07 March 2025

Ms Louisa Brown

Central Highlands Council

By email: planner@centralhighlands.tas.gov.au

Our Project Ref: 2212

Dear Louisa,

WEASEL SOLAR FARM – DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION

On behalf of our client Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd, we are pleased to submit this Discretionary Development Application (DA) for the Weasel Solar Farm (the Proposal). The DA package outlines the anticipated use and development of land for an approximately 250MW large-scale solar farm and associated infrastructure, on private land known at Weasel Plains Road, Central Highlands (no street number).

As one of Tasmania's earliest large-scale solar farms, the Weasel Solar Farm will boost the state's renewable energy capacity and diversify its energy portfolio. Feasibility studies show that, despite being the southernmost solar farm in Australia, the site benefits from extended summer daylight during peak usage hours, reducing transmission costs due to its proximity to Hobart and Launceston. The project aligns with Tasmania's 2040 goal of 200% renewable energy generation and will foster local employment and economic diversification in the Central Highlands, supporting the region's transition to a clean energy future while complementing existing industries like forestry.

The proposal was referred to the EPA, and it was determined that under section 24(1) of the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act* (EMPCA), the proposal does not require further referral to the Board. As a result, the permit application under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* can proceed without additional Board review. Please find the letter provided by the EPA enclosed with this package.

The proposed solar farm and associated infrastructure are defined as 'Utilities' under the Central Highlands Planning Scheme and require a planning permit. The following DA triggers apply to the proposal, with reliance upon some Performance Criteria among the Use and Development Standards:

- Clause 21.2 Use Table: Discretionary Use Class (Agriculture Zone)
- Clause C2.0 Parking and sustainable transport
- Clause C4.0 Electricity transmission infrastructure protection
- Clause 7.0 Natural assets (Waterway and coastal protection area only)
- Clause C13.0 Bushfire-prone areas

The project has been rigorously assessed and the potential impacts evaluated. Based on technical impact assessments, the Proposal is not expected to generate any unreasonable or significant environmental or community impacts. It will provide critical renewable energy generation, energy storage, and a new substation that can service future energy projects, as well as significant regional economic benefits. The site is ideally suited to a solar farm and associated infrastructure development, as it is well-concealed from public view, benefits from existing transmission infrastructure on site, and has minimal sensitive receptors. Native vegetation removal has primarily been avoided and impacts to natural values minimised, no known sites of cultural significance are disturbed, and agricultural activities ('Agrisolar' sheep grazing) will continue.

The Site includes three parcels of private freehold land, and access works required on the Council-managed Weasel Plains Road and Dept. of State Growth-managed Highland Lakes Road.

To support Council's assessment of the DA, please find enclosed with this application the following documents:

- Application form and Council and DoSG consents to lodge
- Board Assessment Not Required Letter, EPA Tasmania
- Planning Report, Cogency Australia
- Certificates of Title (Appendix A)
- Design Plans, DNV & Cogency (Appendix B)
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Human Habitats (Appendix C)
- Ecological and Natural Assets Code Assessment, Van Diemen Consulting (Appendix D)
- Flooding Impact Assessment, Pitt&Sherry (Appendix E)
- Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report, Cultural Heritage Management Australia (Appendix F)
- Bushfire Impact Statement, Ground Proof Mapping (Appendix G)
- Traffic Impact Assessment, Pitt&Sherry (Appendix H)
- Agricultural Assessment, Pinion Advisory (Appendix I)
- Noise Impact Assessment, SLR (Appendix J)
- Glint and Glare Impact Assessment, SLR (Appendix K)
- Historic Heritage Assessment Report, Cultural Heritage Management Australia (Appendix L)
- Consultation Summary Report, Cogency (Appendix M)
- Socio-Economic Impact Assessment, Urban Enterprise (Appendix N)

For the reasons outlined above and in the enclosed Planning Report, it is considered that the proposal warrants planning approval. Furthermore, please note that all landowners have been notified of this proposal and DA.

Please refer to the Planning Report and accompanying technical assessments for further information. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0422424144 or via email.

Yours Sincerely,

Billy Greenham
Associate Director
Cogency Australia

central highlands COUNCIL

Development & Environmental Services
19 Alexander Street
BOTHWELL TAS 7030

Phone: (03) 6259 5503
Fax: (03) 6259 5722

www.centralhighlands.tas.gov.au

OFFICE USE ONLY

Application No.: _____

Property ID No.: _____

Date Received: _____

Application for Planning Approval
Use and Development

Use this form to apply for planning approval in accordance with section 57 and 58 of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*

Applicant / Owner Details:

Applicant Name	Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd		
Postal Address	Level 2, 33 George Street	Phone No:	
	Launceston, TAS 7250	Fax No:	
Email address			
Owner/s Name (if not Applicant)	Attachment provided of owners names (two landowners are involved in this proposal)		
Postal Address		Phone No:	
		Fax No:	
Email address:			

Description of proposed use and/or development:

Address of new use and development:	'The Weasel' - 3145 Highland Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030, 'Weasel Plains' - 3236 Highland Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030 and 'Rockford' 3759 Highlands Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030		
Certificate of Title No:	Volume No: 140433 140581 104298	Lot No: 1 1 1	
Description of proposed use or development:	Use and development of land for Utilities (large-scale solar farm & associated infrastructure, including BESS and transmission connection).		ie: New Dwelling /Additions/ Demolition / /Shed / Farm Building / Carport / Swimming Pool or detail other etc.
Current use of land and buildings:	The Development Area for this project currently supports various agricultural activities including grazing and irrigation.		Eg. Are there any existing buildings on this title? If yes, what is the main building used as?
Proposed Material	What are the proposed external wall colours: N/A	What is the proposed roof colour: N/A	
	What is the proposed new floor area m^2.: Approx. 440 Ha	What is the estimated value of all the new work proposed: $ 468,900,000	

Is proposed development to be staged:	*Yes* ☐	*No* ☑	Tick ✓
Is the proposed development located on land previously used as a tip site?	*Yes* ☐	*No* ☑	
Is the place on the Tasmanian Heritage Register?	*Yes* ☐	*No* ☑	
Have you sought advice from Heritage Tasmania?	*Yes* ☐	*No* ☑	
Has a Certificate of Exemption been sought for these works?	*Yes* ☐	*No* ☑	

Signed Declaration

I/we hereby apply for a planning approval to carry out the use or development described in this application and in the accompanying plans and documents, accordingly I declare that:

1. The information given is a true and accurate representation of the proposed development. I understand that the information and materials provided with this development application may be made available to the public. I understand that the Council may make such copies of the information and materials as, in its opinion, are necessary to facilitate a thorough consideration of the Development Application. I have obtained the relevant permission of the copyright owner for the communication and reproduction of the plans accompanying the development application, for the purposes of assessment of that application. I indemnify the Central Highlands Council for any claim or action taken against it in respect of breach of copyright in respect of any of the information or material provided.

2. In relation to this application, I/we agree to allow Council employees or consultants to enter the site in order to assess the application.

3. I am the applicant for the planning permit and I have notified the owner/s of the land in writing of the intention to make this application in accordance with Section 52(1) of the *Land Use Planning Approvals Act 1993* (or the land owner has signed this form in the box below in "Land Owner(s) signature);
Applies where the applicant is not the Owner and the land is not Crown land or owned by a council, and is not land administered by the Crown or a council.

Applicant Signature (if not the Owner)	Applicant Name (*Please print*)	Date
	Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd	19/09/2024

Land Owner(s) Signature	Land Owners *Name (please print)*	Date

Land Owner(s) Signature	Land Owners *Name (please print)*	Date

Information & Checklist sheet

1. A completed Application for Planning Approval – Use and Development form. *Please ensure that the information provides an accurate description of the proposal, has the correct address and contact details and is signed and dated by the applicant.*	☑
2. A current copy of the Certificate of Title for all lots involved in the proposal. *The title details must include, where available, a copy of the search page, title plan, sealed plan or diagram and any schedule of easements (if any), or other restrictions, including covenants, Council notification or conditions of transfer.*	☑
3. Two (2) copies of the following information - a) An analysis of the site and surrounding area setting out accurate descriptions of the following - (i) topography and major site features including an indication of the type and extent of native vegetation present, natural drainage lines, water courses and wetlands, trees greater than 5 metres in height in areas of skyline or landscape importance and identification of any natural hazards including flood prone areas, high fire risk areas and land subject to instability; (ii) soil conditions (depth, description of type, land capability etc); (iii) the location and capacity of any existing services or easements on the site or connected to the site; (iv) existing pedestrian and vehicle access to the site; (v) any existing buildings on the site; (vi) adjoining properties and their uses; and (vii) soil and water management plans. b) A site plan for the proposed use or development drawn, unless otherwise approved, at a scale of not less than 1:200 or 1:1000 for sites in excess of 1 hectare, showing - (i) a north point; (ii) the boundaries and dimensions of the site; (iii) Australian Height Datum (AHD) levels; (iv) natural drainage lines, watercourses and wetlands; (v) soil depth and type; (vi) the location and capacity of any existing services or easements on the site or connected to the site; (vii) the location of any existing buildings on the site, indicating those to be retained or demolished, and their relationship to buildings on adjacent sites, streets and access ways; (viii) the use of adjoining properties; (ix) shadow diagrams of the proposed buildings where development has the potential to cause overshadowing; (x) the dimensions, layout and surfacing materials of all access roads, turning areas, parking areas and footpaths within and at the site entrance; (xi) any proposed private or public open space or communal space or facilities; (xii) proposed landscaping, indicating vegetation to be removed or retained and species and mature heights of plantings; and (xiii) methods of minimizing erosion and run-off during and after construction and preventing contamination of storm water discharged from the site. c) Plans and elevations of proposed and existing buildings, drawn at a scale of not less than 1:100, showing internal layout and materials to be used on external walls and roofs and the relationship of the elevations to natural ground level, including any proposed cut or fill.	☑ ☑ ☑
4. A written submission supporting the application that demonstrates compliance with the relevant parts of the Act, State Polices and the Central Highlands Interim Planning Scheme 2015, including for industrial and commercial uses, the hours of operation, number of employees, details of any point source discharges or emissions, traffic volumes generated by the use and a Traffic Impact Statement where the development is likely to create more than 100 vehicle movements per day.	☑
5. Prescribed fees payable to Council. An invoice for the fees payable will be issued once application has been received.	

Information If you provide an email address in this form then the Central Highlands Council ("the Council") will treat the provision of the email address as consent to the Council, pursuant to Section 6 of the Electronic Transactions Act 2000, to using that email address for the purposes of assessing the Application under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 ("the Act"). If you provide an email address, the Council will not provide hard copy documentation unless specifically requested. It is your responsibility to provide the Council with the correct email address and to check your email for communications from the Council. If you do not wish for the Council to use your email address as the method of contact and for the giving of information, **please tick** ✓ the box	☑
Heritage Tasmania If the Property is listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register then the Application will be referred to Heritage Tasmania unless an Exemption Certificate has been provided with this Application. (Phone 1300 850 332 or email enquires@heritage.tas.gov.au)	
TasWater Depending on the works proposed Council may be required to refer the Application to TasWater for assessment (Phone 136992)	
Submission of Application Applications can be submitted in a number of ways as follows: • Electronically: Email to development@centralhighlands.tas.gov.au • Post: 19 Alexander Street, BOTHWELL 7030 • In Person: Development & Environmental Services Office, 19 Alexander Street, Bothwell 7030	

cogency

Memo

DATE	28 August 2024
AUTHOR	A Pfitzner
TOPIC	Owner/s Name – Weasel Solar Farm
TO	Central Highlands Council

Our Project Reference: 2212

1. Owner 1

Name: Dungrove Land Company Pty Ltd
Postal Address: The Weasel' – 3415 Highland Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030
Phone No: 0428596192
Fax No: N/A
Email Address: peterjdownie@gmail.com

2. Owner 2

Name: Cluny Pty Ltd
Postal Address: 'Weasel Plains' – 3236 Highland Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030
Phone No: 0448559157
Fax No: N/A
Email Address: N/A

3. Owner 3

Name: Scott Reardon
Postal Address: 'Rockford' - 3759 Highland Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030
Phone No: (03) 6259 6154
Fax NO: N/A
Email Address: N/A

Department of State Growth

Salamanca Building Parliament Square
4 Salamanca Place, Hobart TAS
GPO Box 536, Hobart TAS 7001 Australia
Email permits@stategrowth.tas.gov.au Web www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au
Ref: SRA-24-615

Tasmanian Government

Aliza Pfitzner
Cogency Australia
By email: aliza@cogencyaustralia.com.au

Dear Aliza

Crown Landowner Consent Granted – 3415 and 3236 Highland Lakes Road (Lake SR), Bothwell

I refer to your recent request for Crown landowner consent relating to the development application at 3415 and 3236 Highlands Lakes Road, Bothwell for development of large-scale solar farm.

I, Fiona McLeod, Director Asset Management, the Department of State Growth, having been duly delegated by the Minister under section 52 (1F) of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* (the Act), and in accordance with the provisions of section 52 (1B) (b) of the Act, hereby give my consent to the making of the application, insofar as it affects the State road network and any Crown land under the jurisdiction of this Department.

The consent given by this letter is for the making of the application only insofar as that it impacts Department of State Growth administered Crown land and is with reference to your application dated 30 August 2024, and the approved documents, as accessible via the link below:

https://files.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/index.php/s/QemNXSlnFlZK0IX

A copy of the Instrument of Delegation from the Minister authorising the delegate to sign under section 52 of the Act can also be accessed via the above link.

Please access and download these documents for your records as soon as possible as this link will expire six months from the date of this letter.

In giving consent to lodge the subject development application, the Department notes the following applicable advice:

- **Access – construction or alteration (Access works permit required)**

  In giving consent to lodge the subject development application, the Department notes that the proposed access to the State road network will require the following additional consent:

  The consent of the Minister under Section 16 of the *Roads and Jetties Act 1935* to undertake works within the State road reservation.

  For further information please visit https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/roads_and_traffic_management/permits_and_bookings/new_or_altered_access_onto_a_road_driveways or contact permits@stategrowth.tas.gov.au.

  On sealed State roads all new accesses must be sealed from the road to the property boundary as a minimum.

Pursuant to Section 16 of the *Roads and Jetties Act 1935*, where a vehicle access has been constructed from land to a State highway or subsidiary road, the owner of that land is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the whole of the vehicular access.

- **Other types of works (pipeline, etc.) OR Construction of infrastructure in the road reserve/on Crown land (Works permit required)**

  In giving consent to lodge the subject development application, the Department notes that the works in the State road network will require the following additional consent:

  The consent of the Minister under Section 16 of the *Roads and Jetties Act 1935* to undertake works within the State road reservation.

  For further information please visit https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/roads_and_traffic_management/permits_and_bookings or contact permits@stategrowth.tas.gov.au.

- **Requires Crown land owner consent from DPIPWE**

  Please note that Crown land owner consent is also required from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE tas) in this case. Please see https://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=33332 for the relevant NRE Tas contact details and application form.

The Department reserves the right to make a representation to the relevant Council in relation to any aspect of the proposed development relating to its road network and/or property.

Yours sincerely

Fiona McLeod
DIRECTOR ASSET MANAGEMENT

Delegate of
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
Michael Ferguson MP

9 October 2024

cc: General Manager, Central Highlands Council

central highlands COUNCIL

Our Ref: PID 2538314
Email: development@centralhighlands.tas.gov.au
Telephone: (03) 6259 5503

24 September 2024

Billy Greenham
Cogency Australia Pty Ltd

Email: billy@cogencyaustralia.com.au

Dear Sir / Madam,

COUNCIL CONSENT TO APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMIT
WEASEL SOLAR FARM
WORKS REQUIRED IN COUNCIL ROAD RESERVE

I refer to your request for landowner consent relating to a development application for the Weasel Solar Farm.

Consent is hereby given, pursuant to Section 52(1B) of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993,* for the proposal outlined in the "Consent Application Details" prepared by Cogency Australia Pty Ltd dated 23/09/2024.

The consent given by this letter is for the making of the application only insofar as that it impacts land that is owned or administered by Central Highlands Council.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Mackey
Acting General Manager

Environment Protection Authority

GPO Box 1550 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia

Enquiries: Zoë Brown
Phone: 0472 545 85
Email: Zoe.Brown@epa.tas.gov.au
Web: www.epa.tas.gov.au
Our Ref: D24-201575

6 September 2024

Peter Downie
Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd
Level 2, 33 George Street
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

By Email Only: peterdownie@gmail.com

Dear Peter Downie

WEASEL SOLAR FARM – WEASEL PLAINS ROAD, CENTRAL HIGHLANDS
BOARD ASSESSMENT NOT REQUIRED

I refer to correspondence of 13 August 2024 from Cogency Australia on behalf of Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd, providing a project description and supporting documentation (including a Flora and Fauna Assessment) for the above proposal. In that correspondence advice is requested as to whether the Director of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is likely to require Central Highlands Council to refer the proposal to the Board of the EPA for assessment under Section 24(1) of the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994* (EMPCA).

I note that the most significant potential environmental impacts that may result from the proposal include impacts on threatened flora and fauna communities from vegetation clearing and the impacts of noise emissions on nearby sensitive receptors, particularly during construction.

It is noted the proposal site was selected to avoid areas of native vegetation and will use existing agricultural land which has been previously cleared. However, there are some patches of remnant native vegetation adjacent to and within the proposal site including an area of *Eucalyptus tenuiramis* (silver peppermint) forest and woodland not on dolorite (DTO) listed as a threatened native vegetation community under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*. It is understood that disturbance of this vegetation community will be avoided as far as practicable. Any potential disturbance of this vegetation should be discussed with Conservation Assessments, Department of Natural Resources an Environment Tasmania before it occurs.

After reviewing the information provided and taking into account you intend to submit a referral to the Commonwealth for a controlled action decision under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999,* and a development application to the Central Highlands Council, it is my opinion that given the controls you have described in your documentation, the likelihood of the activity causing serious or material environmental harm is low.

I have considered the environmental aspects of the proposal, and as a delegate of the Director of the Environment Protection Authority, have determined that the proposal also does not need to be referred to the Board under section 24(1) of EMPCA.

You may proceed with the permit application under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* without further reference to the Board.

The above decision is based on the information provided in the project description.

If details of the proposal change significantly, particularly in relation to the type of activity being proposed or potential environmental impacts, you should seek advice from the Environment Protection Authority before proceeding, to ensure that the proposed activity will comply with EMPCA.

If you have any queries regarding the above, please contact the officer nominated at the head of this correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Martin Read
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS
Delegate for the Director, Environment Protection Authority

cc: Stephen Mackey, General Manager, Central Highlands Council, council@centralhighlands.tas.gov.au
Billy Greenham, Cogency Australia, billy@cogencyaustralia.com.au

Planning Report

Weasel Solar Farm

Central Highlands, Tasmania

For Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd C/- Robert Luxmoore Pty Ltd

05 March 2025

cogency

Planning | Engagement | Strategy

Document Details

Weasel Solar Farm

Project No:	2212
Report Name:	Planning Report
Revision:	1
Date:	05 March 2025
Client:	Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd C/- Robert Luxmoore Pty Ltd

Cogency Australia Pty Ltd
cogencyaustralia.com.au
office@cogencyaustralia.com.au

Document history

Revision	Date	Description	Author	Approved
1	26/09/2024	First Draft	AP, BG	BG
2	05/03/2025	Final Report	AP, BG	BG

We celebrate the physical and spiritual connections between Indigenous people and place expressed through the Birrarung Wilam (Common Ground) art project on the banks of Melbourne's Yarra River.

Acknowledgement of Country

Cogency acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet, work and write, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples of the Kulin nation, and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and emerging.

Cogency also extends that respect and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Bothwell, the Big River Tribe, or Teen Toomie Mennenyer. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing connection with the land and waterways. We also recognise the resilience, strength, and pride of the palawa and First Nations communities and acknowledge that Sovereignty was never ceded.

Executive Summary

Cogency Australia (Cogency) has been engaged by Robert Luxmoore, on behalf of Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd (the Proponent), to prepare and lodge a Development Application for a large-scale solar farm and associated infrastructure at Weasel Plains, near Bothwell, Central Highlands (east of Highland Lakes Road). The Proposal is known as the **Weasel Solar Farm**. This planning report supports an application for the use and development of land for Utilities (solar farm – electricity generation), including associated battery energy storage system (BESS) and infrastructure and works.

The Site is zoned Agriculture under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Central Highlands (Planning Scheme), with Utilities a Discretionary Use (discretionary permit application required). The purpose of this planning application package is to provide the Central Highlands Council (as the planning authority) and referral authorities with comprehensive details of the Proposal. This includes details on the Proponent and project team, design features, potential impacts and mitigations, and compliance with relevant Acts, regulations, plans, land use controls and guidelines, contained primarily within the Planning Scheme.

The Proposal is located across three parcels of private freehold land, currently used for agricultural grazing. Combined, these three parcels have a total of 3841 ha (the Site). The Development Area for the Proposal is approximately 430 ha within the Site.

The Proposal includes approximately 270 ha of solar arrays, a BESS, as well as associated infrastructure such as an internal 33 kV transmission line, inverters, transformers and ancillary infrastructure, access tracks, fencing, landscaping, and transmission connection and substation into the existing 220 kV transmission line crossing the Site. The Development Area will be primarily accessed from Weasel Plains Road, with secondary/emergency access points to Highland Lakes Road.

The Site is suitable because much of the land has already been distributed from agricultural activities, and there are minimal key environmental values present. The Proponent is conscious of the natural environment and has ensured the design responds to the topography of the Site, avoiding earthworks that would otherwise disturb regrowth and promote weed spread. Proximity to existing transmission infrastructure and convenient access via Highland Lakes Road further enhances the site's suitability by minimising costs and disruptions to surrounding landowners. Additionally, the project design allows for agrisolar practices, enabling the land to continue supporting agricultural productivity while contributing to renewable energy generation.

The Proponent acknowledges that active and early engagement with the community and other relevant stakeholders is crucial to the planning process. To date, the Proponent is committed to delivering best practice engagement, with the overarching objective of ensuring that the identified community and stakeholder groups are proactively and meaningfully informed, consulted and involved and that the benefits of the Project are genuinely felt by the local community.

The following Development Application triggers apply to the Proposal, with reliance upon some Performance Criteria among the Use and Development Standards:

- Clause 21.2 Use Table: Discretionary Use Class (Agriculture Zone), relies upon some Performance Criteria
- Clause C2.0 Parking and sustainable transport, relies upon some Performance Criteria
- Clause C4.0 Electricity transmission infrastructure protection, relies upon some Performance Criteria
- Clause 7.0 Natural assets (Waterway & coastal protection area only), relies upon some Performance Criteria
- Clause C13.0 Bushfire-prone areas, relies upon some Performance Criteria

Based on technical impact assessments, the Proposal is not expected to generate any unreasonable or significant environmental or community impacts. The Proposal will provide critical renewable energy generation, energy storage, and a new substation that can service future energy projects, as well as significant regional economic benefits. The Site is ideally suited to a solar farm and associated infrastructure development, as it is well-concealed from public view, benefits from existing transmission infrastructure on site, and has minimal sensitive receptors. Native vegetation removal has primarily been avoided and impacts to natural values minimised, no known sites of cultural significance are disturbed, and agricultural activities ('Agrisolar' sheep grazing) will continue.

Application Summary	
Site	
Address	**Primary Address: '**The Weasel' – 3415 Highland Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030 **Secondary Addresses:** 'Weasel Plains' - 3236 Highlands Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030 and 'Rockford' – 3759 Highlands Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030
Title Description	140433/1; 140581/1; 104298/1
Area	3841 ha (the Site), 432 ha (Development Area)
Municipality	Central Highlands
Restrictions on title	None
Planning	
Planning Scheme	Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Central Highlands
Responsible Authority	Central Highlands Council
Zoning	21.0 Agriculture Zone
Overlays	**Mapped codes:** ▪ C4.0 Electricity Transmission Infrastructure Protection (partial) ▪ C7.0 Natural Assets (partial) ▪ C10.0 Bushfire-prone Area (whole) ▪ C15.0 Landslip Hazard code (partial) **Other Applicable Codes:** ▪ Clause C2.0 Parking and Sustainable Transport ▪ Clause C3.0 Road and Railway assets
Permit triggers	▪ Clause 21.2 Use Table: Discretionary Use Class (Agriculture Zone), relies upon some use and development standards' Performance Criteria ▪ Clause C2.0 Parking and sustainable transport, relies upon some Performance Criteria ▪ Clause C4.0 Electricity transmission infrastructure protection, relies upon some Performance Criteria ▪ Clause 7.0 Natural assets (Waterway and coastal protection area only), relies upon some Performance Criteria ▪ Clause C13.0 Bushfire-prone areas, relies upon some Performance Criteria

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

List of Tables

Glossary

Abbreviation	Meaning
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
CEC	Clean Energy Council
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
EPBC	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (Cth)
LGA	Local Government Area
kV	kilovolt
MER	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
MW	Megawatt
NEM	National Energy Market (NEM)
O&M	Operations and Management
ReCFIT	Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone

1. Introduction

Cogency has been engaged by Robert Luxmoore, on behalf of Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd (the Proponent) to prepare and lodge a Development Application for a large-scale solar farm and associated infrastructure at Weasel Plains, near Bothwell, Central Highlands (east of Highland Lakes Road). The Proposal is known as the Weasel Solar Farm.

