

Planning Statement for Planning Application for Green Energy Park Development and Associated Works

Asland Walk Energy Park, Plocks Farm, Bretherton

On behalf of Bretherton Energy Co-Op and GA Pet Food
Partners

Date: December 2025 | Pegasus Ref: P20-1445

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Document Management.

Version	Date	Author	Checked/ Approved by:	Reason for revision
V0	05.09.25	ER	ER	Draft
V1	20.10.25	ER	NC	Peer Review
V2	28.10.25	ER	NC	Peer Review
V3	08.12.25	ER	NC	Client Review
V4	10.12.25	ER	NC	Client Review
V5	11.12.25	ER	NC	Final



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of the applicant, Bretherton Energy Co-Op (BEC) and GA Pet Food Partners (GA), known collectively as the Bretherton Energy Partnership (BEP), in support of the planning application for the construction of a green energy park and associated works at Asland Walk Energy Park, Plocks Farm, Bretherton.
- 1.2. This collaborative development proposal is a step on the journey, providing the means to change the way we heat and power homes and businesses, transitioning from the current reliance on expensive and volatile fossil fuels to the use of zero-carbon renewable power, generated locally through low- and stable-costing wind and solar. The BEP was established in 2022, with the members working collectively for the advancement of the proposed development plans, the community energy engagement, the energy club establishment and other associated matters. The Partnership's working party involves various members of the Bretherton Parish Council, Bretherton residents and members of GA Pet Food Partners.

Following a description of the site, consideration is given to the proposed development. The report assesses the proposal in relation to relevant planning policy and shall demonstrate that the application is in accordance with the Development Plan. This statement draws conclusions as to the suitability of the proposal for the granting of planning permission in the context of the Development Plan and taking into account any material considerations.

Who are GA Pet Food Partners?

- 1.3. GA Pet Food Partners are a local success story and major employer within Chorley. The business has rapidly grown over the last 30-years supporting over 650 jobs. The growth of GA has been supported from the very beginning, and throughout its development by Chorley Council, who through the encouragement of adopting a 10-year master plan approach allowed for flexibility as the business needs of GA changed. This has given GA the confidence to invest in its people and the physical plant and machinery to develop what is a 'World Class' pet food manufacturing facility. GA has its roots firmly set within Chorley and wants to ensure it continues to prosper in the area.
- 1.4. Over the last 30 years GA has been in a continual state of flux, evolving to keep pace with the needs of the markets, its customers, and the prevailing economic circumstances. With this experience the business has realised that it cannot continue to be vulnerable to the peaks and demands imposed by the large grocery style brands, so has changed its strategy to serve smaller independent retailers across the UK and Europe with a range of personalized dry pet food. These retailers work in close collaboration with GA and are seen as Partners (the term GA uses for its customers): the pet food products are formulated in conjunction with these Partners, who are then able to brand it and sell it as their own bespoke product.
- 1.5. It has always been recognized that the business needs to be agile enough to respond to changing circumstances (such as best practice, market forces, and changes to the legislative framework), and interim planning applications between the masterplan 'milestones' have been an accepted part of the process.
- 1.6. Growth of the business has resulted in a highly successful and efficient operation, incorporating highly technical production facilities and high-quality employment opportunities. Over the period of the business growth, the company has endeavoured to work cooperatively with the local community and Planning Authority, to achieve and maintain

high standards of business and environmental sustainability. The current proposal seeks to maintain this successful approach.

The Local Need for the Proposal

- 1.7. GA currently consumes 33 million kilowatt hours of gas and 23 million kilowatt hours of electricity annually comprising 17 times the total of Bretherton's total energy consumption. GA's annual energy bill was £5.8 million before the 2022 energy crisis and with the subsequent sharp rises in global costs now stands at £11.6 million per annum (September 2024). It is acknowledged that in 2023 this contributed to 24% of Chorley's Borough commercial and industrial CO₂ emissions.
- 1.8. The installations proposed at the Asland Walks Energy Park comprise a 4.2MW wind turbine combined with 12MW of solar panels and 5MWh of battery storage: resulting in a carbon saving of 421,917 tCO²e per annum.
- 1.9. The site would generate an estimated 29,585, 543 kilowatts per annum of electrical power. 5% of this would go to Bretherton residents (1,479, 277 kilowatts per annum), with the balance of 28,106,265 kilowatts per annum to support the business at GA. The renewable energy park is designed to operate with maximum self-sufficiency. Any electricity generated that exceeds the business' immediate demand will be fully utilized through the proposed thermal electrification storage, converting the surplus renewable power into heat, thereby ensuring minimal electricity export to grid. This approach to managing surplus electricity simultaneously addresses the decarbonization of GA's gas consumption, which holds parity with the decarbonization of the business' electricity load.

Bretherton Energy Co-Op

- 1.10. In addition to supporting the energy requirements of GA, the proposal will enable the provision of renewable energy to the local community through BEC.
- 1.11. An initial assessment estimates that 280 properties in Bretherton will use an average of 2,700kWh, the school, 6,000 kWh and the pub 15,000 kWh. This is a total village demand of around 777,0000 kWh and associated emission for the UK electricity grid show that emissions of over 155 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year can be avoided.
- 1.12. The Bretherton Community through the 'Bretherton Energy Club' will be supplied with up to 5% of the generation from the Asland Walks wind turbine and solar arrays and sell it to local households at a local tariff rate. This rate would be lower than consumer market priced but high enough to cover the running costs of the Club. Surplus generation not used (up to 5% of the generation) would be sold to GA or the grid by GA, and the revenue generated given to BEC to administer – this could be used to further reduce energy bills by supporting initiatives such as the provision of grants/low-interest loans to make homes more energy efficient, or funding for electric vehicle charging points or other community projects as agreed.
- 1.13. The Asland Walks Energy Park '5&' is estimated to generate twice the current electrical energy used by residents, allowing them to benefit from lower electrical costs and support their transition from coal, fuel oil, and gas to electricity, as well as saving 419 tonnes of carbon in doing so.

Pre-Application Discussions

- 1.14. A request for pre-application advice was submitted to Chorley Council in October 2024 (Reference 2024/00025/PREAPP). An Addendum statement in January 2025 presented the benefits of reducing the turbine height to 110.64m, and it is these two submissions which were reviewed by the Council.
- 1.15. A meeting and site visit was held on 28 February 2025 and subsequent written advice received on 3 April 2025.
- 1.16. In light of the location of the site within the Green Belt the advice from Officers outlines that very special circumstances will need to be demonstrated to outweigh the definitional harm to the Green Belt, which must be accorded substantial weight in line with the Framework. It was also advised that Officers were of the view that the proposal would likely cause an unacceptable loss of openness and result in significant encroachment into the countryside but this may be reduced through an appropriate landscape strategy.
- 1.17. The pre-application advice made no reference to the Grey Belt policy as introduced in the December 2024 update of the NPPF.

EIA Screening

- 1.18. An EIA Screening Request was made under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulation 2017, to determine whether the proposals comprise EIA development and the requirement of an Environmental Statement. This was determined under reference 25/00372/SCE. The Screening Decision from Chorley Council outlined that it is the Authority's opinion that an EIA submission is not required (dated 18 July 2025).

2. Site Description and Context

2.1. The site is located on land Asland Walk to the south east of the GA's base at Plocks Farm. The site comprises approximately 39.70 hectares of agricultural land as detailed on Figure 1 below.

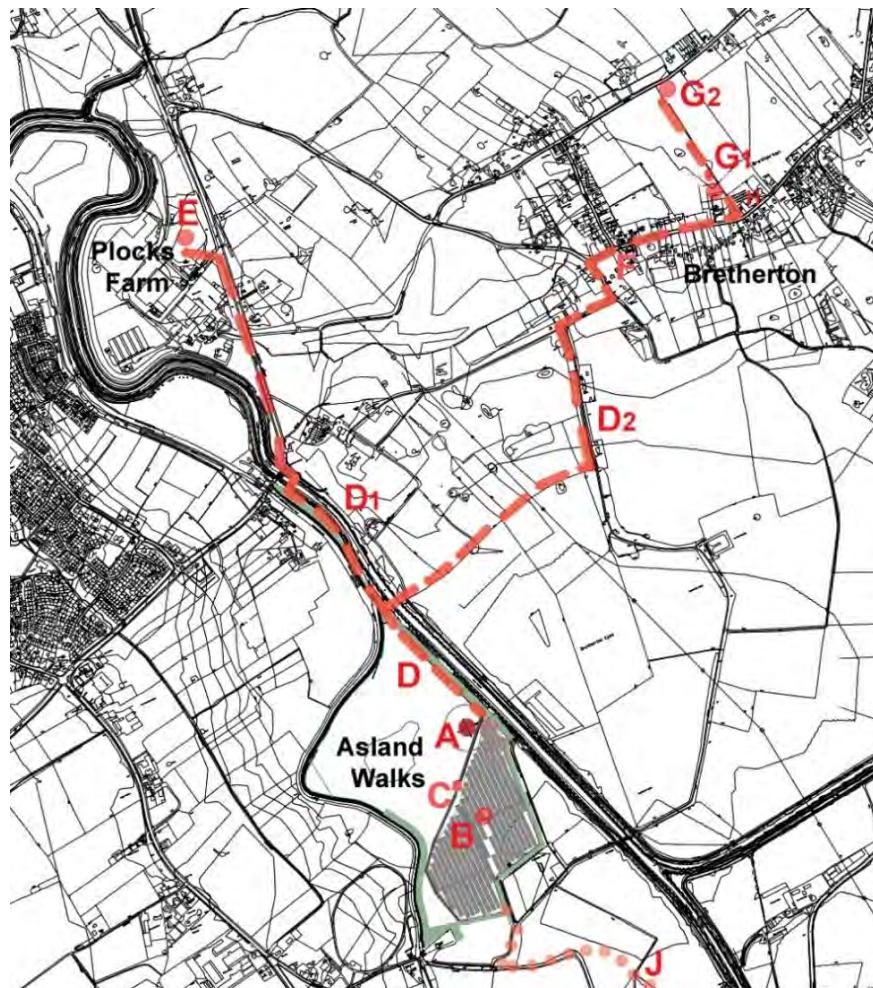


Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

2.2. The site is considered suitable for renewable energy development following initial feasibility works. These are summarised in the DAS Appendix One, Section TN1

Relevant Planning History

2.3. A review of the Council's planning application portal identified no relevant planning history on the site.

3. Proposed Development

3.1. The proposal is for the construction and operation of a green energy park and associated infrastructure at Asland Walk Energy Park for 40 years. The description of development is as follows:

'Construction and operation of single wind turbine, solar farm and battery energy storage with associated infrastructure – Asland Walks Energy Park'

3.2. The proposed development comprises four individual but inseparable elements, amounting to a combined renewable energy output of 21.2MW:

- A single wind turbine (4.2MW)
- Solar arrays (12MW); and
- Battery Energy Storage System (5MWh)
- Cable route to supply Plocks Farm and Bretherton

3.3. The full details of the scheme and the relevant component parts (including underground cable route and the Bretherton Battery Building) can be found within the Design and Access Statement submitted in support of this application.

Wind Turbine

3.4. The proposal consists of the development of 1 no. 4.2MW wind turbine. The turbine would have an overall height to blade tip of 179.8m, with a hub height of 110.64m and a rotor diameter of 135.74m.

3.5. The turbine would be located on an area of hardstanding. An elevation drawing illustrating the dimension and appearance of the proposed turbine is also provided at Drawing Number E-138 EP3 E3-ST-111-FB-C-01_D03024558_2.0.

Solar Arrays

3.6. The solar element of the scheme has the generation capacity of 12MW. The proposed solar PV panels on metal arrays arranged in rows, covering an area of 11.8ha. They have an east to west tilt to maximise and stabilise solar energy throughout the day. The panels dimension are 2.384m x 1.303m x 40mm thick. The lowest panel height at the edges is 0.9m, allowing for sheep grazing underneath (all wiring and electrics are protected by suitable guarding). The area of panels will be enclosed by a 1.8m high weld mesh security fencing, screened by the proposed planting.

3.7. Ancillary on site infrastructure includes:

- 2no combined SKID Solar inverter/transformer and 2no DC/DC converter dimensions are 6.06m x 2.44m x 2.59m
- 1no MV switchroom 8m x 4m x 3m

- 1no small transformer 3m x 3m x 2.4m
- Inverters and sub-station to receive the power generated and feed into the cable routes, housed in four containers 7.1m long x 2.59m wide x 2.4m high, set at 6.0m above ordnance datum, being 1.5m above the existing ground level, to avoid any potential flood damage.

3.8. Cable routes to supply the end users: the initial route to the top end of Asland Walks is common cable.

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)

3.9. The scheme would include provision of battery energy storage system (BESS) units with an export capacity of 5MWh. The BESS infrastructure would consist of a modified ISO/style shipping enclosures set on concrete foundations, with typical dimensions of 12.19 long, 2.44m wide and 2.59m high. Heating and Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) units are located within each enclosure. The Bretherton Battery Building will also be located within the village.

3.10. The application is also supported by Fire Management Strategy that identified the design and risk mitigation measures to be employed on site in line with the NFCC Guidance. The scheme includes for appropriate separation distances between units, emergency access, water supply and early detection. This document can be subject to a condition to any planning consent.

