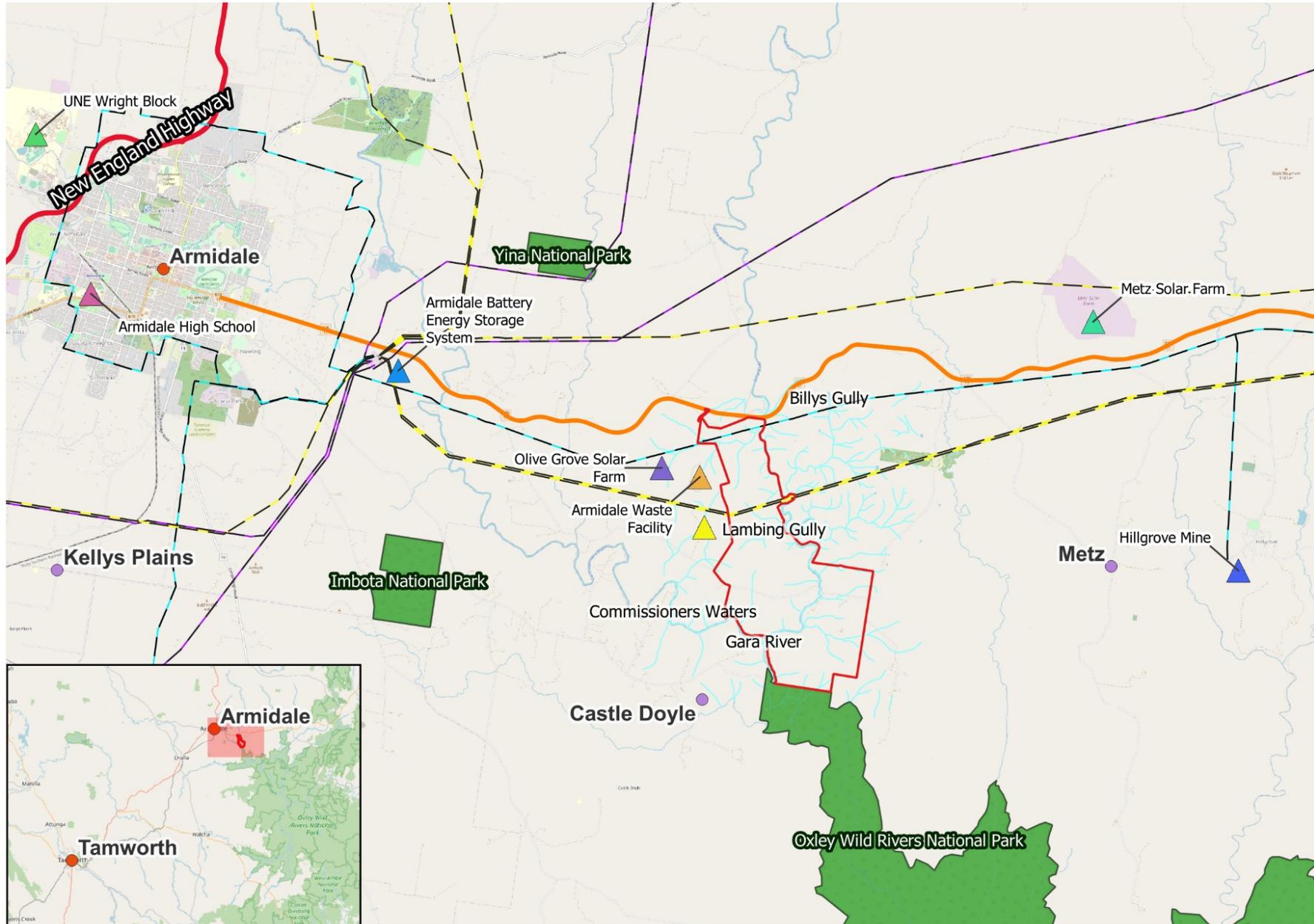


**INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION  
PRESENTATION  
6 OCTOBER 2023**



**Oxley Solar Farm**

# REGIONAL CONTEXT



## Regional Context

- Legend**
- Project site
  - City
  - Locality
  - Grafton Road
  - New England Highway
  - NPWS Reserve
- State Significant Developments**
- ▲ Armidale Battery Energy Storage System
  - ▲ Armidale High School
  - ▲ Armidale Waste Facility
  - ▲ Hillgrove Mine
  - ▲ Metz Solar Farm
  - ▲ Olive Grove Solar Farm
  - ▲ Stringybark Solar Farm
  - ▲ UNE Wright Block
- Electricity transmission line**
- 132kV
  - 330kV
  - 66kV

Data Attribution  
 © NGH 2023  
 © OSF 2023  
 © Openstreetmap 2023

Ref: 21-393 Submissions and Amendment workspace 20220523 \ Regional Context  
 Author: kyle.m  
 Date created: 26.05.2023  
 Datum: GDA94 / MGA zone 56

