

14 CONCLUSIONS

- 14.1 This Environmental Statement has identified the potential impacts of a proposed solar park at Redwick, Caldicot on receptors such as people, landscape character, surface water, heritage assets and biodiversity and has assessed if the resulting effects are likely to be significant.
- 14.2 No effects of a significance level higher than moderate (i.e. a major or substantial effect) were identified in the assessment. The environmental impact assessment identified several likely adverse effects of moderate significance, meaning these are important but unlikely to be a key decision-making factor on one aspect. The cumulative effects of multiple moderate effects may influence decision making if they lead to an increase in the overall adverse effect on a particular resource or receptor.
- 14.3 In terms of significant effects on landscape character and qualities, moderate effects are those where the proposed development would be noticeable and/or partially alter a recognised landscape or landscape feature and potentially significant. The presence of the proposed development would result in a moderate level of effect on the Caldicot Levels Special Landscape Area designated at a local level to protect areas of fine landscape quality. The area is already influenced by numerous lines of pylons, operational and consented wind energy schemes and development on its northern boundary. The solar park would add additional built elements, albeit contained within and largely enclosed by the characteristic regular network of fields, divided by reens and lines of vegetation, the layout having been informed by and respecting of the regular and distinctive landscape pattern. Only in very close proximity to the solar park would there be the potential for the development to be perceived and indirectly influence the special landscape area. In addition, from the very few locations that the proposed solar park would be perceived within the special landscape area, it would always be perceived adjacent to or in combination with other built elements including pylons and wind energy schemes, as illustrated in Viewpoints 1-6 (Figures 8.10-8.15), Viewpoint 8 (Figure 8.17) and Viewpoint 12 (Figure 8.21).
- 14.4 The public right of way along Blackwall Reen immediately to the east of the site runs from north to south and follows a raised embankment across the levels landscape. Intermittently lined by vegetation, close proximity open views towards the proposed solar park would be possible, as illustrated in Viewpoint 3 (Figures 8.12A-B). From immediately adjacent to the proposed development, the presence of the solar panels would create a change to the view. Although confined to the regular landscape pattern, with wider views of the solar panels restricted in the flat levels landscape, the presence of the solar park in such close proximity would be impossible not to notice. At worst, from immediately adjacent to the solar park the level of effect on users of the Blackwall Reen track would be moderate and significant. Very quickly however, exposed views of the proposed development from the public right of way would diminish due to screening by linear vegetation in the intervening landscape as well as surrounding the site itself, as illustrated in Viewpoint 5 (Figure 8.14A).

- 14.5 A likely significant effect was highlighted during the assessment of effects on heritage assets. This was the effect on one's perception of the Historical Characterisation areas within which the site is located which form part of the Gwent Levels Historic Landscapes of Outstanding Interest. The moderate level effect would be a result of the change in setting and land use as a result of a solar park in this location.
- 14.6 Local roads in the area have no segregated footways and currently carry very little HGV traffic. During construction, the introduction of HGV traffic could result in fear and intimidation experienced by road users (pedestrians and cyclists) using North Row and Green Street, representing an effect of moderate significance. All of the construction and decommissioning transport related effects are short-term, being limited to the estimated 18 to 20 week construction phase.
- 14.7 All other likely effects on the environment were assessed to be beneficial or minor to negligible level adverse effects which are not significant. Beneficial effects include significant moderate beneficial effects as a result of the sensitive management of the reens, improved hedgerow boundaries and rough grassland buffers.