The Proposal is a private landowner-led development by Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd, a company founded by the Proponent, Peter Downie, a local landowner and community member. The Proponent is a significant family business with a long history of grazing and agricultural practices in the Central Highlands.

Cogency is a boutique planning and engagement firm, focused on renewable energy projects. Cogency has prepared this Planning Report as well as the Community & Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Summary Report.

The Development Application is for the use and development of Utilities. Under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, 'Utilities' is defined as:

The use of land for utilities and infrastructure including:

- (b) electricity generation;
- (c) transmitting or distributing gas, oil or electricity;
- (d) transport networks.

The site comprises three lots, detailed in Chapter 2. The details of these three lots comprise the following:

- One lot is for solar arrays within the Dungrove property (The Weasel)
- One lot is for solar arrays within the Bowden property (Weasel Plains)
- One lot is for the use of an existing access track within the Reardon property (Rockford)

In addition to the above, some works are required for access to Weasel Plains Road (Council-owned) and Highland Lakes Road (State Road) reserves.

The Development Area covers a smaller area within the broader Site, with an approximate 432 ha required for the solar arrays, internal transmission and associated infrastructure to connect to the existing 220 kV transmission line. The Development Area comprises two key sections: Solar North and Solar South.

The Weasel Solar Farm will have a nameplate capacity of up to 250MW. To provide supply stability and energy storage capacity, the solar farm will be accompanied by a BESS. An internal 33kv transmission line will help connect Solar North and Solar South to the BESS.

A regular Council-assessed Development Application process is warranted as neither solar farms, BESS facilities nor transmission lines are listed as Level 2 developments under the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994* (Tas.) (EMPCA). Moreover, it is also not considered that the Proposal qualifies as a Major Project or Project of State Significance under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* (Tas.) (LUPAA) or the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993* (Tas.). Through correspondence in 2024, the EPA has indicated that the likelihood of the activity causing serious, or material environmental harm is negligible and therefore it is unlikely the proposal would be referred to the Board for environmental assessment.

The area is suitable as it is located in the Central Highlands Renewable Energy Zone, sits alongside existing transmission lines, and has sufficient solar irradiance. The Development Area has historically been used for grazing and is generally cleared of vegetation. The specific locations of solar arrays and other infrastructure have been chosen due to their lower agricultural productivity, poorer soil quality and low environmental value relative to the remainder of the Site. These qualities are evidenced within the suite of specialist reports attached with this report. Responding to the existing environmental conditions of the Site has been a central part of the planning and design process. The main objective of the Proposal's design has been ensuring

through construction, operation and decommissioning, the project avoids as much as possible, existing environmental values, supports agricultural productivity and mitigates potential risks.

Increasing renewable energy targets at both a state and national level indicates a high level of legislative and market confidence in developing new renewable energy infrastructure. The development of new renewable energy projects such as the Weasel Solar Farm would contribute to developing an alternative industry and local employment base for the Central Highlands Region. A solar farm will both contribute to the nation's clean energy transition and assist in strengthening existing local industries such as forestry.

As one of the first large-scale solar farms in the state, the Weasel Solar Farm would not only add to Tasmania's already impressive renewable energy capacity but also help to diversify its renewable energy portfolio. Feasibility studies indicate that while the Weasel Solar Farm project will be the most southern solar farm in Australia, summer daylight hours extend longer than in the northern north and during peak usage hours nationally. The project's central location to Hobart and Launceston will also ensure there is a reduction in the cost of transmission compared to other sites. The project will support the vision for Tasmania's Renewable Energy Future and the 2040 Renewable Energy Target of 200% renewable generation.

1.1 Project Summary

The Proponent is seeking to develop a portion of their landholding located in the Central Highlands region of Tasmania into a solar energy asset. The Weasel Solar Farm features a large-scale solar farm with a capacity of up to 250MW, battery storage and associated infrastructure and works. The Weasel Solar farm is planned to comprise the use and development of land for:

- A large-scale solar farm, containing approximately 270 hectares of solar panels with a nameplate capacity of up to 250MW;
- A battery energy storage system (BESS) within an approximately two-hectare development area;
- Other electricity infrastructure including 33 kV transmission lines, inverters and a switchyard containing an electrical substation to connect to the existing 220kV transmission line;
- Other elements required for construction, maintenance, and operation, such as an operations and management (O&M) compound, new access tracks and upgrades to existing tracks, laydown areas, security infrastructure, landscaping, and workers facilities;
- Existing vegetation will screen the project from most views along Highlands Lake Road, with additional planting proposed to further obscure viewlines; and
- The solar farm will be constructed to enable for the continued use of the land for grazing sheep underneath the solar panels, known as 'agrisolar.'

The project components are described in greater detail in Chapter 3.

1.2 The Proponent

This project is a landowner-led development by Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd (Table 1), a company founded by the Proponent and primary landowner Peter Downie.

Table 1 – Proponent Details

Proponent	Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd
ACN	675 406 649
Registered Address	Level 2, 33 George Street, Launceston, TAS 7250

The Downie family from Dungrove are working in partnership with Andrew Clark from Alternate Path Solutions to develop the Weasel Solar Farm. The Downie family are the owners of the land 'The Weasel' and own much of the land surrounding the project. Other land within the project is owned by the Bowden family, who are lessors of the Weasel Solar Farm. The Downie family have a long history in the central Highlands

region and have been grazing sheep and cattle on Dungrove for over 150 years. Alternate Path provides strategic support and structuring advice for projects in the renewable energy, power, infrastructure and transport sectors. Backed by industry expertise in the legal, financial, engineering and technology sectors, they help support the delivery of new businesses and projects.

As a local landowner and community member, the Proponent is committed to engaging respectfully with the community and neighbours concerning the Project. The Proponent is committed to sensitively considering the environmental and cultural values of the area and making positive contributions to the local and broader communities and region.

1.3 Proposal Vision

The Weasel Solar Farm is the first proposed element of a broader vision - the 'Highlands Renewable Energy Hub'. The vision is to use renewable energy alongside agricultural and forestry practices to generate significant social and economic benefits for the local community, surrounding landowners and the state of Tasmania.

The vision of the Highlands Renewable Energy Hub is to combine and co-locate the development of a solar farm, wind farm, battery storage and a renewable energy business park. The Energy Hub will provide critical support for existing and proposed renewable energy projects within the Central Highlands Renewable Energy Zone, and large electricity users and energy generation facilities in the area. An energy project of this scale in the Central Highlands will have the potential to create local jobs and lower electricity costs for the communities in and around Bothwell.

The Weasel Solar Farm proposal is a standalone Development Application. Other projects within the broader vision are subject to separate, individual approvals, to be pursued in future.

1.4 Site and Development Area Information

The Site includes three lots in different ownership. Within the Site, the Development Area covers only a portion of each parcel. This section provides a clear demarcation of the Site and Development Area (Figure 1).

As per the Planning Scheme definitions:

- Site means 'the lot or lots on which a use or development is located or proposed to be located'.
- Development Area means 'the area of land occupied by development including its yard, outbuildings, vehicle parking, driveways, storage areas, landscaping and wastewater disposal areas.'

2. Site and Context Analysis

2.1 Site Analysis

The solar farm site area consists of three parcels under different ownerships, currently used for agricultural grazing and cropping purposes. Table 2 and Figure 1 provide an overview of the Site details (excludes roads).

Table 2 – Parcel Details

Address	Property ID	Title reference
'The Weasel' – 3415 Highland Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030	2538314	140433/1
'Weasel Plains' - 3236 Highlands Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030	2538322	140581/1
'Rockford' – 3759 Highlands Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030	5014022	104298/1

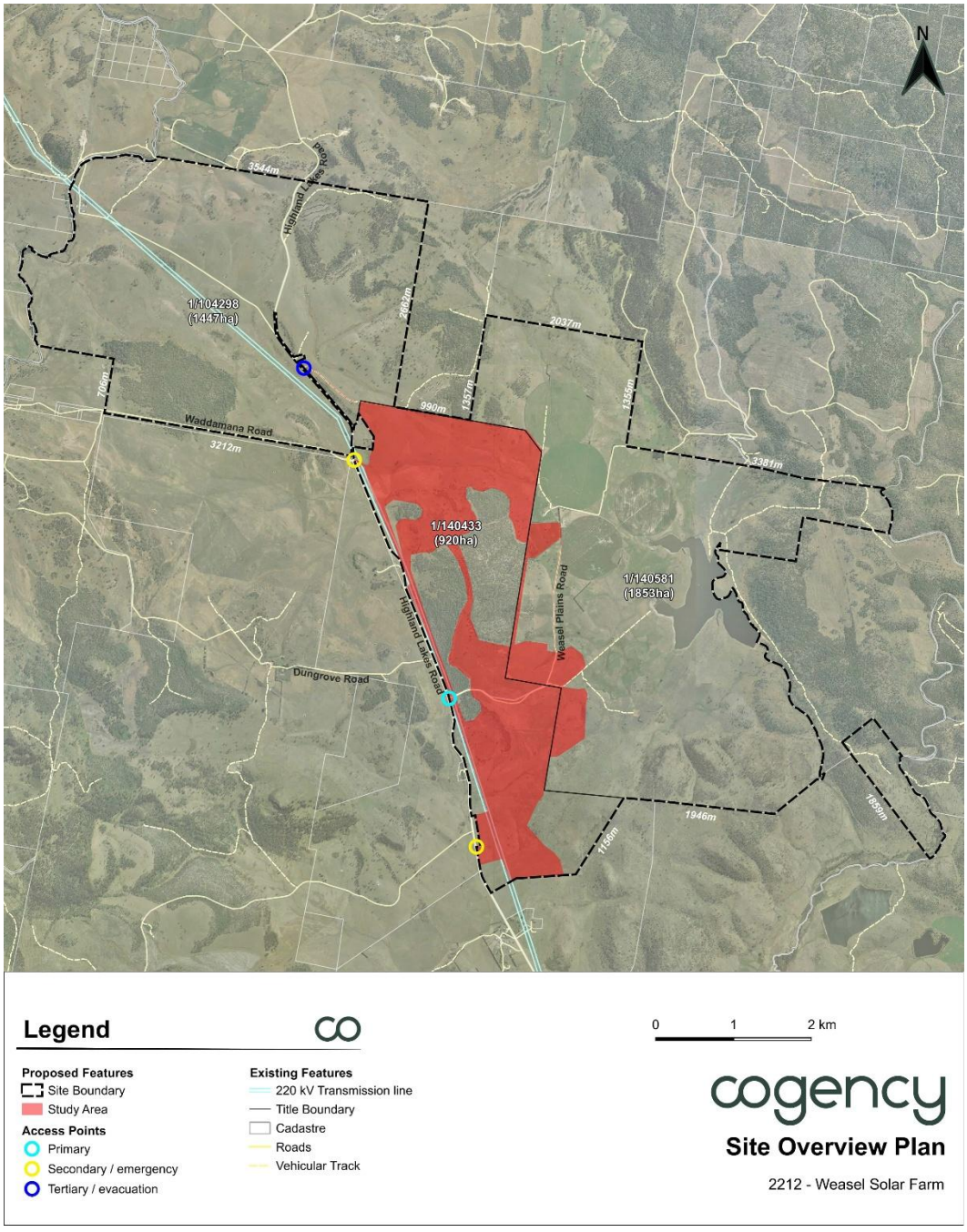


Figure 1 – Site Overview Plan

The Weasel

The Weasel is a rural landholding of approximately 918.8 ha which forms part of the larger Dungrove farming property owned by the Downie family. The property address is 3415 Highland Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030 and is the primary parcel for the development of the Proposal.

The primary access to this property is via Weasel Plains Road, an unsealed road that directly connects to Highland Lakes Road. Additional access is made via farm gates located adjacent to Highlands Lakes Road.

An existing 220kV overhead transmission (Waddamana to Lindisfarne) line transects the western border of the property, adjacent to Highland Lakes Road. Discussions with Watts Advisory and TasNetworks have confirmed that this line would be capable of supporting a grid connection for a large-scale solar farm.

The lot is relatively cleared of vegetation, with some wooded forested areas. Weasel Plains Creek transects the northern portion of the lot. No conservation covenants are affecting the Site. The land specially selected for the development supports agricultural activities and some waterbodies. The following subsections provide further details on site characteristics.

Weasel Plains

Weasel Plains is a rural landholding of approximately 1775.9 ha which forms part of the larger farming property owned by the Bowden family. This parcel is under different ownership to 'The Weasel' and is addressed a 3236 Highlands Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030. Weasel Plains is identified as the secondary parcel for the development of the Proposal.

Access to this property is also made via Weasel Plains Road, an unsealed road that directly connects to Highland Lakes Road. Dwellings are located near the north extent of the property where the unsealed section of Weasel Plain Roads ends.

The broader property supports irrigated cropping and grazing activities, along with man-made waterbodies. Weasel Plains Creek transects the northern portion of the lot. The site is relatively cleared of vegetation with limited and scattered forested trees. No conservation covenants are found within this parcel. The area of land selected to host solar panels is cleared grazing paddocks.

Rockford

Rockford is a rural landholding of approximately 1146.7 hectares and is owned by the Reardon Family. This parcel is addressed as 3759 Highland Lakes Road Bothwell TAS 7030. This parcel is involved for approximately 40 ha of land along an existing access track to be used for emergency access/egress.

The broader property supports grazing activities and Weasel Plains Creek transects the site along the western boundary. The parcel is undulating and relatively cleared of vegetation. Larger forested areas are located on top of hills scattered throughout the site.

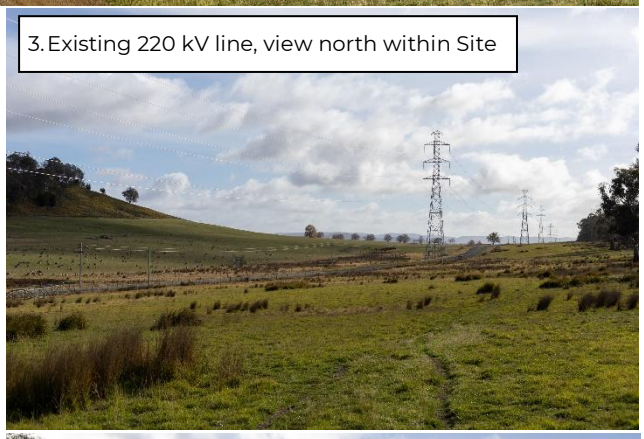
Access to this property is via Highland Lakes Road, with two access points located towards the southwest portion of the parcel. One dwelling is located near the northwest corner of the property and is located approximately 4km from the main solar development areas.

2.2 Site Photos

1. Weasel Plains Rd, view eastwards within primary parcel / Development Area

2. Weasel Plains Rd, view northwest within primary parcel / Development Area

3. Existing 220 kV line, view north within Site



4. Weasel Plains Rd, view west to access to Highland Lakes Road

5. Weasel Plains Rd, view east towards Development Area (over crest)(same viewpoint as photo 4)

6. Highland Lakes Rd, view south at intersection to Weasel Plains Rd

7. Secondary site access, from Highland Lakes Rd, southern site extent

8. Watercourse under Highland Lakes Rd (view south)

9. View east from Highland Lakes Rd towards solar north area

2.3 Planning Summary

As per the Planning Scheme, this development application is for the use and development for Utilities which is defined as: '*The use of land for utilities and infrastructure including:*

(b) electricity generation;

(c) transmitting or distributing gas, oil or electricity;

(d) transport networks.'

The Project is located within the Agriculture Zone under Clause 21.0 (Highland Lakes Road is within the Utilities Zone). Rezoning is not required as part of the Proposal's permit approval.

The Development Area is subject to the following mapped codes/overlays:

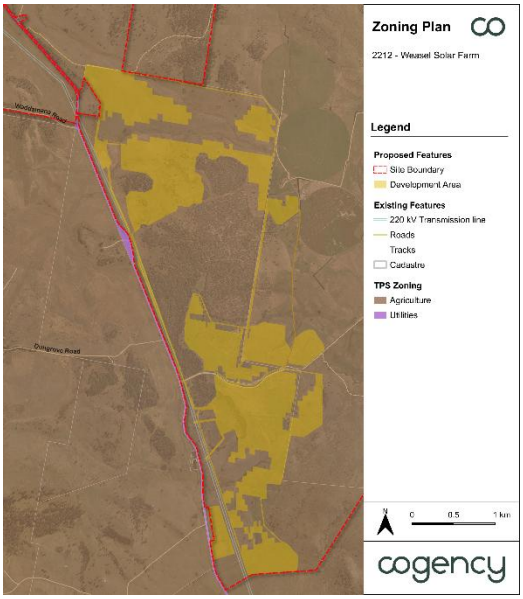
- Clause C4.0 Electricity transmission infrastructure protection (partial)
- Clause 7.0 Natural assets (*Waterway and coastal protection area only, not Priority vegetation area*) (partial)
- Clause C13.0 Bushfire-prone areas (whole)
- Clause C15.0 Landslip hazard (however the Proposal is exempt under this clause) (whole)

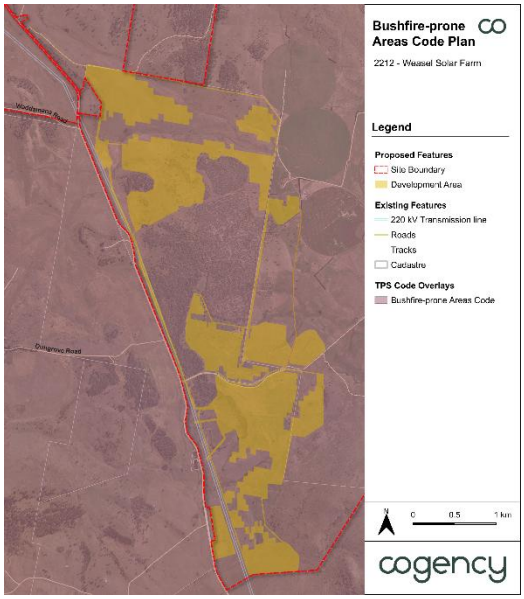
The following codes are also relevant to the Proposal:

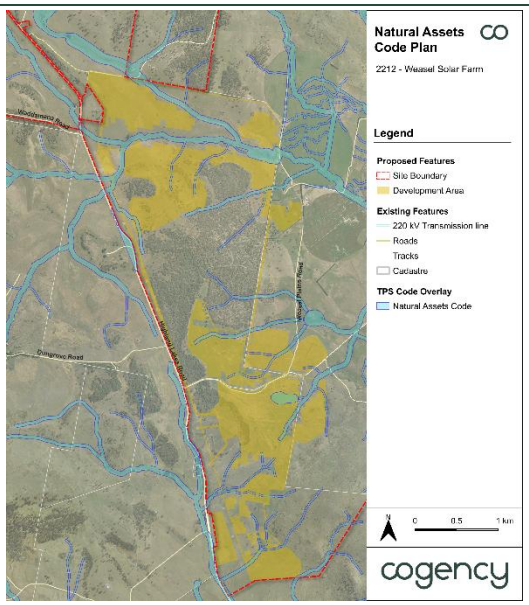
- Clause C2.0 Parking and Sustainable Transport
- Clause C3.0 Road and railway assets

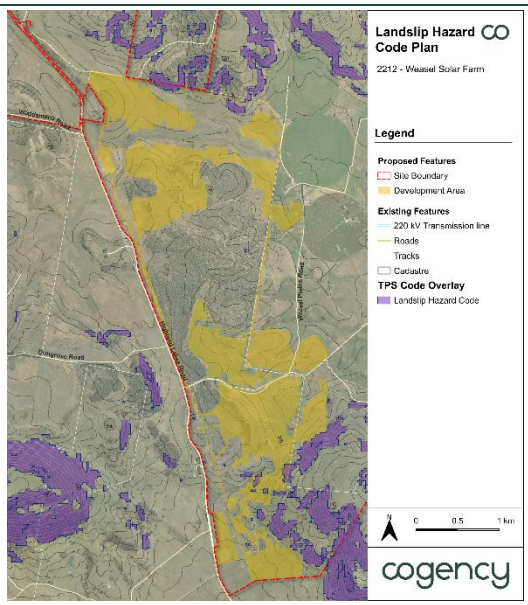
An overview of the mapped zone and overlays are shown in thumbnail form in Table 3 and Chapters 7.3 and 7.4 provide an assessment against the planning provisions, including larger maps of the zoning and code overlays.

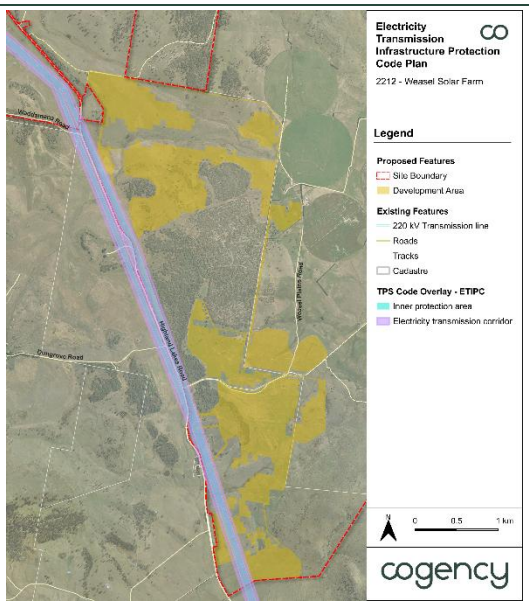
Table 3 – Summary of Zones and Codes











2.4 Indigenous History

The Development Area is situated within the traditional lands of the Big River Nation, an area with deep cultural and historical significance. The Big River Nation is believed to have been home to five distinct Clans, each with its own unique connection to the land:

- The **Leenowwenne** people lived near New Norfolk, a region characterised by its fertile river valleys and location along the River Derwent. This area was central to their way of life, providing abundant resources and serving as a key point for travel and trade.
- The **Pangerninghe** people resided on the west bank of the River Derwent, directly opposite the confluence of the River Derwent and River Clyde. This location was likely significant for its rich aquatic resources and its position at the meeting of two major waterways, which would have been important for both sustenance and cultural practices.
- The **Braylwunyer** people inhabited the hilly plains between the Ouse River and Dee River, a landscape that offered diverse resources, including game and plant life. These hilly plains would have provided a mix of open land and shelter, ideal for hunting and gathering.
- The **Larmairrenener** people lived in the high country west of the Dee River. This elevated terrain, with its cooler climate and rugged landscape, was likely a key area for seasonal activities, including hunting in the highlands and gathering unique mountain resources.
- The **Luggermairrernerpairner** people occupied the lands north of the Great Lake, an area known for its expansive freshwater resources and vast landscapes. This region would have been crucial for fishing, as well as for its role in the broader network of trails and connections between different Clan territories.

These Clans, each with their distinct territories and traditions, together formed the Big River Nation. Their deep connection to the land and its resources shaped their culture, spirituality, and way of life. The presence of the Development Area within these traditional lands underscores the importance of recognising and respecting the historical and ongoing significance of these territories to the descendants of the Big River Nation today. Chapter 9.7 provides further information on the findings of the Aboriginal Cultural heritage assessment completed for the Proposal.

2.5 Context Analysis

2.5.1 Central Highlands

The Proposal is located within the Central Highlands Council area. The LGA covers more than 8,000 square kilometres and makes a significant and increasing contribution to the economic wealth of Tasmania.