0 2 4 km 



## Project Timeline:

- 2018 Negotiations with landowners late
- 2019 OSF Publish Scoping Report June
- 2019 August SEARs issued by DPE
- August 2020 Oxley Solar Community Open Day session
- Numerous individual site visits to landowners in this time
- Significant delays experienced by OSF due to COVID restrictions
- 17 March 2021 to 14 April 2021 EIS exhibition
- May 2021 following EIS exhibition, public info session site visit with DPE
- Significant change to project design by OSF in response to EIS submissions
- October 2022 Submission Report from OSF to DPE
- November 2022 Amendment Report OSF to DPE
- September 2023 RFI response OSF to DPE
- September 2023 DPE recommendation

# KEY FEATURES

- 215 MW Solar
- 50 MW Battery
- 132 kV power line crosses site
- Access directly from main highway, Waterfall Way
- Site is largely cleared grazing land RU1
- Development footprint designed to avoid environmentally sensitive areas

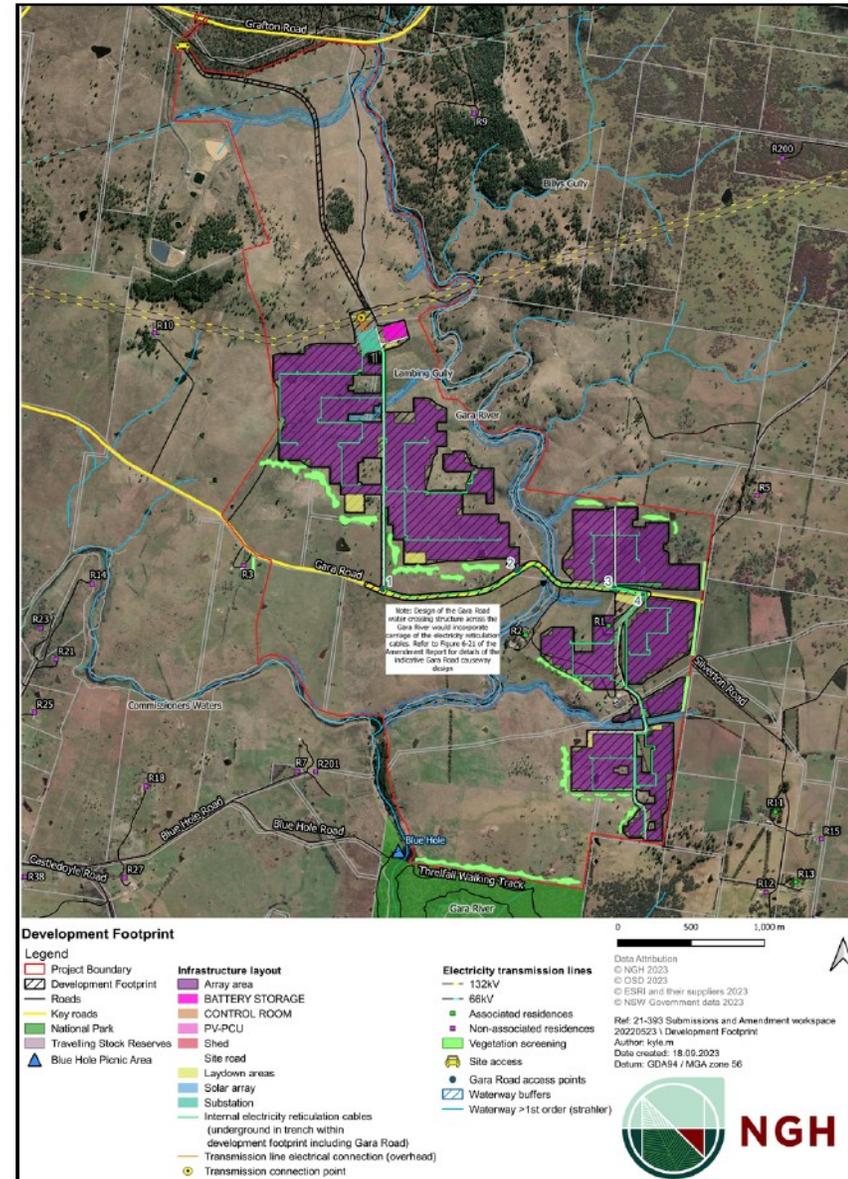
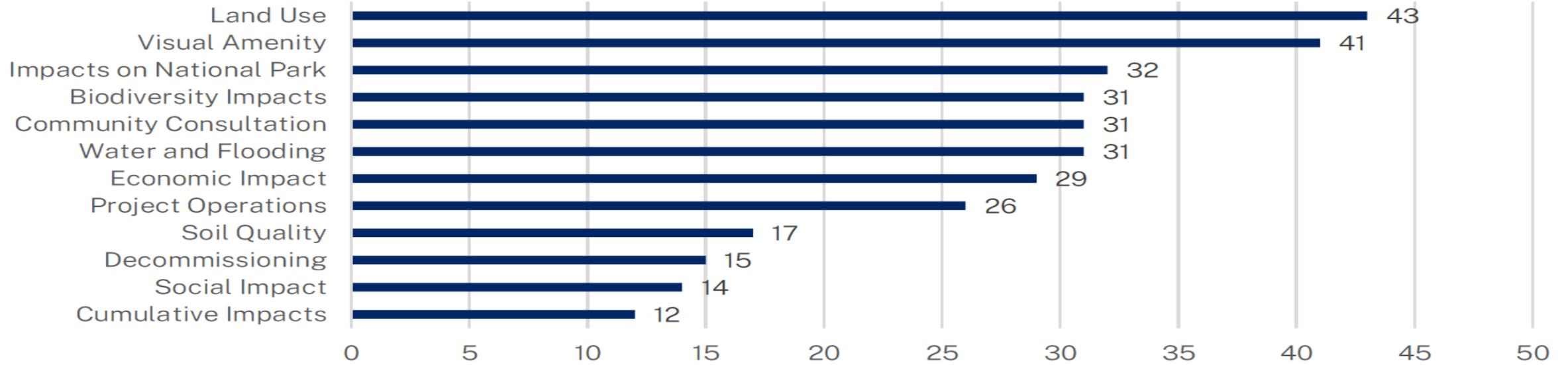


