

22/02241/FUL | Installation of renewable energy generating solar farm; Land East Of Hawksworth And Northwest Of Thoroton Shelton Road Thoroton Nottinghamshire

The proposal site comprises a large area of open countryside between the villages of Hawksworth and Thoroton. The site is surrounded by a range of heritage assets, although no designated heritage assets are present on the site itself. Multiple Grade I and II listed buildings are found within the Conservation Areas covering parts of the nearby villages of Hawksworth and Thoroton and several of these are in close proximity to the application site; additional listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments are found within 2km of the application site. The site comprises nine fields covering a total area of c. 94hectares (ha), of which 37.7ha is required to accommodate the solar arrays and the remaining area would be used for ancillary infrastructure and mitigation and enhancement measures.

Heritage Assets: The Hawksworth Conservation Area includes 6 listed buildings (1 Grade II* listed and 5 Grade II listed) within its boundary and covers most of the village. Its character is formed by the composition of the buildings, trees, brick and stone enclosure walls and open spaces. The rich farmland and adjacent fields make a considerable contribution to the village scene. The landmark of the church, the tower of Top Farm, other farm buildings and trees provide an attractive scene on approaching the village. There are also some particularly fine views over open countryside. From a point at the entrance to Top Farm's grounds on Main Road for example, one can appreciate views over open countryside of the church spire at St Helena's in Thoroton. Paddocks and small fields on the outskirts of the village provide a more traditional rural setting than intensively farmed arable land. The particularly fine architectural detailing of Top Farm suggests that not only was the village one with a strong agricultural foundation, but that farming on the fringes of the vale of Belvoir was both lucrative and profitable. The village includes a high proportion of farms amongst its properties, with 5 farms within the relatively small village (Manor Farm, Top Farm, Yew Tree Farm, Philips Farm, Ivy Farm), again highlighting the importance of the agricultural connection of the village.

Thoroton is a small, linear village which lies alongside the River Smite and is surrounded by open countryside. There are 5 listed buildings (1 Grade I listed and 4 Grade II listed) within the Conservation Area boundary. It is a traditional Nottinghamshire village in character with the buildings themselves closely defining the street, but wide grass verges edge the lanes on the main approaches. The parish church of St Helena is mostly 14th century, but its 11th-13th century origins are visible. To the north is the mid-17th century Manor Farmhouse, whilst in a farmyard to the south of Thoroton Hall is a 14th century circular dovecote which is very similar to that at nearby Sibthorpe. Despite the simplicity of the single street form, subtle curves in the street, individual buildings and trees create an attractive sequence of views and give Thoroton a particular character of its own. A key characteristic of Thoroton is its working farms with complexes of modern agricultural buildings. Though not formally registered, the historic gardens and parkland associated with Thoroton Hall to the southeast of the Conservation Area represent a non-designated heritage asset and a key component of the setting of the hall contributing to its significance, and appreciation of that significance. Additionally, within both Hawksworth and Thoroton are numerous identified buildings of Local Interest. There are several good views out into surrounding countryside from within the village, mostly to the northwest through gaps in the developed frontage along Main Street. Views to the southeast are less common, although there are rights of way leading from Main Street from which views in both of these directions are possible, views east and west are only really possible from the west and east ends of the village.

The village also plays host to several farms (Manor Farm, Manor House Farm, Thoroton Farm, Hall Farm, Holy Farm and Smite Farm) of which one is listed (Manor Farmhouse) and two remain as substantial farming enterprises active today (Smite and Holly). As with Hawksworth farming has a substantial presence both in terms of the character of the fabric of the village, but the continued agricultural activity together with its sounds and smells further contributes to local character and is connected to the wider rural agricultural landscape in which the village sits. The bulk of the proposed solar farm would be located to the north of the village off-of its northeastern limits.

The proposal site is located less than 50m from the Hawksworth Conservation Area and 150m from the Thoroton Conservation Area at the closest points.

The site is within the context of several other heritage assets, a comprehensive list of both designated and non-designated examples is given as Table 2 of Appendix 3B of the applicants' heritage report.