Known for its great lakes and scenic mountainous areas, the region is popular for tourism and recreation. The region boasts multiple thriving industries including agriculture (diverse crop and livestock production), horticulture, forestry, power generation and trout fishing. The key communities in the region of the Weasel Solar Farm are Bothwell, Osterley, Victoria Valley and Ouse. These towns and villages are relatively small and distinct rural communities. Central Highlands' major transport services are the Midland Highway and Highland Lakes Road.

Bothwell

The Site is located within the locality of Bothwell, approximately 9km north of the township (Figure 2). In the 2021 census (ABS, 2021), Bothwell recorded a small population of 499 people. Bothwell sits on the river Clyde and is surrounded by rich rural land, primarily used for agriculture and is known as the southern gateway to the central highlands of Tasmania, and the gateway to some of the best trout fishing in Australia near Arthurs Lake and the Great Lake. First established by settlers of Scottish descent in 1824, the Scottish influence can still be seen in Bothwell today. Bothwell received its name from Governor George Arthur, after the town in Scotland similarly located on the River Clyde. It is one of the most historically significant towns in Tasmania, with a total of 60 buildings and locations of historic interest.

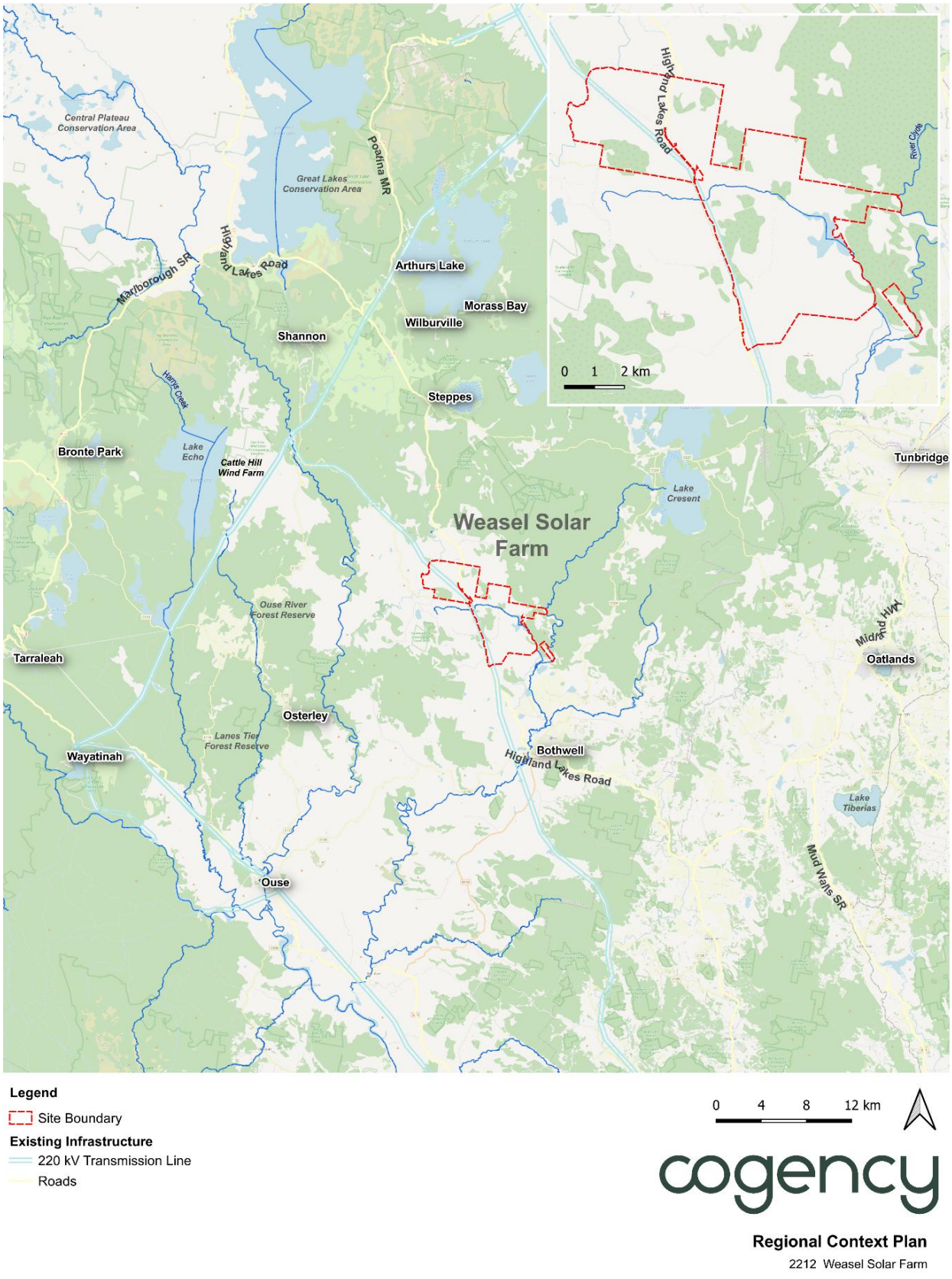


Figure 2 – Regional Context Plan

2.5.2 Surrounding Land Uses

The land surrounding the Development Area and Site is generally modified agricultural land, predominantly used for grazing, irrigation, and cropping. Further to the west, the site is bordered by forestry plantations. The Development Area is situated well outside urban settlements, with the nearest town, Bothwell, located approximately 9 kilometres away. There are 31 residential dwellings within a 5-kilometer radius of the Development Area. Of those, 12 are non-involved dwellings, two of which are within 1 kilometre of the Site (Figure 3).

Key roads near the Development Area include Highland Lakes Road and Weasel Plains Road, which provide primary access to the proposed solar farm. Highland Lakes Road, running along the western boundary of the Site, is one of the main thoroughfares servicing the area. Additionally, an existing 220 kV transmission line (Waddamana to Lindisfarne) runs along the western boundary of the Site, parallel to Highland Lakes Road. To the east of the Site lies the River Clyde.

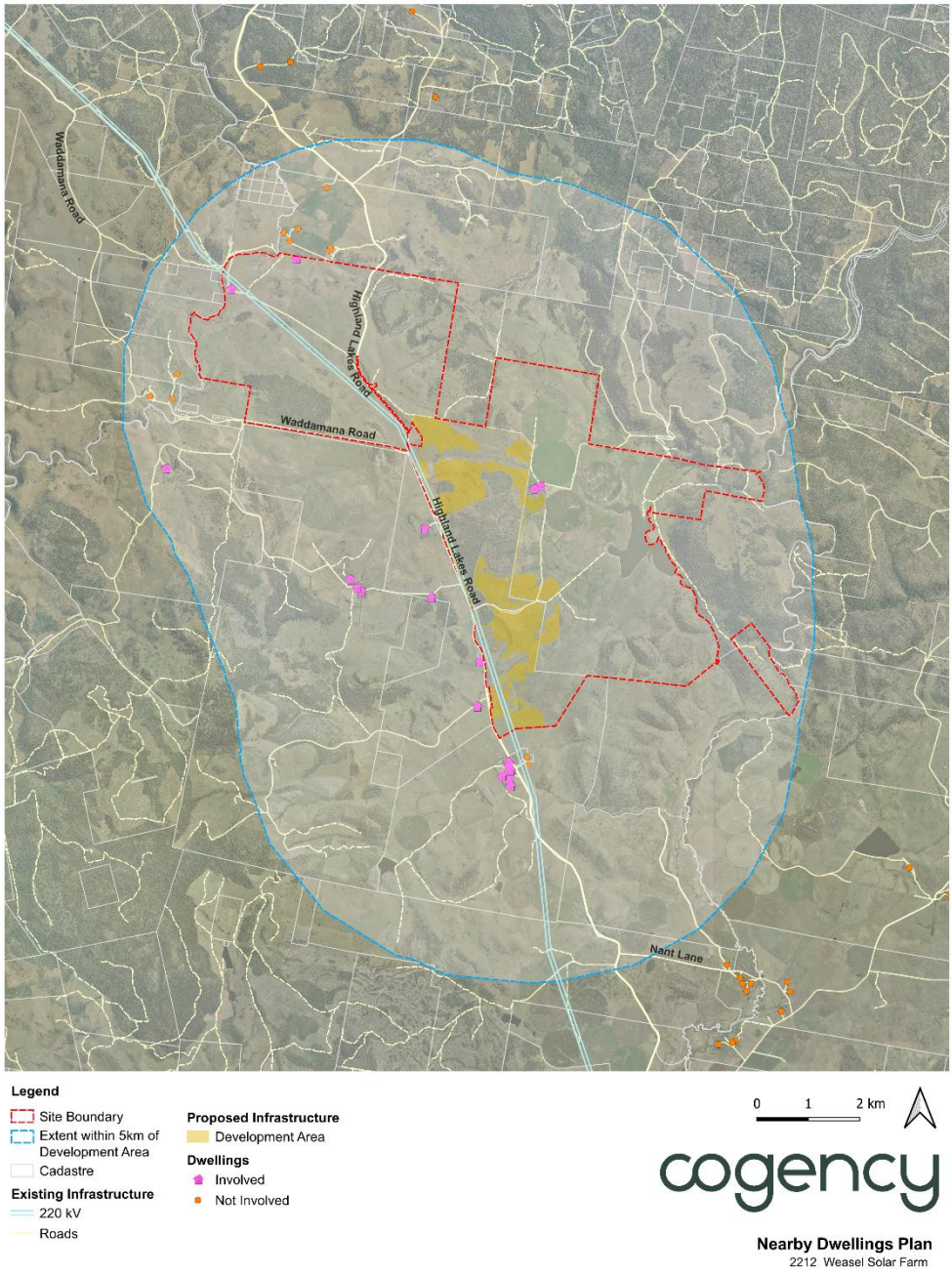


Figure 3 – Nearby Dwellings Plan

2.6 Environment and Physical Conditions

The physical characteristics of the Site are suitable for a solar farm, particularly the land selected as the Development Area. The Site has some undulations, while the Development Area is generally flat and comprises areas of lower agricultural productivity and low-value environmental features. Areas within the Site that lack native vegetation, have lower agricultural output and possess poorer soil quality have been prioritised for the construction of the solar farm and its associated infrastructure.

The environmental conditions of the Site are diverse, comprising a mix of agricultural land, tributaries, woodlands, and forested areas. The Site has undergone significant land disturbance due to long-term grazing and cropping activities across the farming properties. As a result, much of the Site consists of paddocks dominated by improved pastures, with some regrowth areas, characteristic of the Development Area.

The Site's gentle to moderately undulating plains are underlain by a geology dominated by glaciomarine sequences, including pebbly mudstone, sandstone, and limestone. While no major waterways traverse the Site, Weasel Plains Creek runs through the northern portion, and tributaries of Bark Hut Creek flow through the southern portion.

The Site is largely cleared of native vegetation, with some adjoining patches of remnant woodland and native vegetation. Importantly, no significant fauna species or their habitats were identified within the Development Area, ensuring that the solar farm development will have minimal ecological impact. See Chapter 2.6.2 and Appendix D for detailed information on the Site's flora and fauna values.

2.6.1 Topography

The Site is relatively flat with some hills and rises. The Site's elevation ranges between 410AHD and 670 AHD (Figure 4). The Site is surrounded by a series of more steeply undulating hills, including Weasel Hills to the south-west, Cluny Hill to the south, Twelve O'clock Hill to the east and the Bitters to the north. Across the Site slope gradients typically range between 2 degrees and 15 degrees.

The Development Area has been selected to be relatively flat, with heights ranging between 440 AHD and 560 AHD.

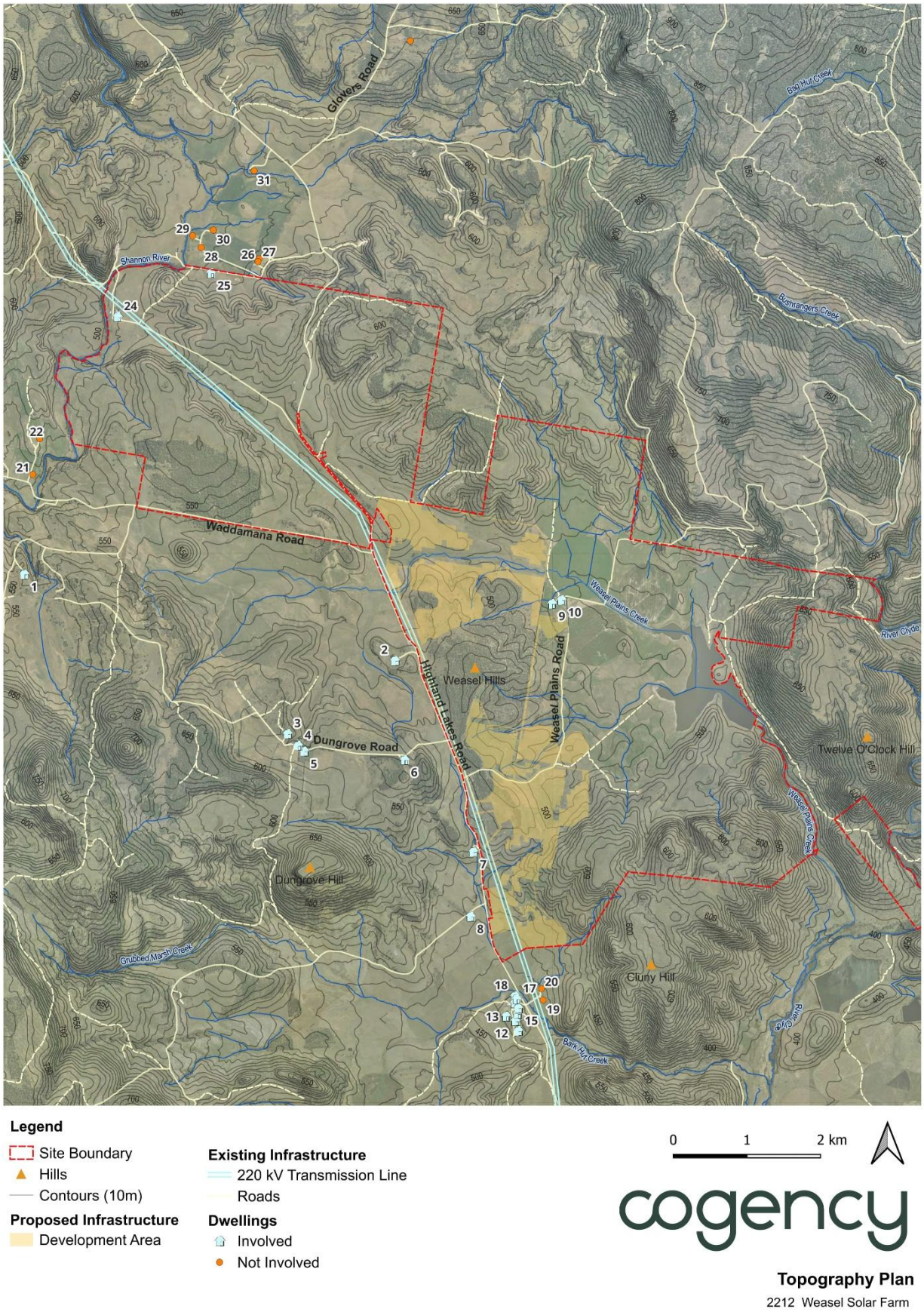


Figure 4 – Topography Plan

2.6.2 Ecology

According to the Ecological and Natural Assets Code Assessment (Van Diemen's Consulting, Appendix D), the Site's environmental and biodiversity features are predominantly of low ecological value. Critical ecological areas have been carefully avoided in the design and layout of the Development Areas, ensuring minimal disruption to key natural values.

The Study Area is located within the Tasmanian Southeast bioregion, as defined by the Interim Biogeographic Regions of Australia (IBRA) and straddles the Ouse and Clyde catchment areas.

Given that the majority of the Site consists of previously disturbed agricultural land, which holds low ecological significance, the Development Areas are largely composed of improved pastures. The Site does include small patches of native vegetation communities, such as Eucalyptus tenuiramis forest and woodland not on dolerite, Eucalyptus pauciflora forest and woodland not on dolerite, and Lowland grassy sedgeland. Among these, the Eucalyptus tenuiramis forest and woodland not on dolerite is the only community listed as threatened under native vegetation classifications. This community is limited to approximately 4.66 hectares within the Site, primarily along a narrow north-south corridor in the central proposed development area.

Although some native vegetation types and listed species are present on the Site, they will not be adversely affected by the Proposal. Areas where these sensitive flora and fauna have been identified are minimal and have been strategically excluded from the Development Areas.

The Ecological and Natural Assets Code Assessment includes detailed vegetation maps (TasVEG) (Appendix D, Figures 6 and 7), along with a comprehensive analysis of the Site's natural values, highlighting the careful consideration given to preserving the ecological integrity of the Site.

2.6.3 Watercourses and Waterbodies

As outlined within the Flooding Impact Assessment (Pitt & Sherry), across the 'Weasel Plains' and 'The Weasel' there are numerous watercourses and waterbodies of varying sizes (See Figure 5).

Weasel Plains Creek transects the northern portion of the Development Area, which is a tributary of the River Clyde. Tributaries of Bark Hut Creek flow through the southern portion of the Site. Other minor creek, minor tributaries and drainage lines exist across the two lots but are significantly modified through past farming-related activities. Additionally, the site features several drainage culverts designed to manage water flow.

The Proposal has been sited and designed to avoid significant disruptions to existing water flows, and to help mitigate potential flood risks have been located away from Weasel Plains Creek and the identified drainage culverts.

2.6.4 Soil

As noted in the Agricultural Assessment (Appendix I), the Site's geology is dominated by glaciomarine sequences of pebbly mudstone, sandstone, and limestone, with smaller areas of dolerite and quartz sandstone to the southeast. The soil across both land parcels comprises grey/brown duplex soil consistent with the chromosol soil type. This soil type is generally suitable for pasture production; however, the productivity of this soil is limited by certain factors related to the land's overall capability. The Proposal would be located on lighter sandy/sandy loam soils identified across the Site. Based on the findings of the agricultural impact assessment, the soil structure of the Site is deemed suitable for the Proposal.

2.6.5 Existing Access

The Site is located along Highlands Lakes Road, a State road, approximately 9 km north of Bothwell. Access to the Development Area is currently primarily via Weasel Plains Road, an unsealed road off Highland Lakes Road. The initial 1.4km of Weasel Plains Road is a Council access road, which after this point continues as a private farm access road. Additional access points to the Site, include two gated farming entrances off

Highland Lakes Road including one opposite the Waddamana Road intersection and at the Natural Resources and Environment (NRE Tas) laydown area.

The Proposal will rely upon Weasel Plains Road as the primary access for construction traffic to the site (northern and southern parts) and once operational. The two gated farm entrances off Highlands Lakes Road will be used as additional access points for use during construction and as emergency accesses once the solar farm is operational. As part of the proposal, existing access points will need to be sealed. The primary access and construction/ emergency access points are shown in Figure 13 in Chapter 3.

2.6.6 Existing Transmission Lines and Easements

The existing 220kV overhead transmission line (Waddamana to Lindisfarne) runs within the western boundary of the Site, adjacent to Highland Lakes Road, within a designated transmission corridor that is protected by a planning overlay (and easements on Title). This well-established infrastructure has sufficient capacity to accommodate a point of connection for the proposed solar farm and BESS.

To facilitate this grid connection, an on-site substation will be constructed. This eliminates the need for constructing extensive new transmission lines, providing an efficient connection process and reducing associated footprints and environmental and logistical impacts. The use of existing infrastructure not only ensures reliability but also supports the delivery of renewable energy to the NEM.

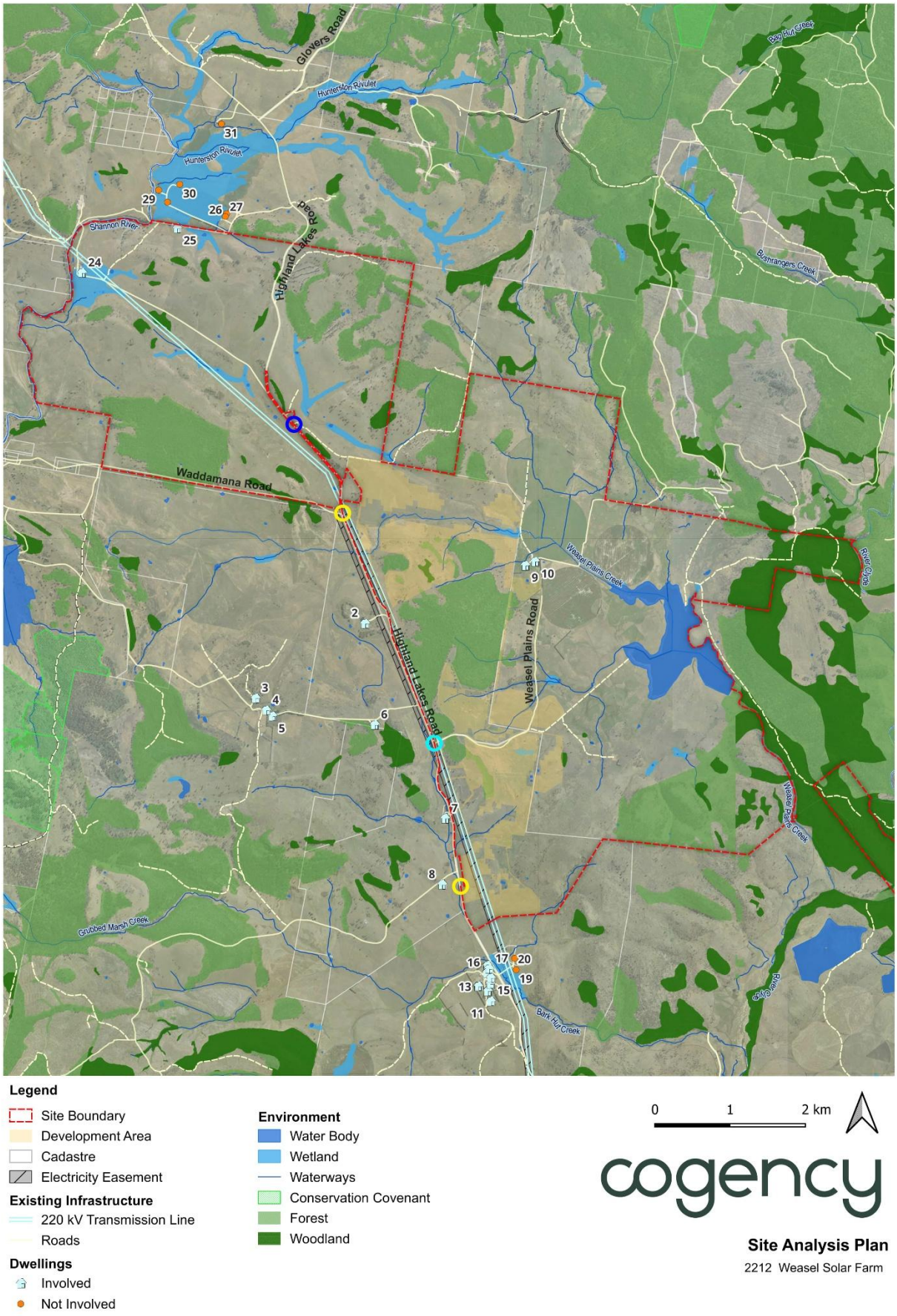


Figure 5 – Site Analysis Plan

3. The Proposal

3.1 Overview and Masterplan

The Weasel Solar Farm will comprise the use and development of a large-scale solar farm (across three properties, primarily The Weasel and Weasel Plains), containing approximately 270 ha of solar arrays with a nameplate capacity of up to 250 MW. The development will also comprise the following elements:

- A battery energy storage system (BESS) within an approximately two-hectare footprint;
- Internal 33 kV transmission line approximately 3km in length
- Other electricity infrastructure including inverters and a switchyard containing an electrical substation to connect to the existing 220kV transmission line; and
- Other elements required for construction, maintenance, and operation, such as an operations and management (O&M) compound, new access tracks and upgrades to existing tracks, laydown areas, security infrastructure, landscaping, and workers' facilities.

The land selected for the Weasel Solar Farm has already experienced disturbance from agricultural activities and the gentle topography avoids the need for significant changes to the landscape. The solar arrays will be constructed to enable the continued use of the land for grazing sheep on pastures underneath the solar panels, known as ‘agrisolar.’

