



# **Non-Technical Summary**

St Asaph Solar Farm

April 2026

Prepared for:  
Anesco Ltd

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Project Number:  
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## Non-Technical Summary

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This document provides a Non-Technical Summary ('NTS') of the Environmental Statement ('ES') prepared in relation to a Development of National Significance ('DNS') application for the St Asaph Solar Farm ('the Proposed Development') which has been submitted by Anesco ('the Applicant'). As this project is categorised as a DNS, Planning and Environmental Decisions Wales ('PEDW') will handle this application on behalf of the Welsh Ministers.

## 1.2 Terms and Definitions

- 1.2.1 The following terms have been used in the NTS:

- 'the Site' – the land on where the Proposed Development will be located (shown on the Site Location Plan at **Figure 1**). It includes:
  - The 'Solar Site' – the main area where the solar farm will be located. This forms the majority of the Site and is split into two sections approximately 250 m apart; and
  - The 'Cable Route' – the area of the Site needed for the cable route connection to St Asaph substation.
- 'the Proposed Development' – the construction, operation, and decommissioning of a solar farm, which full planning permission is sought for (as set out in **Chapter 3**).
- 'PEDW' – Planning and Environment Decisions Wales. The Welsh Ministers decide planning applications for Developments of National Significance (DNS). PEDW handle DNS applications on behalf of the Welsh Ministers.
- 'Denbighshire County Council (DCC)' – the local planning authority; and
- 'the Applicant' – Anesco Ltd.

## 1.3 Purpose of the ES and NTS

- 1.3.1 The ES has been prepared in accordance with relevant national legislation: (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations').
- 1.3.2 The ES presents the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') undertaken to report the likely significant environmental effects resulting from the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, including measures to mitigate adverse environmental effects.
- 1.3.3 The purpose of the NTS is to describe the Proposed Development and explain the key findings of the ES in a concise way using non-technical language.



## 2 Site and Surrounding Area

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Chapter 2 of the ES provides details of the Site and surrounding area.

### 2.2 The Site and Surrounding Area

2.2.1 The boundary of the Site is shown on **Figure 1**.

2.2.2 Within this NTS, reference is made to the Solar Site and Cable Route, which are defined in **Section 1.2**. For avoidance of doubt, any references to 'the Site' in this ES refer to both the Solar Site and Cable Route together.

2.2.3 The 35.53 hectare (ha) Site is located to the south-west of St Asaph and to the south-east of St Asaph Business Park. It is located within Denbighshire County.

2.2.4 The Solar Site is made up of two parcels (eastern and western) and is formed of agricultural fields separated by hedgerows. The Cable Route is limited to roads that connect the Solar Site to St Asaph Substation.

2.2.5 The Site is surrounded by a number of communities including St Asaph, Cefn Meiriadog, Bodelwyddan, Trefnant, Groesffordd Marli, and Bontneywdd; with Rhyl located in the north. The Site is found within the Vale of Clywd.

### 2.3 Environmental Context

#### Transport and Access

2.3.1 The Site is accessible to Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) via the road that runs between the eastern and western parcels (track to Tyn Y Coed). There are no public walkways, bridges or street lighting on this road.

2.3.2 There are a number of Public Right of Way (PRoW) pathways located around the Site. There are no PRoW within the Site.

#### Landscape and Visual

2.3.3 There are no designated landscape sites within or next to the Site. The nearest site is the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, located 5km to the east.

#### Heritage and Archaeology

2.3.4 There are no designated and no recorded non-designated historic features located within the Site.

2.3.5 Relevant surveys have identified that archaeology within the Site is of low to no significance and would not require areas of the Site to be preserved.

2.3.6 The Lower Elwy Valley Registered Historical Landscape and several listed buildings can be found in the surrounding area of the Site.

2.3.7 A Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (HEDBA) has been submitted in support of the planning application.



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### **Land and Soils**

- 2.3.8 A series of surveys and assessments classified the land within the Solar Site as Grade 3b; meaning the land is of moderate quality for growing crops but is limited by factors such as soil depth and climate, and does not qualify as Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.
- 2.3.9 An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Assessment has been submitted in support of the application.

### **Air Quality**

- 2.3.10 The Site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and there are no AQMA's within Denbighshire or surrounding authorities.

### **Flood Risk and Drainage**

- 2.3.11 The Site is located within Flood Zone A and is therefore at low risk of flooding for seas and rivers. Areas within the Site are at low risk of flooding from surface water and small watercourses.
- 2.3.12 The River Elwy is located 750m east of the Site at its closest point. The river runs in a northerly direction towards the northern coast of Wales. Drainage ditches are present in both the western and eastern parcel of the Site.
- 2.3.13 The rock beneath the Site is designated as a 'Secondary A' aquifer. These are underground layers of rock that can support water supplies on a local scale.
- 2.3.14 A Flood Consequence Assessment (FCA) and Drainage Strategy have been submitted in support of the planning application.

### **Biodiversity**

- 2.3.15 There are no designated ecological sites within or in the surrounding area of the Site boundary. Coedwigoedd Dyffryn Elwy / Elwy Valley Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is found 1 km from the southern Site boundary. This area is also designated as a Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI). Rhuddland Pond Local Nature Reserve (LNR) can be found 4 km to the north of the boundary.
- 2.3.16 Habitats within the Site are mostly grassland, with hedgerows acting as boundaries for the majority of the fields. Two small blocks of ancient woodland can be found outside the eastern Site boundary.
- 2.3.17 Ecological and Arboricultural Impact Assessments (AIA) have been submitted in support of the planning application.

### **Noise and Vibration**

- 2.3.18 A baseline noise survey was undertaken in 2022 and updated in 2025 to determine the existing noise levels at residential properties around the Site. The result of the noise impact assessment indicates that the Proposed Development would result in a low impact at existing residential properties as the proposed plant is located at a distance from sensitive receptors and sound levels are considerably below background sound levels.
- 2.3.19 A Noise Assessment has been submitted in support of the planning application.



