

1 INTRODUCTION

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1.1.1 This Environmental Statement has been prepared to accompany a planning application by RES Ltd (the “Applicant”) on Land west of the A4074, to the north-west of Nuneham Courtenay, South Oxfordshire (the “Application Site”), as follows:

Full planning application comprising:

CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF A SOLAR FARM WITH ALL ASSOCIATED WORKS, EQUIPMENT, NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAINS – KNOWN AS “NUNEHAM SOLAR FARM”

1.1.2 The Application Site is situated within the administrative area of South Oxfordshire District Council. The location and extent of the Application Site is shown on **Figure 1.1**. The grid connection does not form part of the planning application, but it is recognised that this would form a wider extent of associated development which it is relevant to consider in the Environmental Statement. It is understood that the grid connection would be made utilising the existing 132kV overhead transmission line which runs to the north of the site, where RES have a confirmed grid connection offer. Further details of this are set out in **Chapter 3: The Site and the Proposed Development**. The site boundary for the purpose of the Environmental Statement therefore encompasses the likely area required for the grid connection as shown on **Figure 1.2**.

The Applicant – RES Ltd

1.1.3 RES Ltd is the world’s largest independent renewable energy company with 40 years’ experience developing, constructing and operating renewable assets. RES has delivered more than 21GW of renewable energy projects across the globe and support an operational asset portfolio of over 7.5GW worldwide.

1.1.4 The Group’s head office in Kings Langley, near London, is complemented by other offices across the UK including Glasgow, Cardiff, Gateshead, Exeter, Truro, Guildford, Rugby and Larne in Northern Ireland, with engineers working across the UK. Internationally, RES has overseas subsidiary offices in France, Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Turkey, Germany, and across the USA. The RES Group employs 3,000 staff.

1.1.5 RES has the expertise to develop, construct and operate solar farms of outstanding quality. RES track record has given them a reputation for excellence that is second to none and have achieved significant success in the solar energy market.

1.1.6 Within the UK&I, RES has a team dedicated to solar development and have an exceptional track record. Examples of recent planning consents are Varley (25MW), Ballymoneen (105MW), Manusmore (76MW), and Derril Water (42MW), and of recent planning submissions are Culimore (40MW), Ballyteige (37MW), Rathdyff (25MW) and Kingston (50MW).

1.2 EIA REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

1.2.1 An Environmental Statement (ES) is a document that sets out the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). An EIA is a process for identifying the likely significance of environmental effects (beneficial or adverse) arising from a Proposed Development, by comparing the existing environmental conditions prior to development (the baseline) with the

environmental conditions during/following the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of a development should it proceed. The EIA is carried out prior to the submission of a planning application.

1.2.2 The EIA process has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended), which are referred to in this document as the 'EIA Regulations'

Screening

1.2.3 The EIA Regulations require that any proposed development falling within the categories set out within Schedule 2, should be considered as 'EIA Development', where the development is considered likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of such factors as its nature, size or location (Regulation 2).

1.2.4 The Proposed Development falls within Section 3 (a) '*Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1)*' of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations, as the area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectares.

1.2.5 Schedule 2 development need not necessarily comprise EIA Development. The determining factor in any consideration of the need for EIA of Schedule 2 development is the likelihood of significant effects. The pre-application advice from South Oxfordshire District Council addressed the matter of the potential for development at the site to bring about significant effects and stated as follows: '*It is likely that the development **would give rise to significant impacts and should be subject to an EIA assessment** and the preparation of an Environmental Statement*'. The response went on to state that '*Therefore, you may wish to **submit a Scoping Opinion request** in the first instance to ascertain the scope of the ES*'. It is acknowledged that the site boundary now proposed differs slightly from that which was included with the pre-application request. However, it is not considered that this change is of such a nature that the Council's pre-application advice regarding the potential for significant effects to arise would not continue to apply and an EIA has been undertaken on that basis.

Scoping

1.2.6 In order to determine the scope of an EIA, the EIA Regulations make provision for, but do not statutorily require, an applicant to request that the LPA provide a written opinion as to the information to be provided within the ES.