Of these, the most notable are the two Conservation Areas of Hawksworth and Thoroton, the Grade I listed Church of St Helena (Thoroton), the Grade II Hawksworth Manor and Adjoining Pigeoncote, the Grade II Hawksworth Place and Adjoining Garden Walls, and the Historic Garden and Parkland (a NDHA) associated with the Grade II Thoroton Hall.

The open spaces between the two Conservation Areas and these listed buildings are of particular importance. The open views and intervisibility are fundamental in understanding the parishes associated with the two churches which they overlook, as is the agricultural setting associated with Hawksworth Manor and Hawksworth Place and similarly the gardens and parkland historically associated with Thoroton Hall. Farming informs the origins of several listed buildings across both villages, as well as being a fundamental component of the history of both villages and contributes both to the evolved character of their conservation areas and the context in which they sit today.

The proposal site contains numerous records within the Nottinghamshire Historic Environment Record, most of which relate to archaeology, and I note that specialist archaeological advisors have been consulted with regard to these. Whilst the site itself contains no structures, it is crossed and bordered closely by a number of public footpaths. These all appear on historic mapping, including Henry Steven's 1820 Map of Newark on Trent, and may be of ancient origin. These footpaths represent routes linking the two neighbouring settlements and their conservation areas and represent approaches to, and routes leading out from, both conservation areas. The development would unavoidably have a substantial impact on the experience of approaching either village, or travelling between them, on these well-established routes.

Assessment: Owing to the proximity of the site to these heritage assets and the overall size of the development, I would have concerns over the proposal as submitted because of the adverse impact it would have on the setting of a number of heritage assets, particularly the Hawksworth and Thoroton Conservation Areas, the Church of St Helena (Thoroton), Hawksworth Manor and Adjoining Pigeoncote and Top Farm (Hawksworth). Those impacts are, at least in part, acknowledged within the heritage statement submitted with the application.

I have previously mentioned views of the spire of the Church of St Helena as visible from Hawksworth, reinforcing the close relationship between the two villages. Only the spire is visible as from the southeast portion of Hawksworth there is a gradual rise in the landscape, up to the hedgeline which forms the nearest boundary of the proposed development, the hedge itself broadly follows this low ridge from the east-west unnamed road between the southern limit of Hawksworth and the northern edge of Thoroton up to a roughly square patch of woodland to the north. The land beyond the hedge is itself around 18"-2ft lower and slopes gradually downhill towards the southeast, such that panels installed beyond it would have limited visibility from Hawksworth, albeit if the hedge were allowed to grow so as to hide the panels fully both the panels and the hedge would truncate, if not entirely block, the view of the neighbouring church spire. The development would probably have only a minor impact on views in this direction although the proposed screening would obscure the church as a landmark and reduce the degree to which the close context of the two villages is apparent.

As the tower of the church in Hawksworth (All Saints) is much lower than the spire of St Helena views back towards Hawksworth from Thoroton and the road and footpaths between the two villages do not feature the church so prominently, and not at all from any significant distance. From the road, and the footpath that enters Thoroton opposite Manor Farm, views of Hawksworth are not possible.

The footpath mentioned above is a well established route shown on older OS maps and Henry Steven's 1820 Map of Newark on Trent and represents a long established link between the two villages and what are now their respective conservation areas. At the time of my visit the paths were well trodden and appear well used such that this path does represent a route of approach and departure for both villages (I suspect that as both villages have little in the way of local services but are each served by one, different, bus route each a lot of this foot traffic will be by residents catching busses from either village or visiting friends in the neighbouring village). Along the route there would be an awareness of an expanse of solar panels in the landscape to the north, owing to the fall of the land this would be increasingly apparent nearer to Thoroton. As the land within the site slopes up gently to the north the hedge along the unnamed road would need to grow up quite substantially to hide panels up the slopes in the northern parts of the site, itself limiting appreciation of the agricultural landscape.