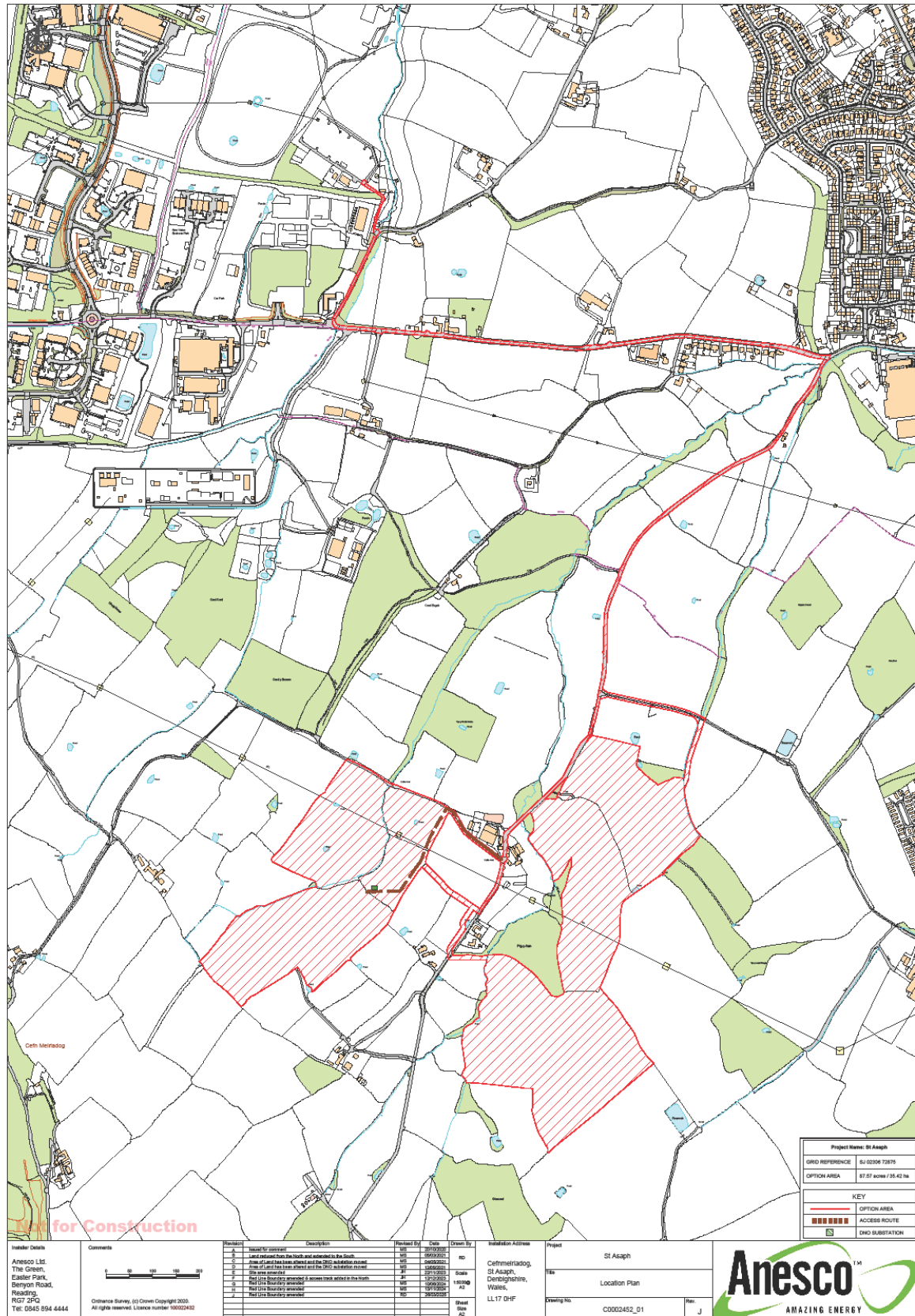


Figure 1: Updated Site Location Plan



## 3 The Proposed Development

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 **Chapter 3 of the ES** sets out the description of the Proposed Development for which full planning permission is being sought.

### 3.2 Description of the Development

- 3.2.1 The Proposed Development includes the construction, operation, and decommissioning of a solar energy generating station which includes photovoltaic panels mounted on a metal framework, substations, fencing, access tracks, landscape planting and enhancements for wildlife. The Proposed Development will have an operational lifespan of up to 40 years and a total installed capacity of 18.44MW. This includes the generation of enough electricity to power 4,777 homes.
- 3.2.2 The Site Layout Plan is shown in **Figure 2**.

### 3.3 Proposed Infrastructure

- 3.3.1 The Proposed Development will include the following key elements of infrastructure:
- Solar panel modules on a metal framework;
  - String inverters;
  - Low Voltage (LV) Switch / Transformer substations;
  - Point of Connection (POC) Customer Substations;
  - A District Network Operator (DNO) Substation;
  - On-Site cabling and an underground cable to the St Asaph substation;
  - Deer fencing;
  - Site accesses, access gates, and internal access tracks, CCTV security cameras; and
  - Landscape planting and ecological enhancements.
- 3.3.2 The Proposed Development will include solar panel modules on metal frames and will be installed to a height of approximately 3 m above ground level. These will be positioned in rows with approximately 4.5 m between front and back, so that the land within the Site can remain in agricultural use for grazing.
- 3.3.3 Inverters, transformers, substations, and electrical cabling (as shown in **the Site Layout Plan**) are examples of infrastructure that will be installed as part of the Proposed Development. To construct the DNO and customer substations, hardstanding surfaces will be introduced, which will provide a stable foundation for equipment and vehicle access.
- 3.3.4 Earthworks associated with the Proposed Development will be generally limited in scale and extent, and typically focussed on the DNO compounds and substation areas. Soil which is excavated and not used as part of the Proposed Development will be used for general levelling in the immediate area of the Site, not for the formation of shallow embankments.
- 3.3.5 For health and safety, and to prevent theft and/or criminal damage, a series of security measures will be introduced, including fencing and security cameras.



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- 3.3.6 No structures will be permanently lit on Site, there will only be emergency lighting on the DNO Substation.
- 3.3.7 The Site will be accessed via two existing access points off the track to Tyn y Coed. On-Site access tracks will be developed across the Site, using crushed stone, these will be 4-5 m in width to allow for two-way traffic. The southern access point will be widened to allow for the safe movement of large vehicles (including HGVs). The proposed layout shows a cable route from the centre of the western parcel of the Site to the highway; however, no access points are proposed in this location.
- 3.3.8 During the construction and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, temporary features will be added to facilitate works (as detailed in **Chapter 4**).
- 3.3.9 During the operation of the Proposed Development (40-year operational lifespan), periodic visits will be required to the Site for maintenance activities, including servicing and cleaning of plant and equipment, and vegetation management.