Figure 2 | Project Site

# KEY ISSUES RAISED DURING EIS PROCESS

## Public Submissions



# MODIFICATIONS MADE BY DEVELOPER IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

Aspect	Unit	EIS Project	Amendment Project	Difference	% DIFFERENCE
Development Footprint	hectare (ha)	895	268	-627	-70.1%
Solar Panel area	hectare (ha)	269.78	195.25	-74.5	-27.6%
Number of Panels	panels	715,680	385,280	-330,400	-46.2%
Setback distance nearest residence (R5)	metres (m)	546	615	69	12.6%
Setback distance Castledoyle residence (R7)	metres (m)	739	1580	841	113.8%
Setback distance Castledoyle residence (R201)	metres (m)	610	1550	940	154.1%
Setback distance Blue Hole Picnic area	metres (m)	475	1,285	810	170.5%
Biodiversity impact Native vegetation	hectare (ha)	86.8	92.78	5.98	6.9%
Biodiversity impact Box Gum woodland	hectare (ha)	6.67	1.68	-4.99	-74.8%
Biodiversity impact Hollow bearing trees	hectare (ha)	20	5	-15	-75.0%
Generation capacity	megawatt (MW)	255	215	-40	-15.7%
Site access		Via existing property access on Waterfall Way	Via a new access point from the ARL access road	(use of higher output panels) Relocated site access to improve road safety.	
Upgrade of Gara River causeway		Upgrades would occur in the vicinity of the causeway	The causeway road will be raised by up to 1.3m and would include culverts	Improve road safety, amenity, flood immunity and enable a fish passage.	

# AGRICULTURAL LAND USE – KEY ISSUE 1

- Land is not mapped as Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL)

From a land capability perspective:

- 67% of land has Severe limitation (Class 5)

Class 5 definition is “Severe limitations, more suitable for grazing, occasional cultivation for fodder crops”

- Balance of land is moderate to severe limitation plus very severe limitation (Class 4 and 6)

Therefore this land is not very suitable for general cropping agriculture however it was chosen as a suitable site for this solar development.