Figure 6 illustrates the concept masterplan layout. The concept masterplan layout will be refined during detailed design engineering, post-approval.

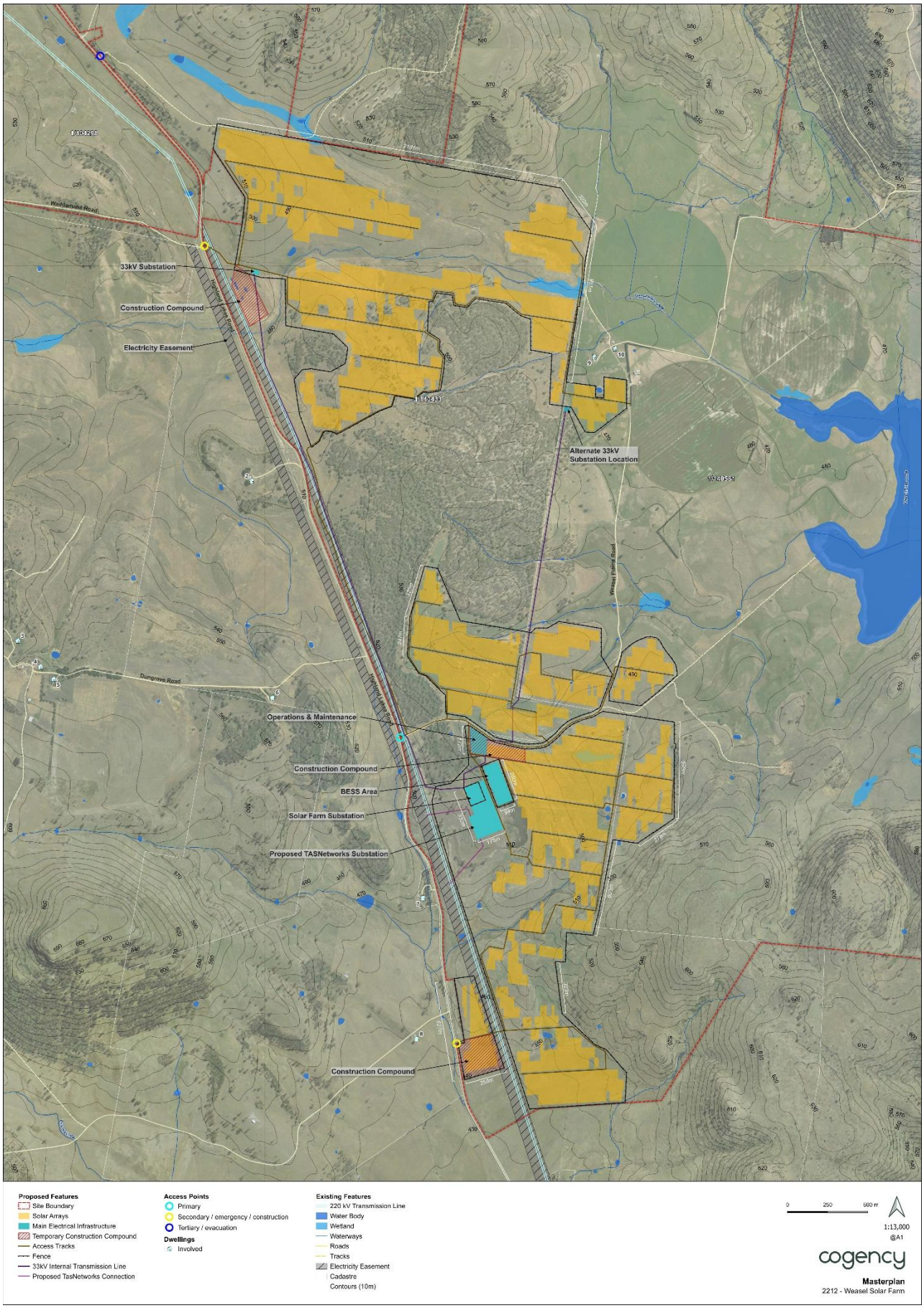


Figure 6 – Concept Masterplan Layout

3.1.1 Project Iterations

The siting of the Proposal has been specifically designed to avoid areas of high sensitivity or constraint. The solar arrays are positioned primarily on lower-value, cleared agricultural land. Key considerations such as high-risk flood zones, along with findings of ecological and cultural heritage assessments, have informed and shaped the design adjustments for the solar farm.

The key changes made to the siting and layout of the Proposal during the planning and design phase stemmed from the:

- Design ethos of reducing visibility from Highland Lakes Road and neighbouring residences;
- Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment, which identified key potential archaeological sensitivity (PAS) sites that the Development Area has avoided;
- Flora and fauna assessment of high-quality native vegetation and habitat to preserve where possible,
- Hydrology assessment of potential high-hazard flooding, which the key elements of the Proposal have been positioned to avoid; and
- Providing an efficient transmission connection and BESS area with appropriate distance to vegetation.

Accordingly, the design iterations have appropriately dealt with various matters to ensure that the siting and layout proposed largely avoids the key constraints and minimise potential environmental impacts. Figure 7 summarises the key considerations in avoidance, including Key Sensitive Areas (high value ecological features, cultural heritage PAS, and higher risk inundation areas).

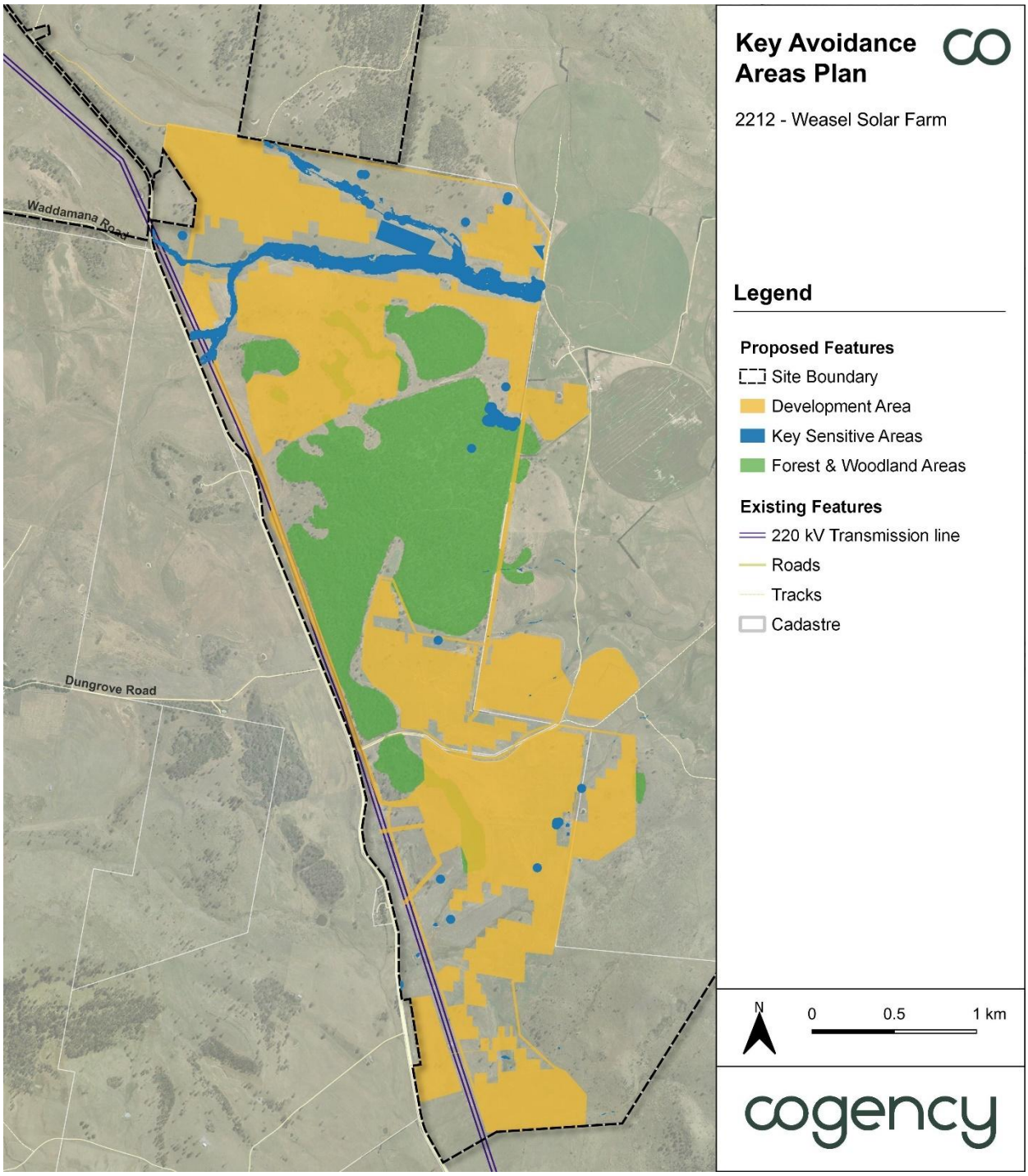


Figure 7 – Key Avoidance Areas Plan

3.2 Solar Panels and Associated Infrastructure

The Proposal will comprise:

- Solar components (PV Modules, trackers, inverters)
- Infrastructure (switchyard, BESS, Operations and maintenance building, internal 33 kV transmission line, fire-fighting supply infrastructure)
- Construction Area
- Security perimeter fencing

- Access routes
- Landscaping (vegetation planting)

The solar panels generate an electric current (DC) from energy in sunlight. Groups of solar arrays are linked (via cabling) to an inverter, that converts the current to AC. This AC electricity is carried by 33kV internal transmission lines to a substation, that steps the voltage up to 220kV. This 220kV electricity goes from the substation to the 220kV Switchyard, where it connects into the existing high-voltage transmission network. The BESS, switchyard, and substation are adjacent to each other, forming a 'primary infrastructure area'. This facilitates BESS connection to the grid and concentrates the larger infrastructure together.

Each component is summarised in the following subsections. See Appendix B for the concept masterplan layout and indicative elevation (by Cogency and DNV).

3.2.1 Solar Panels and Mounting System

The solar farm is expected to have a capacity of approximately 250MW, with the solar arrays covering approximately 270 ha of the broader 432 ha Development Area. The concept design is predicated upon panels being single-axis tracking in 2P format, with a concept string size of 27 modules (see Figure 8, Figure 9 and Figure 10). Importantly, this concept design is subject to detailed design and procurement (undertaken once a planning approval has been granted). The installation process involves direct piling and therefore does not require excavation or concrete footings for the solar arrays. Some trenching for in-ground conduits will be required. Typically, solar modules are aluminium framed with glass face, and generally 240cm x 110cm x 3cm – although subject to final selection in detailed design. The panels are mounted on galvanised steel racks as shown in Figure 8.

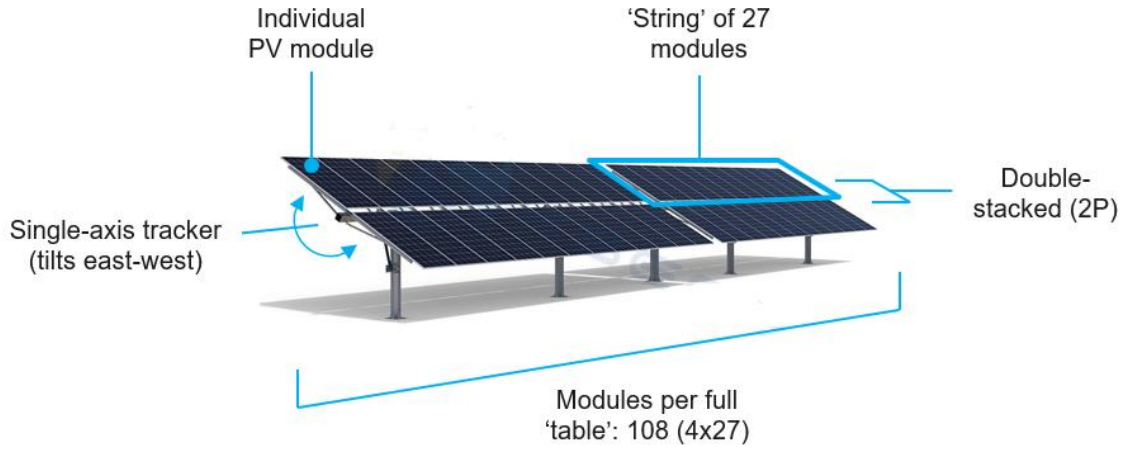


Figure 8 – Typical solar array layout

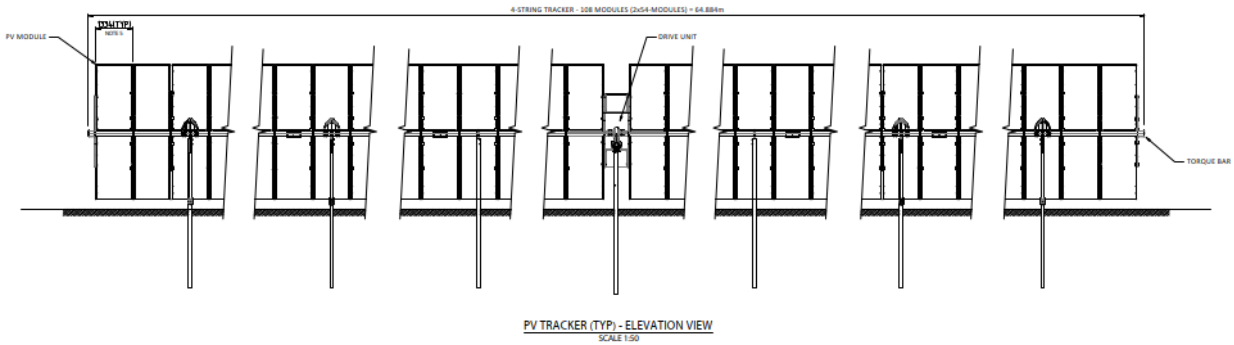


Figure 9 – PV Trackers Layout Elevation View

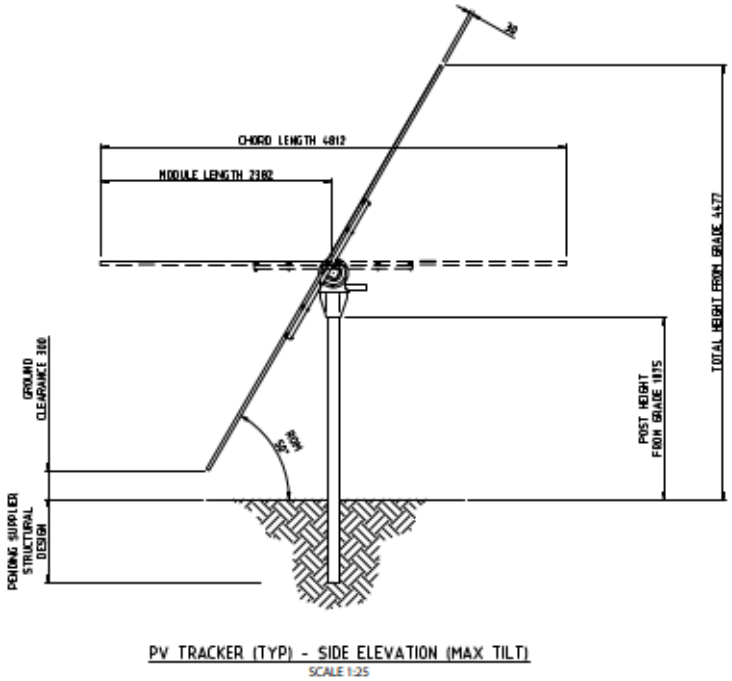


Figure 10 – Proposed solar panel tracker

3.2.2 Inverters and Transformers

Spaced throughout the solar areas will be approximately 60 inverters. These inverters (see Figure 11) are approximately 6 m long, 2.4 m wide, and 2.8 m high.

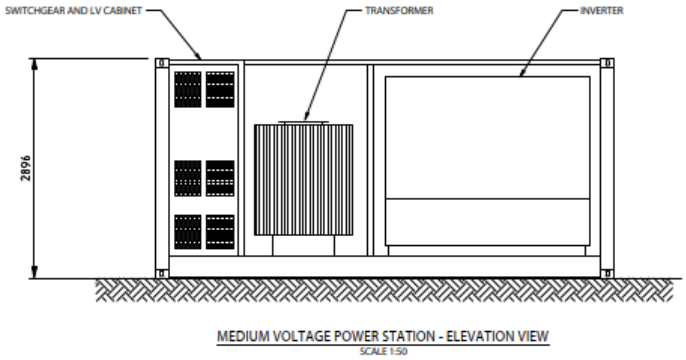


Figure 11 – Design of the Inverter (DNV)

3.2.3 Internal Transmission – 33 kV Overhead Transmission Line

An internal 33 kV transmission line will be installed within the western extent of the site, connecting the northern solar area to the southern area (to the substation). An alternate eastern alignment has been included in technical investigations, allowing it to be considered during detailed design. The line length along the western boundary adjacent to Highland Lakes Road will be approximately 3km long, running overhead. The eastern option would be approximately 2km long (along an existing fence line). Minimal clearing will be required to accommodate the overhead transmission lines. The concept dimensions are shown in Figure 12, typically a height of 18 m.

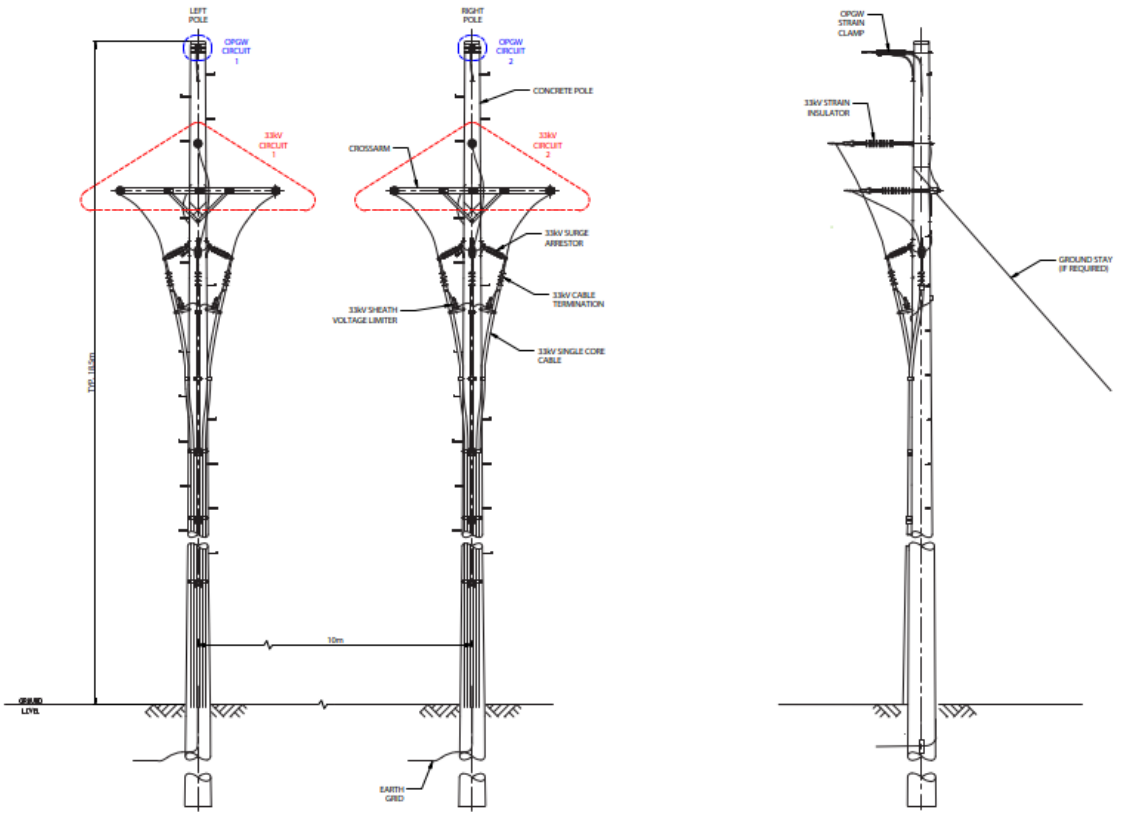


Figure 12 – Proposed 33kV overhead transmission design (DNV)

3.2.4 Battery Energy Storage System

The BESS component is located within the western portion of the site, with a benching footprint of 274m x 115m (approximately 3 ha). The potential capacity is in the order of 4hr/144MW (576MWh), subject to detailed design. Figure 13 shows the BESS general arrangement layout and dimensions (battery modules in red, with associated inverters at the end of each row). The typical height of each BESS unit is up to-3 m. The primary purpose of the BESS is to soak up electricity generated by the solar farm during the day, available for discharge in evening peak periods. The BESS is located next to the substation/switchyard infrastructure for maximum efficiency to import/export to the grid. The BESS may be developed in stages, pending final design.

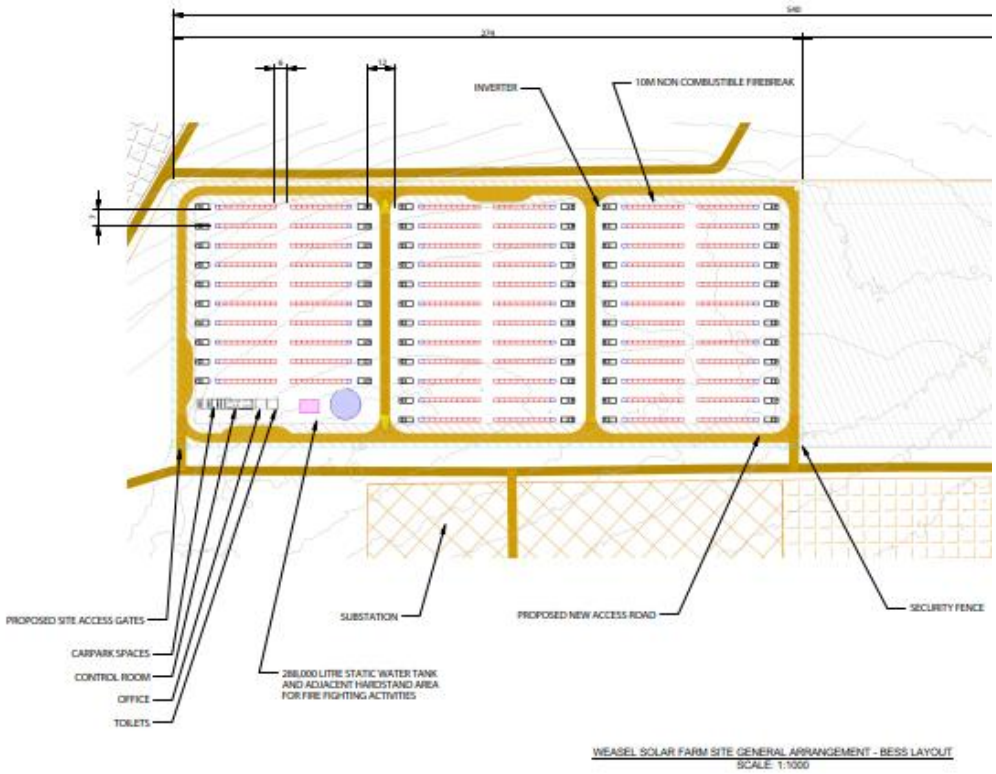


Figure 13 – General Layout of BESS (DNV)

3.2.5 Substation and Switchyard

The substation (33kV-220kV) and switchyard (220kV) are located in the primary infrastructure area together with the BESS. Collectively, they allow the transfer of electricity between the solar farm/BESS and national grid. Typically, the 220kV switchyard becomes a TasNetworks asset. The final design of both switchyard and substation are subject to TasNetworks approval, separate to the DA.

The switchyard provides the export point of the generated electricity into the grid (via the existing 220 kV transmission line). It will comprise the 33 kV transformers as it receives the two internal 33 kV line connections that feed into the northern solar arrays within the Development Area. The indicative Switchyard layout and elevation are shown in Figure 14.