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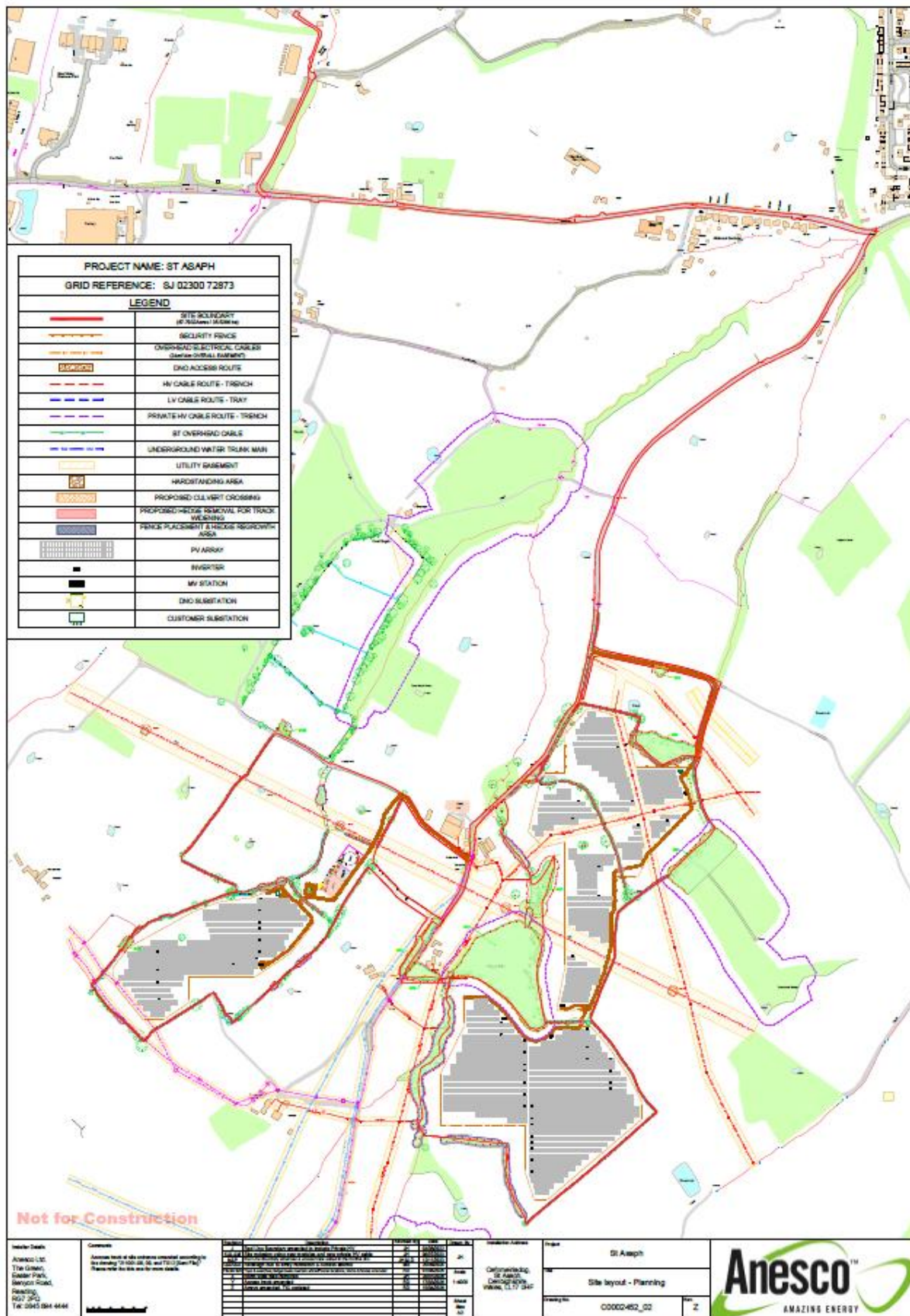


Figure 2: Updated Site Layout Plan



### 3.4 Primary Mitigation

- 3.4.1 In accordance with the EIA Regulations and best-practice guidance, the assessment has considered primary mitigation. Primary mitigation measures are those that form part of the scheme design. These include:
- A security fence located at least 10 metres around hedgerows and trees to make sure none of their features are impacted;
  - A buffer zone will be maintained around lowland woodland, which restricts any construction from happening, to avoid affecting the root systems of the trees;
  - A 30 m buffer zone around badger setts;
  - All ponds will be maintained as part of the Proposed Development;
  - To help protect the movement of Great Crested Newts (GCNs) populations, ponds, strips of woodland, hedgerows and long grass will be created and appropriately managed;
  - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be implemented to help with the movement of rainfall from the Site to storage areas;
  - Structures that produce noise are distanced far enough away from residential properties so that there is a low impact of noise from the Proposed Development; and
  - Any material removed from the ground during construction will remain on-site to be re-used.

### 3.5 Tertiary Mitigation

- 3.5.1 Tertiary mitigation are measures that are required to support the Planning Application, regardless of whether an EIA is required or not. Key tertiary mitigation includes:
- The Construction and Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) which sets out measures to control effects on the environment and local people during construction;

### 3.6 Consideration of Alternatives

#### No Development

- 3.6.1 The 'do nothing' alternative considers the future of the conditions at the Site, should the Proposed Development not progress. In this case, the Site would stay as agricultural fields, and none of the positive or negative effects reported in the ES and this NTS would occur.
- 3.6.2 The increased use of renewable energy sources, such as solar energy, is an important way to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases being added to the atmosphere. The UK Government has a target of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050. As the Proposed Development will provide 18.44 MW of electricity, a 'do-nothing' alternative would mean the energy and potential carbon savings would not occur and would not support the governments net zero target. Therefore, the Applicant did not consider this to be an acceptable or realistic alternative option.

#### Alternative Locations and Forms of Development

- 3.6.3 When considering the suitability a site for solar development, a number of different criteria are relevant such as planning policy designations, environmental constraints and designation, and technical criteria are considered including agricultural land classification, flood risk, and distance from the local community. Grid connection and land ownership are critical.



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- 3.6.4 The Proposed Development requires a suitable connection into the energy grid so that the electricity produced can be used. The project has an agreed point of connection (POC) at the St Asaph substation, which means the project will specifically contribute to government targets for low carbon energy and climate change mitigation. Available land is a key consideration once the potential for a connection to the grid has been established, and key to that is a willing landowner.
- 3.6.5 The Site is the only location where the landowner was willing to progress the Proposed Development and where a viable grid connection could be secured within the required timescales. The Site was therefore selected on the basis that it represents the only feasible location available to the Applicant that meets the technical, commercial and land control requirements necessary to deliver the Proposed Development.
- 3.6.6 No other uses were considered for the Proposed Development.

### 3.7 Design Evolution

- 3.7.1 The Site boundary has been amended to minimise potential environmental impacts whilst maximising the opportunities to provide mitigation and enhancement for the Site. More recently, the Proposed Development has further evolved to provide finer detail revisions following Site specific feedback and technical reports. This includes changes to the internal layout of the Site and access arrangements, which have been selected to represent the most appropriate balance between minimising environmental impacts and delivering renewable energy objectives.
- 3.7.2 The most recent design amendment involved the removal of all development from the western field parcel.



## 4 Construction, Site Management, and Decommissioning

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 **Chapter 4 of the ES** provides information on the construction methodology of the Proposed Development, Site management measures, and the decommissioning phase. The initial assessment of the Proposed Development uses reasonable assumptions and experience to allow for the assessment of the realistic “worst-case” construction phase effects.

### 4.2 Construction Programme

- 4.2.1 Construction for the Proposed Development is expected to commence at the beginning of 2028 and last approximately 36 weeks.