From within Thoroton itself there are relatively few views out into the surrounding landscape to the north from the public realm outside of the northern edge of the village and where rights of way leave the village to the northwest side of Main Street, even then strips of tree planting in the landscape southwest of Thoroton Farm limit views from paths in the direction of the proposal further south from the village centre. I visited the new development on the Thoroton Farm site, however from the limits of the shared access drive I could see only a small glimpse of the application site in the gap between numbers 4 and 5 Thoroton Farm, itself partly obscured by timber boundary fencing such that this will not be a prominent view of the development from within the conservation area.

From further north along Main Street there are no spaces between other properties along the street which would afford glimpses out towards the application site. Only as the northern limits of the village are reached would views featuring the application site become possible, and in this southeastern corner of the site the field nearest the boundary of the conservation area is not proposed to contain any panels or equipment. At present there are views from Hawthorne Cottages and the 'T' junction to their south towards both the north and the west within which the wider site would be visible and from this area there would be an awareness of the proposed development and its impact on the visible wider landscape from this position would be substantial, or else any adequate proposed screening would itself have a major impact on the visibility of wider landscape setting.

I took the opportunity to walk northwards almost to the crossroads with Longhedge Lane where I walked west across fields on the public right of way. There are a number of positions along the road where views back towards the village features the church spire, although I would acknowledge that later into spring when the trees are in leaf a number of these views of the spire would be lost. As the road rises up the slope towards Longhedge Lane it also becomes possible to see the fields in the foreground when looking back towards the village. Whilst allowing the roadside hedges to grow and planting up gaps could hide much of the proposed development it would also limit the visibility of the landscape within which the settlement and its conservation area are seen and would alter the character of this approach.

From the right of way views back to the village and its church would continue to be possible and would be most significantly affected by the proposed development. Roughly midway between the two villages the right of way passes through a small wooded area, and rather strangely Hawksworth has limited presence in views before this wood and Thoroton has almost no presence in views from the footpath beyond the wood. Again this right of way seems well used, the first field appeared relatively recently ploughed and there was already a clearly trodden route for me to follow.

On emerging from the wood, the landscape in all directions would be dominated by arrays, glimpses of buildings on the fringes of Hawksworth would be adversely affected, some of these include glimpses in the distance of the boundary walls around Hawksworth Place and outbuildings north of Hawksworth Manor (albeit these are largely screened by tree belts and more modern agricultural buildings), indeed owing to the height of panels in proximity to the viewer and Hawksworth being down a gentle slope it is likely that from this position the village would no longer appear in views. Passing further west the tower of the church eventually emerges, again it is seen in winter through the open canopy of trees and I suspect it is less prominent, if visible at all, from this position in summer.

Conservation Area Impacts: My view is that there would be an adverse impact on the setting of Hawksworth Conservation Area, primarily from its northern edge where the impact on the rural landscape to the northeast would be transformational in character. The impact on setting to the east from the southeaster limits of the conservation area would be lesser for the reasons described previously, however if the panels themselves are not visible to the east then the heightened hedge would limit visibility of features within neighbouring Thornton (notably the church spire) which serve to highlight the proximity of the two neighbours and contributes to understanding of how Hawksworth sits within a wider landscape.

There would be some impact on the setting of Hawksworth Manor (GII) and the neighbouring Hawksworth Farm both in respect of those truncated eastward views and also through visibility of solar panels in gaps between woodland to the north and north-east, and the impact on views back to them from the footpath to the north.

For Thoroton there would be some impact upon the setting of the conservation area, mostly focused at its northern edge where there would be a combination of reduced prominence of the agricultural landscape, and those parts still visible beyond reinforced boundaries would be visually dominated by solar panels up the gently sloping fields towards the north. There would be some combination of awareness of a large-scale solar farm to the west in approaches from the north of the village, as well as reinforced boundary planting giving the road approach more of an enclosed character limiting view of the landscape beyond.

From public rights of way to the north of both villages there would be a distinct change in the landscape over which the two conservation areas are seen, as well as the views of more prominent individual buildings within those conservation areas such as the spire of the church in Thoroton.