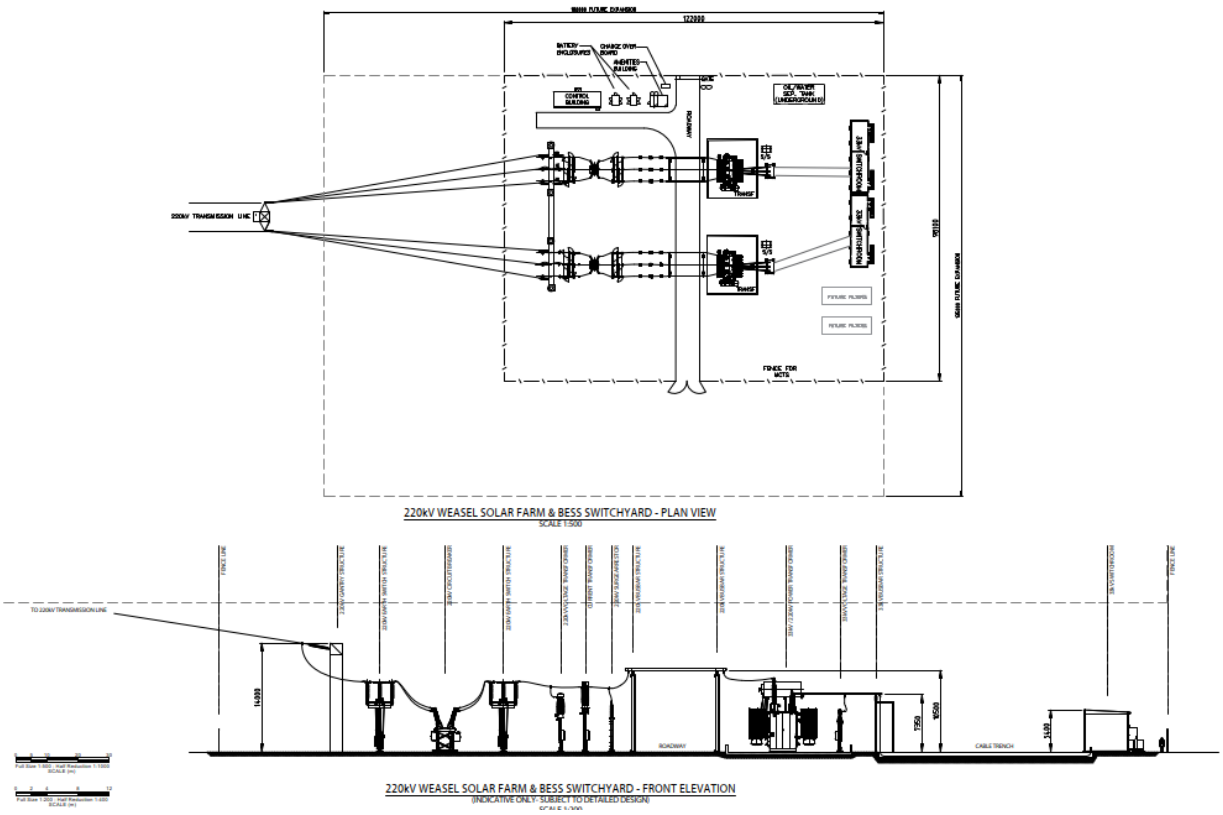


Figure 14 – Design and Layout of Switchyard (DNV)

3.2.6 Fencing and Security

The perimeter of the solar array areas and primary infrastructure area will be secured with a security fence topped with barbed wire to prevent unauthorised access (typically 2.4 m tall). Only a small portion of the fencing, along the northern boundary of the Development Area and the southernmost solar array area within The Weasel parcel, will align with title or property boundaries. The majority of the fencing will be internal, located within 'The Weasel' and 'Weasel Plains' parcels. See Appendix B Design Plans by DNV for a typical elevation diagram.

3.2.7 Operations and Maintenance Building

Control and operations and management buildings are proposed for the Switchyard and BESS areas. These will include a site office for operations. These building will be single-storey colourbond, essentially presenting as agricultural sheds. See Appendix B Design Plans by DNV for typical elevation diagrams. The larger building is approximately 9 m high, 20 m x 40 m.

3.2.8 Fire-fighting supply

The solar areas, BESS, and substation and switchyard require static water supplies, held in storage tanks. The Bushfire Impact Statement (Appendix G) outlines the requirements for fire-break separations, static water supply, access (including track standards and passing bays) and other necessary measures. These requirements will be subject to final detailed design.

3.3 Site Access

The Proposal will rely upon Weasel Plains Road as the main access route (access and egress) for construction and operation traffic to both the northern and southern sections of the site. In addition to Weasel Plains Road, three existing farm gate entrances located off Highlands Lakes Road will be designated as supplementary access points. The two farm gates located on 'Weasel Plains' will be used as secondary access points to

facilitate additional access during the construction phase, particularly for larger vehicles and equipment. Following the completion of construction, these entrances will remain available as emergency access/egress points. The entrance located along Rockford will be used as a tertiary access point only for evacuation purposes. To accommodate increased traffic and ensure safe and reliable access, all existing access points, including those on Highlands Lakes Road, will need to be sealed (Figure 15).

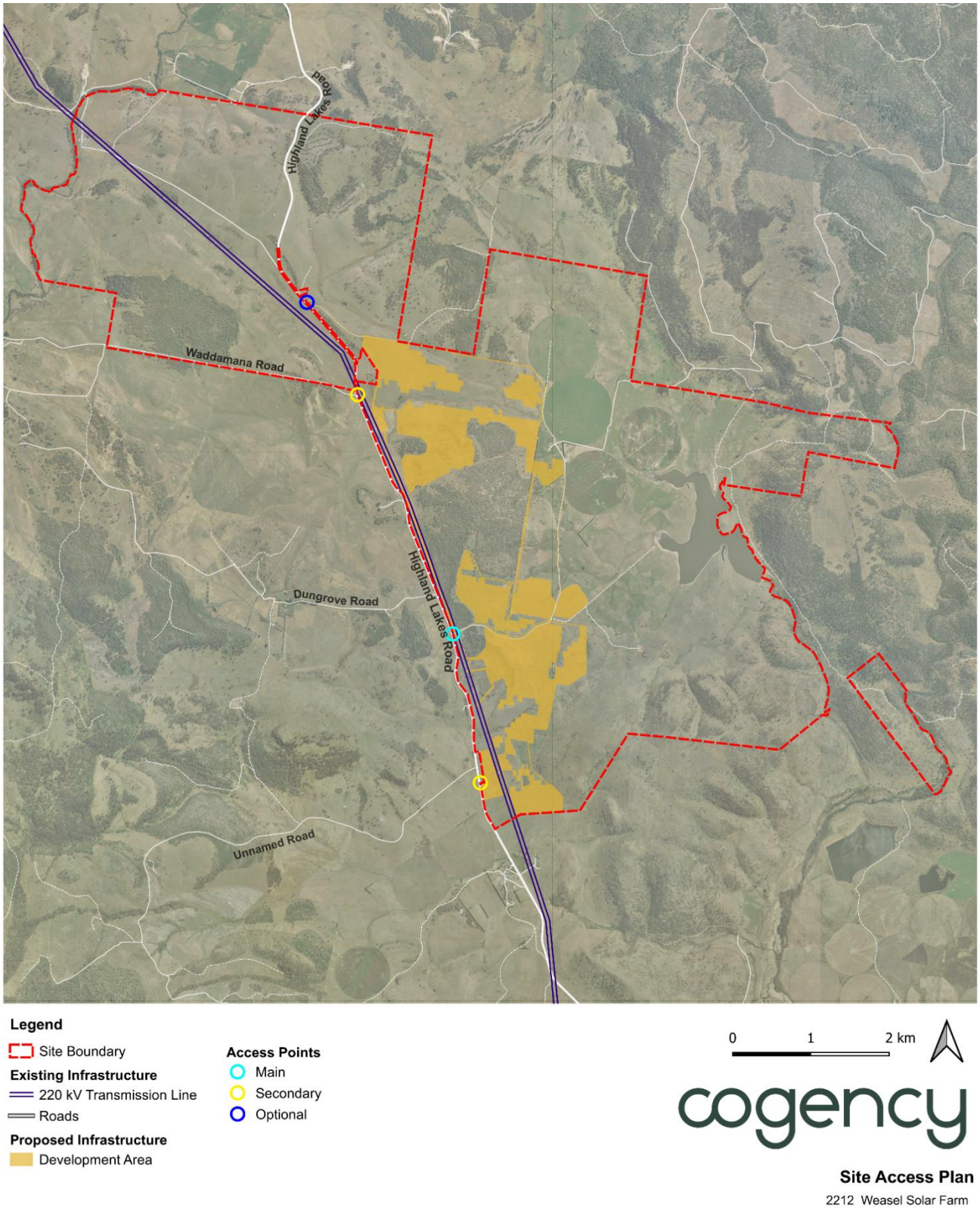


Figure 15 – Site Access Plan

3.4 Vegetation and Landscaping

3.4.1 Vegetation Removal

Some vegetation removal will be necessary as part of the Proposal. However, the siting and design process has carefully considered environmental impacts and prioritised the protection of high-quality native vegetation and tree species, seeking to maximise avoidance and minimisation of native vegetation removal. In line with the findings of the Ecology Assessment, the Proposal has been designed to avoid significant native vegetation areas as much as possible. The majority of the vegetation that will be cleared consists of non-native species, ensuring that much of the forested areas, particularly those with ecological value, are retained. Chapter 9.3 and Appendix D provide further detail on vegetation removal.

3.4.2 Vegetation Planting and Screening

As part of the LVIA, amelioration planting has been proposed along solar area boundaries at the far northern and southern extents, on the Highland Lakes Rd side. These proposed plantings will further obscure and soften the limited public views towards the solar farm. Final planting location will be subject to detailed design, coordinating with fire break requirements and offsets to solar arrays and security fencing.

3.5 Construction, Operation and Lifespan

The construction period is expected to take approximately 1.5 years. Typical solar farm operation periods are 30-40 years, subject to lease arrangements. Replacement of solar panel modules and extension of lease (lifespan) can be altered.

3.5.1 Employment Opportunities

The project is anticipated to generate significant local and regional employment opportunities, particularly during the construction phase. Additionally, the project will actively encourage the participation of local businesses, creating opportunities for suppliers and service providers to contribute to its development. Once operational, the solar farm will also create ongoing jobs, with positions available in areas such as maintenance, operations, and administration, fostering long-term employment within the community. The Socioeconomic Impact Assessment (Appendix N) outlines the economic and employment benefits in detail.

3.5.2 Construction

Due to its scale, the construction activities will be undertaken using a staged approach. The construction period will require haulage of large components and associated access upgrades. Temporary construction laydown and facility areas are located within the Project Area. The two primary construction laydown areas can be filled with solar arrays as a final stage of construction.

3.5.3 Operation

Within the operation phase, there is minimal day-to-day activity relative to construction. It is expected that there will be 20 ongoing jobs (FTE) (8 direct and 12 indirect), related to maintenance, inspections and management.

The Agrisolar component means sheep grazing is the primary method for grass (height) management, although slashing would be used in addition if required, to maintain grass height to a suitable fire-risk management standard during fire-season.

Modern large-scale solar farms comprise live performance monitoring components, allowing detailed operational monitoring, often remotely. Detailed design and development will confirm system details.

3.5.4 Decommissioning

For solar farm projects, lease programs generally include provisions for either extending the operational period or decommissioning the site after a set duration, typically ranging from 30 to 40 years. At the end of this period, the developer is typically obligated to decommission the site, a process that involves the complete removal of all solar infrastructure and the restoration of the land to its original, pre-development condition. This restoration is usually detailed in a decommissioning plan, which must be agreed upon by both the landowner and the developer and is often enforced as a condition of the project's planning permit. Decommissioning ensures that the land remains viable for future use, whether for agriculture, conservation, or other purposes and is a key aspect of responsible renewable energy development.

3.6 Agrisolar

'Agrisolar' combines sheep grazing or other agricultural activities, such as vegetable growing, with solar electricity generation. The goal is to create a mutually beneficial relationship that supports both farming and energy production. There is increasing research across Australia and internationally on the benefits of Agrisolar. The benefits can be derived from:

- Increased land use efficiency, by maximising the utility of available farming land.
- Diversification of income due to the addition of renewable electricity production over grazing land.
- Natural grass management under solar panels (instead of relying upon slashing or spraying).
- Extra shading of sheep and pastures.
- Reduces carbon footprint of agricultural practices
- In drier climates, additional moisture through condensation on panels and reduced evaporation on hot days.

Considering the lower agricultural capability of the Development Areas, diversifying and using agrisolar practices concurrently can provide significant agricultural benefits for the Proponent.

4. Proposal Justification

4.1 Site Suitability

The Site – and Development Area – have been carefully selected based on its suitable characteristics for a solar farm, ensuring minimal environmental constraints and broader social benefits. The Site has already undergone significant disturbance due to longstanding agricultural activities, making it a more favourable location for the Proposal. Its topography is well-suited to support the Proposal, avoiding the need for major earthworks, and being well screened from public view.

Feasibility studies indicate that while the Weasel Solar Farm project will be the most southern solar farm in Australia, summer daylight hours extend longer than in northern parts of the state and during peak usage hours nationally.

The Development Areas are largely free of vegetation, with minimal presence of significant flora and fauna species. Large patches of vegetation within the wider Site have been excluded from the Development Areas, ensuring that the Proposal will integrate with minimal impact into the existing environment.

Additionally, the design of the solar arrays will allow for the continued use of the land for grazing sheep underneath the panels, a practice known as 'agrisolar.' This approach underscores the Site's suitability by maintaining agricultural productivity alongside renewable energy generation.

The Site is located more than 9 km from the nearest town, Bothwell, with very few non-involved residential dwellings within 5km of the Development Area. The Site benefits from proximity to major routes, with direct access to Highland Lakes Road (State Route A5) adjacent to the western extent of the site.

A critical advantage of this location is the existing 220 kV transmission line running through the Site, eliminating the need for new external transmission infrastructure. This reduces both the environmental impact and costs associated with the Proposal. Centrally positioned between Hobart and Launceston, the location ensures reduced transmission costs compared to alternative locations.

At a broad scale, the Project aligns with state and local government policies, supporting existing agricultural land uses while contributing to local economic development. The establishment of the solar farm and associated infrastructure offers a strategic opportunity to diversify the local economy, particularly in response to the declining forestry industry, by fostering alternative industries that can stimulate economic growth.

4.2 Social, Economic and Energy Benefits

4.2.1 Social and Economic Benefits

This local landowner-led project is expected to generate significant positive impacts for the local community as well as Tasmania's environment and economy.

A key benefit of this local landowner-led project is the sensitivity towards local concerns, meaning the Proposal can be tailored to the local context and where benefits may be more tangible and of value to the community. As such, the Proponent has sought to ensure the Bothwell community and surrounding towns are positively impacted by the Proposal and can benefit from the uptake of renewable energy in the Central Highlands Region.

A solar farm in the Central Highlands will increase reliable, affordable and renewable power for the region. The development will be supporting burgeoning renewable energy industry in Tasmania, helping reach critical mass for training and job creation, supporting nearby communities of Bothwell, Ouse, Osterley and beyond. It will further support growth in the local/Tasmanian economy through direct investment and job creation, during construction and once the solar farm is operational.

During the construction phase, several employment and contracting opportunities will be available and local contractors, suppliers and businesses will be engaged, where possible. A local business register will be developed, as well as a community benefit sharing program.

Based on the socioeconomic assessment completed for the proposal the key benefits have been identified as:

- Estimated to generate economic output in the order of $428 million during the construction phase, and support more than 300 direct jobs (FTE).
- Estimated to generate $11 million total economic output operationally, and support 8 direct FTE jobs.

The Socioeconomic Impact Assessment (Appendix N) by Urban Enterprise provides further detail on the social and economic benefits.

4.2.2 Energy Benefits

The Site's location and favourable conditions – such as relatively flat topography, solar irradiance, and proximity to existing transmission infrastructure – are critical factors that contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Weasel Solar Farm, maximising energy production and transmission potential. Additionally, the scale and capacity of the Proposal are designed to provide a substantial source of clean energy, aligning with and advancing Tasmania's renewable energy targets, supporting cheaper electricity and strengthening Tasmania's grid.

The key energy benefits of the Proposal include:

- Transitioning the grid to sources of renewable energy
- Increased renewable energy generation to meet demands for future local industry and the transition to renewable energy, reducing associated climate change drivers.
- Avoidance of more than 44,000 tonnes of CO2.
- More than 30,000 Tasmanian Homes Powered
- Emissions saved equivalent to planting more than 450,000 trees
- Supporting Tasmania's goal of achieving 200% renewable energy by 2030.

5. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Since the inception of the Project, the Proponent has been committed to early, proactive, and meaningful engagement with stakeholders. To help support the Proponent's commitment to community and stakeholder engagement, Cogency prepared a comprehensive Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. This Strategy detailed the engagement objectives, principles, methodology, stakeholder mapping, monitoring and review processes, and an action plan. A Consultation Summary Report is provided in Appendix M that provides a record of the engagement activities and their outcomes.

5.1 Engagement Schedule Overview

The Engagement Schedule for the Project has been structured around three key stages, each designed to ensure early, proactive, and meaningful engagement with key stakeholders and nearby community members. These stages were organised to facilitate open communication and gather valuable input and support for the Proposal at the State, regional, and local levels.

The three phases of engagement are:

- Feasibility and Early Engagement Phase (Q4 2023 -Q2 2024)
- Pre-lodgement Engagement (Q2-Q3 2024)
- Post Lodgement and Advertising Engagement (Q4 2024 – Q1 2025)

In addition to relevant authorities, the early stages of engagement have been mostly targeted towards near-neighbour and local landowners before introducing the project to the broader community. This is largely due to the project being located well outside key settlement areas, and there are a limited number of non-involved residents within 5km of the Proposal.

The engagement activities aimed not only to introduce the Proposal to stakeholders and neighbours of the Proposal but also to help them understand its implications and the associated benefit-sharing opportunities. The schedule was carefully planned to provide ample time for all interested parties to be well-informed and actively involved throughout the process.

5.2 Key Activities and Findings

As a local landowner and key member of the Bothwell community, the Proponent has proactively initiated early engagement with key stakeholders and nearby neighbours to build support and gather valuable feedback for the proposed Weasel Solar Farm. This approach has allowed for meaningful dialogue and consultation with those most directly impacted by the Proposal.

Preliminary discussions with immediate neighbours provided an overview of the Proposal, including key components, timeline, planning approvals process, and the potential amenity impacts and benefits. Those neighbours have demonstrated a positive or neutral sentiment – notably, no negative sentiment.

High-level discussions with the State Government representatives and the Central Highlands Council have focused on introducing the project, along with the broader concept of the Highlands Renewable Energy Hub, which encompasses four key renewable energy projects. These discussions have highlighted the benefits for both the local community and Tasmania, and have included plans for future engagement, detailed project timelines, and the pathways for obtaining necessary approvals.

Engagement with Traditional Owners has been managed by cultural heritage consultants CHMA (Appendix F), ensuring that cultural heritage considerations are respected and integrated into the project planning process.

Following the formal lodgement of the Development Application, the Proponent plans to host a Community Drop-in Information Session. This event will serve as an opportunity to introduce the project to the broader community, provide updates, answer questions, and ensure transparency throughout the development process. For more information, please refer to the Consultation Summary Report provided in Appendix M.

6. Legislation, Guidelines and Policy Context

6.1 Policy & Strategic Alignment Summary

Table 4 outlines the federal, state, regional and local policies, legislation and plans that are relevant to the development of the Weasel Solar Farm.

Table 4 – Policy Alignment Overview

	Relevant Objectives & Actions	Proposal Alignment
Commonwealth		
Paris Agreement 2016	▪ Strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change ▪ Maintain global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C". ▪ Achieve net zero emissions by 2050, and inscribe low emissions technology stretch goals	▪ The proposal aligns with Australia's commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement and will significantly contribute to achieving net-zero targets through the supply and generation of renewable energy. ▪ As a result of the Proposal, it is expected that approximately 44,676 tonnes of CO2 will be saved annually.
Climate Change Act 2022	▪ Advance Australia's response to climate change ▪ Promote accountability in governance and policy-making in regard to climate change. ▪ Achieve Australia's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, per s 10 of the Act, at least 43% below 2005 levels by 2030, and net zero by 2050.	▪ By generating renewable energy, the proposal will support Australia's greenhouse gas reduction target and contribute to minimising the reliance on fossil fuels.
Australian Renewable Energy Target Scheme	▪ Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the electricity sector ▪ Encourage the generation of electricity from sustainable and renewable sources ▪ Investment in new renewable energy projects until the target of 33,000 gigawatt-hours of renewable electricity generation is met and sustained until 2030.	▪ The Proposal supports the national renewable energy targets by supplying electricity generation through renewable energy sources and seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
AEMO Integrated System Plan 2024	▪ Support the development of the National Energy Market (NEM)	▪ The Proposal will connect to the NEM. Along with providing locally generated renewable energy, the BESS component will help improve grid stability and management in the region.
Energy Networks Australia National Connection Guidelines	▪ Provides a set of nationally consistent guidelines for the safe, consistent, and efficient connection of renewable energy sources to the grid. ▪ Outlines the key technical requirements to facilitate streamlined integration into the national grid as the renewable energy transition accelerates.	▪ During the evaluation of the proposal's integration into the national grid, a thorough assessment of technical, safety, social, and environmental factors was conducted. Taking these factors into account, the proposal closely adheres to the core principles of the National Connection Guidelines, ensuring the safe, reliable, and efficient connection of renewable energy to the national grid.
Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999	▪ Environmental law that provides environmental protection in relation to Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES). ▪ Ensures "that 'nationally significant' animals, plants, habitats, and places are	▪ Based on the findings of the Ecology Assessment, species listed under the EPBC Act were not found to be present on site. Therefore, the Proposal is unlikely to be a 'Controlled Action'.

	identified, and any potential negative impacts on them are carefully considered before changes in land use or new developments are approved".	▪ Regardless, the Project will be referred to the Minister for the Environment who will determine if the Project will be considered a controlled action and therefore require formal assessment and approval.
State		
Resource Management & Planning System	▪ Promote the sustainable development of natural and physical resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity ▪ Provide for the fair, orderly and sustainable use and development of air, land, and water ▪ Encourage public involvement in resource management and planning ▪ Facilitate economic development in accordance with the objectives set out in the above paragraphs ▪ Promote the sharing of responsibility for resource management and planning between the different spheres of government, the community and industry in the State	▪ By providing a source of renewable energy generation with minimal environmental impacts, the Proposal promotes the state's sustainable development objectives and orderly planning. ▪ The Proposal also represents a significant economic investment in the region.
Land Use Planning & Approvals Act 1993 (LUPA Act)	▪ Regulate the use and development of land, and some resources, within local government areas. ▪ Schedule 1 of the LUPA Act sets out the objectives of the Resource Management and Planning System (RMPS) (Part 1) and Planning Process (Part 2).	▪ Pursuant to the LUPA Act and the Planning Scheme, a planning permit is required. ▪ The application for this proposal will be made under Part 4, Division 2 section 57 of the LUPA Act. This is because the Use under the Agriculture Zone is Discretionary (Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Central Highlands).
Land Use Planning & Approvals Regulations 2014	▪ Prescribes notice requirements for certain exhibitions, approvals and applications under the LUPAA Act. ▪ Prescribes fees payable under the LUPAA Act.	▪ The regulations outlined in the Land Use Planning & Approvals Regulations 2014 (Tas) will be adhered to during the approvals process of the proposal.
Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994 (EMPCA Act)	▪ Regulate activities that may cause environmental harm, and encourage environmental management by industry, planning authorities, and State agencies. ▪ Determines whether a development is considered a Level 1, 2 or 3 activity, based on the attributes of the project and their potential environmental impact. ▪ Activities not requiring EPA approval are still subject to the EMPCA, its regulations and policies. ▪ Level 1 activities are regular uses and developments which may have their approval covered by regular planning schemes. Their approval does not normally require EPA contribution, though may under a set of triggers outlined in Clauses 24 and 20.B. ▪ Level 2 and Level 3 (highest level) activities are defined as those listed in Schedule 2 to the EMPCA and they require EPA referral for approval.	▪ The Proposal does not fall within the categories contained in Schedule 2 of the EMPC Act as being a level 2 activity. ▪ Confirmation was received from EPA that the Proposal is not considered a high-impact (Level 2 or 3) activity and will be assessed by Council, as a Level 1 activity.