- 4.2.2 All construction works will be undertaken between the hours:

- 07:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday;
- 08:00 to 14:00 on Saturdays; and
- No work on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

### 4.3 Construction Activities

- 4.3.1 The activities on-Site during the construction phase are expected to include:

- Preparation of the Site for construction works. This includes placing fencing around the Site and making sure that any ecological / environmental protection measures are in place;
- The introduction of temporary construction compounds and internal access tracks;
- Deliveries and construction of each of the solar farm components and deliveries and construction of the substations;
- Laying the cables to connect the solar farm to the POC equipment;
- Testing of the equipment; and
- Landscaping and biodiversity improvements.

- 4.3.2 A CTMP will be used to help manage and avoid the environmental effects of construction work. The CTMP will provide information on roles, responsibilities and communication during construction as well as other construction management and mitigation measures. This document will be regularly updated.

### 4.4 Construction Traffic

- 4.4.1 To manage construction traffic (including HGVs and Light Goods Vehicles (LGV)s), construction vehicles will use appropriate access roads identified for the Proposed Development, (A55, A525, B5381) as outlined in **Section 4.4 of the ES**.



### 4.5 Construction Management

- 4.5.1 The Proposed Development will include temporary compounds during the construction period, for use as storage for materials and welfare facilities.
- 4.5.2 A CTMP has been prepared by the Applicant to avoid potentially significant environmental effects during the construction phase, measures include:
- Construction traffic using allocated roads;
  - Any excavated soil will be reused on-site;
  - Delivery vehicles will have no contact with muddy ground, limiting the amount of mud that gets moved onto the road outside. Wheel washing services will be available if they are needed
  - A member of the construction team will help co-ordinate HGVs arriving and leaving the Site; where possible, workers will be employed from the local area;
  - Delivery restrictions;
  - The vehicles will be serviced and maintained through regular inspections;
  - Fuelling will only be allowed in the designated fuelling area on Site.
  - Contractors will be required to follow the construction noise code of practice BS 5228; and
  - Incident and Pollution prevention measures and emergency response procedures.

### 4.6 Construction Waste

- 4.6.1 During the construction period, measures will be put in place which will work to minimise waste and help maximise opportunities for recycling. Relevant recycling and waste regulations and policy will be followed.
- 4.6.2 Construction waste will be managed and minimised using the Waste Hierarchy. This includes waste management methods such as:
- Waste Prevention;
  - Preparation for Reuse;
  - Material Recovery;
  - Other Recovery; and
  - Disposal.
- 4.6.3 A Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) will be produced, which will provide details on the amount and type of waste anticipated.

### 4.7 Decommissioning

- 4.7.1 Following the operational period of 40 years, and upon approval of a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP), the Proposed Development will be decommissioned. It is anticipated that the equipment required, vehicle trips taken and overall procedure will be similar to that used in the construction phase. All solar farm equipment will be removed and recycled or disposed of in accordance with best practice available at the time.



## 5 Assessment Method

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 **Chapter 5 of the ES** describes the process that has been used to carry out the EIA. It includes a discussion on the relevant regulations, the EIA process, consultations and the assessment methods applied.
- 5.1.2 The ES has been prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations and reference has also been made to currently available good practice guidance on EIA.

### 5.2 EIA Regulations

- 5.2.1 The EIA regulations set out the procedures for undertaking an EIA and the information, which is required in an ES, which has been followed in this assessment.

### 5.3 EIA Process

- 5.3.1 In general terms the main stages in the EIA are as follows:
- **Screening** – determining whether a proposed project falls within the remit of the EIA Regulations;
  - **Scoping** – determining the extent of issues to be considered in the assessment and reported in the ES;
  - **Establishing Baseline** – drawing together and reviewing existing available data and undertaking surveys to determine the existing and future baseline conditions;
  - **Assessment and Iteration** – assess likely significant effects of development, evaluate alternatives, provide feedback to design team on potential adverse impacts, modify development or impose parameters, incorporate mitigation, assess effects of mitigated development; and
  - **Preparation of the ES.**

### 5.4 Screening

- 5.4.1 An EIA screening report was submitted to PEDW in 2022 and PEDW responded that the application was not considered EIA development and that there were unlikely to be significant environmental effects. Following changes to the Proposed Development, a second EIA Screening Opinion Request was submitted to PEDW at the end of 2024, and an EIA Screening Direction was received from PEDW in February 2025 which concluded the Proposed Development was an EIA development and therefore required an ES.
- 5.4.2 The EIA Screening Direction provided a clear assessment of the relevant environmental points and concluded that significant effects were limited to landscape matters only and specifically the cumulative impact of the development and other consented development in the immediate area of the site.

### 5.5 Scoping

- 5.5.1 In light of the clear EIA Screening Direction the Applicant has not sought a formal Scoping Opinion from PEDW. Instead the ES has been informed by the Screening Direction. The EIA Screening Direction identified significant effects are only likely with respect to landscape character and visual amenity.



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- 5.5.2 As such, the ES is limited to landscape character and visual amenity assessment. For all other environmental topics, no likely significant effects are expected, and these are assessed in standalone assessments submitted with the application. Further justification as to why all other topics have been scoped out is provided in **Chapter 5 of the ES**, and this includes further specific information on biodiversity, which has been summarised below:

### Biodiversity

- 5.5.3 An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) (Appendix A.5) dated April 2025 (updated March 2026), prepared by SLR has been submitted as part of the planning application. The EclA assesses the potential effects of the Proposed Development on ecological receptors, including statutory designated sites, non-statutory designated sites, habitats and protected species.
- 5.5.4 The EclA confirms that, following updates to the Site layout and step-by-step design process, the Proposed Development will not lead to any likely significant adverse effects on ecological receptors. The assessment has been informed by site-specific survey data, desk-based review and the application of standard ecological impact assessment methodologies.
- 5.5.5 Biodiversity is not considered capable of giving rise to likely significant effects for the purposes of the EIA Regulations and is therefore not considered to constitute an EIA topic in its own right. Biodiversity has therefore been scoped out of the ES.

## 5.6 Consultation

- 5.6.1 Relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies have been contacted to agree the scope of assessments, to provide information, to discuss assessment methods and findings, and / or agree appropriate mitigation measures and design responses.

## 5.7 Assessment Assumptions

- 5.7.1 **Section 5.7** of the ES provides a list of assumptions made regarding the planning conditions, relevant procedures, and preparation of baseline conditions within the EIA process that provides a robust assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development.

## 5.8 Uncertainty and Limitations

- 5.8.1 The studies undertaken within the ES have balanced the beneficial and adverse effects of the Proposed Development and, where possible, data and accepted criteria have been used alongside expert knowledge and judgements.
- 5.8.2 Where necessary, **Chapter 7** of the ES describes any limitations and uncertainty in the prediction of likely environmental effects.

