

Appendix 2: Land Use Assessment – Summary

As part of the approach to be zero carbon by 2025, there will need to be a level of carbon offsetting required to balance residual emissions to achieve carbon neutrality. It is preferred by CEC for this offsetting to be within the borough in order to stimulate low carbon and climate change activity locally, described as ‘insetting’.

To inform this, RSK has been appointed to carry out land use assessments on council owned sites to understand the opportunities for additional and permanent carbon savings through renewables or carbon sequestration. This assessment does not prioritise or select sites for carbon insetting, its purpose is to provide potential options and an evidence base of the relative opportunity and benefits.

34 sites were identified for high level assessment for renewables and carbon sequestration. The sites range in size from 1 and 94ha and include farm holdings and closed waste sites. Most of the farm sites are dairy farms, but some have mixed farming practices.

Two separate assessments have been conducted by specialists within RSK. The renewables assessment focuses on the land availability and suitability for wind and solar PV energy at each site. The other assessment focuses on the potential for carbon sequestration alongside the implications and opportunities for biodiversity net gain (BNG) within each site.

It was found that seven farm sites should be taken forward for further analysis. These sites are considered to be mostly unconstrained for solar however do have some risk factors, such as they are in a Green Belt, that would need further consideration and analysis.

It is recommended that none of the sites should be considered for wind turbines.

Some productive farmland (ALC 3+) will be required to create 120ha for woodland creation across the portfolio of sites. As sufficient area cannot be found solely within either the BNG scenario (55ha only) nor the Blended scenario (111ha). However, up to 508ha is available across the portfolio of sites for woodland creation indicating that the target of 120ha is achievable.