



AKEMAN SOLAR PARK, RAMSDEN DESIGN DEVELOPMENT - **DRAFT**

NOVEMBER 2020

LANDMARK REF: 3269

1.0 Overview and Early Design Layout



Figure 1 Early Design Layout, November 2019 (BSR)

Overview

- 1.1. This short design report has been compiled to illustrate how the design of the proposed Akeman Solar site has been influenced and determined by the findings of a site visit (February 2020) and desktop study of the immediate site as well as its wider landscape setting.
- 1.2. The approach has also been informed by the comments received from West Oxfordshire District Council officers in January 2020 following a pre application request submission. Pertinent landscape comments included:
- 1.3. *'The site lies close to the Cotswolds AONB, a nationally important designation, where great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty.'*
- 1.4. *'Policy EH2 of the Local Plan also seeks to protect landscape character and ensure that new development conserves and, where possible, enhances the intrinsic character, quality and distinctive natural and man-made features of the local landscape.'*
- 1.5. *'This site lies within the Wychwood Project area where special attention and protection will be given to the landscape and biodiversity.'*
- 1.6. *'Following a site visit by the Landscape Officer there are strong concerns relating to the impact of this development on this sensitive landscape and its visual prominence from public vantage points including the adjoining right of way and road. Longer distance views have not been assessed and would need to be included within the required LVIA. It is felt that the proposed solar farm including the solar photovoltaic array, energy storage scheme and associated infrastructure including the security fencing, CCTV and access arrangements would have a significant harmful impact on the landscape. Notwithstanding, these concerns, if an application is to be submitted, the location of the energy storage system would require particular careful consideration and white containers would not be appropriate.'*

Early Design Layout

- 1.7. Initial proposals for the proposed development maximised coverage of the solar panels within the application site boundary, see **Figure 1**.
- 1.8. These outline proposals formed part of the pre-app submission material to inform West Oxfordshire District Council's initial advice.