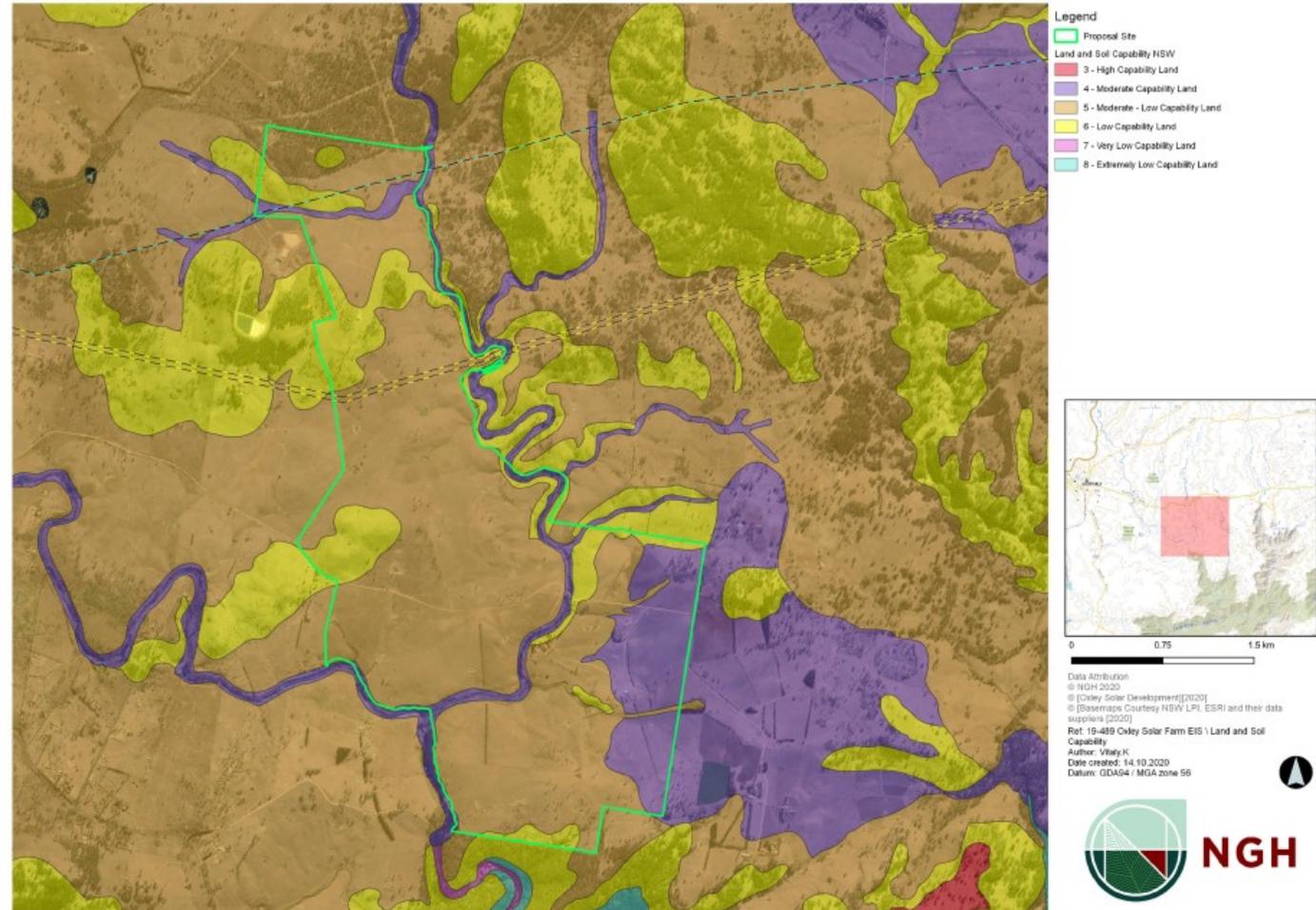


Figure 7-23 Proposal site Land and Soil Capability Classes mapping (modified from OEH, 2020).

# VISUAL AMENITY – KEY ISSUE 2

- Development footprint reduced from 895ha to 268 ha
- Solar panel area reduced from 269ha to 195 ha
- Number of panels reduced from 715,680 to 385,280
- Visual screening with vegetation
- Panels have been set back from key viewpoints and dwellings