3.11. The site would generate an estimated 29,585, 543 kilowatts per annum of electrical power and will have an operational lifetime of 40 years.

3.12. Following decommissioning all landscape, habitat and recreational improvements will be retained in perpetuity.

4. Planning Policy Context

Legislative Background

4.1. This chapter summarises the planning policy and guidance relevant to the development proposed.

4.2. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 required that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a key material consideration in the determination of planning applications and also set out the framework of policies with which up-to-date development plans must be in accordance.

Development Plan

4.3. The current development plan for Chorley Council comprises the Chorley Local Plan 2012 to 2026 (adopted 2015) and the Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy (2012). The local policies recognised as relevant to any subsequent application are as follows:

Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026

4.4. A full list of policies against which this application will be assessed can be found at Appendix 1. The policy most relevant to this development is Policy BNE1 which states:

Planning permission will be granted for new development, including extensions, conversions and free standing structures, provided that, where relevant to the development:

- a) *The proposal does not have a significantly detrimental impact on the surrounding area by virtue of its density, siting, layout, building to plot ratio, height, scale and massing, design, orientation and use of materials.*
- b) *The development would not cause harm to any neighbouring property by virtue of overlooking, overshadowing, or overbearing;*
- c) *The layout, design and landscaping of all elements of the proposal, including any internal roads, car parking, footpaths and open spaces, are of a high quality and respect the character of the site and local area;*
- d) *The residual cumulative highways impact of the development is not severe and it would not prejudice highway safety, pedestrian safety, the free flow of traffic, and would not reduce the number of on-site parking spaces to below the standards stated in Site Allocations Policy – Parking Standards, unless there are other material considerations which justify the reduction;*
- e) *The proposal would not adversely affect the character or setting of a listed building and/or the character of a conservation area and/or any heritage asset including locally important areas;*
- f) *The proposal would not have a detrimental impact on important natural habitats and landscape features such as historic landscapes, mature trees, hedgerows, ponds and*

watercourses. In some circumstances where on balance it is considered acceptable to remove one or more of these features then mitigation measures to replace the feature/s will be required either on or off-site;

- g) The proposal would not cause an unacceptable degree of noise disturbance to surrounding land uses;*
- h) The proposal includes measures to help to prevent crime and promote community safety.*

Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy (2012)

4.5. A full list of policies against which this application will be assessed can be found at Appendix 1. Specifically, Policy 28 relating to 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Schemes' stipulates that:

"Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy schemes will be supported and planning permission granted where the following criteria are met:

- a) The proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on landscape character and visual appearance of the local area, including the urban environment;*
- b) The reason for the designation of a site with statutory protection would not be compromised by the development;*
- c) Any noise, odour, traffic or other impact of development is mitigated so as not to cause unacceptable detriment to local amenity;*
- d) Any significant adverse effects of the proposal are considered against the wider environmental, social and economic benefits, including scope for appropriate mitigation, adaptation and/or compensatory provisions."*

4.6. It is acknowledged that the Central Lancashire Local Plan is currently at Examination by the Inspector. As such, it is considered at present this plan carries limited weight in the determination of the application. If however this plan is approved during the determination of this application, a policy addendum note against the new policies of the Local Plan can be prepared.

Neighbourhood Plan

4.7. It is acknowledged that Bretherton Neighbourhood Plan is currently in preparation with the most recent consultation on the Draft Plan concluding in April 2025. Albeit it, it is acknowledged that limited weight can be apportioned to this Plan until it is adopted. The policies relevant to this application can be found at Appendix 1:

4.8. It is noted that the Neighbourhood Plan makes policy provision in relation to the proposed development site under Policy E2 'Asland Walks Energy Park'. Specifically, this policy states:

"Asland Walks Energy Park site, (shown in Figure 7), is an area potentially suitable for the development of solar and wind renewable energy infrastructure.



As the site is situated in the Green Belt the planning balance would have to demonstrate that the public benefits of the development clearly outweigh harm to Green Belt and other harm (including environmental) to demonstrate Very Special Circumstances exist.

In considering whether Very Special Circumstances have been demonstrated, regard will be had to public benefits of the development and specifically public benefits to the community in Bretherton and renewable energy benefits.

Subject to the demonstration that Very Special Circumstances exist, the Parish Council supports the development of a solar and wind renewable energy infrastructure at the Asland Walks Energy Park site provided that the planning impacts of such development are satisfactorily addressed.

A planning application for solar and wind renewable energy infrastructure at Asland Walks Energy Park site should demonstrate that:

- a) *The development is designed and constructed to remain operational and safe in times of flood.*
- b) *Landscaping and public access (if appropriate), have been fully considered.*
- c) *Any environmental and visual impacts are clearly identified and appropriately managed and mitigated.*
- d) *The development respects the residential amenity of those nearby.*
- e) *Enhancements and net gains for biodiversity (BNG) are delivered.*

National Policy

4.9. In June 2019, the UK became the first major economy to implement a legally binding net zero carbon emissions target by 2050. Decarbonising the power sector is integral to achieving this target and requires major investments into renewable technologies, such as solar power, which are supported by planning policy at both local and national levels.

4.10. The following policy documents and guidance are considered relevant to the determination of this application:

- National Infrastructure Committee (NIC) 'Net Zero Opportunities for the Power Sector' (March 2020)
- Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan, (April 2023)
- Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A new era of clean electricity (December 2024)
- Solar Roadmap: United Kingdom powered by solar (June 2025)
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero Onshore Taskforce (June 2025)



National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 4.11. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (the “Framework”) was first published in 2012 and most recently revised in December 2024. A full review of the relevant sections of the NPPF can be found at Appendix 1.
- 4.12. It is acknowledged that a revised NPPF is scheduled to be released for consultation by the Government in December 2025. An update on the contents of this report can be provided to Officers as required during the application process.

5. Assessment of Proposed Development

5.1. The following section of this report assesses the development proposals against the policies of the Development Plan, the NPPF and NPPG. It is considered that the key issues in the determination of the application are the principle of development, Green Belt considerations, the impact upon landscape, heritage, amenity, biodiversity, highways and traffic implications, and flood risk.

General Principle of Development

5.2. The application seeks the temporary permission for the construction and operation for 40 years of an energy park and associated works at Asland Walks Energy Farm Plock Farm, Bretherton.

The National Need for the Proposal

5.3. There is a clear need for the development of solar farms and other renewable energy generation, which is driven by numerous government legislation at both local and national level in the UK.

5.4. Producing electricity with photovoltaic (PV) panels and wind, produces no greenhouse gases during operation and uses no finite fossil-fuel resources. Where, as generally recognised, the current consumption of and reliance on fossil fuels is unsustainable, there is a very real need to find a viable long-term solution. To this end, there is greater emphasis on renewable energy sources for the production of power, with all local Authorities being encouraged to ensure a greater percentage of power consumed in their areas is from these sources, thereby reducing their carbon emissions.

5.5. The amount of energy which can be harnessed from the sun's radiation is often underestimated. In the UK, we receive a vast amount of solar energy. In an average year we receive as much as 60% of the solar energy which is received on the equator. There is often the misconception that solar technologies can only be used within the summer months, but the UK has a large number of clear spring, autumn and winter days, where the Sun's radiation can be harnessed, meaning that solar technologies can contribute to energy consumption for the whole year.

5.6. In the Clean Power Action Plan 2030, the Government's summary identifies a requirement for rapid deployment of new clean energy, setting a high ambition for 2030 of "*43–50 GW of offshore wind, 27–29 GW of onshore wind, and 45–47 GW of solar power, significantly reducing our fossil-fuel dependency. These will be complemented by flexible capacity, including 23–27 GW of battery capacity*". (Page 10)

5.7. The provision of a broad range of energy solutions, including solar, creates a more robust energy network that is less susceptible to fluctuations in global markets for oil and gas, making the UK energy supply less carbon intensive with greater levels of resilience, security and self-sufficiency.

5.8. This national need complements the important and pressing local need for the additional energy generation to support GA Petfoods and the local community, as set out in the introduction above.

Social, Economic and Local Community Benefits

5.9. BEP have been working openly and constructively to ensure meaningful local benefits. The proposed development would generate social, economic and community benefits.

5.10. The benefits would include, but are not limited to:

- Increased renewable energy generation GA, for the benefit of GA and the local community through BEC.
- Economic benefits associated with investment and support of job during the construction phase of development. The applicant will encourage contractors to source construction materials locally (i.e. within the country) and to use local transport and plant hire companies where possible, in addition to local services and amenities.
- Appropriate biodiversity and landscape enhancements via increased boundary planting and species-rich grassland, as a 30-year Habitat Bank

5.11. The above outcomes associated with the scheme progressing, and associated Local Plan support for renewable energy generation, are considered to cumulatively represent very substantial benefits and as such are a material consideration which weigh greatly in favour of planning permission being granted. It is acknowledged that the community benefits, although significant as a result of the development, do not carry material weight in the planning balance and are therefore afforded neutral weight in the granting of planning permission.

5.12. As outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at Paragraph 16:

"The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emission, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure." (my emphasis)

5.13. It is considered that the general principle of the development is acceptable. The proposed development provides a real opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the GA renewable energy and climate change targets as well as providing opportunities to enhance local economic development. The site is sustainably located, and it is considered to meet the requirements of national policy.

Socio-Economic Growth of GA

5.14. As discussed in the submitted economic review conducted by Brookdale Consulting, GA currently employs 678 staff and it is estimated that on top of those staff employed directly, GA supports a further 915 jobs nationally with 411 being in the local area. Meaning that, in total, GA support 1,593 jobs nationally and 1,069 locally.

5.15. As a result of the development, it is anticipated 427 direct and indirect jobs will be created during construction and of these 229 will be in the local area. It is also acknowledged that

annual maintenance will support 5 jobs per year. This report demonstrates that there will be significant economic benefits felt within the local area as a result of the development.

Grey Belt

5.16. Following the publication of the NPPF in December 2024, the designation of land as 'grey belt' has been introduced. Grey Belt is defined at NPPF Annex 2 as:

"For the purpose of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any purposes (a), (b) or (d) in Paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in Footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."

5.17. Paragraph 155 outlines that, the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also be regarded as inappropriate where all of the following apply:

- a) *The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan)*
- b) *There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed*
- c) *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework; and*
- d) *Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraph 156-157*

5.18. The submitted Grey Belt Assessment (report reference R002v1 – Appendix 2), assesses the site against these aspects of the NPPF. For the reasons set out in that assessment it is concluded that the site meets the definition of the Grey Belt as stated in the NPPF and the requirements of Paragraph 155. As such, the proposed development is not considered to form inappropriate development, and very special circumstances are not required to be demonstrated.

Green Belt

5.19. Notwithstanding the above, should Officers be minded conclude that the site does not comprise Grey Belt, very special circumstances can be demonstrated sufficient to justify the development within the Green Belt.

5.20. The proposed development site is located within the designated Central Lancashire Green Belt as defined within the Central Lancashire Core Strategy.

5.21. Paragraph 153 of the NPPF, relating to development proposals affecting the Green Belt outlines that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The paragraph goes on to confirm that *"very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."*

5.22. With regards to renewable energy development, Paragraph 160 states:

"When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources."

5.23. Paragraph 168 Part A states that *"when determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy development and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future."*

5.24. This clearly outlines that the provision of renewable energy development can be considered as very special circumstances in the determination of an application. The primary matter left to assess in relation to the Green Belt is then whether the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impacts on the Green Belt and other harms. In order to conclude on this matter, it is necessary to consider the Green Belt harms and other harms.

Green Belt Harm by way of inappropriateness

5.25. Paragraph 154 provides exceptions for development in the Green Belt and which this proposal does not fall in to. Therefore, the development of an energy park in the Green Belt would represent inappropriate development when assessed against planning policy.

5.26. NPPF 153 says *"When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness"*

5.27. Notwithstanding this requirement to accord substantial weight, it is relevant to consider the extent of harm to the green belt.

Green Belt Harm to the purposes of Green Belt.

5.28. Paragraph 143 of the NPPF identified that the five main principles of the Green Belt are as follows:

- a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

5.29. As noted in the Grey Belt Assessment, the site is not considered to strongly contribute to the Green Belt purposes (a), (b) or (d).

5.30. With regards to purpose (a) it is noted that Policy 19 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy outlines a number of 'Areas of Separation and Major Open Space' under Policy 19. This policy stipulates that its aim is to;

'Protect the identity, local distinctiveness and green infrastructure of certain settlements and neighbourhoods by the designation of Areas of Separation and Major Open Space, to ensure that those places at greatest risk of merging are protected and environmental/open space resources are safeguarded.'

5.31. The proposed development site does not fall into any of those areas designated under this policy.

5.32. When considering purpose (c) it is discussed within the supporting Grey Belt report that whilst the Green Belt designation of the site means that the site would result in encroachment, the negative effects of the proposal will be temporary, limited to the operational lifetime of the development and will be partly mitigated by the proposed landscape and ecological enhancement.

5.33. With regards, to the final principle of the Green Belt, purpose (e), ground mounted solar, particularly when co-located with wind energy development, tend not to be located on brownfield land or in urban areas where there are usually limitations on the size of the plot which in turn creates viability issues. There is further often shadowing within urban areas preventing efficient output of energy. Chorley's Brownfield Register identified a number of sites across the region, seven of these do not currently benefit from planning permission. Of the sites identified six the majority under 1 hectare.