State Policies and Projects Act 1993	▪ Encourage the development of State policies that achieve the objectives outlined in the RMPS. ▪ Provide for the determination and integrated assessment of projects of State Significance. ▪ Guide and outline requirements for State of the Environment Reporting. ▪ Seeks to further objectives of the RMPS.	▪ The proposal is not considered to qualify as a project of State Significance under the LUPA Act or this Act. ▪ Therefore, this planning approvals pathway has not been selected for the proposal.
Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975	▪ Protect and conserve relics (places, objects and sites) of Indigenous heritage.	▪ An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage assessment has been completed. The findings determined that there are no known European or Aboriginal cultural heritage values on site. ▪ The Weasel Solar Farm is not expected to impact existing Aboriginal cultural heritage values and therefore is considered to align with the objectives and requirements of the AHA Act.
Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995	▪ Protect and conserve places of cultural heritage significance in Tasmania ▪ Seeks to further objectives of the RMPS	▪ A European cultural heritage assessment was completed for this proposal, and it determined the Proposal will not impact on existing heritage values in the vicinity.
Major Infrastructure Development and Approvals Act 1999	▪ Make special provisions in relation to the approval of major infrastructure projects. ▪ Applies to projects having effects extending beyond a single council area. ▪ Seeks to further objectives of the RMPS.	▪ The Proposal is not considered to qualify as a Major infrastructure project based on the requirements under the LUPA Act. ▪ The Proposal's footprint is within a single council area. Therefore, the Proposal will not be considered under this approvals process.
Water Management Act 1999	▪ Promote the sustainable and fair use, management, and development of freshwater resources. ▪ Maintain ecological processes and diversity of aquatic and riparian ecosystems. ▪ Seeks to further objectives of the RMPS.	▪ A Flooding Impact Assessment has been prepared by a suitably qualified hydrologist for this proposal. ▪ Under this assessment, it is considered that the Proposal aligns with the objectives and requirements of the WM Act.
Nature Conservation Act 2002	▪ Conserve and protect the fauna, flora and geological diversity of the State. ▪ Protect national parks and other reserved land for related purposes.	▪ The likelihood of impact on the quality of flora and fauna habitat of the Proposal is expected to be negligible. ▪ It is therefore considered that the proposal aligns with the objectives of the NCA Act.
Threatened Species Protection Act 1995	▪ Aim to protect threatened species in Tasmania	▪ Based on the findings of the Flora and Fauna report, some species listed in the Act were deemed to have the potential to occur on site. ▪ However, as demonstrated in the concept layout, the Proposal has been sited and designed to ensure the impact on native vegetation and listed species is negligible.
Forest Practices Act 1985	▪ Provide a code of conduct for forest practices ▪ Aim to conserve and protect land for the use and maintenance of forests, native vegetation, and timber assets ▪ Maintain natural and cultural values of forests in Tasmania	▪ The *Forest Practices Act 1985* is not considered relevant to the Proposal.
Tasmania's Climate Change Act (2008)	▪ Aim to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and help the State adapt to climate change.	▪ The Proposal will help the state in achieving its emissions target through the generation and storage of additional renewable energy.

Tasmanian Renewable Energy Target 2022	▪ Expand generation of renewable energy and increase network resilience capability. Aim to achieve 150% (15,750 GWh of electricity generated by NEM-connected equipment) by 2030 and 200% (21,100 GWh per the same conditions) by 2040.	▪ The Proposal will be a key contributor to the heightened TRET target and support the Tasmanian Government's transition to a major clean power exporter. ▪ The target in itself highlights the Tasmanian Government's strong support for new renewable energy generators.
Tasmania Renewable Energy Coordination Framework 2022	▪ The framework provides greater clarity optimal development locations for the community and renewables sector. ▪ Two Key actions include: Action 8 – Assist Local Economic Opportunity and Action 9 – A Guideline to Community Engagement, Local Procurement and Benefit-Sharing Practice.	▪ The Proposal will generate substantial direct and indirect benefits for the Tasmanian economy. It will stimulate job creation and economic growth through renewable energy investment, along with building a skilled workforce. The Proposal, through community consultation, will also seek to create other benefits for the Bothwell community.
Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan 2020	▪ Transform the State into a global renewable energy powerhouse ▪ Improve energy security and lower energy prices through renewable energy ▪ Growing the economy and creating jobs	▪ The Proposal to use and develop land for a solar farm is well aligned with the REAP's goals and would contribute to each of its priorities, as well as support its vision.
Guideline for Community Engagement Benefit, Benefit Sharing and Local Procurement	▪ Sets best practice standards for renewable energy projects in Tasmania. ▪ Outlines key principles for effective community engagement, ensuring that local communities are consulted and involved throughout a project's lifecycle.	▪ As part of the Proposal, community engagement activities, guided by the principles of ReCFIT's Guideline to Community Engagement, Local Procurement and Benefit Sharing Practice have been undertaken. ▪ Based on the Guidelines, the approach to community engagement was to facilitate early, proactive, and meaningful interactions with the local community to ensure the benefits of the Proposal are tangible and valued.
Strategic Regional Plan for Tasmania (2023)	▪ Delivering renewable energy projects and leveraging the benefits for Tasmania's industries and people ▪ Diversifying off-island opportunities in new economy sectors	▪ The Proposal will deliver a new renewable energy project in Tasmania and support industry diversification.
Regional		
Southern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy 2010-2035	▪ Outlines a strategic vision for the sustainable development of Southern Tasmania, guiding land use planning and management ▪ Manage and protect the value of non-significant agricultural land in a manner that recognises sub-regional diversity in land and production characteristics	▪ The overarching vision of the regional Land Use Strategy is generally supportive of the development of renewable energy assets in Southern Tasmania. ▪ The Proposal will generate significant economic value for the region through the productive use of land through agrisolar.
Local		
Central Highlands Strategic Plan 2015-2024	▪ Encourage sustainable economic and social development of the region. ▪ Encourage the establishment of alternative industries to support job creation and increase permanent residents. ▪ Encourage expansion in the business sector and open new market opportunities.	▪ The Proposal represents an economically sustainable investment for the local economy and will provide many community benefits within the Central Highlands. ▪ The Proposal is expected to create opportunities for local business involvement during the construction phase and will facilitate the development of new industries to support local economic development.

7. Planning Assessment

7.1 Planning Scheme Overview

This section provides a comprehensive planning assessment of the Proposal against the planning controls set out in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Central Highlands.

In 2023, the Central Highlands Council reformed its planning system to align with the new, State-wide Tasmanian Planning Scheme (TPS). The TPS comprises two components: (a) State Planning Provisions (SPPs), which set consistent, State-wide planning rules, and (b) Local Provisions Schedules (LPSs), administered by local governments, which designate zoning and special areas for additional, unique controls.

Under the Planning Scheme, the Proposal is within the Agriculture Zone (Clauses 21.0). It is also partially affected by code overlays: Electricity Transmission Infrastructure Protection Code (Clause C4.0), Natural Assets Code (Clause C7.0), Bushfire Prone Areas Code (Clause C13.0) and Landslip Hazard Code (Clause 15.0).

Planning Scheme Operation and Application

The purpose of the Planning Scheme is to control and coordinate use and development by applying planning controls to land. These controls are set out in Zones, Codes and General Provisions, and can become operative when a proposal exceeds certain use or built parameters or is located within a Zone or Code area.

There are two types of controls in the scheme that can be included in Zones, Controls or General Provisions: 'Acceptable Solution' and 'Performance Criteria'. The two are intended to work together. Some controls, however, include only one of either. The purpose of acceptable solutions is to act as suggested, frontline requirements that should be met where possible. The purpose of Performance Criteria, then, is to provide backup decision guidelines for the planning authority to consider if the Acceptable Solution is not met by a proposal. Where there is only an Acceptable Solution, it is considered that it is a requirement, not an encouragement; where there are only Performance Criteria, it is considered that there are no specific requirements and only decision guidelines.

Project Definition

The Proposal is appropriately defined in the planning scheme as:

- (Clause 6.0, Table 6.2) **Utilities**: use of land for utilities and infrastructure including:
  - (b) **electricity generation**;
  - (c) **transmitting** or distributing gas, oil or **electricity**;

While there are more specific definitions that describe some of the Proposal's components, all components are considered associated with/subservient to the primary component, the solar farm ('Utilities'), and therefore grouped under the primary use class (Clause 6.2). The use class 'Minor utilities' is not an appropriate description of the Proposal components.

7.2 Summary of Requirements

The following Development Application triggers apply to the Proposal, with reliance upon some Performance Criteria among the Use and Development Standards:

- Clause 21.2 Use Table: Discretionary Use Class (Agriculture Zone), relies upon some Performance Criteria
- Clause C2.0 Parking and sustainable transport, relies upon some Performance Criteria
- Clause C4.0 Electricity transmission infrastructure protection, relies upon some Performance Criteria
- Clause 7.0 Natural assets (Waterway and coastal protection area only), relies upon some Performance Criteria
- Clause C13.0 Bushfire-prone areas, relies upon some Performance Criteria

There are no major exemptions to exempt the entire Proposal.. However, within specific clauses some exemptions apply to specific components, including within the Landslip hazard and Electricity transmission infrastructure protection codes. Under the Planning Scheme Table 4.6 Miscellaneous exemptions, fencing within the Agriculture Zone is exempt.

Although Battery Use/Storage is not clearly defined in the Planning Scheme as a hazardous use, the TFS have determined that both the battery storage compounds and compounds for diesel storage (construction and operating phases) will exceed the manifest quantities and therefore are considered as a hazardous use under the Bushfire Prone Areas Code (Appendix G), as per the *Tasmanian Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022* Chapter 7, Part 7.1, the *Explosives Act 2012* and Clause C13.0 Bushfire-Prone Areas Code – C1.5.2 – P1. Therefore, these components are considered a 'Hazardous use'. This is relevant to the assessment against the bushfire and landslip risk codes, addressed in Appendix G.

7.3 Zoning

The Development Area is subject to the Clause 21.0 Agriculture Zone (Figure 16). While Highland Lakes Road is zoned Utilities, the only works occurring in that road reserve are access roadworks, therefore the Utilities Zone is not relevant for assessment.

Clause 21.0 – Agriculture Zone

The purpose of the Agriculture Zone is:

- 21.1.1: To provide for the use or development of land for agricultural use.
- 21.1.2: To protect land for the use or development of agricultural use by minimising:
  - (a) conflict with or interference from non-agricultural uses;
  - (b) non-agricultural use or development that precludes the return of the land to agricultural
  - use; and
  - (c) use of land for non-agricultural use in irrigation districts.
- 21.1.3: To provide for use or development that supports the use of the land for agricultural use

Under Clause 21.2 Use Table, the use class for Utilities is Discretionary, with no associated condition.

The following clauses apply to the Proposal, with an assessment against each provided in Table 6 and Table 7:

- 21.3 Use Standards: 21.3.1 Discretionary uses
- 21.4 Development Standards for Buildings and Works (all standards)

Clause 21.5 Development Standards for Subdivision is not applicable as the Proposal does not include subdivision.

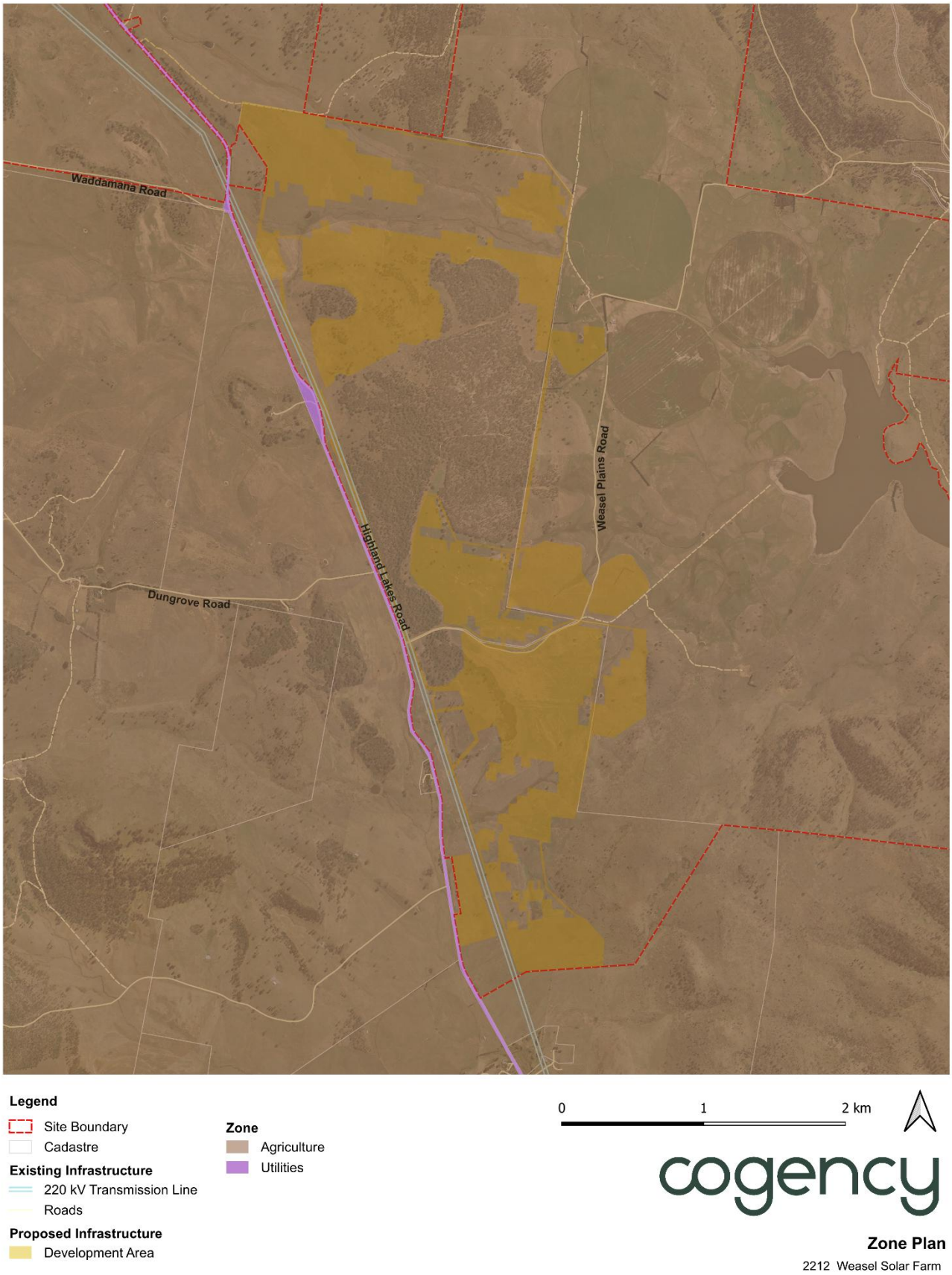


Figure 16 – Zoning Plan

Table 5 – Agriculture Zone – 21.1 Purpose

Purpose	Response
21.1.1: To provide for the use or development of land for agricultural use.	The Proposal supports the agricultural use of the land. The Development Areas consist of low-value agricultural land within the broader Site. The integration of agrisolar practices within the solar farm areas will allow for the continued grazing of sheep, thereby maintaining the agricultural productivity of the land.
21.1.2: To protect land for the use or development of agricultural use by minimising: (a) conflict with or interference from non-agricultural uses; (b) non-agricultural use or development that precludes the return of the land to agricultural use; and (c) use of land for non-agricultural use in irrigation districts.	The Proposal will not constrain or limit existing agricultural land uses or potential future expansion of such activities. The solar farm will integrate with the surrounding agricultural landscape with minimal impacts upon existing local farming operations. For a comprehensive assessment, refer to the Agricultural Assessment report.
21.1.3: To provide for use or development that supports the use of the land for agricultural use	The Proposal has been designed to support the continued agricultural use of the land.

Table 6 – Agriculture Zone – 21.3 Use Standards

21.3.1 Discretionary Uses	
Objective: That uses listed as Discretionary: (a) support agricultural use; and (b) protect land for agricultural use by minimising the conversion of land to non-agricultural use.	
Acceptable Solution or Performance Criteria	**Assessment**
P1 A use listed as Discretionary, excluding Residential or Resource Development, must be required to be located on the site, for operational or security reasons or the need to contain or minimise impacts arising from the operation such as noise, dust, hours of operation or traffic movements, having regard to: (a) access to a specific naturally occurring resource on the site or on land in the vicinity of the site; (b) access to infrastructure only available on the site or on land in the vicinity of the site; (c) access to a product or material related to an agricultural use; (d) service or support for an agricultural use on the site or on land in the vicinity of the site; (e) the diversification or value adding of an agricultural use on the site or in the vicinity of the site; and (f) provision of essential Emergency Services or Utilities.	**Satisfies P1** The Discretionary Use for Utilities (f) supports the diversification and value add of the farming properties involved in the Proposal (d, e). Large-scale solar farms typically require expansive areas of land with suitable topography and minimal vegetation, making agricultural land a suitable choice for solar generation (c). For this Proposal, the siting of the solar farm is proximate to the necessary infrastructure (220 kV Waddamana to Lindisfarne transmission line), (b), and has appropriate solar access (a). The Proposal will provide economic diversity for the agricultural businesses of Dungrove, Cluny and Rockford.
P2 A use listed as Discretionary, excluding Residential, must minimise the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural use, having regard to: (a) the area of land being converted to non-agricultural use; (b) whether the use precludes the land from being returned to an agricultural use; (c) whether the use confines or restrains existing or potential agricultural use on the site or adjoining sites.	**Satisfies P2** Approximately 430 hectares of low-value agricultural land will be used for solar arrays for the Proposal. The majority of the Development Area will continue to be used for sheep grazing (a), will not impact surrounding agricultural operations (c), and can be fully decommissioned and returned to its former state if/when the solar farm is closed (a).

P3 A use listed as Discretionary, excluding Residential, located on prime agricultural land must: (a) be for Extractive Industry, Resource Development or Utilities, provided that: (i) the area of land converted to the use is minimised; (ii) adverse impacts on the surrounding agricultural use are minimised; and (iii) the site is reasonably required for operational efficiency; or (b) be for a use that demonstrates a significant benefit to the region, having regard to the social, environmental and economic costs and benefits of the proposed use.	**Satisfies P3** The Proposal satisfies (a) and (b) The Proposal comprises a Utilities use (solar farm) located on low-value agricultural land and will not impact surrounding agricultural uses. The solar farm will provide direct use to existing farming properties and benefits from its location next to existing transmission infrastructure. Furthermore, the Proposal will provide significant benefits to the region, in economic investment, diversification, energy security and construction jobs.
A4/P4 (Residential use) does not apply	**Satisfies P4** (not applicable – Proposal use is not Residential)**.**

Table 7 – Agriculture Zone – 21.4 Development Standards for Buildings and Works

21.4.1 Building Height	
Objective: To provide for a building height that: (a) is necessary for the operation of the use; and (b) minimises adverse impacts on adjoining properties.	
Acceptable Solution or Performance Criteria	**Assessment**
P1 Building height must be necessary for the operation of the use and not cause an unreasonable impact on adjoining properties, having regard to: (a) the proposed height of the building; (b) the topography of the site; (c) the bulk and form of the building; (d) separation from existing use on adjoining properties; (e) the nature of the existing uses on adjoining properties; and (f) any buffers created by natural or other features.	**Satisfies P1** All solar farm, BESS and associated structures are below the 12m acceptable solution height. The project will be connected to the NEM via an interconnection to the existing TasNetworks 220 kV transmission line that lies within the western boundary of the site, parallel to Highland Lakes Road. The substation and switchyard will have some electrical components above 12m, necessary for electrical engineering and safety reasons. The internal 33kV transmission and 220kV external transmission connection will use poles above 12m high. Again, these are strictly necessary, and are at acceptable heights with negligible visual impact. The attached LVIA assesses and justifies the proposal (Appendix C).
21.4.2 Setbacks	
Objective: The siting of buildings minimises potential conflict with use on adjoining properties.	
P1 Buildings must be sited to provide adequate vehicle access and not cause an unreasonable impact on existing use on adjoining properties, having regard to: (a) the bulk and form of the building; (b) the nature of existing use on the adjoining properties; (c) separation from existing use on the adjoining properties; and (d) any buffers created by natural or other features.	**Satisfies P1** The layout is distant from adjoining property uses, particularly any sensitive uses such as dwellings (c). Figure 3 shows significant separation between the solar farm component of the Proposal and any nearby dwellings. The development is adjacent to neighbouring agricultural uses, all are private freehold land, and the Proposal does not cause an unreasonable impact through use, visual impact or bulk/form (a)(b). There are no relevant buffers for sensitive or hazardous uses or environmental or scenic features (d).

A2	Complies
Buildings for a sensitive use must have a setback from all boundaries of: (a) not less than 200m; or (b) if the setback of an existing building for sensitive use on the site is within 200m of that boundary, not less than the existing building.	The proposal is not a sensitive use.

21.4.3 Access for new dwellings

*No dwellings are proposed; therefore, this **does not apply**.*

7.4 Codes

The Development Area is subject to the following mapped codes/overlays:

- Clause C4.0 Electricity transmission infrastructure protection (partial)
- Clause 7.0 Natural assets (*Waterway and coastal protection area only, not Priority vegetation area*) (partial)
- Clause C13.0 Bushfire-prone areas (whole)
- Clause C15.0 Landslip hazard (however the Proposal is exempt under this clause) (whole)

The following codes are also relevant to the Proposal:

- Clause C2.0 Parking and Sustainable Transport
- Clause C3.0 Road and railway assets

The following subsections provide an assessment of the proposal against relevant codes.

7.4.1 Clause C2.0 Parking and Sustainable Transport Code

For a comprehensive assessment of the Proposal against this code, see Chapters 6.2 and 6.3 within the Traffic Impact Assessment prepared by Pitt & Sherry (Appendix H).

All acceptable solutions are met under the C2.5 Use Standards. For the C2.6 Development Standards, while most relevant acceptable solutions are complied with, certain aspects rely on Performance Criteria. Given the size of the Development Area, all necessary access, turning, loading, and parking requirements for the Proposal can be adequately addressed.

7.4.2 Clause C3.0 Road and Railway Assets Code

For a comprehensive assessment of the Proposal against this code, see Chapter 6.4 within the Traffic Impact Assessment prepared by Pitt & Sherry (Appendix H).

Broadly, the use will generate negligible traffic in operation. During construction, Highlands Lakes Road is expected to have sufficient capacity to accommodate additional traffic generated during this period. Once operational, the traffic volumes generated from the Weasel Solar Farm are estimated to be minimal and are not expected to have any noticeable impact on the safety and function of the surrounding road network after construction. Therefore, the Proposal is not expected to generate any unacceptable impacts.

7.4.3 Clause C4.0 – Electricity Transmission Infrastructure Protection Code

The Electricity Transmission Infrastructure Protection Code is mapped along the western boundary of the Site and relates to the existing 220 kV (Waddamana to Lindisfarne) transmission line (Figure 17). Additionally, the mapped overlay comprises an area associated with a now-removed 110kV transmission line. Because the '*electricity transmission corridor*' covers two lines (one removed), it varies in width where the old and new transmission routes diverged. The mapping of the now-removed 110kV line is considered outdated, so while the mapped area generally comprises two 50 m Inner zones plus 25 m on either side (total width 200 m), the realistic Inner zone for the 220kV would be 60m width (aligning with its easement) and corridor typically 120m wide.

Under Clause C4.2.1, the Electricity Transmission Infrastructure Protection Code applies to the use or development of land within an electricity transmission corridor, if for buildings and works.

Of critical note, no solar array or associated infrastructure (security fencing) is proposed within the easement of the 220kV transmission line (equating to the Inner zone). The Proposal *does* have a length of internal 33kV transmission adjacent to the Inner zone, with its own easement sharing the Inner zone.

Technically, due to outdated mapping of the removed 110kV line, there is solar array development within the Inner zone, at the south-west corner of the Development Area (solar arrays on west side of the 220kV line). Given the outdated purpose of the 110kV Inner zone, this is not considered in the assessment tables for this Code.

The broader transmission corridor does include:

- The internal 33 kV overhead transmission line
- Solar Arrays
- Internal Access Tracks
- Security fencing
- Connection point into existing 220 kV transmission line.

Nominally, the Proposal triggers this application of the code, although some components are exempt under Clause C4.4.1. The proposed connection point into the 220 kV transmission line and the internal 33 kV line are exempt under Clause C4.4.1, as they are for the use and development of electricity transmission infrastructure. The connection point and 33 kV line are considered to meet the purpose and expectations of the code.