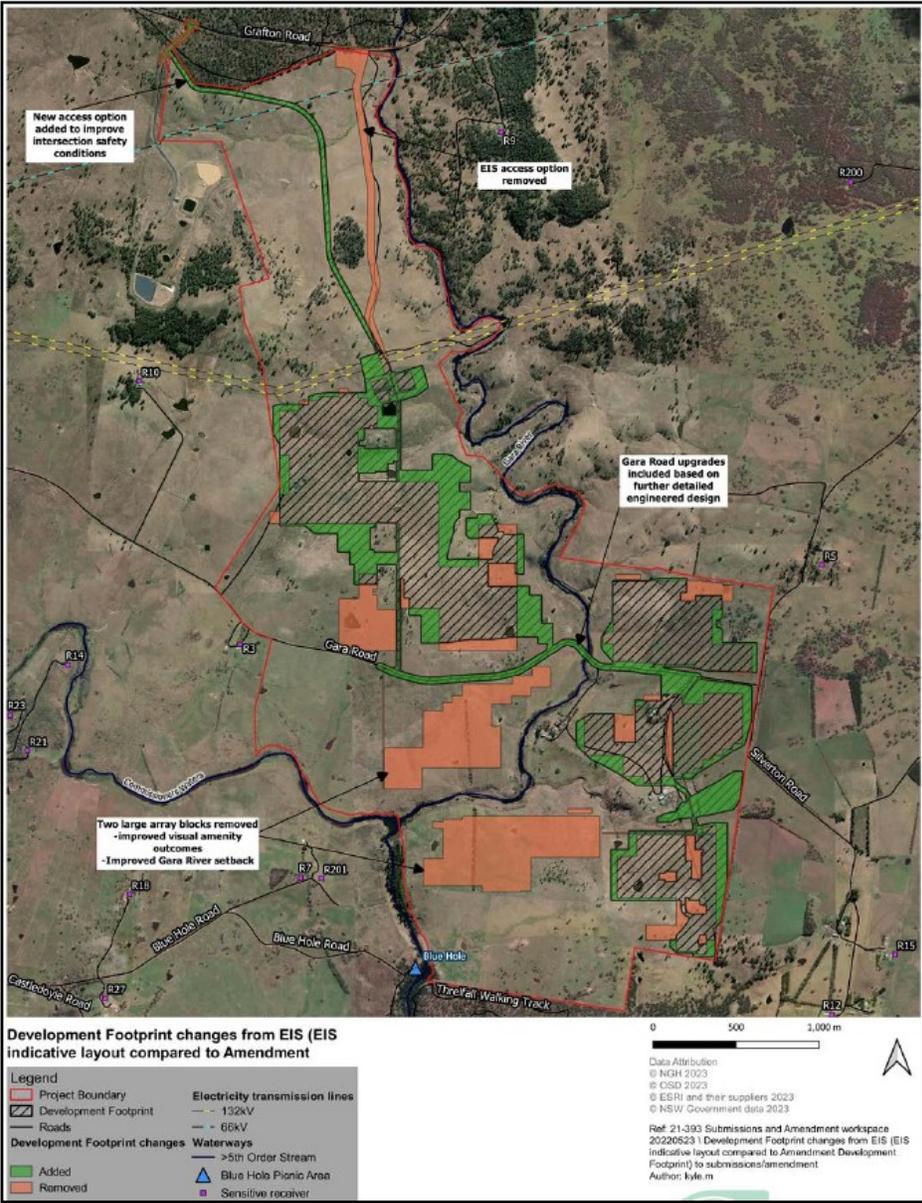
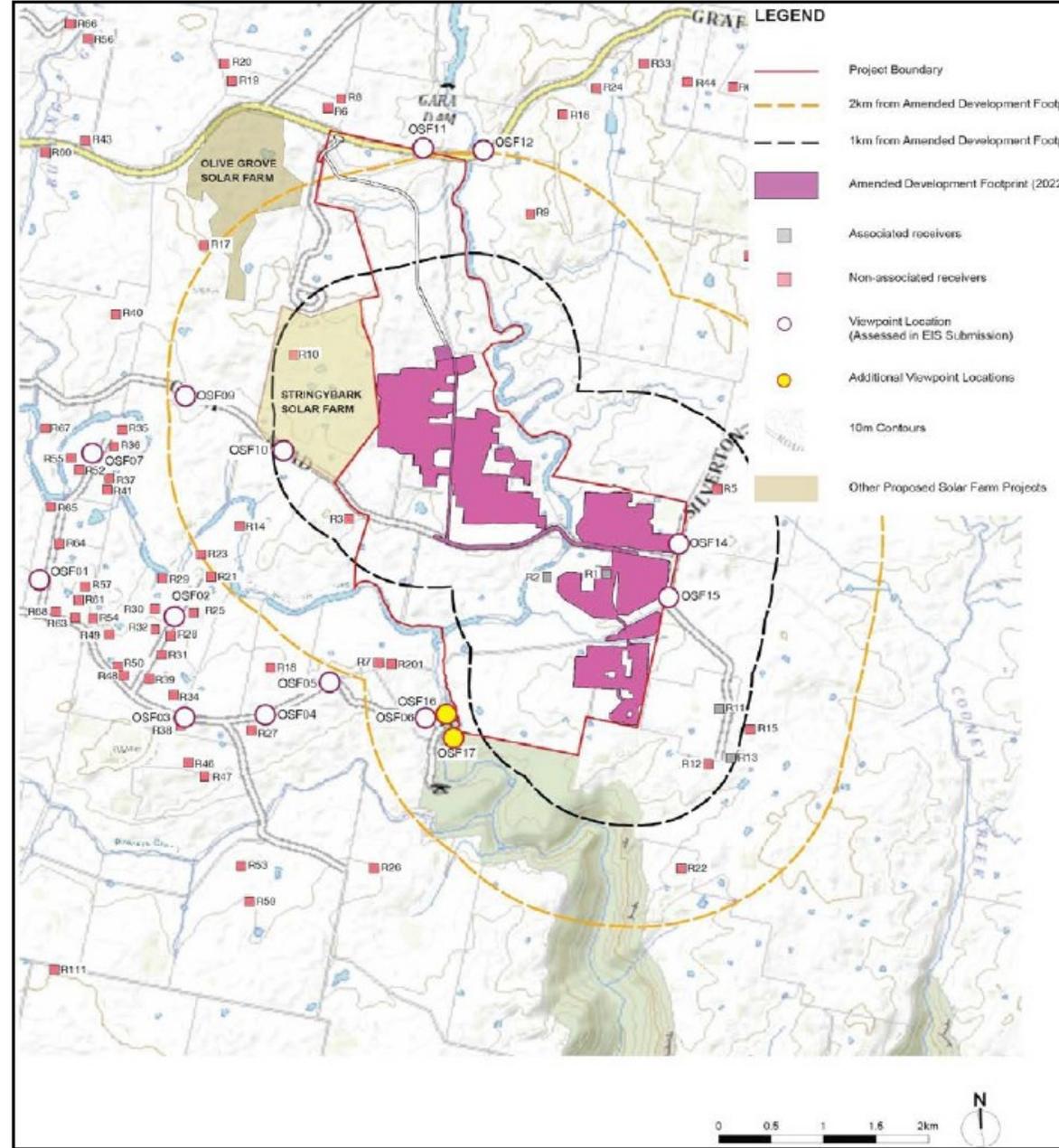


