and glare caused by Peartree Hill Solar Farm adversely affect residential dwellings, major roads and aviation infrastructure?

- 4.11.1 Although solar panels are designed to absorb rather than reflect sunlight, they have potential to cause a brief flash of bright light typically received by moving receptors or from moving reflectors ('glint') or a continuous source of bright light typically received by stationary receptors or from large reflectors ('glare').
- 4.11.2 The preliminary glint and glare assessment has considered potential residential receptors and major roads within 1 kilometre of the Site and any airfields or airports within 10 kilometres of the Site. There is potential for glint and glare effects on:
 - 225 residential dwellings (without consideration of screening);
 - two sections of the A1035, and one section of the A165 (without consideration of screening); and
 - aviation activity at Beverley Airfield.



- 4.11.3 Any likely significant glint and glare effects on ground-based infrastructure (i.e. houses and roads) are expected to be solved with mitigation strategies, the most common being the provision of screening (e.g. hedgerow planting). Any likely significant effects on aviation activity are expected to be removed by rearranging the panel layout or agreed to be operationally accommodatable with the airfield safeguarding team. Mitigation will be informed by the full glint and glare assessment to be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application.
- 4.11.4 Following the implementation of mitigation, it is anticipated that **no likely significant effects** would remain for glint and glare.

4.12 Other environmental considerations

Electric, magnetic and electromagnetic fields

4.12.1 Electromagnetic fields arise from the generation and transmission of electricity and can impact on human health and ecological receptors. However, the voltage of the underground cables does not exceed the threshold of 132 kilovolts (as set out in health protection guidelines) and Peartree Hill Solar Farm is expected to incorporate offsets between the on-site substations and residential properties and public rights of way to avoid the potential for any electromagnetic effects on these sensitive receptors. The likely electromagnetic effects during the construction, operation and decommissioning of Peartree Hill Solar Farm are therefore expected to be not significant.

Heat and radiation

4.12.2 Due to the scale and nature of Peartree Hill Solar Farm, no significant sources of heat or radiation are anticipated during construction, operation or decommissioning.

Human health

4.12.3 The likely effects of Peartree Hill Solar Farm on human health are considered within the respective relevant environmental assessments, which are summarised in the following sections of this Non-Technical Summary: Section 4.1 ('Air quality'), Section 4.6 ('Landscape and visual'), Section 4.7 ('Noise and vibration'), Section 4.8 ('Population'), Section 4.9 ('Transport and access'), and Section 4.11 ('Glint and glare'). Of these assessments, the ones with the most direct links to human health are Air quality, Noise and vibration and Population. All of these concluded in their respective assessments that any likely effects would be not significant.



4.12.4 Potential cumulative effects to human health are considered, with the overall approach to cumulative assessment summarised in **Section 4.13** ('Cumulative effects') of this Non-Technical Summary.

Major accidents and disasters

- 4.12.5 The construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of Peartree Hill Solar Farm has the potential to give rise to major accidents and disasters such as those outlined below; however, they can be mitigated as described below or in the relevant section of this Non-Technical Summary:
 - Flooding large parts of the Site are located in Flood Zones 2 and 3 but the Site is not considered to be at significant risk of flooding, as confirmed by the Environment Agency. See Section 4.10 ('Water') of this non-technical summary for more information.
 - Fire there is a potential fire risk associated with the Battery Energy Storage System. Cooling systems and siting of Battery Energy Storage System components a suitable distance from sensitive receptors would minimise this risk. An Outline Battery Safety Management Plan will be submitted in support of the Development Consent Order application and would document relevant mitigation.
 - Aircraft disasters see Section 4.11 ('Glint and glare') of this Non-Technical Summary
 - Plant disease new planting could be susceptible to pests and disease.
 Risks would be managed through the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan.
- 4.12.6 The proposed embedded mitigation and the implementation of safety standards mean that no likely significant effects in relation to major accidents and disasters are anticipated during any phase of Peartree Hill Solar Farm.

Material assets and waste

- 4.12.7 The main potential effects relating to material assets and waste are depletion of resources and unsustainable use of resources, which could lead to degradation of the natural environment.
- 4.12.8 Indirect impacts resulting from materials consumption and waste disposal (e.g. water consumption and release of greenhouse gas emissions) are incorporated in the assessments of other environmental disciplines, which are summarised in Section 4.2 ('Biodiversity'), Section 4.3 ('Climate)' Section 4.6 ('Landscape and Visual') and Section 4.10 ('Water') of this Non-Technical Summary. Of these assessments, the ones with the most direct links to material assets and waste



are Climate and Water. Both of these concluded that no likely significant adverse effects are anticipated, with significant beneficial effects anticipated in relation to greenhouse gas displacement.

4.12.9 Potential streams and volumes of materials and waste disposal would be described within the Environmental Statement. The Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (including a Site Waste Management Plan and a Materials Management Plan) and the Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan will set out how waste would be recycled or disposed of.

Transboundary effects

4.12.10 Due to the nature and location of Peartree Hill Solar Farm, no likely significant effects are anticipated on the environment of another European Economic Association State.

4.13 Cumulative effects

Will the different environmental effects from Peartree Hill Solar Farm be considered together?

- 4.13.1 Different environmental effects from Peartree Hill Solar Farm could occur concurrently on certain receptors.
- 4.13.2 Receptors that could experience more than one environmental effect at the same time include local residents and users of public rights of way, ecological receptors, heritage assets such as listed buildings and conservation areas, and land, soils and water. For example, combined effects on human receptors, such as local residents, could arise from air quality (dust), visual and noise impacts.
- 4.13.3 A full assessment of such effects will be undertaken and detailed within the Environmental Statement.

Will the effects of Peartree Hill Solar Farm be considered together with other projects in the area?

- 4.13.4 There is potential for significant environmental effects of Peartree Hill Solar Farm to occur cumulatively with those of other approved developments.
- 4.13.5 Other projects to be included in the cumulative assessment have been selected based on identifying major developments that: have the same Zone of Influence as Peartree Hill Solar Farm for at least one environmental factor; have temporal crossover in the proposed dates for construction, operation and/or



decommissioning; and are of a scale and nature where a significant effect is likely. The other projects to be included in the cumulative assessment include consented and proposed solar schemes in proximity to Peartree Hill Solar Farm as well as other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects comprising offshore wind farms which are proposing to connect into the existing Creyke Beck Substation or a proposed new substation further north.

4.13.6 A full cumulative assessment will be reported in the Environmental Statement.



5 What happens next?

- 5.1.1 The statutory consultation period for Peartree Hill Solar Farm runs from Wednesday 15 May until Wednesday 26 June. More information can be found at the consultation website (<u>www.peartreehillsolar.co.uk</u>). As previously mentioned, the Preliminary Environmental Information Report, to which this Non-Technical Summary relates, is intended to enable interested parties, including members of the public, to understand the likely significant environmental effects of Peartree Hill Solar Farm to help inform their consultation responses.
- 5.1.2 There are a number of ways to respond to the consultation:
 - By returning a feedback form at the in-person consultation events (see the above website for details).
 - By sending feedback to FREEPOST PEARTREE HILL SOLAR FARM (no stamp required).
 - By completing the feedback form on the above website.
 - By email (<u>info@peartreehillsolar.co.uk</u>).
- 5.1.3 Any feedback that is received through the consultation process will help inform the ongoing design of Peartree Hill Solar Farm.



Appendix A: Location plan





Appendix B: Proposed operational layout plan





Appendix C : Environmental features plan







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