The scale of the development proposed would see the arable field network altered in terms of its character and appearance. Although electricity pylons are visible in 3 fields and electrical lines pass through 4 fields, the total impact of the proposal would be far more visible and intrusive than that existing impacts in the form of power lines, which are themselves relatively ephemeral given the grid construction of the pylons. Existing internal field boundaries are comprised of hedgerows, tree lines and several linear strips of woodland shelter belt and alterations to remove some internal boundaries would be required to implement the proposal. Some existing field boundaries appear to represent retained boundaries of earlier, smaller, field patterns within the landscape, making some small additional contribution to the character of the rural area and evidencing field boundary division related to farming in Hawksworth and Thoroton. External boundaries to the site largely consist of mature hedgerows with individual trees and some evident gaps.

The proposal site forms part of a wider landscape, which very much contributes to the rural and open countryside setting of the two Conservation Areas and the listed buildings identified as most notable. The addition of a solar farm in this location would fail to preserve part of the rural and open countryside setting and would introduce a fundamentally different appearance into the adjacent fields. As the settlements have an agricultural basis evidenced through farming activity which continues to be a significant component of village life today, particularly in Thoroton where active farms remain prominent parts of village life, landscape scale changes to the character and appearance of the surrounding agricultural landscape will necessarily diminish the extent to which a rural agricultural landscape setting continues to inform the character and origins of both settlements. Access roads, trackways, CCTV and fencing would be necessary, and this would introduce features not traditionally associated with agriculture to the arable fields. These along with the solar PV arrays would result in a negative impact to the character of the countryside and the setting of designated heritage assets, which has associations with the history of the settlements and contributes towards understanding of their development and significance.

Listed Building Impacts: Thoroton Hall sits to the southeast side of Main Street within Thoroton, with its parkland setting extending beyond to the southeast. Whilst the hall has its principal front facing Main Street its main views are to the southwest. In my view the proposal would have limited impact on the non-designated parkland to the extent to which it forms the setting in which the hall itself is experienced and understood. Similarly, the main elevations of the hall are mainly experienced from Main Street and in these views the proposed development would be located behind the observer, and not visible from street level. There would be some impact on views out across the agricultural landscape from the hall, mostly from within first floor rooms and even then, at an angle and in glimpses between nearer properties. This is as identified within the applicant's heritage assessment, and I would agree that the scale of this impact on significance is relatively minor. In this case there may be some impact on the setting of the wider non-designated parkland, particularly its northern reaches near the church and The Manor House, although views back to the Hall itself are not possible from this part of the parkland, and even views into the churchyard and the ground of The Manor House are limited by trees around the edges of the churchyard and Manor grounds. There would therefore be some impact on the setting of the parkland as a non-designated heritage asset in its own right, the impact would be minor and would do little to disrupt its role as the setting within which the listed Hall itself is experienced.

Hawksworth Manor would suffer some impact as mentioned briefly above, the heritage statement suggests a conscious choice to omit the nearest fields from the proposal was to mitigate impact upon setting of this building, but acknowledged that impacts would remain. I consider that there would be some harm to significance via setting, however given distance and the limited parts of the site that would be visible I would not disagree with a level of harm at the lower, but not lowest, end of the scale.

St Marys Church sits well within Hawksworth village, with its churchyard and relatively open relationship with the former Rectory at Hawksworth Place forming its immediate setting. I have noted above some vantage points from public rights of way and approaches from the north of the village where glimpses of the tower are possible and would be affected by the proposal, although these views are less frequent than views of the spire in Thoroton, owing to the shorter nature of the tower and that in several instances views are only possible at the time of my visit as trees were not in leaf. I would suggest that the level of harm for the church is low and I would not disagree with a level of harm as the bottom end of the scale for the significance of Hawksworth Place given its relatively well enclosed ground which provide it a grand, but quite isolated, setting.

Top Farm in Hawksworth is a grand farmhouse with a decorative tower and associated Model Farm buildings, as such its relationship with an agricultural landscape plays a higher role in informing its significance, however it is well separated from the proposed development, and in most direct views the nearest part of the site is beyond a slight rise. There may be views from first floor rooms, and likely from the tower which may have had a function as a surveying or lookout point. I would suggest that there would be some harm to its significance through setting and would agree that this is likely in the lower part of the scale, but I would not agree that it would be 'negligible', particularly as views from the elevated tower position would be notably affected.