5.34. Furthermore, as discussed in the submitted Grey Belt Assessment, it is acknowledged within the Green Belt Assessment that the current extent of the Green Belt assessed is roughly 22,840 hectares. Of this area Chorley accounts for 71.8% and 14, 560 hectares of land. The red line boundary for the scheme is 39.70 hectares of land which is the equivalent to 0.27% of the Chorley Green Belt area and 0.17% of the Central Lancashire Green Belt area. As such, when taken together the size of the site within the wider context of the Green Belt is negligible.

5.35. It is concluded that the proposal will have a limited harm to the purposes of the Green Belt.

Green Belt Harm to openness

5.36. When considering the assessment of Green Belt Harm to openness, NPPG guidance sets out at Paragraph 013 that a number of matters need to be taken into account, including:

- Openness is capacity of having both spatial and visual aspect – in other words the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume.
- The duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness.
- The degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.

5.37. As discussed within the submitted Landscape & Visual Appraisal (LVA), the assessment concludes that the proposed development would introduce a new vertical element which would be a visible new feature of the landscapes of the Mossland, the Coastal Plain and Enclosed Coastal Marsh character areas which form the lowlands of west Lancashire. It is also accepted that although trees and woodland blocks in the Site's immediate surroundings, together with existing nearby wind turbines to the south (Mawdesley Moss), interrupt its visibility in places, the turbine would be a new vertical element in the flat landscape and cannot be completely mitigated. It is however considered that the turbine will be seen within the context, and in conjunction with the power lines, pylons and the existing wind turbines at Mawdesley Moss which are present in the landscape.

5.38. The scheme is temporary in nature with an operations lifetime of 40 years after which the land will be returned to agricultural use and following the construction of the scheme, the traffic generated to the site will be negligible.

5.39. As such, it is considered that impact on openness would have a limited and minor degree of harm.

Conclusions on extent of harm to the Green Belt

5.40. Noting that there is harm in principle due to the development being inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that the NPPF directs to give this and other Green Belt harm substantial weight, it is clearly shown that the harm to the purposes and openness of the Green Belt is limited.

Very Special Circumstances

5.41. Paragraph 153 of the NPPF stipulates:

"When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."

Other Harms

5.42. In accordance with the above reference to Paragraph 153 of the NPPF, it is necessary to consider whether the proposal would result in other harms.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

5.43. The site lies outside of any nationally designated landscape (National Parks, National Landscapes).

5.44. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared to accompany this planning application and confirms that a number of mitigation measures have been incorporated into the scheme to reduce the effects of both landscape and visual amenity to help integrate the proposed development into the surrounding landscape. These details are discussed in within the document and include, but are not limited to:

- Areas of pasture managed for ground nesting birds, grassland for low intensity grazing for sheep; and
- Hedgerow planting including alder trees to mitigate potential glint and glare and advance hedgerow and linear copse planting.

5.45. This report acknowledges that the proposed development would introduce a new vertical element in the form of the wind turbine which would be a visible new feature in the landscapes of the Mosslands, the Coastal Plain and Enclosed Coastal Marsh character areas which form the lowlands of West Lancashire. It is accepted that the turbine cannot be mitigated within the wider setting of the site, however it will be seen in conjunction with the power lines, nearby wind turbines and pylons present in the landscape.

5.46. It is therefore considered that the development accords with the relevant national policies, Policy BNE1 and EP3 of the Chorley Local Plan, and Policy 28 of the Core Strategy. The level of landscape and visual harm arising from the proposal is limited and localised.

Heritage and Archaeology

5.47. It is acknowledged that there are a number of heritage assets within the vicinity of the site that could be sensitive to the introduction of the proposed development:

- Sollom Conservation Area
- The Plox Brow Conservation Area
- Church of St Mary, Tarleton—Grade II* Listed (1163170)
- Bank Hall—Grade II* Listed (1362113)
- Farm Building (Bank Hall)—Grade II Listed (1163194)
- Bretherton Conservation Area
- Church of St John the Baptist—Grade II Listed (NHLE 1362115)
- Rectory—Grade II Listed (NHLE 1163234)
- 152 and 154 South Road—Grade II Listed (NHLE 1072570)
- White House Farmhouse—Grade II Listed (NHLE 1163201)
- Smithy Cottage—Grade II Listed (NHLE 1072567)
- Bank Bridge Warehouse—Grade II Listed (1361863)
- The Canal Bridge (Number 11)—Grade II Listed (1031385)
- Grade II Tarleton Bridge—Grade II Listed (1073123)

5.48. It is acknowledged that as part of the construction of the scheme, temporary works would be required to removal a section of the parapet stone wall of the Tarleton Bridge, Following the completion of construction works, the parapet will be reinstated in its original form.

5.49. In considering the impact of the development the application is supported by a Heritage Statement. This report considers the impacts of the proposed development on all of the assets outlined above. The following conclusions are drawn:

- Tarleton Bridge – Temporary works resulting in less than substantial harm.
- Bank Hall – less than substantial harm.
- Wider identified heritage assets – no fundamental character of their setting.
- Bretherton Conservation Area – No harm to the constituent heritage assets.

5.50. It is therefore concluded that the level of harm arising from the development would be low. It is therefore concluded that the scheme complies with the relevant national guidance and Policy BNE8 of the Chorley Local Plan. Notwithstanding the requirement under paragraph 212 of the NPPF for great weight given an asset's conservation, in accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 215 of the NPPF, the proposal, when leading to less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. In light of the low level of less than substantial harm identified, and the weight of public benefits proposed, the heritage balance is such that the harm is outweighed by the benefits.

5.51. The weight to the heritage harm in the overall planning balance is therefore limited.

Benefits of the Scheme

5.52. There are a range of benefits from the scheme which need to be weighed against the harms identified above.

Renewable energy generation

5.53. As outlined, there is a need for this type of development as promoted through a number of international, national and local targets for renewable energy across all areas of the country. Paragraph 168 of the NPPF outlines that local authorities should not require the applicant to demonstrate the need for renewable energy but should '*recognise that small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions*'. Chapter 14 of the NPPF clearly substantiates the importance of renewable energy developments across the country and suitably supports the principle of development for these technologies.

5.54. It is considered that this shows a clear direction of travel at a national level in support of renewable energy generation in England.

5.55. In the case of the Chimmens Solar Farm (Reference APP/G2245/W/25/2259260), the Inspector outlined that the reduction of carbon emissions and towards energy security considerations, along with national support for the generation of renewable energy attract substantial weight in the planning balance. In reviewing these and other precedent cases, there is a clear and consistent approach from the Secretary of State and appointed

inspectors in determining appeal over the last two years that either 'significant' or 'substantial' weight should be given to this benefit.

5.56. In this instance, given the local generation for local consumption, it is considered that the renewable energy generation of the overall scheme should afford **substantial** weight in the planning balance.

Climate emergency

5.57. A national climate emergency was declared by the UK Parliament in May 2019. In addition, Chorley Council also declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. This was a response to the global climate crisis, which acknowledges that existing measures are not enough to limit rising temperatures.

5.58. Through the generation of renewable energy, the appeal scheme will contribute towards addressing these declarations.

5.59. The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan is an important recent latest statement of government underlining the objective of urgently delivering clean energy to limit our contribution to the damaging effects of climate change. The call to act with urgency adds to the weight which would be accorded to the climate emergency.

5.60. By providing a positive, deliverable action on this statement of intent, the declaration of climate emergencies at both national and local level is a material consideration which should afford **substantial** weight in the planning balance.

Energy Security

5.61. The proposal will supply renewable energy to the local community and local businesses, comprising secure, locally distributed and diversified energy generation which fully accords with the Government policy on energy security

5.62. Energy security should be regarded as a material consideration in its own right, one which is separate to the generation of renewable energy per se. Renewable energy generation by virtue of its contribution to reducing carbon emissions and the drive to decarbonise the electricity system is a separate and distinct type of benefit i.e. there could be a security crisis without a climate crisis.

5.63. The latest published version NPS EN-3 which, when setting the policy for Solar Photovoltaic Generation at Section 2.10, refers at paragraph 2.1.9 to solar playing a key part of the government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector in the context of the net zero emission pathway to 2050; but then in a separate following paragraph 2.10.10 goes on to state that:

'Solar also has an important role in delivering the government's goals for greater energy independence ...' (EN3, para 2.10.10)

5.64. The contribution of the scheme to energy security should be afforded **substantial** positive weight in the planning balance

Grid Connection

5.65. This project offers significant benefits by strategically utilizing existing grid infrastructure to accommodate renewable generation without requiring substantial, costly upgrades.

5.66. The connection strategy—specifically at the Bretherton North and South and Plocks Farm points—involves connecting directly to existing substations. This approach is highly advantageous because it:

- Minimizes Investment: It avoids the need for major capital expenditure by both the generation partners (GA/BEP) and the Distribution Network Operator (ENWL).
- Reduces Disruption: It eliminates the need for extensive and disruptive earthworks and the associated costs of laying new high-capacity cabling.

5.67. By ensuring the local utilization of approximately 29 GWh per year of renewable generation, the project directly addresses several critical issues facing the regional electrical grid. This local consumption strategy actively alleviates congestion and network inadequacy, which is a common symptom of the grid's lack of modernization. Furthermore, by securing a rapid and effective connection, the project successfully bypasses the typical industry challenges of lengthy connection queues and costly generation curtailment.

5.68. This is to be afforded **significant** positive weight in the balance.

Economic Benefits

5.69. Furthermore, the NPPF at Paragraph 85 stipulates that "*significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.*" As discussed above the proposed development will support the aspiration of making GA as well as BEC, for more sustainable and self-sufficiency in energy supply terms. This is an approach that is supported in The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy (June 2025).

5.70. The economic benefits are afforded **significant** positive weight in the balance.

Ecology and Biodiversity

5.71. The application is supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA). This report summarises the potential ecological constraints to the development.

5.72. It is acknowledged that there are four international statutory sites located within 10km of the site and six national statutory designated sites for nature conservation within 5km of the site, details of which can be found at Section 3 of the EIA. It is concluded that the works will be contained within the Site with no direct impacts to statutory designated sites for nature conservation.

5.73. The construction process and layout of the scheme have been designed to avoid impact to hedgerows and trees (including newly created habitats) as far as practicable. This include, but are not limited to:

- Botanically diverse grassland with scrapes, creation of ponds, and the planting of hedgerows and woodland to provide suitable foraging and breeding habitats for a range of bird species.
- Provision of five bird boxes and one barn owl box, to be affixed to trees within the site.
- Provision of a Hibernacula, and 5 hedgehog boxes, to be installed in a sheltered woodland area within the site

5.74. This supporting ecological appraisal outlines the biodiversity net gains that can be achieved on site which are significantly more than the required net gains of 10%. This equates to 175.05% in area habitat units, 162.89% in hedgerow habitat units and 21.12% in watercourse units as a result of the proposed development.

5.75. As such, this biodiversity net gain should be afforded **significant** positive weight in the balance.

Green infrastructure and Environmental Benefits

5.76. As detailed above there is significant landscape mitigation and ecological enhancement works proposed as part of the development. The extensive green infrastructure is identified on Drawing Number 22.522-BCAL-ZZ-00-DR-L-102-S3, Landscape Structure, with supporting technical detail added in the DAS Appendix One, Section T4

5.77. Noting that soil health improves when arable land is converted to permanent pasture, with increases in soil organic matter, soil carbon and soil moisture, it is concluded that this soil improvement can be included as one of the environmental benefits of the scheme.

5.78. The green infrastructure and environmental benefits are afforded **significant** positive weight. (likely significant)

Farm Diversification (including soils)

5.79. The proposal is a rural development, and renewable energy developments are now a common feature of the countryside across the UK.

5.80. The energy park proposed at Asland Walks, will support the rural economy through farm diversification, allowing continued agricultural use for sheep grazing and ensuring that decommissioning after the 40-year operational period will see the land returned to its current state.

5.81. This is to be afforded **moderate** positive weight in the balance.

Linear Footpath

5.82. As discussed within the Design and Access Statement, whilst existing public access to the site itself is restricted, access is currently achievable along the eastern boundary via the River Douglas Path and the west along the side of the Leeds Liverpool Canal.

5.83. Whilst access to the main site will continue to be restricted, the existing tracks (albeit outside of the red line boundary) will remain open in their current state. Additionally, two

new routes are identified on the submission Landscape Strategy Plan (Drawing Number 22.522-BCAL-ZZ-OO-DR-L-102-S3):

- FP1 – a route from Eyes Lane to the Leeds Liverpool Canal; and
- FP2 – a route from Eyes Lane to the River Douglas.

5.84. These routes will be complemented with interpretation information including site history, project details, the habitat and the energy output from the wind and solar resources.