## 5.9 Assessing Effects

### Establishing Baseline Conditions

- 5.9.1 To better understand the environmental conditions at the Site and in the surrounding area, a range of Site surveys and data collection exercises have been completed to aid assessment work. The EIA has assessed likely significant effects of the Proposed Development against baseline conditions in the same year. The EIA also considers how the site would evolve in the future without the Proposed Development

## 5.10 Assessing Construction and Decommissioning Effects

- 5.10.1 Construction and decommissioning effects will be temporary and intermittent. The potential duration and intermittency of effects is identified as appropriate in **Chapter 7** based on the information provided in **Chapter 4 of the ES**.



### Assessing Operational Effects

- 5.10.2 The EIA has focused on assessing the Proposed Development, so that the full environmental effects of the full planning application have been considered.

### 5.11 Mitigation and Enhancement

- 5.11.1 Mitigation measures are used to help avoid, minimise or compensate for adverse effects. The primary mitigation for the Site is set out in **Section 7.6** and within **Chapter 7**.
- 5.11.2 The ES will identify primary (**Section 3.4**), secondary (**Section 7.5**) and tertiary (**Section 3.5**) mitigation measures for the construction, operation, and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. These can be defined as follows:
- Primary Mitigation – changes to the main design or location of the project during the pre-application phase, which then do not require additional actions to be taken.
  - Secondary Mitigation – further action is needed for the measure to achieve the expected outcome. These actions may form part of the planning consent or be part of the ES.
  - Tertiary Mitigation – actions that would happen with or without an EIA. This may include actions that are already being used to meet legal requirements or already form part of standard practice. These may often be used to manage commonly occurring environmental effects.
- 5.11.3 Methods used in mitigating significant effects will be outlined using a hierarchy and will be ordered in preference of avoidance, reduction and compensation measures.
- 5.11.4 For mitigation measures that have been considered uncertain, data and / or professional judgement has been introduced to help support assumptions made.

### 5.12 Assessment of Cumulative Effects

- 5.12.1 The EIA Regulations require an assessment of likely significant effects of the Proposed Development in the context of other existing and/or approved projects, as well as the overall effect from the Proposed Development and these other developments which have been agreed through consultation with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), PEDW, and DCC.
- 5.12.2 The list of cumulative developments considered in the EIA is provided in **Appendix B.8 of the ES**.

### 5.13 Significance Criteria

- 5.13.1 Two main criteria of determining the significance of an environmental effect are the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity of the receptor/resource. The approach to assessing significance has considered EIA Regulations, guidelines and sector standards. **Section 5.13** outlines relevant questions used to evaluate significance.
- 5.13.2 Specific significance criteria have been prepared for each specialist topic, based on the generic criteria, for adverse and beneficial effects, set out in **Table 1**, below.

Table 1: Generic Significance Criteria



## Non-Technical Summary

|                    | Level of Effect | Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Significant</i> | Substantial     | These effects are assigned this level of significance as they represent key factors in the decision-making process. These effects are generally, but not exclusively, associated with sites and features of national or regional importance. A change at a borough scale site or feature may also enter this category. |
|                    | Major           | These effects are likely to be important considerations at a local scale and may become key factors in the decision-making process.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                    | Moderate        | These effects, while important at a local scale, are not likely to be key decision-making issues. Nevertheless, the cumulative effect of such issues may lead to an increase in the overall effects on a particular area or on a particular resource.                                                                  |

|                        | Level of Effect         | Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Not significant</i> | Minor                   | These effects may be raised as local issues but are unlikely to be of importance in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, they are of relevance in enhancing the subsequent design of the project and consideration of mitigation or compensation measures. |
|                        | Negligible or No Effect | Either no effect or effect which is beneath the level of perception, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error. Such effects should not be considered by the decision-maker.                                                   |

- 5.13.3 Substantial and Major significance levels (positive or negative) allocated during assessments should not, in themselves, indicate whether an application is accepted or refused.

### 5.14 Monitoring

- 5.14.1 The EIA Regulations introduce a requirement that significant adverse environmental effects should be monitored where appropriate. Relevant monitoring methods are outlined in **Chapter 7**.



## **6 Planning Policy and Context**

### **6.1 Introduction**

- 6.1.1 Chapter 6 of the ES outlines planning policy relevant to the Proposed Development.

### **6.2 National Planning Policy Context**

#### **Future Wales: the national plan 2040 (February 2021)**

- 6.2.1 This is the current national development framework for Wales. The plan sets the direction of development for Wales to 2040 and presents ways in which the government will address key national priorities including decarbonisation and climate resilience. It is one of several policy documents that are involved in infrastructure and development in Wales.
- 6.2.2 Future Wales recognises the challenges climate change will have on future generations and the pressures it places on infrastructure and the built environment. As such, the Welsh Government provides support for the development of renewable energy projects and is committed to ensuring the planning system in Wales can be a leader in renewables.

#### **Planning Policy Wales (February 2024)**

- 6.2.3 PPW is used in the decision-making process to address targets for renewable energy and decarbonisation in planning policy. It seeks to reduce fossil fuel usage in energy generation in a way that increases the benefits to the economy and communities whilst minimising potential environmental and social impacts.

### **6.3 Local Planning Policy and Guidance**

#### **Denbighshire County Council Local Development Plan (2006-2021) (Adopted June 2013)**

- 6.3.1 The DCC Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out a series of objectives and policies that help address current issues and needs within the county. These policies cover topics such as renewable energy technologies, water management and the conservation of natural resources.

#### **Replacement Denbighshire Local Development Plan**

- 6.3.2 DCC is in the process of creating a replacement LDP 2018-2033 that will address updated national policies and become the Preferred Strategy.

### **6.4 Supplementary Planning Documents**

- 6.4.1 DCC have prepared several Supplementary Planning Guidance notes as well as The Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Guide (April 2016) to support planning considerations of solar energy schemes.



## 7 Landscape and Visual

### 7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 **Chapter 7 of the ES** presents the findings on the assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the environment with respect to Landscape and Visual matters. A summary is provided below.

### 7.2 Baseline Conditions

- 7.2.1 The Landscape and Visual assessment uses a study area of 5 km from the Solar Site, as well as land within the Clwdian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape.

