Chapter 1 – Introduction

Postcombe and Lewknor Solar Farm Environmental Statement

Postcombe and Lewknor Solar Farm Limited

Prepared by:

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Table of Contents

Tables

Supporting Figures (Environmental Statement Volume 2)

Supporting Appendices (Environmental Statement Volume 4)

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BNG	British National Grid
DAS	Design and Access Statement
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ES	Environmental Statement
GW	Gigawatt
GWh	Gigawatt-hours
GWp	Gigawatt peak
MW	Megawatt
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
PV	Photovoltaic
SODC	South Oxfordshire District Council
UK	United Kingdom
USB	Universal Serial Bus

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Site Description

1.1.1 Solar 2 Project E Limited (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant'), which is jointly proposed by Solar 2 and Recurrent Energy, is applying to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) for planning permission, under the terms of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), for permission to install and operate Postcombe and Lewknor Solar Farm (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development') at a site centred on grid reference SU 70800 98800 (the 'Site').

1.1.2 The planning application is supported by this Environmental Statement (ES) as required under the terms of the Town and Country Planning Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations 2017 (as amended) (hereafter referred to as 'the EIA Regulations').

1.1.3 This chapter introduces the Proposed Development, provides an overview of the purpose and structure of the ES, and confirms the EIA project team.

Site Description

1.1.4 The Site consists of two components; the 'cable corridor' and the 'solar site'.

1.1.5 The solar site lies approximately 50 m south of the village of Postcombe, 450 m north of the village of Lewknor, and 4.3 km south of the town of Thame. The solar site consists of two land parcels which border either side of the M40 motorway, with the A40 to the east, Weston Road to the west and Salt Lane to the north (refer to **Figure 1.1**). The cable corridor extends for approximately 3 km from the substation at the solar site to the at Harlesford Solar Farm substation.

1.1.6 The Site area is approximately 97.5 ha including the proposed cable corridor. The Site is predominantly used for arable agricultural purposes with small sections of woodland. The solar site is largely enclosed by trees and hedgerows with more open sections to the north and north-east.

The Proposed Development

1.1.7 The Proposed Development will consist of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array with an indicative maximum panel height of 3.1 m. The associated infrastructure would include an onsite substation, cable route and control building, inverters, transformers, temporary construction compound, security fencing, CCTV, landscaping planting and access tracks across the Site (refer to **Figures 1.2a** and **1.2b**).

1.1.8 The total export capacity of the Proposed Development is anticipated to be approximately up to 49.9 MW.

1.2 The Applicant

1.2.1 The Applicant is a company owned by Solar 2 and Recurrent Energy, set up to facilitate the delivery of the Proposed Development.

1.2.2 Solar2 is a specialist energy developer, founded in 2019 by Gerry and Paula Jewson, former owners of West Coast Energy. Solar2 has offices in Somerset and Wales and members of the team have experience of developing solar projects in Oxfordshire.

1.2.3 The Solar2 team has a substantial track record in the successful development of renewable projects throughout the UK, being responsible for the delivery of more than 1GW of renewable energy.

1.2.4 Recurrent Energy, a subsidiary of Canadian Solar Inc., is one of the world's largest and most geographically diversified utility-scale solar and energy storage project development, ownership, and operations platforms. With an industry-leading team of in-house energy experts, Recurrent Energy serves as Canadian Solar's global development and power services business.

1.2.5 To date, Recurrent Energy has successfully developed, built, and connected 11 GWp of solar projects and more than 3 GWh of energy storage projects across six continents. As of December 31, 2024, its global pipeline includes over 28 GWp of solar and 67 GWh of energy storage capacity.

1.3 The Renewable Energy & Planning Policy Framework

1.3.1 The ES has taken into account relevant energy and planning policy. A separate Planning Statement has been provided in support of the planning application. It contains a detailed appraisal of the Proposed Development against the relevant statutory Development Plan policies, national planning and energy policy and other material considerations. The development plan is made up of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.

1.3.2 In recent years the UK government has focused increasingly on concerns about climate change. Each tier of Government has developed targets, policies and actions to achieve net zero targets to combat the climate crisis and generate more energy and electricity from renewable sources reducing the reliance on carbon dioxide emitting fossil fuels.

1.3.3 The UK as a whole is not on track to meet its solar energy targets. A May 2024 House of Commons research report states, "*As of March 2024, the cumulative installed capacity of solar power in the UK was 15.8 GW. The government aims to achieve 70 GW of solar power by 2035*" (House of Commons Library, 2024). The Environmental Audit Committee, a Commons Select Committee, said meeting this target would be "*challenging given existing barriers and current rates of deployment*" (House of Commons Library, 2024). The government's advisory Climate Change Committee also said current deployment rates were "*significantly off track*" (House of Commons Library, 2024).

1.3.4 The Proposed Development relates to the generation of electricity from renewable energy sources and comes as a direct response to national planning and energy policy objectives.

1.3.5 The Proposed Development would make a contribution to the attainment of emissions reduction, renewable energy and electricity targets at UK levels. Detailed reference to the renewable energy policy framework is provided in the Planning Statement.