5.85. This is to be afforded moderate positive weight in the balance.

Summary on benefits

5.86. The wider benefits of the proposed development have been outlined above along within the numerous supporting documents: These include, but are not limited to:

- Enabling the transition from carbon-based energy to a renewable energy source to contribute to the net zero ambitions of Bretherton residents and businesses to satisfy a financial need and supported by local policy, the NPPF and National Policy Statements.
- A deliverable scheme with an existing electrical grid connection to support the continued sustained economic growth of a major local employer, alongside residents with locally generated power, able to be consumed locally in a de-centralised manner, not intended for export.
- It is anticipated 427 direct and indirect jobs will be created during construction and of these 229 will be in the local area. It is also acknowledged that annual maintenance will support 5 jobs per year. This report demonstrates that there will be significant economic benefits felt within the local area as a result of the development. Biodiversity Net Gains –175.05% in area habitat units, 162.89% in hedgerow habitat units and 21.12% in watercourse units as a result of the proposed development.
- Provision of additional linear footpath providing a link between the riverside (eastern boundary) and Eyes Lane (south) around the perimeter of the solar scheme.

5.87. The proposal leads to economic, social and environmental benefits and therefore accord with the core principles of sustainable development as outlined in Paragraph 8 of the NPPF.

5.88. It is acknowledged that the community benefits, although significant as a result of the development, do not carry material weight in the planning balance and are therefore afforded neutral weight in the granting of planning permission.

5.89. The significant benefits that come from the scheme contribute to creating the required very special circumstances whereby the harm to the Green Belt and other harms are clearly outweighed. (a summary of which is made within the below section).

Other material considerations

5.90. A number of further material considerations arise in regard to the proposal. For the reasons set out below these do not constitute benefits or harms and are therefore neutral factors in the overall planning and VSC balance.

Agricultural Land Classification

5.91. The site in its current use comprises agricultural land. The NPPF outlines that planning policies and decision should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

5.92. Furthermore, Footnote 65 states, *"Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality."*

5.93. Policy 31 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy seeks to *"protect the best and most versatile agricultural land, (Grade 1, 2 and 3a) that occurs in the west of Central Lancashire when considering both agricultural and other forms of development to avoid irreversible damage to, and instead achieve the full potential, of the soil".*

5.94. The Solar Roadmap re-states the position in respect of BMV land on Page 20, preferring the use of lower quality land and requiring justification for the use of better-quality land.

5.95. An Agricultural Land Classification Survey has been undertaken for the site. This report confirmed the classification of the land as follows:

Grade/Subgrade	Area (ha)	Area (%)
Grade 1	2.6	7
Grade 2	23.9	60
Subgrade 3a	-	-
Subgrade 3b	13.2	33
Grade 4	-	-
Grade 5	-	-
Non-Agricultural	-	-
Urban	-	-
Total	39.7	100

5.96. It is therefore noted that 67% of the site comprises what is considered to be best and most versatile land (BMV). However, when assessing the extent of land covered by the development itself it is noted that only 2.1 hectares of land (5% of the total land area) is utilised for the siting of infrastructure associated with the project. The majority of the panels and associated works are located within the southern most area of Grade 3B land, with the remainder hosting the proposed habitat bank. Furthermore, it is demonstrated through the site layout that, whilst not a national or local requirement, a sequential approach within the

site has been taken with the majority of the required infrastructure located in the southern most area of the site, that of lowest value.

- 5.97. The solar farm will support the rural economy through farm diversification, allowing continued agricultural use for sheep grazing and ensuring that decommissioning after the 40-year operational period will see the land returned to agricultural use.
- 5.98. The NPPF does not preclude the use of BMV land, instead it required planning policies and decisions to 'recognise' the economic and other benefits of BMV land. It does not prohibit the loss of this land.
- 5.99. Annexed to the Solar Roadmap is a document "Solar Misconceptions". Against the heading "*Solar is a threat to food security*", it is noted that, "*the biggest threat to food security is crop failure due to climate change and solar farms are helping to tackle this directly*". This response also states:

"Recent Government analysis shows that even under the most ambitious deployment scenarios set out in the Solar Roadmap, and in the unlikely case that all new capacity coming forward is ground mount, it would only occupy up to around 0.6% of UK Utilised Agricultural Land by 2030 (less than that used by golf courses in Great Britain)."

Solar farms are a temporary and completely reversible land use with restoration of land at the end of the solar farm's life usually guaranteed by a planning condition".

- 5.100. In the recent Burcot Decision (Appeal Reference APP/Q3115/W/24/3350890) the Inspector acknowledged that the site, in its entirety, comprised best and most versatile land. They acknowledged that whilst the 40 year time period (in that case) is a significant period of time, it is not permanent and, although taken out of arable production, the land would be used for both energy production and sheep grazing – a dual use that could be secured by condition. Similarly, the Inspector noted that:

"there would be nothing in planning terms to prevent the use of the fields that form the appeal site for sheep grazing or even from leaving them to fallow. In fact, the Sustainable Farming Incentive encourages farmers to convert arable land to grassland."

- 5.101. In this case, it is concluded that, "*the proposal would not result in either the temporary or permanent loss of BMV; and for agriculture as the land would continue to be used for some agricultural purposes whilst also being used to produce solar energy."*
- 5.102. As such, whilst the proposed development will result in the temporary loss of agricultural land which could be assigned a low level of harm, when considered against the other significant benefits associated with the development, the planning balance makes the harm acceptable in planning terms. It is therefore concluded that agricultural land is afforded neutral weight in the balance.
- 5.103. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is in accordance with the relevant national and local policy.

Highways and Transport

- 5.104. As detailed within the submitted Transport Assessment, during the construction phase, access and egress for large delivery and site vehicles will be accommodated from Eyes Lane

to the south of the site via Sollom Lane. The delivery of the turbine blades will be via the A59 Banks Bridge to the north of the site. The details of the relevant routing and visibility splays can be found within the submitted Transport Reports (including Route Survey Report). The routes outlined have been identified to minimise traffic disruption during construction.

- 5.105. As discussed in the above sections, the construction of the wind turbine, will necessitate temporary works to Banks Bridge. These works have been subject to prior discussion with Lancashire County Council and the approach suggested has been accepted. The assessment of these temporary works is included within the submitted Heritage Statement and subject to the appropriate Listed Building Consent application.
- 5.106. Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be an increase in highway movements during the construction period it is not anticipated that outside of this time, the proposed development will accrue a high number of trips.
- 5.107. During the operational phase of the development trips to site will reduce to those required for the purpose of maintenance, anticipated to occur once or twice a month. As such, once operational the scheme will have a negligible impact on local roads.
- 5.108. The application is also supported by an outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). The applicant would be happy to accept a suitably worded condition to secure the final documents prior to the construction of any consented scheme.
- 5.109. As such, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with Policy 3 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and relevant national policy. Impacts on the local highways network are therefore considered to carry neutral weight in the planning balance.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 5.110. Policy 29 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy states that schemes should improve water quality, water management and reduce the risk of flooding through a number of elements, including but not limited to:
 - a) *Appraising, managing and reducing flood risk in all new development, avoiding inappropriate development in flood risk areas particularly in Croston, Penwortham, Walton-le-Dale and southwest Preston;*
 - g) Encouraging the adoption of Sustainable Drainage Systems;
 - h) Seeking to maximise the potential of Green Infrastructure to contribute to flood relief.
- 5.111. It is acknowledged that the site is located with an area of both Flood Zone 2 and 3 owing to the proximity to the River Douglas. It is however acknowledged that there are defences along the west back of the River Douglas (eastern boundary of the proposed development site) in the form of flood embankments. It is also acknowledged that there are areas of high surface water flooding within the site.
- 5.112. The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment prepared by Tetra Tech (report reference 784-BO39518 Rev 4.0). Within this report at Section 3.7 and within the conclusions at Section 6 it is acknowledged that the risk to the site from fluvial and tidal flooding is low, however if in the event that there is a breach of the defences, this risk would become high.

5.113. A sequential test on alternative land parcels has been undertaken on the site and confirms that even with the development site having a larger proportion of Flood Zone 3, there is the benefit of flood defences, therefore when compared to alternative sites, the risk to the development site is lower. As such all key electrical infrastructure is raised to 6m AOD.

5.114. As such, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with the relevant section of the NPPF, and Policy 29 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy. The scheme therefore carries neutral weight in the planning balance.

Amenity

5.115. Policy 28 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy outlines that renewable and low carbon energy schemes will be supported where:

- Any noise, odour, traffic or other impact of the development is mitigated so as not to cause unacceptable detriment to local amenity.*

Noise

5.116. When considering the noise impact of the development, the application is supported by an Noise Assessment prepared by Spectrum Acoustic Consultants (report Ref CJA4862/23314/Rev 0).

5.117. This report outlines how both operational noise and construction noise have been considered and assessed in line with the current UK standards and guidelines at the nearest noise sensitive receptors. In all cases, the predicted noise levels have been found to be within the relevant criteria for low impact.

5.118. As such, it is considered that the noise generated by the development accords with the requirements of Policy 28 and the applicant would be happy to accept an appropriately worded condition to ensure that the noise emissions remain low for the lifetime of the development. Therefore, this carries neutral weight in the planning balance.

Glint and Glare

5.119. The extent to which the proposed development will have an impact on light sensitive receptors has been assessed within a Glint and Glare report prepared by Pager Power (report reference 13712A).

5.120. This report concludes that there is no significant impact predicted upon road safety and aviation activity, with particularly no impact on the nearby Carr Valley Airfield and no mitigation is recommended.

5.121. The submitted Landscape Strategy (Drawing Number 22.522- BCAL-ZZ-OO-DR-L-102-S3) includes provision for a hedgerow (including alder) to be planted on the south eastern boundary to mitigate against the impacts of glint and glare to the nearby residential receptors. This planting will be implemented in January 2026.

5.122. As such, this carries neutral weight in the planning balance.

Shadow Flicker

- 5.123. The extent to which the proposed turbine will have an impact by way of shadow flicker is assessed in a report prepared by Pager Power (report reference 13712B).
- 5.124. It is acknowledged within this report there are likely to be shadow flicker effects at 33 dwellings, this could however be mitigated either by a shutdown scheme or a technical solution such as a light intensity detection system. The applicant would be happy to accept an appropriately worded condition to limit shadow flicker for the assessed dwellings to below the referenced limits.
- 5.125. As such, it is concluded that the impact of shadow flicker would be neutral in the planning balance.

Aviation

- 5.126. As discussed in the Design and Access Statement amendments to the proposed height of the turbine to alleviate aviation concerns. It is identified that the two closest receptors against which assessment needed to be made were Blackpool Airport and BAE Warton. These assessments are submitted as part of this planning application.
- 5.127. These reports confirm that the revision to the proposed height of the turbine there are no resultant impacts as a result of the development.
- 5.128. As such, it is concluded that the impact on aviation would be neutral in the planning balance.

6. Planning Balance

6.1. Notwithstanding the location of the site within the Green Belt, for the reasons set out in the Grey Belt Assessment (report reference RO02v1 – Appendix 2) the land is considered to comprise Grey Belt land and the proposal is not inappropriate development. Consequently, in accordance with the NPPF, NPPG and decisions of the courts, there is not a need to consider the proposal to be harmful to the green belt.

6.2. Should officers determine that this is not the case, very special circumstances need to be demonstrated whereby the benefits of the proposal outweigh the harms to the Green Belt and other harms. It is acknowledged that there is no local planning policy relating to Green Belt in the Core Strategy or Local Plan and therefore the provisions of the NPPF Paragraph 11d apply. It has been demonstrated that this planning application is in broad compliance with national planning policy and the requirements of Policy E2 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.3. The development of the Asland Walks Energy Park would give rise to a wider range of local social, environmental and economic benefits which amount to very substantial weight in favour of planning permission being granted, against the effects in landscape and heritage terms.

6.4. Whilst it is accepted that the proposal will result in changes to the local environment, such as in terms of visual impacts, those changes are not such that would constitute a breach of the policies contained within the Development Plan. This is also the case where any identified harm can be addressed by way of a planning condition, such as matters of landscaping, ecological mitigation and enhancement. This application, as summarised by the planning statement has demonstrated accordance with policy and is consequently in accordance with guidance contained within the NPPF and NPPG.

6.5. Notwithstanding this accordance with the development plan, the change of the local environment could be perceived as being harmful, such as impacts upon the Green Belt. In addition, in accordance with the NPPF, it is necessary to give substantial weight to the harms to the green belt.

6.6. This statement has set out the benefits of the proposal and these are substantial in their weight (particularly in combatting climate change and meeting the ambitious local targets for renewable energy production), so as to constitute very special circumstances. As such, those benefits can be regarded as further supporting the acceptability of the Proposed Development against the Development Plan or should a more pessimistic view be taken as being capable of outweighing any conflict with the Development Plan (which we do not consider there to be).