The below assessment therefore focuses on the development components listed above including the solar arrays and security fencing, which are not exempt under this code.

Broadly, the Proposal does not include any major development within the overlay that could create conflict with the existing transmission infrastructure and therefore is appropriate. The Weasel Solar Farm requires TasNetworks approval through their connection enquiry approval process, and this DA will be referred to TasNetworks for comment. The project team have consulted with TasNetworks closely over the past year.

Some of the Development Standards do not apply. The Proposal is not for a sensitive use and is not a use listed within Table C.4.1 (Uses with potential to create dust or other airborne particulates), is not within a substation facility buffer and does not include subdivision. The Development Standards are assessed in Table 9 and Table 10.

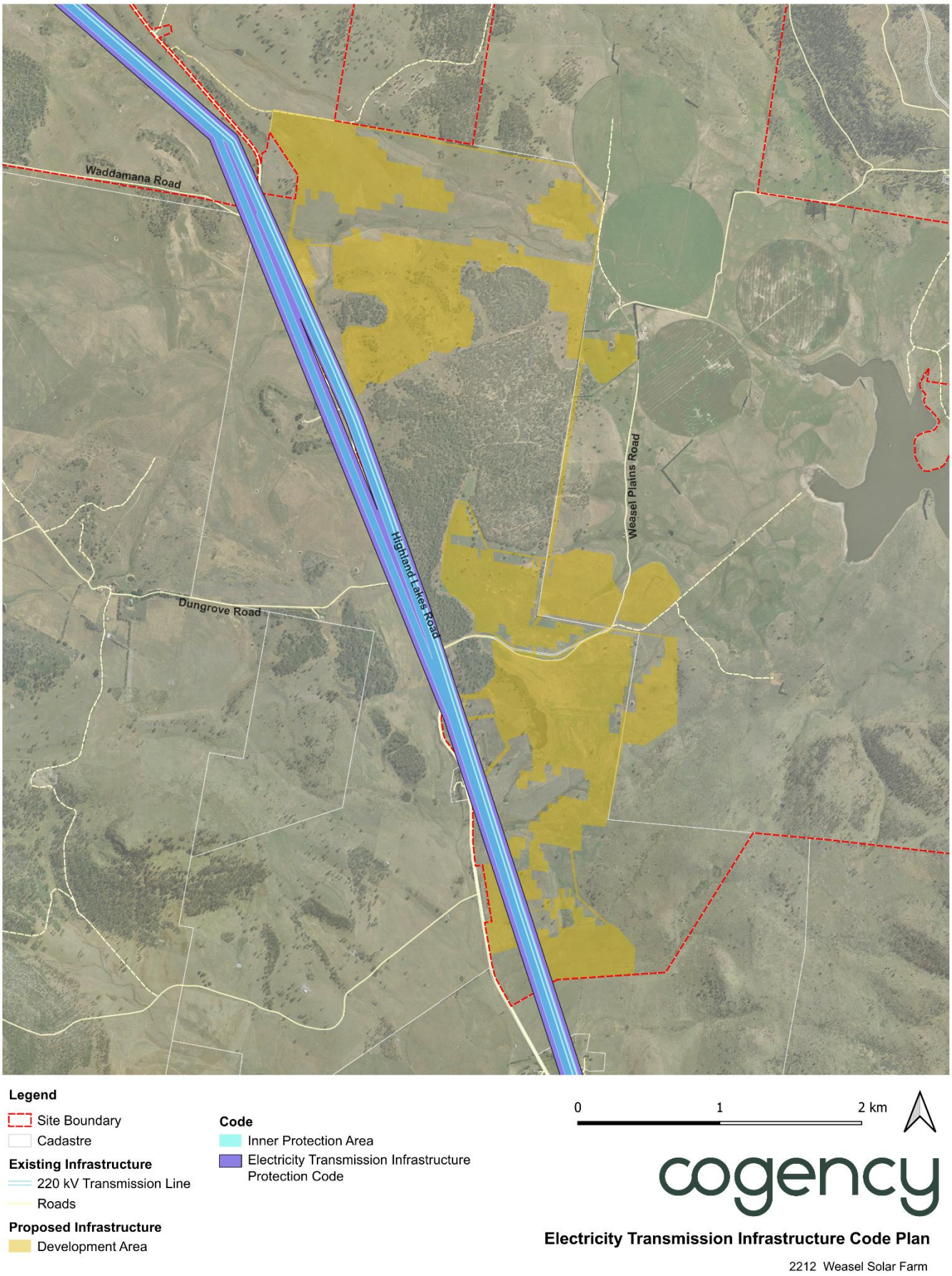


Figure 17 – Electricity transmission Infrastructure protection Code Plan

Table 8 – Electricity transmission Infrastructure protection Code – C4.1 Purpose

Purpose	Response
C4.1.1: To protect use and development against hazards associated with proximity to electricity transmission infrastructure.	▪ The Proposal is sited so that it does not create any hazards or conflict with the nearby electricity transmission infrastructure.
C4.1.2: To ensure that use and development near existing and future electricity transmission infrastructure does not adversely affect the safe and reliable operation of that infrastructure.	▪ The Proposal is sited so that it does not adversely affect the safe and reliable operation with the nearby electricity transmission infrastructure.
C4.1.3: To maintain future opportunities for electricity transmission infrastructure.	▪ The Proposal includes internal transmission lines, in an appropriate location adjacent to existing lines.

Table 9 – Electricity transmission Infrastructure protection Code – 21.3 Use standards

C4.5.1 Sensitive sue within a substation facility buffer
*The Proposal is not within a substation facility buffer; therefore, this **does not apply**.*
C4.5.2 Dust or other airborne particulates within an electricity transmission corridor
*The Proposal does not include a use listed in Table C4.1; therefore, this **does not apply**.*
C4.5.3 Dust or other airborne particulates within a substation facility buffer
*The Proposal is not within a substation facility buffer; therefore, this **does not apply**.*

Table 10 – Electricity transmission Infrastructure protection Code – C4.6 Development Standards for Buildings and Works

C4.6.1 Buildings or works within an electricity transmission corridor	
Objective: That buildings or works within an electricity transmission corridor are located at appropriate distances from transmission lines or cables to: (a) ensure operational efficiencies, access to, and security of, existing or future electricity transmission infrastructure; and (b) protect against a safety hazard associated with proximity to existing or future electricity transmission infrastructure.	
Acceptable Solution or Performance Criteria	**Assessment**
A1 Buildings or works within an electricity transmission corridor must not be within: (a) an inner protection area; or (b) a registered electricity easement.	**Complies** The Proposal does not include any buildings within an inner protection area / registered electricity easement. As noted, the 220kV transmission line has a 60m easement width (equating to Inner Zone). Only access tracks are within the Inner Zone. Notably, all components of the Proposal within the transmission corridor are appropriate to the context and do not cause an impact on the safety, security, operation of, or access to, existing or future electricity transmission infrastructure.
C4.6.2 Buildings or works within a substation facility buffer area	
*The Proposal is not within a substation facility buffer; therefore, this **does not apply**.*	
C4.6.3 Buildings or works within a communications station buffer area	
*The Proposal is not within a communications station buffer area; therefore, this **does not apply**.*	

C4.7 Does not apply as no subdivision is proposed.

7.4.4 Clause C7.0 – Natural Assets Code

Under Clause C7.2.1, the Natural Assets Code applies to development on land within a waterway and/or coastal protection area. There are some mapped waterways within the Development Area, including Weasel Plains Creek. This code is mapped waterways and drainage lines across the Site (Figure 18). The Development Standards are assessed in Table 12.

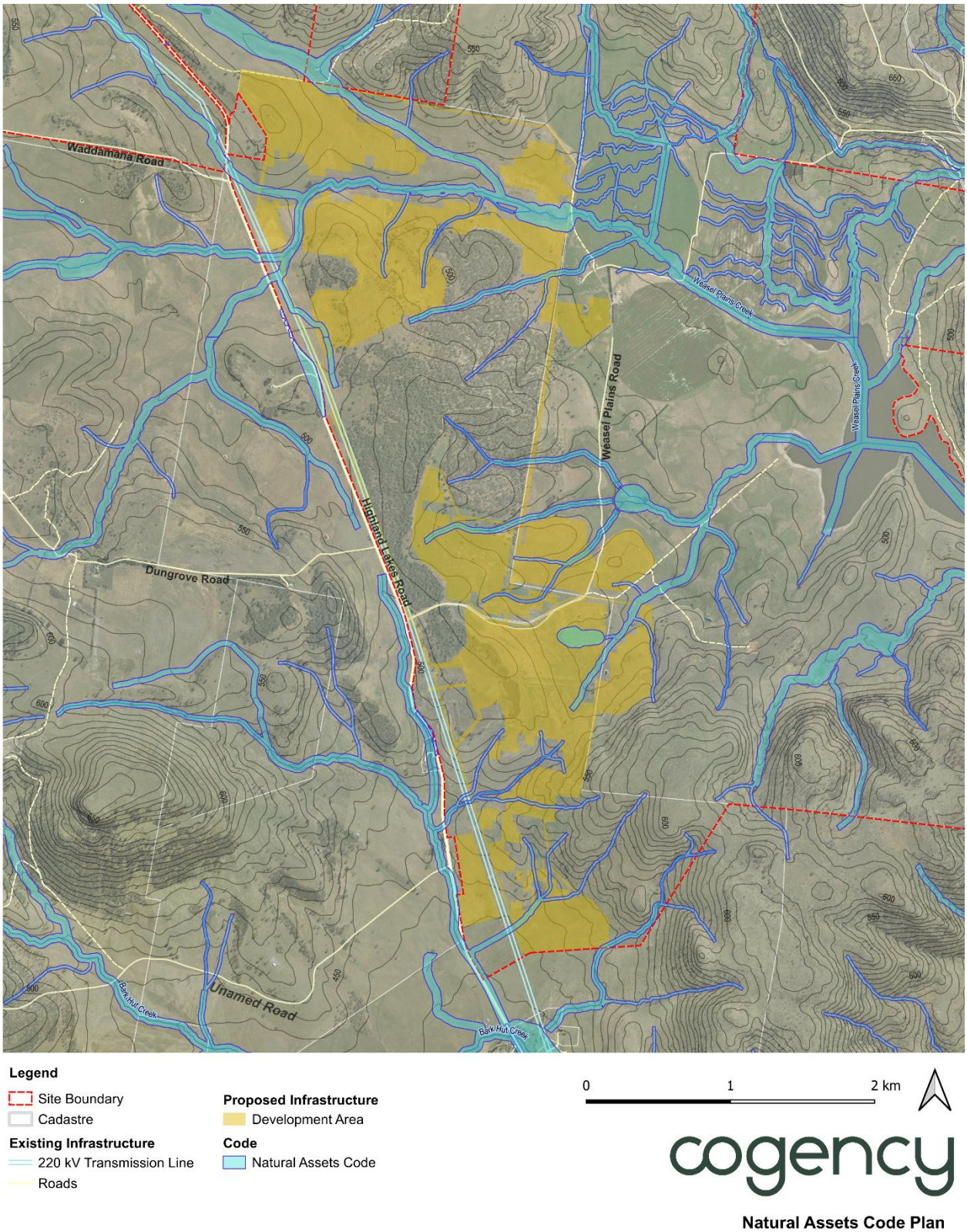


Figure 18 – Natural Assets Code Plan

Table 11 – Natural Assets Code (Waterways) – C7.1 Purpose

Purpose	Response
C7.1.1 To minimise impacts on water quality, natural assets including native riparian vegetation, river condition and the natural ecological function of watercourses, wetlands and lakes.	▪ The Proposal will not negatively impact water quality, as confirmed by the supporting flooding impact assessment report (Appendix E). ▪ The Proposal has been designed to avoid higher class waterway corridors. With careful planning and the implementation of construction management measures, key natural values will be protected and preserved. Additionally, the flow of waterways will remain unobstructed, with only minor drainage works such as the introduction of culverts at new crossing points with trafficable surfaces, being necessary. The Ecological and Natural Assets Code Report (Appendix D) addresses these matters in detail.
C7.1.2 To minimise impacts on coastal and foreshore assets, native littoral vegetation, natural coastal processes and the natural ecological function of the coast.	▪ Not applicable
C7.1.3 To protect vulnerable coastal areas to enable natural processes to continue to occur, including the landward transgression of sand dunes, wetlands, saltmarshes and other sensitive coastal habitats due to sea-level rise.	▪ Not applicable
C7.1.4 To minimise impacts on identified priority vegetation.	▪ Not applicable
C7.1.5 To manage impacts on threatened fauna species by minimising clearance of significant habitat.	▪ Not applicable

Table 12 – Natural Assets Code (Waterways) – C7.6 Development Standards for Buildings and Works

C7.6.1 Buildings and works within a waterway and coastal protection area or a future coastal refugia area

Objective:

That buildings and works within a waterway and coastal protection area or future coastal refugia area will not have an unnecessary or unacceptable impact on natural assets.

Acceptable Solution or Performance Criteria	Assessment
P1.1 Buildings and works within a waterway and coastal protection area must avoid or minimise adverse impacts on natural assets, having regard to: (a) impacts caused by erosion, siltation, sedimentation and runoff; (b) impacts on riparian or littoral vegetation; (c) maintaining natural streambank and streambed condition, where it exists; (d) impacts on in-stream natural habitat, such as fallen logs, bank overhangs, rocks and trailing vegetation; (e) the need to avoid significantly impeding natural flow and drainage; (f) the need to maintain fish passage, where known to exist; (g) the need to avoid land filling of wetlands;	**Satisfies P1.1** The Proposal has typically been designed to avoid waterways. The buildings are watercourse crossing points (e.g., culvert-based structures with a trafficable surface), where they don't already exist, to enable equipment and machinery to access installation areas for the solar panels and other structures. On balance, the areas intersected by the Overlay are areas of agricultural land or areas where there has been the regeneration of some native species such as rushes, grasses and sedges. The implementation of construction management measures as can further mitigate the risk of adverse impacts to natural assets where the Overlay intersects the development. See Ecological and Natural Assets Code Assessment (Appendix D) for detailed assessment.

(h) the need to group new facilities with existing facilities, where reasonably practical; (i) minimising cut and fill; (j) building design that responds to the particular size, shape, contours or slope of the land; (k) minimising impacts on coastal processes, including sand movement and wave action; (l) minimising the need for future works for the protection of natural assets, infrastructure and property; (m) the environmental best practice guidelines in the Wetlands and Waterways Works Manual; and (n) the guidelines in the Tasmanian Coastal Works Manual.	**P1.2 is not applicable.**

A2, A4, A5 do not apply

A3	**Complies**
Development within a waterway and coastal protection area or a future coastal refugia area must not involve a new stormwater point discharge into a watercourse, wetland or lake.	No new stormwater discharge points into a watercourse, wetland or lake are required for the Proposal.

C7.6.2 Clearance within a priority vegetation area

Does not apply (not within a priority vegetation area)

7.4.5 Clause C13.0 Bushfire-Prone Areas Code

Under Clause C13.2.1, the Bushfire-Prone Areas code applies to the subdivision and any use, on the land for a vulnerable or 'hazardous' use within the mapped area. The entire site is mapped within the Bushfire-Prone Area. See Figure 19.

Under C13.3.1, 'Hazardous use' means a use where:

(a) hazardous chemicals of a manifest quantity are stored on a site; or

(b) explosives are stored on a site and where classified as an explosives location or large explosives location as specified in the *Explosives Act 2012*.

C13.5.1 Vulnerable uses and C13.6 Development Standards for Subdivision do not apply to this Proposal.

The supporting report Bushfire Impact Statement (BIS)(Appendix G) assesses the Proposal against the relevant clause C13.5.2 Hazardous uses and determines that the Proposal meets the Objective, specifically, it satisfies P1, and complies with A2 and A3.

The BIS is supported by a Bushfire Emergency Management Strategy (BEMS), Bushfire Mitigation Plan (BMP) and plans for each area of the proposal (that show a Bushfire Hazard Management Area (HMA)). Furthermore, the Victorian Country Fire Authority *Design Guidelines and Model Requirements - Renewable Energy Facilities* (v3 March 2022) have been considered in the design of the Proposal, to minimise risk. Where a requirement of the Planning Scheme is more stringent than the CFA guidelines, the Planning Scheme requirement has been addressed as the minimum.

The TFS have been engaged as part of the preparation of the Bushfire Impact Statement and relevant supporting plans.

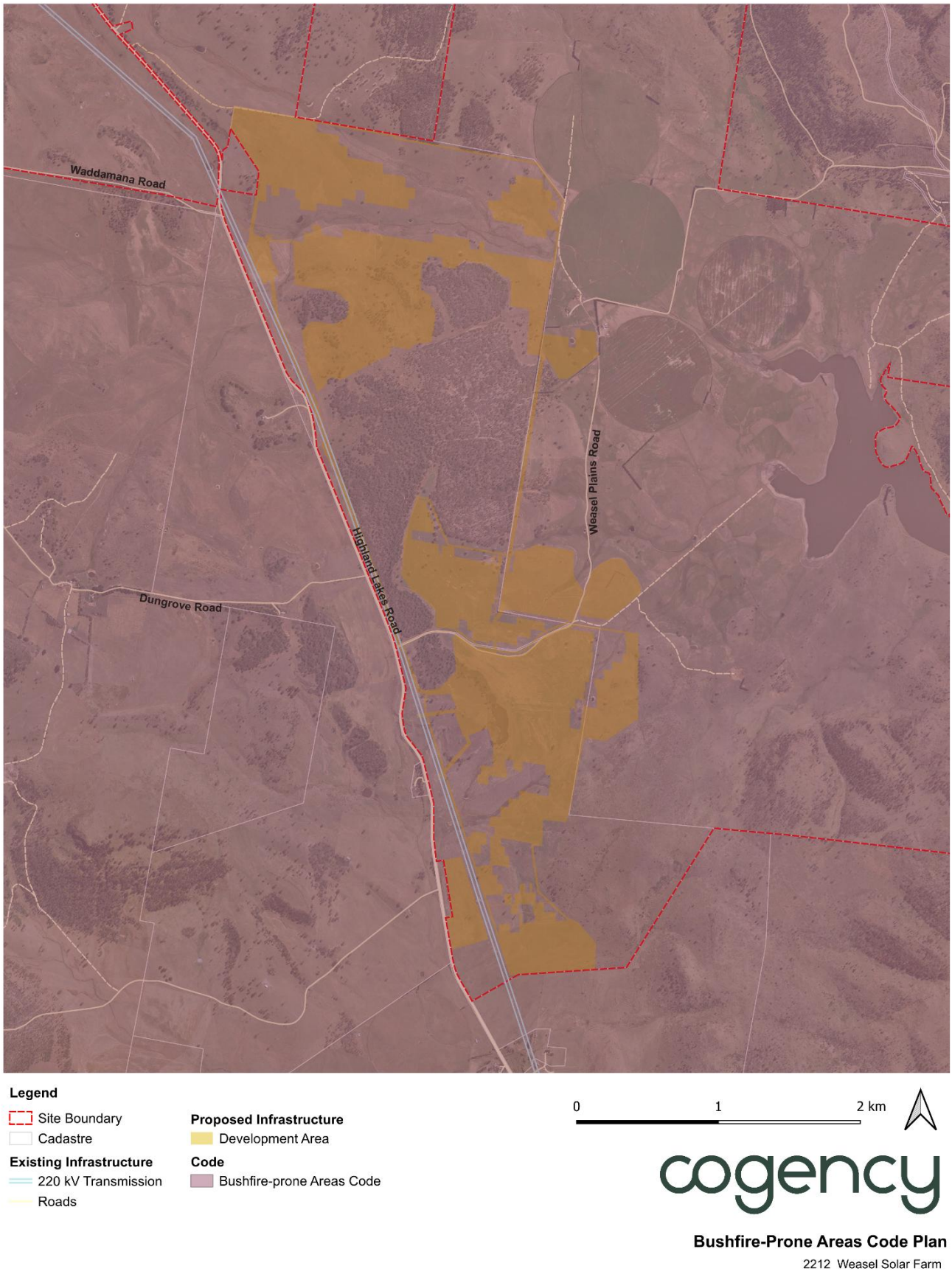


Figure 19 – Bushfire-prone Areas Code Plan

7.4.6 Clause C15.0 – Landslip Hazard Code

Under Clause C15.2.1, the Landslip Hazard Code applies to the use or development of land within a landslip hazard area.

Within the Development Area there are very limited, small patches of 'Low' landslip hazard risk areas (generally in the southern solar area, and on the northern boundary) (Figure 20). These areas are only proposed for solar arrays and/or security fencing – both installations are minor in nature.

Despite the fractional overlap of the Development Area and low landslip hazard risk area, the development is exempt under Clause C15.4.1 (a), (c)(iv) and (e):

- (a) use of land within a low or medium landslip hazard band, excluding critical use, hazardous use or vulnerable use;
- (c) use of land for:
  - (iv) Utilities;
- (e) development, including subdivision, on land within a low landslip hazard band, if it does not involve significant works;

The areas of overlap will include some security fencing and solar arrays. Further avoidance of these areas of low hazard risk may be achieved in detailed design. Nonetheless, Clause C15.3.1 defines **Significant works** as any of the following:

(a) excavation equal to or greater than 1m in depth, including temporary excavations for the installation or maintenance of services or pipes;

(b) excavation or landfilling of greater than 100m^3 whether or not material is sourced on the site or imported;

(c) felling or removal of vegetation over a contiguous area greater than 1000m^2;

(d) the collection, pooling or storage of water in a dam, pond, tank or swimming pool with a volume of more than 45000L;

(e) removal, redirection, or introduction of drainage for surface or groundwater; and

(f) discharge of stormwater, sewage, water storage overflow or other wastewater.

The minor works proposed within areas of landslip hazard risk do not comprise 'significant works' under the above definition. Therefore, no further assessment against the code is required.

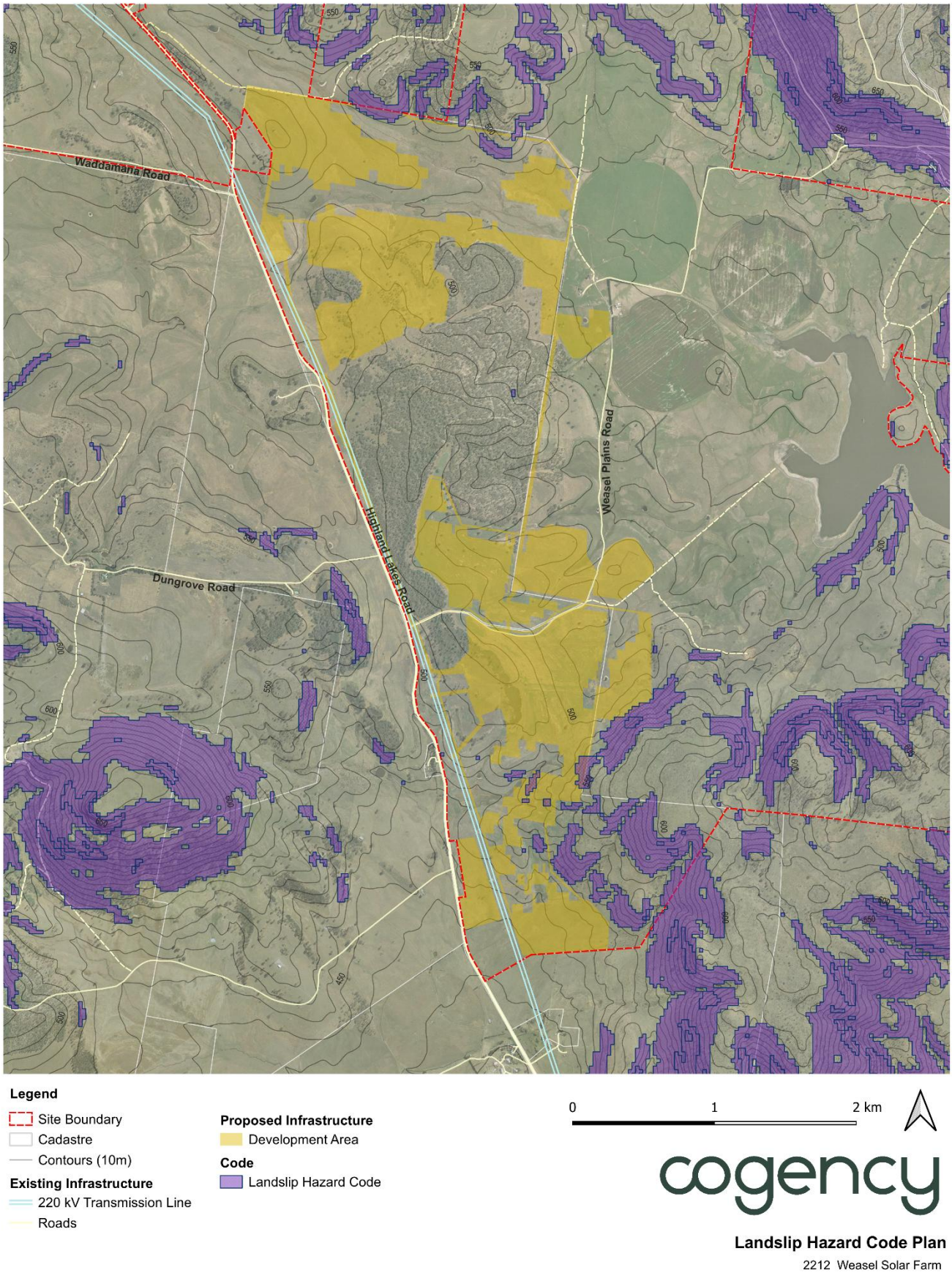


Figure 20 – Landslip Hazard Code Plan

7.5 Central Highlands Local Provisions Schedule

There are no Local Area Objectives or other relevant provisions, such as Particular Purpose Zones within the Central Highlands Local Provisions Schedule that apply to the Development Area.