I have considered Yew Tree Farm in Hawksworth, however given its position and intervening buildings, landscape and the distances involved I would struggle to suggest that there would be any notable impact upon its significance.

In Thoroton I would suggest that given the widespread visibility of the church spire as a landmark within the landscape, and its presence in views from Hawksworth informing of the close relationship between the two villages I would be of the view that there would be harm and would argue that this would sit at least at the higher end of the range suggested by the applicants – a moderate level of less than substantial harm.

There would be some adverse impact on the significance of Thoroton Hall, although this would be limited to views from the first floor front rooms at a significant angle and some distance. I would not disagree with the suggestion that the degree of harm would be low.

For similar reasons I am also in agreement with the level of harm identified for Manor Farmhouse, Thoroton Pigeoncote and the blacksmiths forge as being at the lower end of the scale of less than substantial harm.

Heritage Assets in the Wider Setting: I have briefly considered the assessed impact on some more distant heritage assets, including those in Sibthorpe, Flintham, Orston, Shelton and the registered battlefield at East Stoke. In these cases, given the greater distances involved, greater scope for screening through intervening features within the landscape and the relatively reduced prominence of the proposed solar farm within their settings owing to these factors I would broadly agree with the levels of harm, Mostly zero or at the far lower end of the 'less than substantial' scale. Despite distance the asset at this distance most likely to be affected would be the registered park and garden at Flintham Hall. That asset is itself a landscape scale feature and as a largely naturalist engineered landscape it is recognised that the asset itself transitions into and has a wider relationship with the surrounding landscape. Given the scale of the proposed development within that wider landscape I would suggest that whilst harm would be low it should not be described as 'negligible'.

Existing Impacts on Settings of Listed Buildings: The applicants heritage statement makes the observation that the

“sensitivity [of setting to proposed development] is somewhat compromised by the inclusion of modern developments within the surrounding village”. Whilst the applicants' advisors have chosen to consider that existing modern development reduces the sensitivity of nearby assets to further change, it might just as readily be argued that this creates an argument for cumulative impacts to be considered alongside, not subtracted from, impacts arising from the proposed development.

It should be noted that the NPPF acknowledges that the setting of assets evolves and changes, indeed the agricultural landscape forming the setting of the two nearest conservation areas and the listed and unlisted farms within their boundaries has changed, whilst it is still undeniably an agricultural landscape written large it is not unaltered through time. The proposed change, however, would fundamentally alter the

character of a sizable parcel of land on a landscape scale such that this part of setting would no longer have a clear agricultural character, and would no longer perform a role in informing the agricultural basis which many of the nearby heritage assets are associated with.

Published guidance on assessing impacts upon the setting of heritage assets sets out a staged approach to proportionate decision taking outlines four steps in assessing impact on setting of heritage assets (there are 5, but the last is post-decision monitoring so not part of the decision making process) where Step 4 is to explore ways of maximising enhancements and avoiding or minimising harm. This states that mitigation is not an ideal solution, proposals should be designed from inception to avoid causing harm to the significance of heritage assets where settings are likely to be affected. Options for reducing harm arising may include repositioning of a development or its elements or changes to its design. The step notes that for some developments affecting setting, the design of a development may not be capable of sufficient adjustment to avoid or significantly reduce the harm, for example where impacts are caused by fundamental issues such as the proximity, location, scale, or prominence of a development. In other cases, good design may reduce or remove the harm, or provide enhancement. It concludes that mitigation is a lesser solution as it concedes that harm must be caused, in addition mitigation itself can then have adverse impacts of its own, albeit often less than what it intends to screen or mitigate.