6.7. The benefits of the scheme can be listed as, but not limited to:

- Enabling the move to a reliance on low carbon and renewable energy in achieving net zero where there is a clear need and supported by local policy, the NPPF and National Policy Statements.
- A deliverable scheme with a viable and available electrical grid connection to support the continued sustained economic growth of an existing major local employer, alongside the joint benefit of 280 long residential properties

- It is anticipated 427 direct and indirect jobs will be created during construction and of these 229 will be in the local area. It is also acknowledged that annual maintenance will support 5 jobs per year. This report demonstrates that there will be significant economic benefits felt within the local area as a result of the development.
- Biodiversity Net Gains – 175.05% in area habitat units, 162.89% in hedgerow habitat units and 21.12% in watercourse units as a result of the proposed development, managed in the long term for a minimum of 30 years as a Habitat Bank.
- Maintain and improve existing footpath routes along the River Douglas and the Canal: additional links provided to allow circular walks around the Asland Walks using the proposed new paths FP1 and FP2 (as per Landscape Strategy Plan 22.522- BCAL-ZZ-00-DR-L-102-S3)

6.8. In conclusion, having examined the benefits outlined above, and also the overall low localised harm to the openness of the Green Belt (which should be afforded substantial weight), and to any other harms as assessed above in respect of landscape and built heritage, it is demonstrated in the table below that 'very special circumstances' are shown. The benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the harms identified to the Green Belt and other harms as identified above to landscape and heritage matters.

Material Considerations which are Benefits	Weight (Positive)
Renewable energy generation and reduction in carbon emissions	Substantial Positive Weight
Climate Emergency	Substantial Positive Weight
Energy Security	Substantial Positive Weight
Grid Connection	Significant Positive Weight
Economic Benefits	Significant Positive Weight
Biodiversity Net Gain	Significant Positive Weight
Green infrastructure and Environmental Benefits	Significant Positive Weight
Farm Diversification (including soils)	Moderate Positive Weight
Linear Footpath and Interpretation Hut	Moderate Positive Weight
Material Considerations which are Neutral	Weight (Neutral)
Community Benefits	Neutral Weight
Impact on Agricultural Land	Neutral Weight
Flood Risk and Drainage	Neutral Weight
Shadow Flicker	Neutral Weight
Noise Impact	Neutral Weight
Material Considerations which are Adverse	Weight (Adverse)
Effect on openness and purpose of the Green Belt (if not considered Grey Belt)	Substantial Adverse Weight
Effect on Landscape	Limited Adverse Weight
Impact on Designated Heritage Assets	Limited Adverse Weight

6.9. In consideration of compliance with the Development Plan and other planning policy requirements, the significant benefits and limited adverse effects, resulting in very special circumstances associated with the Proposed Development it is clear that this development is, on balance, acceptable in planning terms.

6.10. The Proposed Development has been shown to achieve the main objectives of sustainable development (environmental, social and economic) without causing undue detriment to any of those matters. The presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF there applied here. As the NPPF directs, in such circumstances and where the application complies with the Development Plan, the application should be approved without delay.

7. Conclusion

7.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Bretherton Energy Partnership a in support of the planning application for the construction of a green energy park and associated works known at the Asland Walk Energy Park, and their temporary use for 40 years.

7.2. The proposed development comprises four individual but inseparable elements, amounting to a combined renewable energy output of 21.2MW:

- A single wind turbine (4.2MW)
- Solar arrays (11MW); and
- Battery Energy Storage System (5MW).

7.3. The development supports the UK Government's intention to move to a low carbon economy, which represents a substantial benefit. The impacts of the proposal have been shown to be acceptable and, where necessary mitigation measures have been set out to reduce potential impacts of the proposed development.

7.4. The significant benefits/very special circumstances associated with this proposal, primarily through the generation of renewable energy to provide low carbon electricity make a valuable contribution towards meeting the challenging obligations of the Government regarding renewable energy generation. This is supported by the economic investment, ecological and landscape enhancements, being factors which weigh heavily in favour of this development.

7.5. National planning policy and guidance is a material consideration in the determination of this planning application. The proposal has been shown to be in compliance with the relevant Development Plan policies.

7.6. Accordingly, this proposal represents sustainable development, and as such this planning application should be approved without delay.

Appendix 1 – Planning Policy Context

Development Plan

The current development plan for Chorley Council comprises the Chorley Local Plan 2012 to 2026 (adopted 2015) and the Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy (2012). A full list of policies against which this application will be assessed can be found at Appendix 1. The following policies however are considered to be the main policies relevant to the principal of the development. The local policies recognised as relevant to any subsequent application are as follows:

Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026

The policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- Policy V1: Model Policy
- Policy V2: Settlement Areas
- Policy EP3: Development Criteria for Business and Industrial Development
- Policy BNE1: Design Criteria for New Development
- Policy BNE6: Light Pollution
- Policy BNE8: Protection and Enhancement of Heritage Assets
- Policy BNE9: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation
- Policy BNE10: Trees
- Policy BNE11: Species Protection

Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy (2012)

The policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- Policy MP
- Policy 1: Locating Growth
- Policy 3: Travel
- Policy 13: Rural Economy
- Policy 16: Heritage Assets
- Policy 18: Green Infrastructure
- Policy 21: Landscape Character Areas
- Policy 22: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- Policy 28: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Schemes
- Policy 29: Water Management
- Policy 31: Agricultural Land

Neighbourhood Plan

It is acknowledged that Bretherton Neighbourhood Plan is currently in preparation with the most recent consultation on the Draft Plan concluding in April 2025. Albeit it, it is acknowledged that limited weight can be apportioned to this Plan until it is adopted, it is considered that the following policies would be relevant to the determination of the application:

- Policy L1: Local Character
- Policy R1: Rural Economy
- Policy N1: Nature, Green and Blue Infrastructure: woodland, trees, hedgerows, watercourses, water bodies and agricultural land.
- Policy T1: Sustainable Transport and Traffic Generation
- Policy E1: Energy
- Policy E2: Asland Walks Energy Park
- Policy W1: Water Management

National Policy

The National Infrastructure Committee (NIC), official advisor to the Government on Infrastructure, has published a report (Net-Zero Opportunities for the Power Sector, March 2020) setting out the key infrastructure requirements needed to meet the UK's 2050 net-zero target, including the amount of renewable energy development that would need to be deployed. The NIC recommends that in meeting these targets, the UK's energy mix needs to be made up of around 90% renewables. The NIC recommends that across all scenarios, significant levels of solar, onshore wind and offshore wind will need to be deployed with between 129-237GW (gigawatts) of renewable energy capacity in operation by 2050. Furthermore, the British Energy Security Strategy published in April 2022 states that solar deployment will increase five-fold by 2035.

In the recent Government Publication 'Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan' (April 2023) it was outlined that the strategy to increase supply of low-carbon energy is dependent on enhancing our strengths on wind, solar and nuclear power generation alongside hydrogen production and carbon capture, usage and storage. Furthermore, the report outlines that the UK has huge potential for solar power, with the aim for 70GW of ground and rooftop capacity together by 2035. As such, the Government considers that there is a strong need for increased solar deployment as reflected in the latest draft of the Energy National Policy Statements.

Following the issue of the revised NPPF in December 2024, the Government also released the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A new era of clean electricity.

The Action Plan highlights that achieving clean power is now a broader goal and key to growing the economy and improving national security and standards of living. The document identifies urgency of enacting policy by *“Sprinting to clean, homegrown energy”*, placing delivering clean power by 2030 at the heart of one of the Prime Minister’s five missions and the Plan for Change (page 6).

The Action Plan follows the Government’s commissioning of expert advice from the National Energy System Operator (NESO) and builds on that advice, setting out the need to *“move fast and build things to deliver the once in a generation upgrade of our energy infrastructure Britain needs”*. (page 7)

The Government’s summary identifies a requirement for rapid deployment of new clean energy, setting a high ambition for 2030 of *“43–50 GW of offshore wind, 27–29 GW of onshore wind, and 45–47 GW of solar power, significantly reducing our fossil-fuel dependency. These will be complemented by flexible capacity, including 23–27 GW of battery capacity”*. (Page 10)

The Action Plan outlines three major challenges as being “the need for a secure and affordable energy supply, the creation of essential new energy industries, supported by skilled workers in their thousands, the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit our contribution to the damaging effects of climate change.” There is a clear link made between the steps to address energy security and climate change and the potential economic benefits from employment and investment in the energy industry, assisting the national plan for growth. The document (at page 20) refers to the Clean Power 2030 action plan *“Playing a key part in supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs, as part of the wider transition to net zero”*.

The Government have indicated that a programme of investment worth around £40 billion per year for the next 6 years is on the horizon, and battery storage plays a crucial role in meeting the growth of electricity demand and maintaining a secure energy supply.

The plan also outlines the role of a clean power system in meeting net zero by 2050. In this it is noted that *“By 2050, annual electricity demand is likely to at least double as a result of electrification”*.

In terms of the need to act immediately and take the opportunity for renewable energy where grid capacity is present, the Action plan states at page 50 *“There is particular urgency to accelerate the planning process across Great Britain for energy infrastructure since we do not have long for many clean power projects to begin construction if they are to be operational for 2030”*.

Clean Power 2030 identifies that the strategy will also represent a significant area for economic growth through expanding employment opportunity in addition to ensuring energy security, affordability and price stability. The Action plan states that *“Another of the key benefits of Clean Power 2030 and the scale up of clean energy sectors is the creation of new job opportunities”*. It is the Government’s intention that the new Industrial Strategy will include Clean Energy industries as a priority growth sector. (Page 43 and 44)

The Action Plan includes addressing planning and consenting as a measure for removing roadblocks to enable consenting regimes to bring new projects through the system at pace. It is stated that *“Our planning system needs to quickly change to enable government’s missions to grow the economy and deliver clean power”*. The plan states that *“There is particular urgency to accelerate the planning process across Great Britain for energy infrastructure since we do not have long for many clean power projects to begin construction if they are to be operational for 2030, especially networks and offshore wind developments.”* (pages 49 and 50)

Reform of locally consented decision making is proposed to deliver clean power 2030. The Action Plan identifies that the NPPF does not make clear that local planning authorities should *“consider the benefits*

associated with renewable energy generation, and proposals' contribution to meeting a net zero future when determining applications for these developments". (It is noted that the revision to the NPPF in December 2024 incorporates this into the new para 168 (a).)

Most recently, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero published their Onshore Wind Taskforce in June 2025. This Taskforce has been established to develop actions to boost onshore wind deployment and deliver benefits for local communities, British businesses and the consumer. This work started by lifting the de facto planning ban imposed in 2015. This document reiterated that the Clean power Action plan stated that to decarbonise the power sector by 2030, 27-19GW of onshore wind will be needed within Great Britain.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (the "Framework") was first published in 2012 and most recently revised in December 2024. The Framework sets out the UK Government's planning policies for the planning system to ensure that it helps to achieve sustainable development, which Paragraph 7 cites to be the overall purpose of the planning system. The Framework forms a material consideration in the assessment of all planning applications. Paragraph 3 confirms the Framework should be read as a whole.

The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in its three dimensions; economic, social and environmental. Central to the NPPF is presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking this means (paragraph 11):

- *approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination."

Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decision should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Specifically, it states that, *specific weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business need and wider opportunities for development.*

Furthermore, Paragraph 88 outlines that when considering the rural economy, planning policies and decisions should enable the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses (part b).

When considering the Green Belt, Paragraph 143 is clear that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) *To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) *To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*

- c) *To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) *To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) *To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF confirms when considering any planning application, Local Planning Authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness (footnote 55). Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Footnote 55 states – Other than in the case of development on previously developed land or grey belt land, where development is not inappropriate.

In this regard, Paragraph 160 states:

"When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources."

Paragraph 155 outlines that, the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also be regarded as inappropriate where;

- a) *The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan);*
- b) *There is a demonstrable unmet need;*
- c) *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to Paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework; and*
- d) *Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157.*

Grey Belt is defined with the Glossary of the NPPF (Annex 2) as follows:

'For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.'

Paragraph 161 of the NPPF states:

"The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change. It should

help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.”

Paragraph 164 of the NPPF states that new renewables development should be planned for in ways that:

- a) *avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through incorporating green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems; and*
- b) *can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design. Any local requirements for the sustainability of buildings should reflect the Government’s policy for national technical standards.*

When considering the Government’s approach to renewable energy, Paragraph 161 of the NPPF states that the planning system should support transition to a net zero by 2050. This involves taking full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change, which should help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience, encouraging the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Paragraph 166 outlines that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should expect new development to:

- b) *comply with any development plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy supply unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable; and*
- c) *take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption.*

Finally, Paragraph 168 states that, when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

- b) *not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal’s contribution to a net zero future;*
- c) *recognize that small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions;*
- d) *in the case of applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site.*

Acknowledging the location of the site within Flood Zone 2 and 3, the NPPF at Paragraph 170 outlines that *‘inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.’*

Paragraph 175 identifies that '*the sequential test should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding, except in situations where a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that no built development within the site boundary, including access or escape routes, land raising or other potentially vulnerable elements, would be located on an area that would be at risk of flooding from any source, now and in future (having regard to potential changes in flood risk).*'

Having applied the sequential test, if it is not possible for development to be located in areas with a lower risk of flooding (taking into account wider sustainable development objectives), the exception text may have to be applied. The need for the exception test will depend on the potential vulnerability of the site and of the development proposed, in line with the Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification set out in Annex 3.

Annex 3 defines the 'Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification'. Within this classification, the following elements are considered to form 'essential infrastructure':

- Essential utility infrastructure which has to be located in a flood risk area for operational reasons, including infrastructure for electricity supply including generation, storage and distribution systems; and water treatment works that need to remain operational in times of flood.
- Wind Turbines
- Solar Farms

When considering biodiversity, the NPPF stipulates at Paragraph 193 that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) *If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
...
- d) *development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate."*

When considering the implications of a scheme on heritage assets, Paragraph 212 outlines that, '*when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*'

Paragraph 215 states that, where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage assets, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate securing its optimum viable use.