Figure 5 | Project layout amendments

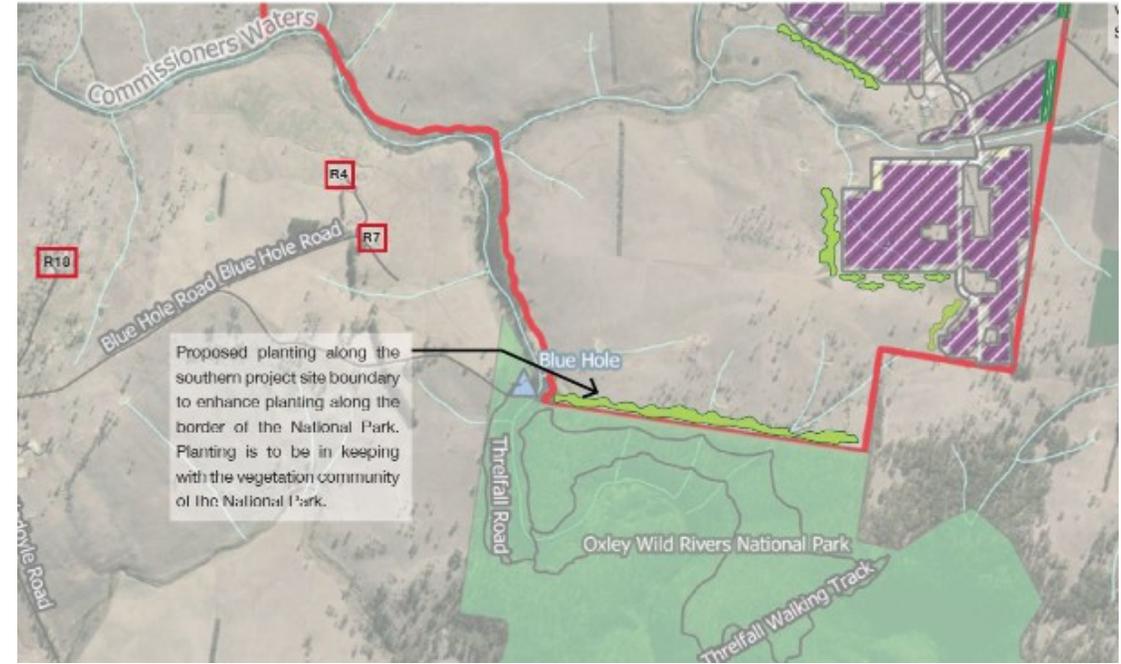
# VISUAL AMNENITY – KEY ISSUE 2

- 11 non associated receivers within 2 km
- Closest residence (R5) is about 615m north east of the project site
- Two smaller approved (not constructed) Solar Farms are to the east. One of them (Olive Grove) is not visible from the project site
- Receivers R7 / R201 are now about 1,550m from project an increase of around 900m



# IMPACTS ON NATIONAL PARK – KEY ISSUE 3

Vegetation and topography will screen views to the Project from the National Park