1.4 Purpose of the ES

1.4.1 SLR Consulting Ltd was appointed by the Applicant to coordinate the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process for the Proposed Development in accordance with the EIA Regulations. The EIA process is the systematic process of identifying, predicting, and evaluating the environmental impacts of a proposed development. Where appropriate, it also sets out mitigation measures designed to prevent, reduce and, if at all reasonably possible, offset potential significant adverse environmental effects. An assessment of residual effects, those expected to remain following implementation of mitigation measures, is also presented.

1.4.2 The main findings and conclusions of this ES are summarised in a Non-Technical Summary (NTS), as required by the EIA Regulations. The NTS, provided as a standalone document, summarises the key findings of the EIA in easily accessible, non-technical language, ensuring everyone with an interest in the project can understand and access information on its predicted environmental effects.

1.5 Structure of the ES

1.5.1 The ES is split into five volumes, with Volume 1 of the ES (this document) structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1** provides an introduction to the ES and its authors;
- **Chapter 2** describes the methodology of the EIA process including the scope of the process, justification for the topics scoped out of the EIA, and details of the Public Consultation process;
- **Chapter 3** provides a description of the design iteration process, detailing how the Proposed Development evolved through the course of the assessment process, taking into account technical advice and public consultation feedback and the elimination of alternative development options;
- **Chapter 4** provides a description of the existing Site, details of the Proposed Development, the construction, operation and maintenance processes, decommissioning process, need for the development and carbon considerations;
- **Chapter 5** assesses the effects on landscape and visual amenity;
- **Chapter 6** assesses the effects on the historic environment;
- **Chapter 7** assesses the effects on ecology and biodiversity;
- **Chapter 8** assesses the effects on land take, soil quality and agricultural land;
- **Chapter 9** assesses the effects of glint and glare; and

- **Chapter 10** is the Schedule of Environmental Commitments, which summarises all the mitigation measures presented in this ES and provides summary tables of all predicted residual and cumulative effects.

1.5.2 Volume 2 contains the figures that inform the ES.

1.5.3 Volume 3 contains the A3 visuals including the landscape and visual impact assessment visualisations and photomontages that inform **Chapter 5**.

1.5.4 Volume 4 contains supporting information and technical appendices.

1.5.5 Volume 5 contains confidential technical appendices.

1.5.6 Additional supporting documents which form part of the application submission include a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the ES, a Planning Statement and a Design and Access Statement (DAS).

1.6 Assessment Team

1.6.1 The assessment was undertaken by SLR Consulting's environmental teams supported by external consultants. **Table 1.1** outlines the full EIA team and their experience.

Table 1.1 EIA Project Team

Consultant	Input To The EIA	Experience
Gavin Spowage SLR Consulting	EIA Project Director	BSc (Hons) Environmental and Management Services, MSc Environmental Management. 17 years' experience in environmental consultancy.
Sophia Cockell SLR Consulting	EIA Project Manager	BSc (Hons) Environment and Development. 3 years' experience in the renewable energy industry.
Jack Henderson SLR Consulting	EIA Assistant Project Manager	BSc (Hons) Environmental Science. 1 year of experience in the environmental industry.
Joanna Berlyn Stephenson-Halliday	Planning and Energy Policy	BA Urban Studies and Planning, PGDip Town and Regional Planning, MRTPI. 15 years' experience in planning and development.
Matthew Thirsk Stephenson-Halliday	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	BA Landscape Architecture. 20 years' experience in landscape architecture.
Victoria Olesky AOC Archaeology	Archaeology & Cultural Heritage Assessment	MA Historical Archaeology. 17 years' experience as an archaeologist.

Consultant	Input To The EIA	Experience
Gary Millward	Archaeology & Cultural Heritage Assessment	BA Archaeology, MSc Geoarchaeology. 18 years' experience as an archaeologist.
Giselle Parry SLR Consulting	Ecology Assessment	BSc Geography, MSc Wildlife Management and Conservation. 6 years' experience as an ecologist.
Isabel Romero SLR Consulting	Glint and Glare	MSc Renewable Energy, MEng Chemical Engineering. 6 years' experience in the renewable energy industry.

1.7 Availability of the ES

1.7.1 Electronic copies of the ES, including all figures, appendices and accompanying documents are available to view on the project website https://postcombeandlewknorsolarfarm.co.uk/and via the SODC planning portal at www.southoxon.gov.uk.

1.7.2 For anyone who has difficulty accessing the documentation online, a USB copy can be made available on request by emailing info@solar2.co.uk.

1.8 Representations to the Application

1.8.1 Any representations to the Town and Country Planning application should be made directly to SODC via their website: www.southoxon.gov.uk or by emailing enquiries@southoxon.gov.uk.

1.8.2 Representations should be dated, clearly stating the name of the project (in block capitals), return email address, and postal address of those making representations.

1.8.3 All representations should be received no later than the date falling 30 days from the date of the last published notice in the local and national press, although representations received after this date may be considered.

1.9 References

House of Commons Library (2024). Research Briefing: CBP-7434 - The UK's changing relationship with the European Union. [online] Available at: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7434/ [Accessed 20 February 2025].