#### The Surrounding Area

- 7.2.2 The study area is mainly formed of agricultural land, however it is crossed by energy pylons, overhead lines and there is some industrial development in the area (e.g. St Asaph Business Park, a substation, and photonics factory). Towards the south of the Site there are several small farmsteads and small villages.
- 7.2.3 There are several roads within the study area, including the A55, A525, A541, A547, B5381, and unnamed lanes. No PRow are present within the Site. There are PRow within the surrounding area, the closest is a bridleway 65m north of the western parcel of the Site. The remaining PRow are over 700 m from the Site.
- 7.2.4 At a regional scale, the Site is located within a wide valley where the River Elwy and Clwyd flow through. These rivers meet 3.5 km north of the Site and flow into the Irish Sea at Rhyl. The land in the study area includes lower slopes of the Rhos Hills that rise in the south-west. The majority of settlements can be found on lower-lying land, with some also located on the sloping valley sides.
- 7.2.5 Hedgerow and hedgerow trees are a key part of the agricultural land in the study area. Areas of woodland can also be found throughout the surrounding area, some of which is Ancient Woodland. These hedgerows and trees provide screening in many places.
- 7.2.6 The Site does not lie within any areas designated for their landscape or scenic beauty, but within the study area are the following designated sites and features:
- The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, 5 km to the east of the Solar Site;
  - Elwy Valley Woods / Elwy and Meirchion Woods and Caves SSSI and SAC, 1 km south of the Solar Site;
  - Pontnewydd Cave Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site, 1.4 km to the south of the Site and Cefn & Galltfaenan Caves GCR, 1.6 km to the south of the Solar Site;
  - Rhuddland Pond Local Nature Reserve (LNR), 4.4 km to the north of the Solar Site;
  - Several Regionally Important Geodiversity Site (RIGS) locations to the south-west of the Solar Site;
  - The Lower Elwy Valley Registered Historic Landscape can be found 410 m to the south of the Solar Site;
  - The Vale of Clywd Registered Historic Landscape 2.5 km to the south-east of the Solar Site;



## Non-Technical Summary

- Many Scheduled Monuments, the nearest of which is 600 m southwest of the Solar Site;
- Five Registered Parks and Gardens, the nearest of which is 1.7 km northwest of the Solar Site;
- Five Conservation Areas including St Asaph 1.2 km northeast of the Solar Site; and
- Several listed buildings, the nearest being the Church of St Mary, 900 m south of the Solar Site.

7.2.7 The Site is located within National Landscape Character Areas (NLCAs): NLCA11: Vale of Clwyd and NLCA09: Rhos Hills.

### The Site

7.2.8 The Solar Site boundaries are defined by hedgerows, trees, and woodland blocks. The eastern parcel is well contained by woodland vegetation to the north, east, and west, which limits visibility with the surrounding area in these directions. Woodland also limits visibility of the western parcel from the north, and hedgerows filter visibility from the east and west. To the south, there are more open views of both parcels. Both parcels have some visibility with the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape and the Cefn Meiriadog (a ridge to the southwest).

7.2.9 Site context photographs are provided in **Appendix B.5 of the ES** and a full description of the potential views and sensitive receptors can be found in **Section 7.5 of the ES**.

### Baseline Evolution

7.2.10 Were the Proposed Development not to come forward, the Site would remain agricultural and likely managed using the current management processes.

## 7.3 Primary and Tertiary Mitigation

### Primary Mitigation

7.3.1 The mitigation strategy is illustrated in **Figure 3: Landscape Strategy Plan**.

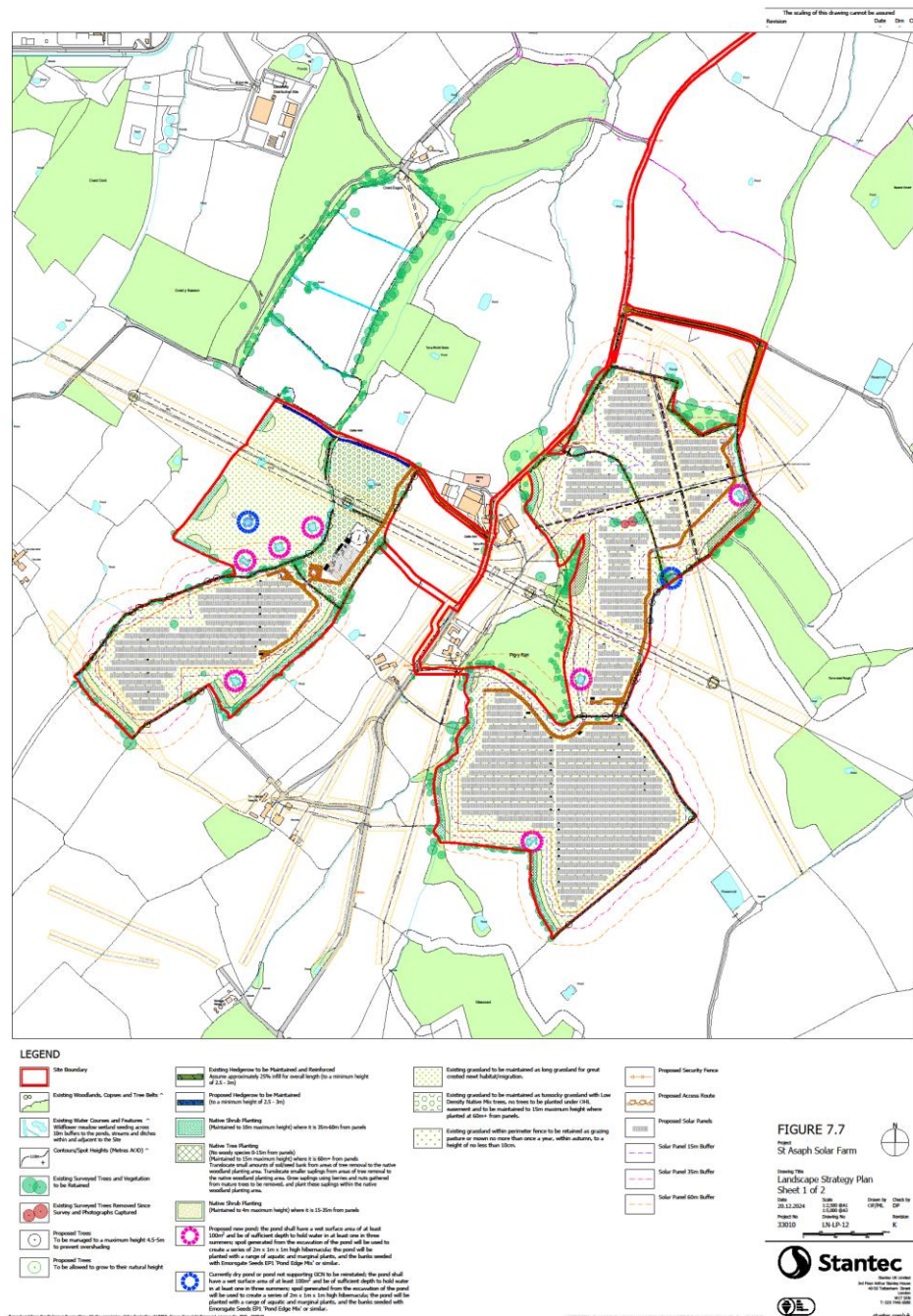
7.3.2 A summary of relevant primary mitigation includes:

- Positioning structures away from nearby roads to reduce visibility for sensitive areas;
- Maintaining and planting vegetation along the Site boundaries;
- Consideration of the height and scale of development to limit the potential for views;
- Retaining and managing vegetation on Site to encourage improved biodiversity;
- A hedgerow improvement strategy (including 173 m of new hedgerow and 2.8 km of improvements to existing hedgerow) to increase habitat value and provide a visual barrier to the Proposed Development;
- Native tree planting within the Site to improve wooded character and screen the Proposed Development;
- Enhancing the Site through shrub planting and pond, ditch, and stream enhancements (wildflower meadow wetland seeding);



## Non-Technical Summary

- Grassland will be kept short within the Site boundary via mowing or grazing, and allowed to grow longer outside the fence. This will result in improved habitat across 26.75 ha of grassland;
- To prevent shading of panels, proposed and existing vegetation will be managed at a minimum height, with woody vegetation being kept at a buffer distance from the panels; and
- No panels are to be introduced into the north-western field of the Site to avoid conflicts with the ecological mitigation associated with the Mona Wind Farm application.