1.2.7 As part of the development process, a Scoping Opinion was requested by the Applicant, with the aim of identifying the necessary topics to be included within this ES. The Scoping request was accompanied by a Scoping Report which set out the proposed content of the ES. The Scoping Opinion was issued by South Oxfordshire District Council, dated 16.11.22, and confirmed the matters for inclusion within the ES should comprise those set out in the Scoping Report (i.e. Landscape and Visual Effects, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage, Ecology and Agricultural Land).

1.3 STRUCTURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

1.3.1 This ES comprises studies on each of the aspects of the environment identified as likely to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development (the 'technical chapters'), which are supported with figures and technical appendices where appropriate.

1.3.2 This ES is structured as follows:

- **Environmental Statement – Volume 1: Main Report and Figures** – Comprises the main volume of the ES, including ‘general chapters’ that describe the EIA context which, provide a description of the Application Site and Proposed Development, and set out the scope of the ES, followed by the ‘technical chapters’ for each environmental theme and their associated Figures, and concluding with a summary.
- **Environmental Statement – Volume 2: Appendices** – Comprises the associated technical Appendices which accompany the ‘general chapters’ and ‘technical chapters’.
- **Environmental Statement: Non-Technical Summary (NTS)** – this provides a concise summary of the ES identifying the likely significant environmental effects and the measures proposed to mitigate or to avoid adverse effects of the Proposed Development.

1.3.3 The content of the ES Main Report comprises:

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Assessment Scope and Methodology
- Chapter 3 The Site and the Proposed Development
- Chapter 4 Consideration of Alternatives
- Chapter 5 Planning Policy Context
- Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Effects
- Chapter 7 Archaeology & Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 8 Ecology (Biodiversity)
- Chapter 9 Agricultural Land

1.3.4 For continuity, the Figures and Appendices are arranged and presented using the same reference numbers as the chapters as a means of providing supportive background and technical information.

The EIA Consultant Team

1.3.5 The applicant has appointed a team of specialist consultants to consider planning and environmental matters in relation to the proposed development and to provide input into the production of this Environmental Statement.

1.3.6 The Environmental Statement has been coordinated and managed by Pegasus Group. Pegasus are registered to the EIA Quality Mark, a scheme operated by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) which allows consultancies that lead the co-ordination of statutory EIAs in the UK to make a commitment to excellence in their EIA activities and have this commitment independently reviewed. The Lead Author of the Environmental Statement was Dale Turner. Dale holds a Master of Science Degree in Environmental Impact Assessment and has many years of experience in producing Environmental Statements for development projects under the Pegasus EIA Quality Mark scheme.

1.3.7 The consultants that have also contributed to the preparation of this ES are set out below and details of the competency of their lead authors is set out in each of the Chapters:

| Topic | Consultant |
|---------------------------------|---|
| LVIA | Pegasus Group – internal LVIA specialists |
| Archaeology & Cultural Heritage | Pegasus Group – internal Heritage specialists |
| Ecology | Clarkson and Woods |
| Agricultural Land | Pegasus Group and Soil Environment Services |

1.4 ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT AVAILABILITY AND COMMENTS

1.4.1 This ES should be made available by South Oxfordshire District Council for public viewing during normal office hours. For details of where they can be viewed and the times they are available will be available from the Council's Planning Department, who can be contacted by telephone on 01235 422 422 or email at enquiries@southoxon.gov.uk.

1.4.2 The ES and planning application documents may also be available via the Council's website once the planning application has been registered, and comments can be left electronically: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/comment-on-planning-applications>

1.4.3 Alternatively, the ES may be purchased, the costs for which are set out below:

- Main Report – £75
- Non-Technical Summary (NTS) – £5
- Digital copies of the above documents on a memory stick – £10

1.4.4 For copies of any of the above please contact Pegasus Group (quoting reference P21-2947) at the following address:

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Green Lane
Garforth
Leeds
LS25 2AF
Telephone: 0113 287 8200
Email: Leeds@pegasusgroup.co.uk