Vegetation and topography will screen views to the Project

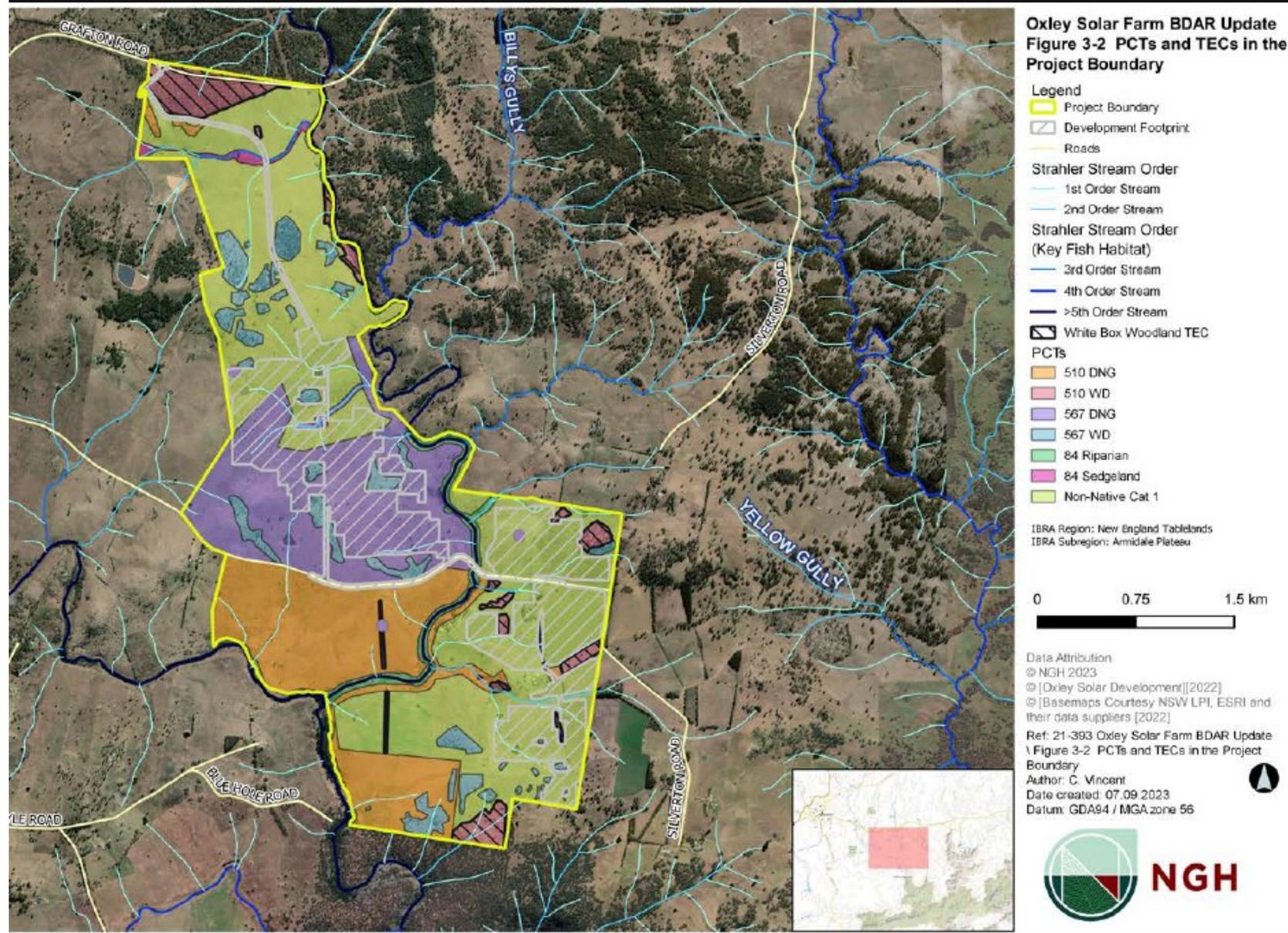
Indicative direction of visible extent of Development Footprint



View from Threlfall walking track

# BIODIVERSITY IMPACTS – KEY ISSUE 4

- OSF focused on avoidance of impacts
- set back of infrastructure
- enhance wildlife corridors



# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION – KEY ISSUE 5



- Dedicated website, email, phone contact established and advertised early in the project life
- Public meeting open day held August 2020
- Public meetings and information session held for published EIS May 2021
- Expression of interest email list established and news updates provided regularly
- Support of local charity events
- Site visits undertaken proactively
- Newspaper advertisements
- Media interviews
  
- No objections from Government Agencies, Council or Utility providers
- Project is consistent with:
  - DPE “Large Scale Solar Energy Guidelines”
  - NSW Government “Climate Change Policy framework” and “Net Zero Plan Stage 1:2020-2030”