Appendix 2 – Grey Belt Assessment

Grey Belt Assessment for Energy Park.

Asland Walks Green Energy Park.

On behalf of Bretherton Energy Co-operative.

Date: December 2025 | Pegasus Ref: P20-1445

Author: Emma Ridley



Document Management.

Version	Date	Author	Checked/ Approved by:	Reason for revision
0	08.10.2025	ER	NC	Draft
1	10.10.2025	ER/NC	NC	Client Draft
2	11.12.2025	ER	NC	Final



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1. Introduction

Introduction and Purpose

1.1. Pegasus Group have been instructed by the Bretherton Energy Co-Operative to undertake Belt Assessment on land comprising the Asland Walks, Eyes Lane, Bretherton, PR4 6FS. The site falls within Chorley Council's jurisdiction. The purpose of this report is to determine if the Site can be regarded as Grey Belt land and would therefore be suitable for renewable energy development based on the parameters established within the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) and the Green Belt Planning Practice Guidance (February 2025).

1.2. The site is Asland Walk to the south east of GA Pet Food Partners Plocks Farm base. The site comprises approximately 39.70 hectares of agricultural land as detailed on Figure 1 below.

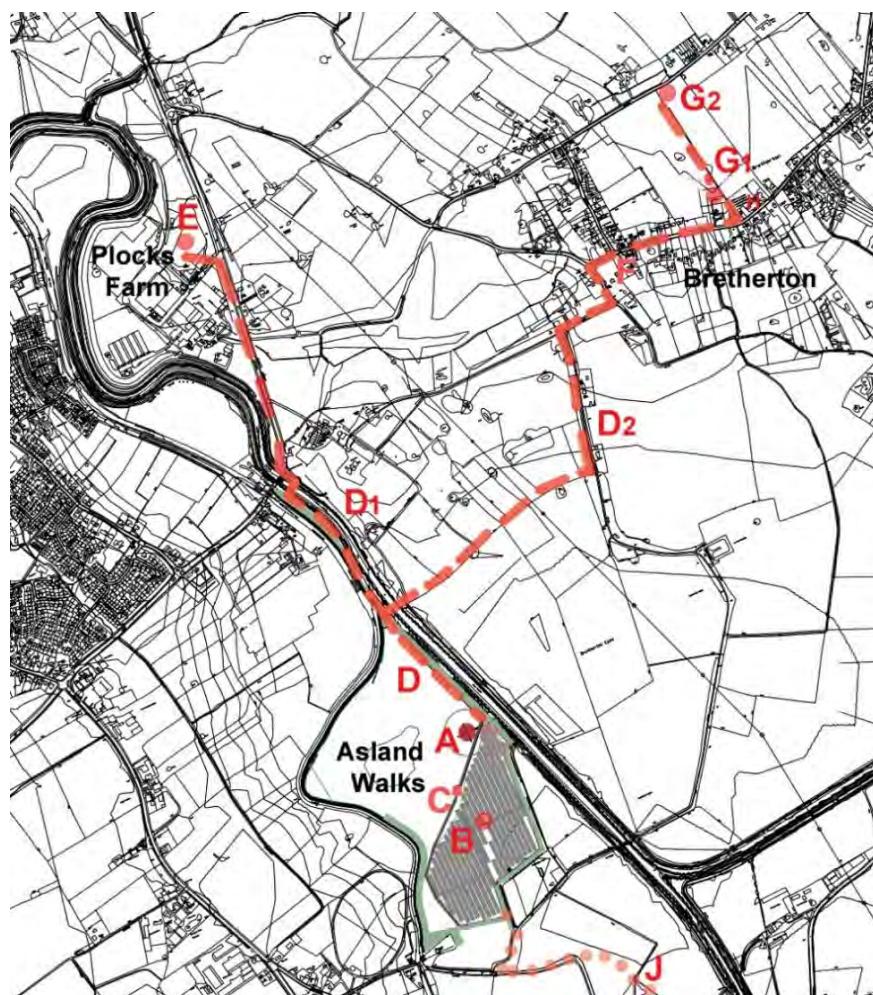


Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

1.3. This assessment provides a comprehensive assessment of the Site's role in fulfilling the purposes of the Green Belt, and its potential consideration as 'Grey Belt' land within the definition set out in national planning policy.

Methodology

1.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), most recently updated in December 2024, sets out at Paragraph 143 that the Green Belt serves five key purposes. The NPPF also provides a formal definition of the Grey Belt. While Central Lancashire combined Authority lists the Green Belt purposes using numbers 1-5 in their documentation, the presentation of the five purposes within the NPPF is in a numbered format (a-e).

1.2. For consistency and to align with national policy, this report adopts the updated lettering (a-e) when referencing the Green Belt purposes throughout, including in discussions of assessments or policies that originally used a numbered format as set out in Table 1 below.

Green Belt Purposes	Green Belt Review reference (October 2022 Green Belt Assessment – Main Report)	Equivalent reference (NPPF 2024)	NPPF (NPPF 2024)
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Purpose 1	Purpose A	
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Purpose 2	Purpose B	
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Purpose 3	Purpose C	
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Purpose 4	Purpose D	
To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Purpose 5	Purpose E	

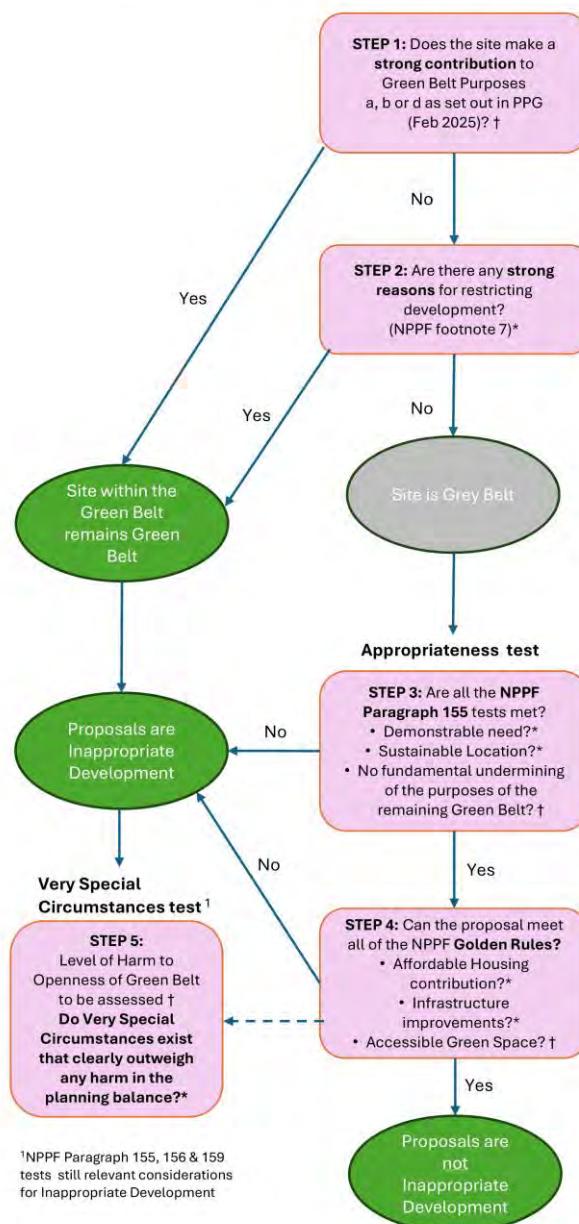
1.3. The NPPF and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (February 2025) sets out the key steps for undertaking Green Belt Assessments. These include evaluating whether land makes a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes (a), (b) and (d), as part of establishing whether it may be identified as Grey Belt land.

1.4. The second step in determining Grey Belt land is to consider whether any policies relating to the area or specific assets are of particular importance. This is established in Footnote 7 of the NPPF, which refers to nationally significant designations that may justify restricting development regardless of other considerations. These include protected habitats such as

Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Natura 2000 Sites, land designated as Green Belt or Local Green Space, and nationally recognised landscapes including National Parks, National Landscapes (previously Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), or areas defined as Heritage Coast. Footnote 7 also covers irreplaceable habitats, designated and important non designated heritage assets, as well as areas that are at risk from flooding or coastal change.

1.5. A flow chart illustrating how Green Belt Sites for major development are assessed to be Grey Belt land and subsequent tests for Appropriateness and Very Special Circumstances is set out below. To inform the assessment, a Site visit was conducted during September 2025 to review the baseline Site conditions and surrounding context including walking the local footpaths.

Green Belt Assessment: Indicative Flowchart for Major Development based on NPPF (2024)



PEGASUS
GROUP

*Assessed by Planning Consultant
†Assessed by Landscape Consultant

2. Description of the Proposed Development

2.1. This application seeks planning permission for the construction and operation of a green energy park and associated infrastructure at Asland Walks, Bretherton.

2.2. The proposed development comprises three individual but inseparable elements, amounting to a combined renewable energy output of 21.2MW:

- A single wind turbine (4.2MW)
- Solar Arrays (12MW); and
- Battery Energy Storage System (5MW).

2.3. The site would generate an estimated 29,585,543 kilowatts per annum of electrical power and will have an operational lifetime of 40 years.

2.4. Following decommissioning all landscape, habitat and recreational improvements will be retained in perpetuity.

3. Policy and Guidance on Green / Grey Belt

3.1. In the December 2024 published version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Green Belt is outlined as having 5 purposes:

- a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- c) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.2. Paragraph 155 outlines that, the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also be regarded as inappropriate where all of the following apply:

- a) *The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan)*
- b) *There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed*
- c) *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework; and*
- d) *Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraph 156-157*

3.3. Grey Belt is defined within the Glossary of the NPPF (Annex 2) as follows:

'For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in Footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.'

3.4. For the purpose of the definition of Grey Belt, Footnote 7 states:

'The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 189) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.'

3.5. Additional national guidance on Green Belts is published in the online National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) which was revised in February 2025 to reflect the new policy on Grey Belt introduced in the NPPF. The NPPG sets out that – *"An assessment of Green Belt will (alongside other considerations) inform the determination of applications which involve reaching a judgement as to whether proposals utilise Grey Belt land and whether development of the site would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area.*

Where Grey Belt sites are not identified in existing plans or Green Belt assessments, it is expected that authorities should consider evidence, in light of this guidance, on:

- *whether the site strongly contributes to the Green Belt purposes a, b or d; and*
- *whether the application of policies to areas and assets of particular importance identified in footnote 7 to the NPPF (other than Green Belt) provide a strong reason to restrict development; and*
- *whether development of the site would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area, as set out in national policy and this guidance.*

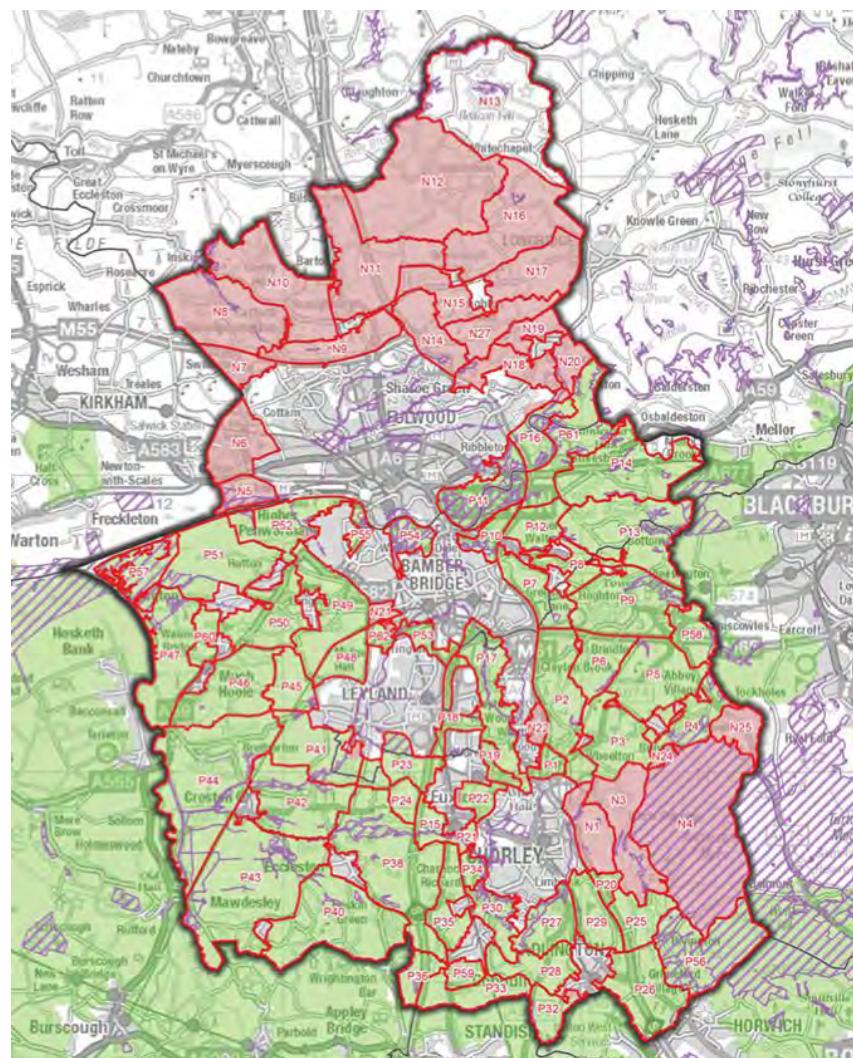
3.6. The NPPG also sets out the circumstances where development should be approved on Grey Belt land. *"Where a site is judged to be Grey Belt, and to not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area if released or developed, wider considerations will still be relevant to the consideration of development proposals on the site. These would include determining whether the development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as set out in paragraph 155 of the NPPF. That question would include consideration of whether a development is sustainably located, whether it would meet the 'Golden Rules' contributions (where applicable), and whether there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.*

Where a development is not inappropriate in the Green Belt, this does not itself remove the land from the Green Belt nor require development proposals to be approved. In accordance with section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, wider policies and

considerations apply, including those in the area's adopted Plan, and in the NPPF read as a whole."