2.0 Landscape Initial Thoughts Sketch

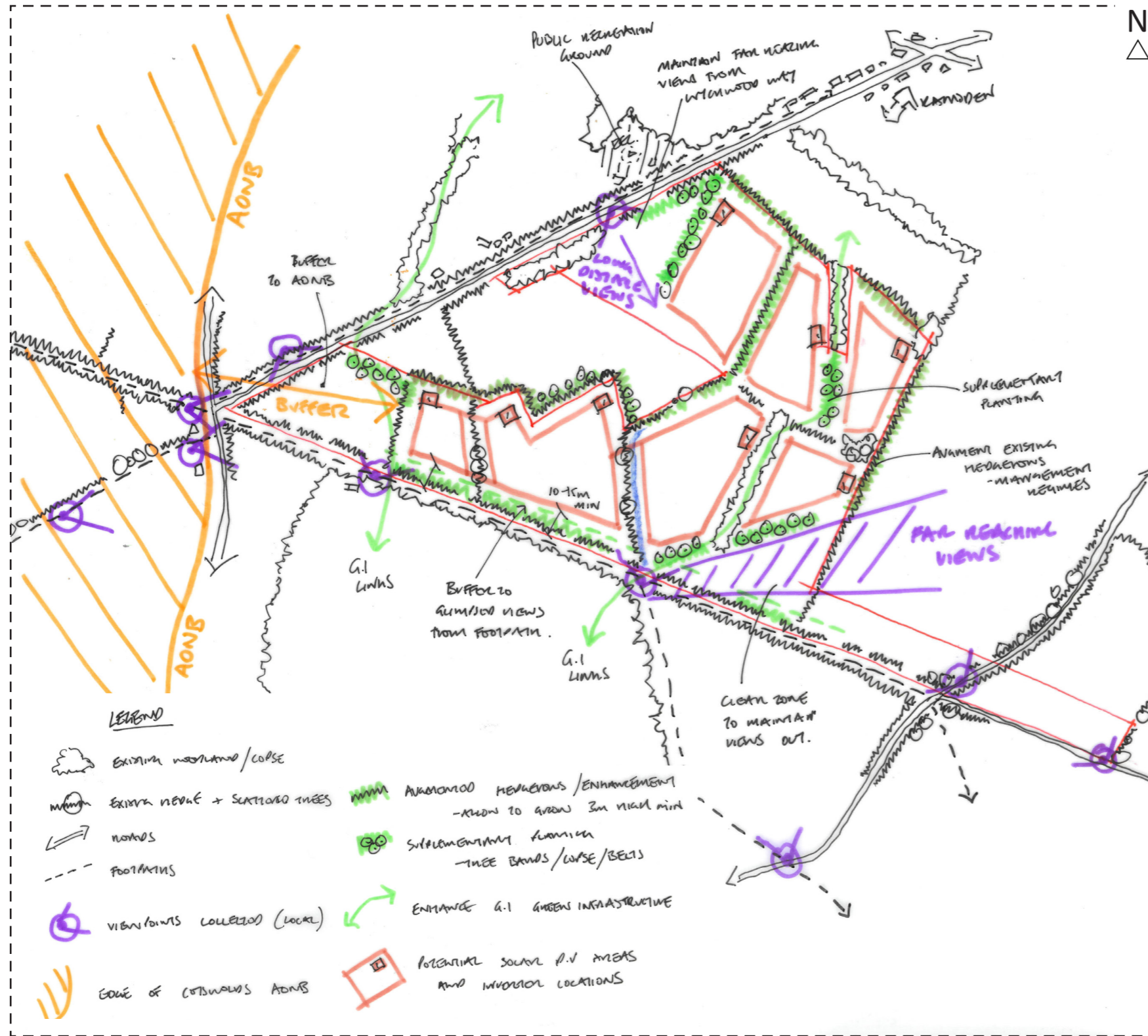


Figure 2 Landscape Initial Thoughts Sketch (TLP)

Initial Thoughts

- 2.1. Figure 2 sets out initial landscape opportunities and constraints advice from TLP and was informed by a site visit site visit and review of local designations, landscape character and a detailed desktop study.
- 2.2. The sketch highlights key considerations and opportunities with regard to ensuring that potential landscape and visual impacts associated with the development are mitigated as far as possible and make use of existing assets within and close to the site.

Key Considerations

- Provide a buffer between the Cotswolds AONB and the site, limit any development in the western most field. This field is overlooked by residences around New Found Out Farm and receptors using footpaths.
- Maintain expansive views experienced along Wychwood Way / Akeman Street (Roman Road) which runs along the north-western edge of the site by providing a buffer. There is also a local recreation ground located along this road positioned to the north of the red line.
- The Saint John's Lane footpath which runs east to west between the site and Singe Wood has a strong character and is well used. Some sections are enclosed by dense evergreen vegetation whilst other sections are relatively open which allows for views north east across the site and the landscape beyond. The security fencing and proposed solar PV panels along this edge should be offset from the path and wood to avoid shading and opportunities for boundary buffer planting should be explored.
- The internal hedgerows within the site vary in height, depth, structure and quality. Options for enhancement, augmentation (through management regimes) and supplementary tree planting should be explored to assist in screening whilst also providing Green Infrastructure (GI) and ecological enhancements.
- Landscape interventions in the form of supplementary copse and shelter belt planting would fit with the local landscape character and assist in screening and directing views across and away from the site as well as provide GI and ecological benefit.
- Suggest that invertors/storage features are positioned in locations that maximise screening potential, we also concur with the Landscape Officer comments that the finish/colour of these should be muted.