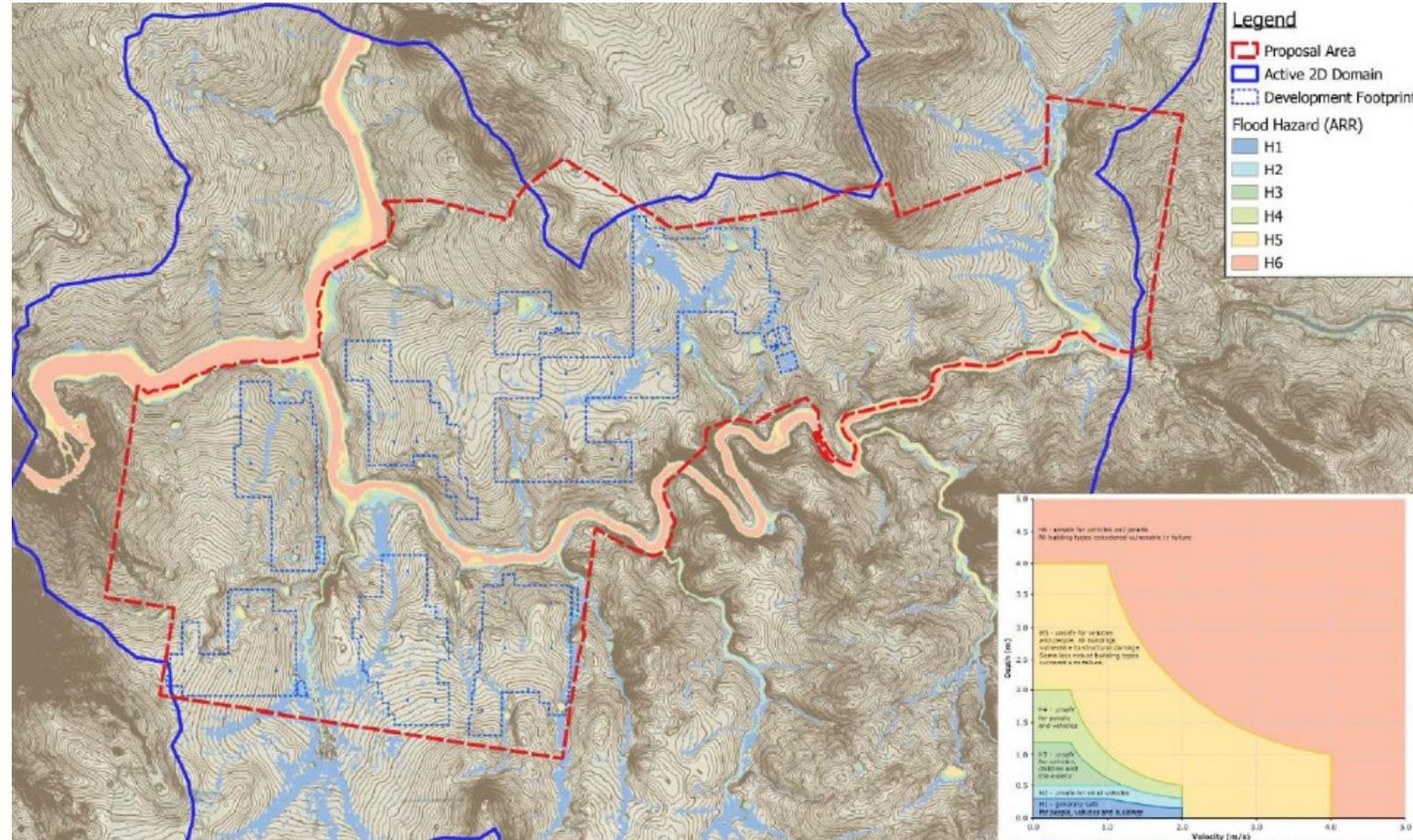
# WATERWAYS AND FLOODING – KEY ISSUE 6

The project is committed to manage all issues associated with waterways and flooding by the following plans:

- Erosion and Sediment Control Plan
- Soil and Water Management Plan
- Ground Cover Management Plan

From the DPE assessment:

- Site is not significantly affected by flooding
- Project would not have significant effect on flood behaviour
- Gara River causeway to be upgraded



# ECONOMIC IMPACT – KEY ISSUE 7

## CONTRIBUTIONS BY OXLEY SOLAR

- Funding by OSF to Armidale Regional Council - \$2.79M initially then \$2.79M over 20 years total (total \$5.58M indexed for CPI) through a Voluntary Planning Agreement
- Electric vehicle charging stations to be installed by OSF
- Sponsorship of Project Zero30 by OSF for ten years (\$20k per year indexed)
- Sponsorship of local charity events by OSF for childhood cancer
- Support establishment of wildlife corridors in conjunction with Armidale Tree Group
- Potential liaison with environmental biodiversity researchers



## PROJECT OPERATIONS – KEY ISSUE 8

- Traffic Management Plan will be completed in conjunction with TfNSW
- Traffic Impact Assessment report produced
- Infrastructure will be selected to blend into landscape as much as possible
- Lighting will be minimised and be in accordance with relevant standards

- 71% of the land is Class 5 “Severe limitations, more suitable for grazing, occasional cultivation for fodder crops”
- Inherent agricultural capability of the land would not be affected by the project due to relatively low scale of development
- Land would be returned to original use when project is decommissioned



# DECOMMISSIONING – KEY ISSUE 10

- A Decommissioning Environmental Management plan will be developed
- Decommissioning would commence within 18 months of cessation of operations
- Relevant solar farm and ancillary infrastructure would be removed



## SOCIAL IMPACT – KEY ISSUE 11

- Accommodation and Employment strategy to be developed
- Voluntary Planning Agreement with Armidale Regional Council
- Ongoing support to local charities



# OTHER ISSUES

## HERITAGE

- Footprint designed to avoid these items
- Unexpected finds to be reported
- Surveys were undertaken together with local Aboriginal Groups

## NOISE

- All work to be done within work hours and to relevant noise standards

## DUST

- Soil and Water Management Plan to be developed including water trucks

## HAZARD AND RISKS

- To be managed under relevant Management Plans including for fire, Emergency Response

## ACCOMMODATION AND WORKFORCE

- Accommodation Management Plan to be developed

## COMMUNITY BENEFIT

- Voluntary Planning Agreement contribution to Armidale Regional Council
- Support local charities

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**DEPARTMENT PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT WORDS**  
(clauses 158, 159 of DPE Assessment Report, September 2023)

*“The Department considers that the project achieves an appropriate balance between maximising the efficiency of the solar resource development and minimising the potential impacts on surrounding land users and the environment. Through job creation and capital investment and a planning agreement with Council, the project would also stimulate economic investment in renewable energy and provide flow-on benefits to the local community.*

*On balance, the Department considers that the project is in the public interest and is approvable, subject to the recommended conditions of consent.”*