### Figure 3: Landscape Strategy Plan

### Tertiary Mitigation

- 7.3.3 No tertiary mitigation has been identified in relation to operational landscape and visual effects as a result of the Proposed Development.

### Glint and Glare

- 7.3.4 A Glint and Glare study has been prepared by Pager Power to assess the potential effects arising from the Proposed Development on the surrounding area and population as a result of reflections from the solar panels. This study is provided in **Appendix B.10 of the ES**.
- 7.3.5 Based on the results of the Glint and Glare Assessment, visual receptors are considered highly unlikely to experience visual effects as a result of solar panel reflections and no mitigation is required.

## 7.4 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

### Overview

- 7.4.1 The assessment of landscape and visual considers effects of the Proposed Development on:
- Landscape character within which the Site is located;
  - Landscape features (the 'fabric' or features, which contribute to character); and
  - Views available to people and their visual amenity, from publicly accessible viewpoints.
- 7.4.2 Due to the limited length of the construction period, these effects would only be experienced for a brief period, reducing their impact. As such, construction impacts have been scoped out of the assessment as they are unlikely to result in significant landscape and visual effects.
- 7.4.3 Operational effects associated with the cable route are scoped out of the assessment as the cable will be below ground and will not result in significant landscape or visual effects.

### Operational Phase – Year 1

#### Landscape

- 7.4.4 Four landscape features will be subject to **moderate adverse (significant)** effects as a result of the Proposed Development. This includes:
- Geological Landscape AA Cefn Meiriadog;
  - Historic Landscape AA Bont-newydd;
  - The character of the Solar Site; and
  - Open fields.
- 7.4.5 The remaining 27 landscape features will not experience significant effects, as follows: eight landscape features will be subject of **minor adverse effects (not significant)**, ten landscape features will be subject to **negligible adverse effects (not significant)**, six landscape features will be subject to **no effects (not significant)**, and three landscape features will be subject to **negligible beneficial effects (not significant)** as a result of the Proposed Development.



## Non-Technical Summary

### Visual

- 7.4.6 One visual feature will experience **moderate adverse effects (significant)** as a result of the Proposed Development, this is the users of the north-south lane that runs between the two parcels of the Site.
- 7.4.7 The remaining 14 visual features will not experience significant effects, as follows: ten visual features will experience **minor adverse effects (not significant)**, and four visual features will experience **negligible adverse effects (not significant)** as a result of the Proposed Development.

### Operational Phase – Year 15

#### Landscape

- 7.4.8 By Year 15, none of the landscape features will be subject to significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development. Four of the landscape features will be subject to **minor adverse effects (not significant)**, seventeen landscape features will be subject to **negligible adverse effects (not significant)**, six landscape features will be subject to **no effects (not significant)** and four landscape features will be subject to **minor beneficial effects (not significant)** as a result of the Proposed Development.

#### Visual

- 7.4.9 By Year 15, none of the visual features will be subject to significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development. Three visual features will experience **minor adverse effects (not significant)**, eight visual features will be subject to **negligible adverse effects (not significant)** and four visual features will be experience **no effects (not significant)** as a result of the Proposed Development.

## 7.5 Secondary Mitigation and Enhancement

- 7.5.1 The LEMP provides a strategy for the overall management and maintenance of the landscape features of the Proposed Development.

## 7.6 Residual Effects

### Operational Phase – Year 1

- 7.6.1 At Year 1, the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) will not have been implemented over a long enough period and landscape planting would not be matured enough to reduce the significance of effects. As such, the residual effects remain the same as those identified above.

### Operational Phase – Year 15

- 7.6.2 By Year 15, the planting and habitats will have had time to grow and establish. The management measures set out in the LEMP will have a positive impact on the quality of the vegetation onsite. However, this positive impact will not change the level of the significant of effects. As such, the residual effects remain the same as those identified above.

## 7.7 Cumulative Effects

- 7.7.1 This section outlines the likely cumulative landscape and visual effects resulting from the Proposed Development and other committed or anticipated developments. Operational developments form part of the baseline for this assessment, so cannot be assessed as cumulative schemes. Developments with beneficial impacts have also not been considered as they would not represent a 'worst-case' scenario approach.



## Non-Technical Summary

- 7.7.2 Full commentary on the magnitude and significance of landscape and visual cumulative effects is set out in **Appendix B.8: Cumulative Effects Table of the ES**.

### Operational Phase – Year 1

- 7.7.3 At Year 1 of the operational phase, where the effects of the Proposed Development alone are not significant, five landscape components will experience **moderate to major adverse** cumulative effects:

- Geological Landscape AA Bodelwyddan;
- Landscape Habitats AA Cefn Improved Grassland;
- Cultural Landscape Services AA Cefn Estate;
- Historic Landscape AA Pentre-mawr; and
- Visual and Sensory AA Cefn Estate.

- 7.7.4 Two landscape components will experience **moderate adverse** cumulative effects:

- Geological Landscape AA Waen Gloeugoed; and
- Visual and Sensory AA Vale Wooded Estate-South of Dyserth.

- 7.7.5 Two landscape components will experience **minor to moderate adverse** cumulative effects:

- LCA D/LC/6: Vale of Clwyd North; and
- Visual and Sensory AA Vale of Clwyd-North of Denbigh.

- 7.7.6 At Year 1 of the operational phase, where the effects of the Proposed Development alone are not significant, one visual component (users of the north/south lane that runs between the parcels) will experience **major adverse** cumulative effects.

- 7.7.7 Five visual components will experience **moderate to major adverse** cumulative effects:

- Users of the lane that runs along the eastern slopes of the Cefn Meiriadog ridge;
- Residents at Isfryn, Ty Celyn, Cefn Farm, Caubwll, 1 and 2 Camrau, 1 and 2 Church View and Rhewl;
- Residents at Tyddyn Meredydd;
- Users of PRoW and lanes within and immediately adjacent to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape; and
- Residents of properties within and immediately adjacent to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape.

- 7.7.8 Three visual components will experience **moderate adverse** cumulative effects:

- Users of Wigfair Hall;
- Residents at Tan y Bryn and Tan y Bryn Uchaf; and
- Users of the churchyard of the Church of St Mary in Cefn Meiriadog.