3.0 Current Layout

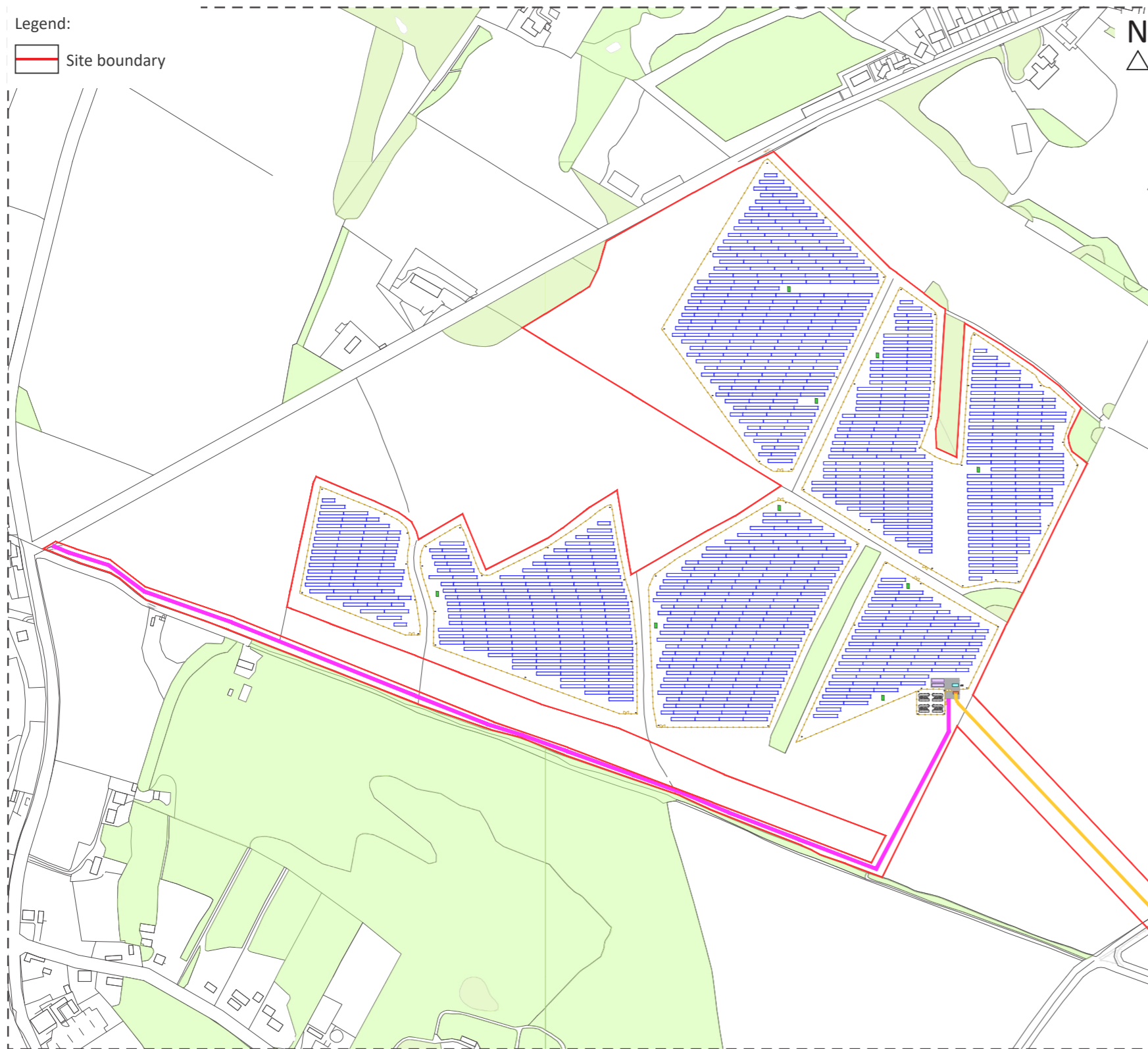


Figure 3 Current Layout (BSR)

Current Layout

- 3.1. The current layout has taken on board the suggestions and comments identified on **Figure 2** as demonstrated on the adjacent **Figure 3**.
- 3.2. This layout has been used to inform the AVRs (Photomontages) supplied alongside this report.

Going Forward

- 3.3. A full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is currently being carried out which will include a supporting landscape plan.
- 3.4. This material will form part of the planning application.