4. Summary of Central Lancashire's Green Belt Review

- 4.1. As part of the evidence base submitted as part of the preparation for the Central Lancashire Local Plan, covering the Chorley, Preston and South Ribble Council areas, a Green Belt Designations Study was undertaken by LUC in 2022 within which a number of parcels were assessed for their contribution to the Green Belt purposes.
- 4.2. This report seeks to assess the strategic role and function of the Central Lancashire Green Belt.
- 4.3. The parcel within which the proposed development site is located is identified within the report as being Parcel 44.



4.4. When considering the strategic contribution for the defined assessment parcel the results were as follows:

P44	Chorley Council, in the northwestern corner of the Borough, between the River Douglas to the west and the railway line to the east	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
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4.5. It is acknowledged within this report that at a strategic scale there is little Green Belt land that doesn't make a significant contribution to at least one of the purposes of the Green Belt as defined within the NPPF.

4.6. The full individual parcel assessments found at Appendix 1 of this report are discussed in greater detail as part of the summary of effects on the Green Belt below (Appendix A).

4.7. It is noted that this assessment was prepared before the most recent PPG Green Belt Guidance (updated February 2025) was published, hence its methodology and findings are not necessarily considered up to date.

5. Effects on the Green Belt Purposes

5.1. Before considering the nature of the proposed development on the site, and how a proposed scheme may have a bearing upon the wider Green Belt, local landscape character and openness, this report considers how the site currently had a bearing upon the five Green Belt purposes.

Purpose (a) – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

5.2. The PPG Green Belt 2025 notes that this purpose relates to the sprawl of large built-up areas and not villages. The site is located within Chorley Rural West, approximately 7km west of both Leyland and Chorley, approximately 9km east of Southport, and 6km north of Burscough / Ormskirk. It comprises a large arable field with two discontinuous hedgerows and a low voltage power line running through the site. The site has well defined boundaries to the east and west which follow the River Douglas and the Leeds Liverpool Canal. The south and southeast boundaries are mostly dense hedgerow with a small stretch of open boundary facing onto an adjacent field. The northern boundary is narrow and bounded by the A59, and separated by dense woodland from Bank Hall. The overall character of the site is of a large rural isolated field contained mostly by natural physical features.

5.3. In the 'Open Land Designations Study – Green Belt Assessment' undertaken in 2022, this site was assessed as part of a wider parcel – Parcel 44 – which scored 'limited / no contribution' for purpose 1 (a) due to the wider parcel not contributing to the prevention of sprawl. Assessing the site as a smaller area within Parcel 44, it has strong physical boundaries (river and the canal) which contain the site within the parcel itself.

5.4. As such, the site forms a weak to no contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and does not strongly contribute to purpose (a) in Green Belt terms.

5.5. The majority of the proposed development is relatively low-level in stature, with the exception of the proposed wind turbine, and the components largely have a small and limited footprint. The appeal proposal also seeks to retain and enhance existing field boundaries.

- 5.6. As confirmed in the recently publicised Solar Roadmap Appendix 2 outlines under 'solar misconceptions' that solar renewable energy developments are not a form of industrialisation in countryside locations, it is the applicants view that the introduction of a turbine would also not contribute to the industrialisation of the countryside.
- 5.7. The proposed development would restrict any permanent urban sprawl (such as housing or other development associated with built up areas) from taking place in this location for the duration of its operational lifetime after which it would be reversed to its greenfield state upon decommissioning.
- 5.8. As such, it is concluded that the site does not make a strong contribution to purpose (a) of the Green Belt and the proposal would also have a negligible effect on the green belt in respect of this purpose.

Purpose (b) – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- 5.9. Regarding purpose (b), preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another, the PPG Green Belt 2025 notes that this purpose relates to the merging of towns not villages. The site lies within a large area of Green Belt with nearby villages and settlements shown 'inset' to the Green Belt. See the Green Belt Designation Plan at Appendix 1. In terms of towns and large built up areas Southport lies to the west, Leyland to the north east, Chorley to the east and Burscough to the south. The closest town to the site, Leyland, is located approximately 7km to the north east. The site forms a very small part of the overall gap between surrounding towns.
- 5.10. In the 'Open Land Designations Study – Green Belt Assessment', the wider parcel was described as having 'limited / no contribution' to purpose 2 (b) because it does not lie between neighbouring towns. Given the site's location on the western edge of the assessed parcel and its clear physical separation from nearby towns including Chorley the site could be developed as a Solar Farm without contributing to any loss of visual separation between towns. The generally low nature of this type of development and the containment the site can offer in terms of existing and proposed vegetation would not result in any intervisibility. In terms of the installation of a wind turbine on the land, whilst this would be a tall structure with a very wide visual influence across the surrounding Green Belt between towns, this would not in Green Belt Terms contribute to a loss of visual separation between towns.
- 5.11. It is considered overall that the site makes no contribution to Green Belt purpose (b), which seeks to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another and the proposal would have a negligible effect on purpose (b) the green belt.

Purpose (c) – to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 5.12. The proposed development site is currently undeveloped agricultural land and it is acknowledged that the scheme would represent a change to the countryside for a temporary period 40 years. However, the site is well contained and agriculture in terms of grazing or hay making could continue under panels.
- 5.13. The site is contained by some existing vegetation which could be further supplemented to enhance containment. The turbine whilst introducing a built structure would not be at odds with the local landscape context which contains other turbines, the Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Energy Development in Lancashire' study identified that the local landscape character type displays a low sensitivity to wind turbines.

5.14. It is acknowledged that within the 'Open Land Designations Study – Green Belt Assessment', the wider parcel is described as having a significant contribution to purpose 3 (c) as the parcel generally has rural uses and contains land that has strong distinction from any inset settlement, where development would be considered significant encroachment on the countryside. It is however outlined within the key considerations that there are existing development at the Twin Lakes Industrial Park and Plocks Farm both are confined to areas surrounded by well treed boundaries.

5.15. When considering the implications of the development of the site within the context of the wider Green Belt, it comprises a significantly smaller area than the general 'parcel' (P44). It is acknowledged within the Green Belt Assessment that the current extent of the Green Belt assessed is roughly 22,840 hectares. Of this area Chorley accounts for 71.8% and 14, 560 hectares of land. The red line boundary for the scheme is 39.70 hectares of land which is the equivalent to 0.27% of the Chorley Green Belt area and 0.17% of the Central Lancashire Green Belt area.

5.16. Whilst the Green Belt designation of the site means that the site would result in encroachment, the negative effects of the proposal will be temporary, limited to the operational lifetime of the development and will be partly mitigated by the proposed landscape and ecological enhancement.

5.17. Overall, this type of development on this site would result in moderate harm to encroachment.

Purpose (d) – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

5.18. Purpose (d), which relates to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns, does not apply to villages, as set out in the PPG Green Belt (February 2025). The site is not within the vicinity of any Historic Towns. However, given the importance of this purpose in the original Green Belt designations in the area, the following assessment considers how the Site relates to local heritage context.

5.19. The Environmental Designation Plan at Appendix 2 illustrates that there are a number of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings within the settlements of Sollom, Tarleton, Croston, Bretherton and Rufford in proximity of the site, but these settlements are defined as villages. The closest heritage feature to the site is Bank Hall, a Grade II listed* listed mansion in a private estate, built in 1608. Dense woodland on estate between Bank Hall and the River Douglas provide a physical and visual separation to the site.

5.20. In the wider context, there are several conservation areas and listed buildings that fall within Southport and Chorley, however, these towns are not classified as 'Historic'. There is also no intervisibility between the site and these towns.

5.21. Against purpose 4 (d), the wider parcel 44 was assessed in the 'Open Land Designations Study – Green Belt Assessment' as 'Limited / no contribution' due to the parcel not containing land that contributes to the setting or special character of any historic town.

5.22. Given the above outcome in the Council's assessment and the lack of nearby historic townscape, it is considered the site has no contribution towards purpose (d) of the Green Belt. Accordingly the effect of the proposal on Purpose (d) would also be negligible.

Purpose (e) – to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

- 5.23. The scale of the proposed development is generally not viable in urban areas where land is typically more fragmented and land values are higher.
- 5.24. In the event that there were brownfield sites, such sites may be better utilised for permanent residential or commercial development, potentially lessening the pressure for permanent development of greenfield and green belt land.

Assessment of development against the definition of the Grey Belt

- 5.25. In light of the analysis above, it is demonstrated that the site does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes (a), (b) or (d), therefore meeting this aspect of the NPPF definition of Grey Belt.
- 5.26. As the definition of Grey Belt excludes sites where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in Footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development, it is necessary to consider this in relation to the site.
- 5.27. The policy exclusions within footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) relate to habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 189) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change. None of these matters would provide a strong reason for refusal, therefore I consider that footnote 7 matters do not negate consideration of the site as Grey Belt.
- 5.28. Consequently, it is concluded that the site is appropriately considered as meeting the NPPF definition as Grey Belt.

6. Assessment of whether the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

- 6.1. Having concluded that the land can be considered to form Grey Belt land in line with the definition contained within the NPPF and wider policies when taken together it is necessary to then consider whether the proposal would be considered inappropriate development. As discussed above, Paragraph 155 of the NPPF outlines that:

The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

- a) *The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan)*
- b) *There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed*

- c) *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework; and*
- d) *Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraph 156–157*

6.2. In regard to the first sub paragraph (a) of paragraph 155, for the reasons set out in Section 4 above, it is concluded that the site does not perform strongly against the five purposes of the Green Belt as defined at paragraph 143 of the NPPF. The only purpose which the site is considered to have any bearing is that of purpose (c) encroachment. The degree of encroachment is considered to be very limited in relation to the Green Belt as a whole, owing to the size of the site, it constitutes a small percentage of the Green Belt area in the district. Consequently, the proposed temporary use of the site would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.

6.3. With regard to sub paragraph (b) and the unmet need for the type of development, whilst it is not required that the need for renewable energy must be demonstrated, it is evident from recent national publications that there is clear direction of travel towards a greater reliance on renewable energy generation. The NPPF at Paragraph 168(a) confirm that LPAs should:

"not require applicant to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future."

6.4. As discussed in Section 5 of the Planning Statement, there is a clear need for the development of solar farms and other renewable energy developments, which is driven by government legislation at both the local and national level. Amongst others, following the issue of the revised NPPF in December 2024, the Government released the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A new era of clean electricity.

6.5. This Action Plan highlights that achieving clean power is now a broader goal and key to the growing economy and improving national security and standards of living. The document identifies urgency of enacting policy by '*sprinting to clean, homegrown energy*', placing delivering clean power by 2030 at the heart of one of the Prime Minister's five missions and the Plan for Change.

6.6. Clean Power 2030 identified that the strategy will also represent a significant area for economic growth through expanding employment opportunities in addition to ensuring energy security, affordability and price stability. The Action Plan stated that "*another of the key benefits of Clean Power 2030 and the scale up of clean energy sectors is the creation of new job opportunities*". It is the Government's intention that the new industrial strategy will include Clean Energy industries as a priority growth sector.

6.7. The local need for the proposal in relation to the existing business and local community is set out within the Planning Statement (Section 5).

6.8. Having regard to the above, and those further details provided in the Planning Statement, the proposed development makes an appreciable contribution to meeting the amended Climate Change 2008 targets. It is clear that in order for the UK to meet the ambitious target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 100% or "net zero" compared to 1990 levels by 2050,

a presumption in favour of increasing the number and output of low carbon energy sources, such as the technology to be deployed here, is entirely appropriate and necessary.

6.9. When considering sub paragraph (c) of Paragraph 155, cross reference is made to paragraph 110 and 115 of the NPPF. These deal with transport sustainability matters.

6.10. NPPF Paragraph 110 states that:

'The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are, or can be made, sustainable through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.'

6.11. The site itself, once operational will not generate trips, with a small number of journeys to the site for maintenance purposes only. Therefore, the effects of the proposal on reducing congestion and emissions and improving air quality and public health as a result of traffic movements are likely to be limited.