- 7.7.9 Three visual components will experience **minor to moderate adverse** cumulative effects:



## Non-Technical Summary

- Residents at Coed yr Esgob;
- Residents at Tyn y Fford Fawr, Squirrels Lodge, Tyn y Ffordd Bach, Tyn y Fford Newydd and Rhos Aber; and
- Pedestrians on the short distance local footpaths PRow 105/3, 105/4 and 105/6.

### Operational Phase – Year 15

7.7.10 At Year 15 of the operational phase, where the effects of the Proposed Development alone are not significant, three landscape components will experience **moderate adverse** cumulative effects:

- The character of the Solar Site;
- Geological Landscape AA Cefn Meiriadog; and
- Historic Landscape AA Bont-newydd.

7.7.11 Five landscape components will experience **minor to moderate adverse** cumulative effects:

- LCA D/LC/6: Vale of Clwyd North;
- Geological Landscape AA Bodelwyddan;
- Cultural Landscape Services AA Cefn Estate;
- Historic Landscape AA Pentre-mawr; and
- Visual and Sensory AA Cefn Estate.

7.7.12 Also, at Year 15 of the operational phase, where the effects of the Proposed Development alone are not significant, two visual components will experience **moderate to major adverse** cumulative effects:

- Users of PRow and lanes within and immediately adjacent to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape; and
- Residents of properties within and immediately adjacent to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape.

7.7.13 One visual component will experience **moderate adverse** cumulative effects (users of the north/south lane that runs between the parcels)

7.7.14 Three visual components will experience **minor to moderate adverse** cumulative effects:

- Users of the lane that runs along the eastern slopes of the Cefn Meiriadog ridge;
- Residents at Isfryn, Ty Celyn, Cefn Farm, Caubwll, 1 and 2 Camrau, 1 and 2 Church View and Rhewl; and
- Residents at Tyddyn Meredydd.

## 7.8 Monitoring

7.8.1 The LEMP prepared for the Proposed Development provides a management strategy for the landscape and associated ecology. This document should be regularly renewed and amended as circumstances change.



## 8 Conclusion

- 8.1.1 This non-technical summary has been prepared by Stantec on behalf of Anesco (The Applicant) in relation to a full Development of National Significance (DNS) application for the construction, operation and decommissioning of a ground mounted photovoltaic (PV) solar farm, together with associated equipment, infrastructure, and ancillary works (the 'Proposed Development') on Land at Cefn Meiriadog, St Asaph (the 'Site').
- 8.1.2 This non-technical summary supports the associated ES, which presents the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended) and identifies the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development during construction, operation and decommissioning.
- 8.1.3 The Scope of the ES has been informed by the Screening Direction received from PEDW, which identified that significant effects are likely in relation to landscape character and visual amenity only. As such, the scope of the ES is limited to landscape character and visual amenity. For the remainder of the environmental topics, no likely significant environmental effects are anticipated, and where appropriate these are assessed in standalone assessments submitted with the application. Other documents submitted with the application include:
- Planning, Design, and Access Statement;
  - Ecological Impact Assessment and associated protected species survey reports;
  - Transport Statement;
  - Construction and Traffic Management Plan (CTMP);
  - Noise Assessment;
  - Arboricultural Impact Assessment;
  - Flood Consequences Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy;
  - Glint and Glare Assessment;
  - Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment;
  - Geophysical Survey Report; and
  - Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Assessment

### 8.2 Conclusion

- 8.2.1 **Chapter 7** assesses the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character and visual amenity. A summary of the identified residual effects is provided in **Table 7.6**, and a summary is provided below.

#### **Operational Phase – Year 1**

##### **Landscape**

- 8.2.2 Four landscape receptors will be subject to **moderate adverse (significant)** effects as a result of the Proposed Development. This includes:
- Geological Landscape AA Cefn Meiriadog;



## Non-Technical Summary

- Historic Landscape AA Bont-newydd;
- The character of the Solar Site; and
- Open fields.

8.2.3 The remaining 27 landscape receptors will not experience significant effects, as follows: eight landscape receptors will be subject of **minor adverse effects (not significant)**, ten landscape receptors will be subject to **negligible adverse effects (not significant)**, six landscape receptors will be subject to **no effects (not significant)**, and three landscape receptors will be subject to **negligible beneficial effects (not significant)** as a result of the Proposed Development.

### Visual

8.2.4 One visual receptor will experience **moderate adverse effects (significant)** as a result of the Proposed Development, this is the uses of the north-south lane that runs between the two parcels of the Site.

8.2.5 The remaining 14 visual receptors will not experience significant effects, as follows: ten visual receptors will experience **minor adverse effects (not significant)**, and four visual receptors will experience **negligible adverse effects (not significant)** as a result of the Proposed Development.

## Operational Phase – Year 15

### Landscape

8.2.6 By Year 15, none of the landscape receptors will be subject to significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development. Four of the landscape receptors will be subject to **minor adverse effects (not significant)**, seventeen landscape receptors will be subject to **negligible adverse effects (not significant)**, six landscape receptors will be subject to **no effects (not significant)** and four landscape receptors will be subject to **minor beneficial effects (not significant)** as a result of the Proposed Development.

### Visual

8.2.7 By Year 15, none of the visual receptors will be subject to significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development. Three visual receptors will experience **minor adverse effects (not significant)**, eight visual receptors will be subject to **negligible adverse effects (not significant)** and four visual receptors will be experience **no effects (not significant)** as a result of the Proposed Development.

## Cumulative Effects

### Operational Phase – Year 1

8.2.8 At Year 1 of the operational phase, where the effects of the Proposed Development alone are not significant, five landscape receptors will experience **moderate to major adverse cumulative effects**, two of the landscape receptors will experience **moderate adverse cumulative effects**, and two landscape receptors will experience **minor to moderate adverse cumulative effects**.

8.2.9 At Year 1 of the operational phase, where the effects of the Proposed Development alone are not significant, one visual receptor will experience **major adverse cumulative effects**. Five visual receptors will experience **moderate to major adverse cumulative effects**, three visual receptors will experience **moderate adverse cumulative effects**, and three visual receptors will experience **minor to moderate adverse cumulative effects**.



## Non-Technical Summary

### Operational Phase – Year 15

- 8.2.10 At Year 15 of the operational phase, where the effects of the Proposed Development alone are not significant, three landscape receptors will experience **moderate adverse** cumulative effects. Five landscape receptors will experience **minor to moderate adverse** cumulative effects.
- 8.2.11 Also, at Year 15 of the operational phase, where the effects of the Proposed Development alone are not significant, two visual receptors will experience moderate to major adverse cumulative effects. One visual receptor will experience moderate adverse cumulative effects and three visual receptors will experience minor to moderate adverse cumulative effects