7.6 Planning Assessment Summary

As demonstrated by the above planning assessment, the Weasel Solar Farm complies with the relevant planning provisions under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Central Highlands. While the Use Class 'Utilities' is Discretionary within the Agriculture Zone, the Proposal aligns with the objectives of the relevant zone. It satisfies the applicable Acceptable Solutions or, where necessary, adheres to the corresponding Performance Criteria outlined in the zones and related codes.

Potential risks, constraints, hazards and impacts have been addressed proactively through the design process, including the avoidance of key constraints due to flooding, environmental values (such as waterways and native vegetation), and cultural heritage, as well as mitigation of risks associated with bushfires. The Proposal has further minimised these risks wherever feasible and can incorporate further mitigation measures that at the detailed design stage.

The placement infrastructure and works have been integrated into the existing landscape to ensure they complement the surroundings and have minimal impact on nearby properties. Visual impact has been thoughtfully minimised through careful planning and positioning of infrastructure and also benefits from existing topography and vegetation screening along Highlands Lakes Road.

The suite of supporting technical investigations in the appendices provides further detail on the design considerations and mitigations of the Proposal.

Importantly, the Proposal allows for continued agricultural activity across the Site and will help while also providing substantive economic benefits for both Bothwell and the wider Central Highlands region.

In summary, the Proposal aligns strongly with the relevant planning requirements and merits approval.

8. Relevant Applications and Amendments

There are no current public applications and/or amendments in the vicinity of the Weasel Solar Farm that would impede the development of the Proposal.

Within the Central Highlands, multiple renewable energy projects are currently under development or in operation. Notably, St Patricks Plains Wind Farm Pty Ltd, is advancing the development of the recently approved St Patricks Plains Wind Farm approximately 26km northwest of the Site. The two projects are do not interact given the distance between both projects and connection into different transmission lines across TasNetworks infrastructure. Conversely, both projects will help strengthen existing transmission networks and can benefit from the proximity to the existing skills and infrastructure in the region.

The Proponent is also in the early stages of preparing the Cellars Hill Wind Farm project adjacent to the Proposal, as part of the Highlands Renewable Energy Hub vision. The Cellars Hill Wind Farm, currently in the early design phase, is seeking to follow the Major Project Proposal approvals pathway – completely distinct from the Weasel Solar Farm DA process.

The presence of multiple renewable energy projects is positive for the Central Highlands and the region holds immense potential for the development of a variety of renewable energy sources. Developing renewable energy in the region is crucial for increasing reliable and affordable power and promoting investment and job creation in both the local region and Tasmania's economy.

9. Technical Impact Assessments

To inform the project design and support the DA, a group of suitably qualified, experienced specialist consultants were engaged to assess and provide input on various environmental and technical matters.

The Proponent, Weasel Solar Farm Pty Ltd, engaged Robert Luxmoore to lead the project management.

The following impact assessments have been prepared to support the Development Application and should be read in conjunction with this report:

- Design Plans, DNV & Cogency
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Human Habitats
- Ecological and Natural Assets Code Assessment, Van Diemen Consulting
- Flooding Impact Assessment, Pitt&Sherry
- Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report, Cultural Heritage Management Australia
- Bushfire Impact Statement, Ground Proof Mapping
- Traffic Impact Assessment, Pitt&Sherry
- Agricultural Assessment, Pinion Advisory
- Noise Impact Assessment, SLR
- Glint and Glare Impact Assessment, SLR
- Historic Heritage Assessment Report, Cultural Heritage Management Australia
- Consultation Summary Report, Cogency
- Socio-Economic Impact Assessment, Urban Enterprise

Furthermore, Watts Advisory was engaged to provide advice on grid connection.

9.1 Engineering and Concept Layout

The conceptual design of the solar farm and its associated infrastructure has been developed by DNV. The design process has been highly iterative, incorporating findings from a range of technical impact assessments, as summarised below.

The layout of the solar farm has been designed to align with the site's natural topography and environmental characteristics, ensuring minimal ground disturbance. The Development Area is primarily situated on cleared agricultural paddocks within the lower-value agricultural areas of the two key land parcels, 'The Weasel' and 'Weasel Plains.' The placement of the solar arrays and electrical infrastructure has been carefully selected to minimise disturbance to natural values, such as native vegetation and waterways, and to reduce any potential environmental impacts. Special consideration has also been given to two areas of Aboriginal Cultural heritage of potential archaeological sensitivity (PAS). These areas have been deliberately excluded from the Development Areas to ensure their preservation, and ongoing monitoring will be conducted throughout both the construction and operational phases of the project to safeguard these significant cultural sites.

The design plans are subject to further refinement during the detailed design phase, which may include planning permit conditions that require updated plans or allow for minor amendments to the endorsed plans. As the development of a major renewable energy generation facility involves a high degree of complexity, additional consents beyond planning approval are required, including grid connection design and approval by TasNetworks, the local network service provider.

9.2 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) includes landscape, and visual assessments characterise the setting and examine how the Proposal may impact the landscape and visual amenity. This considers viewer sensitivity, magnitude of chance, visual impact, residual visual impact, mitigation measures (including a proposed Landscape Concept Plan), and viewshed analysis.

There are no relevant landscape overlays or controls in the Development Area or vicinity. The Site and surrounds is predominantly utilised for broadacre grazing purposes, with some forested areas. The landscape includes prominent, existing electrical transmission infrastructure. While not officially designated as such, Highland Lakes Road has been assessed with some tourist driving usage in mind.

Given the relatively low level of scenic quality, the low-profile form of the majority of the development components, and the lack of opportunities for overlooking (from nearby residences and Highland Lakes Road), the Proposal is considered to have a limited and relatively isolated impact on the landscape character of the setting.

Detailed viewpoint assessment from northern and southern approaches on Highland Lakes Road, and a 'mid-point' view, demonstrate the limited potential visual impact, with small landscaping belts reducing the residual visual impact further to 'low'. Overall, the design's clever use of existing topography means the small crest-line running parallel to Highland Lakes Road significantly blocks and obscures views to the Proposal. Its isolated location in freehold agricultural land means there are very limited overlooking points, and the nearest non-involved residence has existing vegetation and topography blocking views.

9.3 Ecological and Natural Assets Code Assessment

An Ecological and Natural Assets Code Assessment has been prepared by Van Diemen Consulting to determine the potential extent and conditions of native vegetation, fauna habitats and the likelihood of the occurrence of listed flora and fauna species listed under the state *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995 (TSP Act),* the *Nature Conservation Act 2002 (NC Act)*, and the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 (EPBC Act)* an. This included an analysis of the Protected Matters database, the Natural Values Atlas and onsite surveys and field assessments.

The assessment's conclusion is that the proposed Weasel Solar Farm will not impact significant environmental values. The identified native vegetation types and listed species will not be adversely affected. No significant fauna species or their habitats were found in the survey area, ensuring that the development will have minimal ecological impact.

No species listed under the EPBC Act were found. Three species listed under the TSP Act 1995 were observed (ferny buttercup, dagger wattle, and spreading knawel), but no impact on these species is expected from the development.

No fauna species listed under the TSP Act 1995 or EPBC Act 1999 were observed. No masked owl or blue-winged parrot nests were found, although trees suitable for their breeding were present, mainly as 'paddock trees' in agricultural land (most of which are dead or partly dead).

Three native vegetation types were identified in the survey area:

- *Eucalyptus tenuiramis* forest and woodland not on dolerite
- Eucalyptus pauciflora forest and woodland not on dolerite
- Lowland grassy sedgeland.

Of these three native vegetation types, *Eucalyptus tenuiramis* forest and woodland not on dolerite is the only species listed as threatened Native vegetation community. Approximately 4.66 hectares are present on site and mostly limited to a narrow north-south corridor in the central proposed development area. Where possible these areas will be avoided in the final design and layout of the solar farm.

As the majority of the site consists of previously disturbed agricultural land, which is of low ecological value, the Proposal is unlikely to have adverse impacts on any significant environmental features of the site or the surrounding area, particularly given the design intent of avoiding woodland and locating on cleared agricultural paddocks.

9.4 Flood Impact Assessment

The Flood Impact Assessment evaluated the hydrology and flood conditions of the Weasel Solar Farm site and assessed how the proposal may affect existing watercourses and flood behaviour. The study followed the Australian Rainfall and Runoff 2019 guidelines for flood estimation, though it did not include detailed flood modelling for the development.

Given that several watercourses cross the site and border the development areas, hazard maps were produced to identify flood-prone zones. The assessment recommended that solar panels avoid high-hazard areas (H2-H6) to prevent potential flood damage, and the current layout adheres to this by positioning panels outside these zones. Most infrastructure is strategically placed to avoid significant disruptions to water flows or environmental impacts, with additional recommendations to keep panels away from Weasel Plains Creek and drainage culverts informing the current design iteration.

The study concluded that the proposed layout minimises flood risks and maintains the natural flow of watercourses, resulting in minimal hydrological impact. However, further analysis is required to determine finished floor levels (FFL) for sensitive infrastructure and to inform the drainage design once earthworks and layouts are finalized. Future hydraulic studies will assess potential impacts on critical infrastructure, such as batteries and transformers, to ensure adequate protection through additional drainage measures. The current flood model, based on LIDAR data, will need to be updated to incorporate these design elements.

9.5 Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report

Cultural Heritage Management Australia (CHMA) conducted an Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report for the Weasel Solar Farm. The assessment found no known Aboriginal sites on the project site; however, two areas of potential archaeological sensitivity (PAS) were identified. Beyond these areas, the likelihood of undetected Aboriginal heritage sites is considered low to very low.

In recognition of the cultural significance of the Tasmanian landscape, the project has sought to be sensitive to both cultural and natural resources. The site is primarily located within cleared farmland, avoiding areas of native vegetation where cultural values may still be present.

To address the two identified PAS areas, the assessment has been shared with key Tasmanian Aboriginal organizations for review and input. Feedback from Aboriginal community representatives has been incorporated into the solar farm's design and layout to ensure cultural heritage concerns are addressed. Notably, the design layout was modified to ensure full avoidance of the two PAS areas.

The draft assessment by CHMA was submitted to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (AHT) for final review and endorsement. Engagement with Tasmanian Aboriginal communities and Registered Indigenous Parties has been integral to this process, and their input will inform ongoing management strategies. AHT provided their endorsement on 26 August 2024 (included with Appendix F).

9.6 Bushfire Impact Statement

The Bushfire Impact Statement (BIS) provides an analysis and evaluation of the bushfire potential at a local and landscape level surrounding the Proposal. Factors including, but not limited to, vegetation types and flammability, topographical layout, fire weather, fire history, current land use, proposed land use and proposed infrastructure have been assessed.

The BIS concludes that while there is potential for bushfire to impact the site (predominantly ember transfer), there is a lack of bushfire prone vegetation connectivity, reducing potential fire severity – considered unlikely

to be a significant threat. No development can be zero-risk, so site selection and mitigation measures ensure that this Proposal is as low-risk as possible.

The Proposal is considered low fire risk (emanating from the development), both during construction and operation. The report includes management and mitigation measures, as well as design guidance (mostly via the Bushfire Mitigation Plan (BMP)) on emergency vehicle access, static water (firefighting) supply, vegetation layout, firebreaks and separation of renewable energy components.

The BIS addresses the Bushfire Prone Areas Code. Additionally, a Bushfire Emergency Management Strategy (BEMS) has been incorporated, to ensure that the facility is prepared in the event of an unplanned fire, providing for safety of site personnel, emergency responders and the community. This will cover the construction and production phases. This BEMS will guide the formation of a Bushfire Emergency Plan (BEP) to be prepared at Building Approval stage.

9.7 Traffic Impact Assessment

The Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) provides an analysis of the current site access, transport routes, traffic volumes, and safety history. It has been prepared in accordance with the Department of State Growth's Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) Guidelines and with reference to the Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Central Highlands (the Planning Scheme).

The local road network consists of Highland Lakes Road, and other rural roads with low existing traffic volumes, operating well below capacity. It is not expected that the additional traffic generated during the construction phase of the Weasel Solar Farm will adversely affect the function or safety of the local network.

A review of the crash history for Highland Lakes Road near the site did not reveal any safety concerns at the proposed access points. Sight distances at the primary, secondary, and tertiary access points were evaluated, and it was confirmed that the Austroads guidelines for safe intersection sight distances are met at all locations.

The proposed transport routes are deemed to have sufficient capacity to handle the increased traffic during the construction phase of the development. Once operational, traffic volumes from the Weasel Solar Farm are anticipated to be minimal, with no noticeable impact on the safety or functionality of the surrounding road network post-construction.

The primary access via Weasel Plains Road (Council-managed), to Highland Lakes Road, is a suitable access point considering road safety requirements. Access intersections will be sealed prior to construction, as required.

9.8 Agricultural Assessment

The Agricultural Assessment (Pinion Advisory) provides an evaluation of the current and potential agricultural activities on the subject parcels, as well as an analysis of potential impacts on both the site and surrounding agricultural lands.

The assessment assesses the two primary parcels containing development, using the standard Land Capability Classification methodology. This classification system ranks land from Class 1 to Class 7, with Class 1 being the most versatile and suitable for a wide range of agricultural uses. As the class number increases, the land's versatility for agriculture decreases due to inherent limitations. Classes 1 to 4 are deemed suitable for cropping, while Classes 5 and 6 are more appropriate for pastoral grazing. Class 7 land is considered unsuitable for agricultural purposes due to significant limitations and necessary management practices.

The land designated for the proposed solar farm falls predominately within Class 5, which is considered unsuitable for cropping and more appropriate for grazing activities. The development has been carefully planned and designed to accommodate the continuation of current and future agricultural activities, while also delivering a range of positive operational and management benefits for both properties.

Sheep will still be able to graze under and around the solar array and the current level of livestock productivity of this land will be maintained. Although the Weasel Solar Farm will result in the permanent loss of 8.22 hectares of pastureland (primarily due to the BESS and infrastructure areas), this impact is expected to be outweighed by significant ongoing benefits, such as reduced ewe and lamb mortality and improved overall livestock productivity from the shelter offered from the solar array infrastructure. The proposed development is designed in a way that will not constrain, prejudice, or limit existing agricultural land uses or potential future expansion of such activities.

Overall, the Agricultural Assessment concludes that the solar farm will integrate effectively with the surrounding agricultural landscape, promoting sustainable land use while delivering additional benefits to local farming operations.

9.9 Noise Impact Assessment

SLR undertook a Noise Impact Assessment for the Proposal. Evaluation of noise impacts on sensitive receptors has been undertaken in accordance with the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994*, *Environmental Management and Pollution Control (Noise) Regulations 2016* and the *Environmental Protection Policy (Noise) 2009*. The Noise Impact Assessment concludes that key potential impacts in relation to noise are:

Noise from construction activities: All construction works will be completed under a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Due to the distance between the proposed site and non-project-involved receivers, construction noise impacts are relatively minimal. However, scheduling construction activities in accordance with the Prohibited Hours as defined in the Regulations. community engagement and best practice noise management controls: regular maintenance, broadband reversing alarms, etc. will further minimise the residual risk of harm to nearby receptors.

Noise from operational activities: The closest non-project-involved receiver, R8 is located approximately 100 m from the boundary of the project (approximately 730 m to the BESS area). Compliance for all time periods is achieved at this receiver and all others with all solar farm inverters, BESS and substations operating at 100% capacity with no additional mitigation.

Overall, the assessment indicates that the Project complies with the relevant noise legislation at all sensitive receptors across all time periods, without the need for additional mitigation. During the detailed design phase, all plants to ensure that compliance with the noise goals is maintained as the acoustic performance of the plant and site layout is refined. Updated noise modelling will be conducted during this phase, and post-commissioning noise measurements will be taken to verify compliance.

9.10 Glint and Glare Assessment

SLR conducted a Glint and Glare Assessment, evaluating potential glare impacts under both daytime and nighttime conditions.

During the day, the assessment focused on reflective glare (glint) from the solar PV panels, while nighttime conditions examined potential glare from 24/7 operational security lighting. Baseline glare modelling was conducted, assessing the impact on nearby residences and the surrounding road network.

The results indicated no significant glare impacts from the Proposal, with existing vegetation around the site providing additional shielding. For nighttime conditions, the assessment concluded that nuisance glare from security lighting would be negligible if mitigation measures were implemented, including limiting light spill to no more than 1 lux on nearby residences and adhering to light spill minimisation guidelines per AS/NZS 4282-2023.

9.11 Historic Heritage Assessment Report

CHMA undertook a Historic Heritage Assessment Report, including an archaeological potential investigation for the Development Area. A three-stage project methodology was implemented Stage 1 (pre-field work background work), Stage 2 (fieldwork) and Stage 3 (report production).

The field survey was undertaken over 5 days in May 2024. The primary focus of the field survey assessment was the proposed potential overall development area for the Weasel Solar Farm project, which encompasses approximately 471.57ha. The field team walked a total of 68.45 km of survey transects across this area with the average width of the transects being 10m.

No historic heritage sites, features or areas of elevated archaeological potential have been identified within the Development Area for the Proposal, and it has been assessed that there is a very low potential for additional undetected historic sites or features to be present. On this basis, it is recommended that there are no further historical heritage requirements or constraints that apply to the Proposal.

9.12 Socio-economic Impact Assessment

A Socioeconomic Impact Assessment (SEIA) was completed by Urban Enterprise to evaluate the full range of potential socioeconomic impacts for the construction and operation of the Proposal. The assessment covers economic impacts, including both direct and indirect activities that will arise during the construction and operational phases of the Proposal. It also examines social impacts, addressing potential changes—both positive and negative—to the Bothwell community's lifestyle and environment throughout the Weasel Solar Farm lifecycle.

Notably, the Proposal is modelled to generate significant economic and employment benefits. The following results are modelled in the SEIA:

Construction phase:

- $428 million in total economic output, including:
  - $188 million direct output; and
  - $240 million indirect output.
- 927 jobs, including
  - 348 direct jobs; and
  - 579 indirect jobs.

Operation phase:

- $11 million in total economic output, including:
  - $4.7 million direct output; and
  - $6.3 million indirect output
- 20 jobs, including
  - 8 direct jobs; and
  - 12 indirect jobs.

10. Conclusion

As demonstrated within this Planning Report, the Weasel Solar Farm Development Application for the use and development of land for Utilities, is an appropriate use and form of development for the Site.

The Weasel Solar Farm will provide critical renewable energy generation, energy storage, and a new substation that can service future energy projects, as well as provide significant local and regional economic benefits. The Proposal supports local economic development policy advocating.

Approval of this Development Application is considered appropriate for the following reasons:

- It will increase renewable energy generation in the region, contributing directly to Tasmanian renewable energy targets and advancing the state's transition to a clean energy future;
- The Proposal leverages existing transmission infrastructure crossing the Site, eliminating the need for additional transmission infrastructure, thereby reducing environmental and broader amenity impacts;
- Development Areas are located on a highly modified landscape currently used for agricultural grazing, with the design prioritising areas of the lowest agricultural value. The Proposal integrates 'agrisolar' practices with continued grazing of sheep, thereby maintaining the land's agricultural productivity;
- The Proposal features a site-responsive design that avoids sensitive ecological, hydrological and cultural heritage areas as determined by rigours technical assessments;
- There are very few rural dwellings near the Development Areas, with PV panel locations strategically located behind a crest-line to primarily hide and obscure any public views to the development;
- The project will provide significant local and regional economic benefits including:
  - Creation of approximately 348 direct jobs during construction and 8 direct ongoing operational jobs;
  - Local employment and procurement opportunities for construction, operation and maintenance;
  - Direct funding to community organisations to further support local area.
- It is consistent with the relevant planning provisions within the Planning Scheme:
  - Although classified as a Discretionary Use within the Agricultural Zone, the Proposal aligns with the zone's objectives and provisions. The development is strategically located on low-value agricultural land, ensuring minimal impact on high-value farming areas. Furthermore, it supports the economic diversification of the rural properties involved, enhancing long-term agricultural sustainability;
  - The Proposal is consistent with the applicable codes, and environmental buffers and fire safety requirements, ensuring the development meets all statutory obligations and mitigates potential risks.
  - It aligns with state and local government policy for Southern Tasmania, complementing existing agricultural land uses while enhancing renewable energy capacity.
- Any potential negative impacts, which are expected to be minimal or negligible, are minimised, mitigated or offset through the design, mitigation measures and necessary environmental plans.

This Development Application is supported by technical impact assessments that provide detailed analysis and justification of the Proposal. Based on the findings of the various technical assessments, the Proposal is expected to generate positive impacts on the environment, economy and local community.

The Proponent is committed to ongoing community and stakeholder engagement and will ensure that nearby residents and the broader Bothwell community remain well-informed about the Proposal. To date, key authorities and neighbouring properties have been provided with comprehensive details on the Proposal, including its potential benefits and impacts. A Community Drop-in Information Session is planned to offer further information and gather feedback from the local community. The project team has been in regular communication with the Central Highlands Council and other key stakeholders, including the EPA, ReCFIT, and State Government representatives.

Taking the above reasons into consideration, it is requested that Council approve the development application permit.

Appendices

Appendix A	Certificates of Title
Appendix B	Design Plans
Appendix C	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
Appendix D	Ecological and Natural Assets Code Assessment
Appendix E	Flooding Impact Assessment
Appendix F	Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report
Appendix G	Bushfire Impact Statement
Appendix H	Traffic Impact Assessment
Appendix I	Agricultural Assessment
Appendix J	Noise Impact Assessment
Appendix K	Glint and Glare Assessment
Appendix L	Historic Heritage Assessment Report
Appendix M	Consultation Summary Report
Appendix N	Socioeconomic Impact Assessment

Appendix A Certificates of Title

Appendix B Design Plans

Appendix C Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Appendix D Ecological and Natural Assets Code Assessment

Appendix E Flooding Impact Assessment

Appendix F Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report

Appendix G Bushfire Impact Statement

Appendix H Traffic Impact Assessment

Appendix I Agricultural Assessment

Appendix J Noise Impact Assessment

Appendix K Glint and Glare Assessment

Appendix L Historic Heritage Assessment Report

Appendix M Consultation Summary Report

Appendix N Socioeconomic Impact Assessment

cogency

Planning | Engagement | Strategy

Cogency provides planning, environmental assessment and stakeholder engagement services for the renewable energy, property, clean tech and circular economy sectors.

Our collaborative teams bring a uniquely nuanced understanding of planning processes and the technical aspects of renewable energy property, infrastructure and circular economy projects, which helps to build a strong rapport and trust with local community members and stakeholders.

Unlike many in-house engagement and planning teams that are managed separately, our planners work in collaboration with our engagement practitioners to ensure that stakeholder and community consultation is at the heart of the planning process and a critical tool for delivering positive outcomes for our clients.

www.cogencyaustralia.com.au