6.12. With regard to paragraph 115 of the Framework, this states:

In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) *sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location.*
- b) *safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.*
- c) *the design of streets, parking areas other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code; and*
- d) *any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highways safety can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision led approach.*

6.13. With regards to paragraph 115(a) sustainable transport options have been prioritised, taking account of the nature of the proposal and its location.

6.14. Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be an increase in highway movements during the construction period it is not anticipated that outside of this time, the proposed development will accrue a high number of trips.

6.15. During the operational phase of the development trips to site will reduce to those required for the purpose of maintenance, anticipated to occur once or twice a month. As such, once operational the scheme will have a negligible impact on local roads.

6.16. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal meets the requirements of Paragraph 155(c).

- 6.17. Finally, sub-paragraph 155(d) referring to the 'Golden Rules' is applicable more broadly to residential development and is therefore not applicable to this development.
- 6.18. In summary therefore, it is concluded that the development meets the requirements of the criteria of paragraph 155 of the Framework and the proposal should also not be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

7. Conclusion

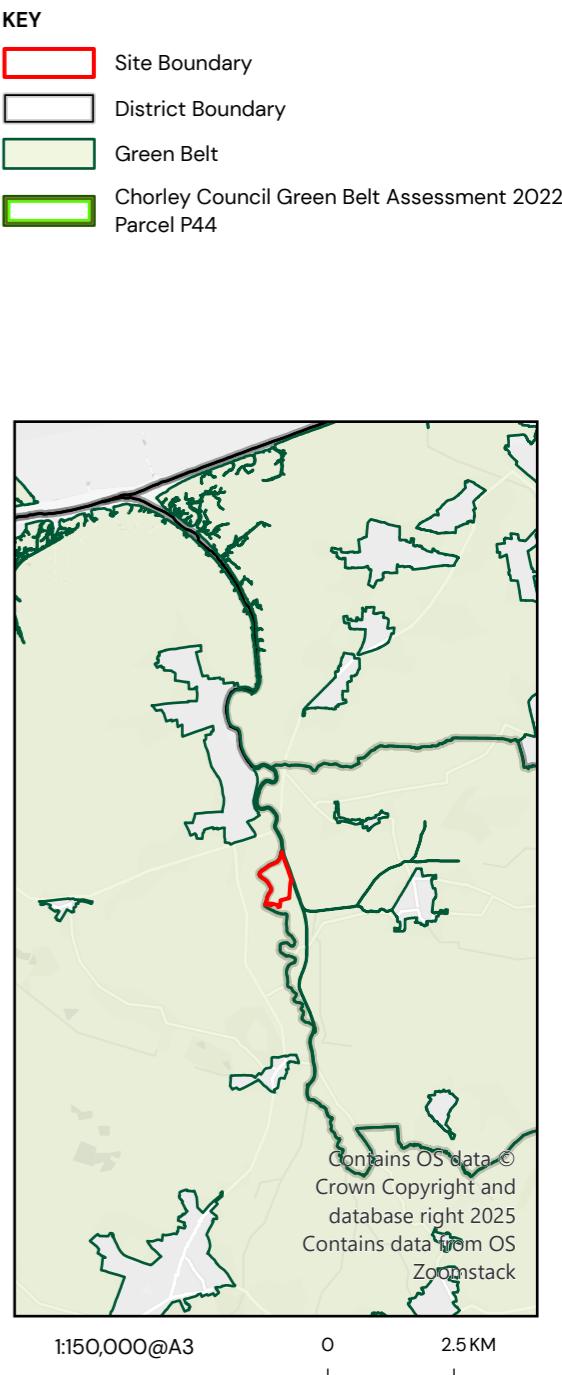
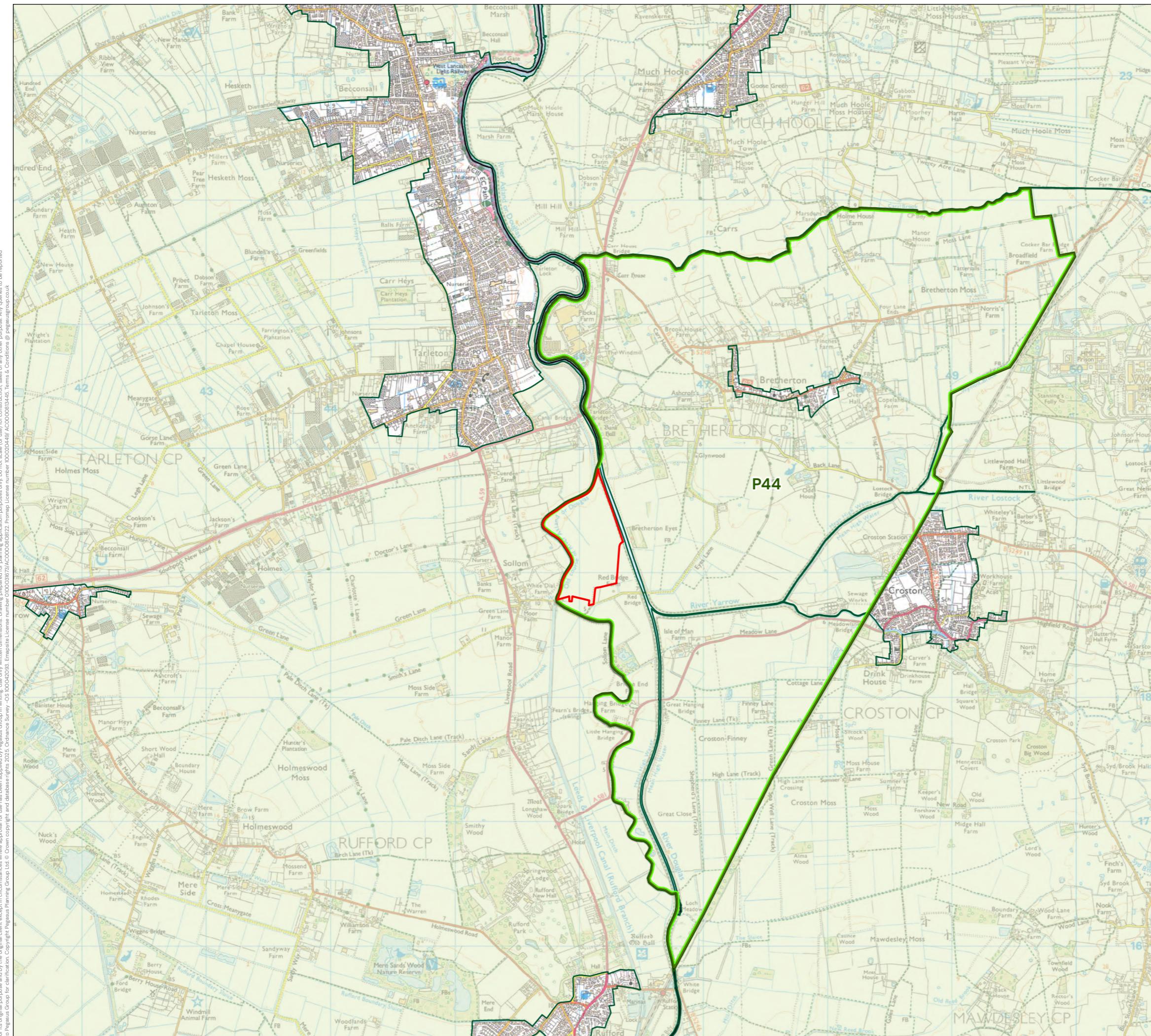
- 7.1. Noting the definition of the Grey Belt it is considered that the site meets this definition and in accordance with Paragraph 155 the proposal would not constitute inappropriate development and does not require the demonstration of Very Special Circumstances as demonstrated within recent appeal decisions and case law including, but not limited to Chimmens Solar Farm (Appeal Reference APP/G2245/W/25/3359260) and Burcot Solar Farm (Appeal Reference APP/Q3115/W/24/3350890) and Mole Valley DC v SSHCLG [2025] EWHC 2127 (Admin).
- 7.2. This conclusion also aligns with the advice in the NPPG which states:

"if development is considered to be not inappropriate development on previously developed land or grey belt, then this is excluded from the policy requirement to give substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt, including to its openness.

This is consistent with rulings from the courts on these matters that, where development (of any kind, now including development on grey belt or previously developed land) is not considered to be inappropriate in the Green Belt, it follows that the test of impacts to openness or to Green Belt purposes are addressed and that therefore a proposal does not have to be justified by "very special circumstances"." (NPPG Green Belt Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 64-014-20250225)
- 7.3. Notwithstanding the view that the proposal is not inappropriate development and therefore there is no requirement to demonstrate very special circumstances, in the event that Officers disagree with this assertion, a very special circumstances balance is demonstrated within the submitted Planning Statement. It is concluded that there is a very special circumstances case even if the scheme is found to constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.



Appendix 1 – Green Belt Designation Plan



REV DATE DESCRIPTION

GREEN BELT DESIGNATION PLAN

ASLAND WALKS ENERGY PARK

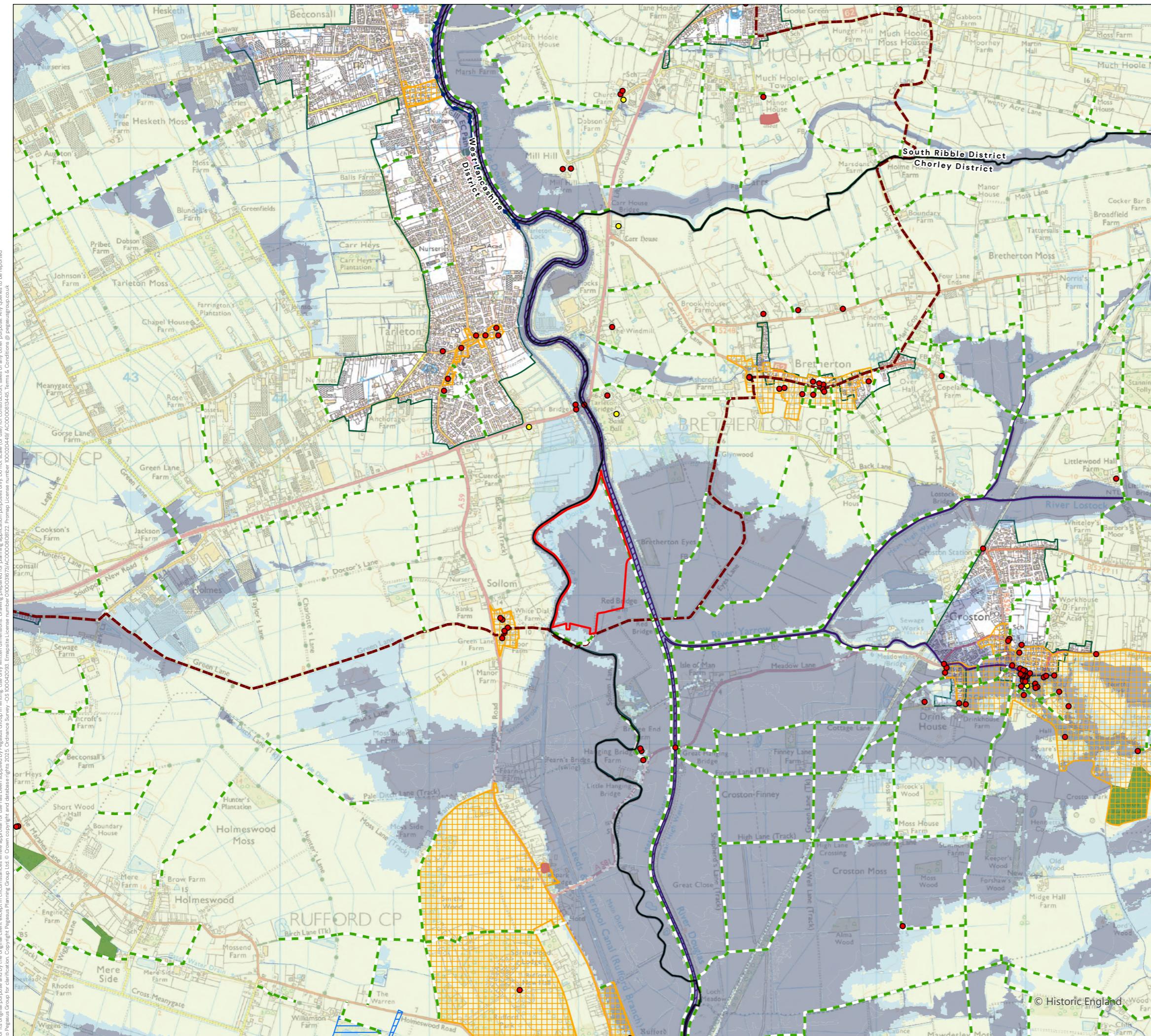
GA PET FOOD PARTNERS

DATE	SCALE	DRAWN	APPROVED
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-	B	O	0.7 KM

DRAWING NUMBER
P20_1445_EN_06



Appendix 2 – Environmental Designation Plan



REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION
-	22/08/2025	GA PET FOOD PARTNERS

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATION PLAN

ASLAND WALKS ENERGY PARK

GA PET FOOD PARTNERS

DATE	SCALE	DRAWN	APPROVED
22/08/2025	1:25,000@A3	EN/EH	NG
SHEET	REV	N	O
-	A	0	0.5 KM

DRAWING NUMBER
P20_1445_EN_05

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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