For example, the proposed plan for the introduction of woodland planting, tree planting, native hedgerow planting and the proposed infilling and enhancement of existing hedgerows, or allowing hedges to grow out to greater height seeks to mitigate prominence and visibility of the arrays - some arguably in the longer-term with some reductions requiring up to Year 10 to reduce potential visual effects to moderate or below. But such mitigation would also hide parts of the landscape the current visibility of which makes the positive contribution to setting. The submitted Design & Access Statement states mitigation measures are proposed for their potential to reduce inward views from nearby receptors. And while the Heritage Statement notes that several site reductions and setbacks to remove more visible land from sensitive points around Thoroton and Hawksworth took place during the preparation of the application, the resulting size of the development site would still result in development that would have intervisibility with the heritage assets. The Heritage Statement recognises that some intervisibility will be possible and that for some heritage assets such as Hawksworth Manor and Hawksworth Place and to the Church of St Helena, *'these views and intervisibility may have the potential for visual impacts to the setting of the Hawksworth Manor/Place, but are not expected to constitute substantial harm'*, but it remains that some harm has been identified. Aside from the limited setting back of the development from a few of the listed buildings closest to the site, mitigation measures are reliant on screening which would include 5m buffer from hedgerows, and various visual buffers from settlements, PROWs and trees as well as a 10m woodland buffer. Whilst this is somewhat successful, much of the screening has adverse impacts of its own by obscuring views of the landscape setting of the heritage assets and fundamentally concedes that it has not been possible to design out harm from the proposal. The applicants heritage statement seems to take into account proposed screening but seems to not consider whether the proposed screening has adverse impacts of its own.

I would take issue with some of the assessments which cite 'negligible harm'. Such phrases should be avoided, the PPG makes clear that all harm is relevant, and no level of harm should be set aside or discounted. The use of language such as 'negligible harm' is misleading in that respect.

The assessment insofar as it addresses conservation areas seems to suggest that this has considered conservation areas as the settings in which the listed buildings which they contain are experienced, it is not clear from the wording of the report that the assessment has considered the conservation areas as heritage assets in their own rights, with settings of their own: if so then I would suggest the level of harm identified is undervalued, and if not then that likely explains why my assessment of harm on settings of conservation areas is somewhat higher than within the supporting statement.

With regard to the impact on the setting of designated heritage assets, as set out above, it is considered that the proposal would fail to preserve the significance derived from the settings of several assets, both listed buildings and conservation areas, this engages a strong and statutory presumption against granting planning permission arising from both section 66 and section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

This level of harm would be 'less than substantial' for NPPF purposes engaging the test in Paragraph 202. In this case, it is acknowledged that there are considerable public benefits of the provision of new

renewable energy sources. However, the submission fails to provide a clear and convincing justification for locating the solar farm in this precise position, as is required under paragraph 200, and as such fails to demonstrate that the harm is necessary to secure the benefits which might arise from the proposal.

In respect of the two conservation areas I would suggest that the level of harm site somewhere around the middle of the broad range represented by 'less than substantial harm' owing to the significant change to the agricultural landscape within which the two villages are experienced, both the nature of the change in landscape character and the scale of landscape which is affected. For individual listed buildings the impacts range from 'moderate' in the case of the Church of St Helena, but also include a number of cases where the scale of harm would be low, however that degree of harm affects several listed buildings.

It would appear that all of the benefits of the proposal could be delivered through alternative sites located practically anywhere else nationally, owing to the national nature of the electricity grid, including in parts of the country with intrinsically greater exposure to solar radiation, such as in the south west – there might also be sites considered more suitable just outside of the somewhat small radius in which alternative sites have been considered as this is not the only location even within the Borough with available grid connections. There is also no requirement for the applicant to discount alternative sites; rather, it is for each individual proposal to fully justify its location in terms of minimising its impact, however the findings in the Barnwell Manor and Forge Field Society cases both concluded that when considering matters of heritage harm it is legitimate for a decision maker to consider whether or not the benefits of the proposal (a wind farm in the first instance, and affordable housing in the second) could be attained via alternate means, including alternate sites, without causing harm to heritage assets or their settings, the implication being that harm which could be avoided (or reduced) must struggle to also have a 'clear and convincing justification' for causing it. Given the very small search radius for alternative sites it is difficult to see that this clear justification has been provided.

As the level of harm is considered 'less than substantial' permission could still be granted if it is concluded that public benefits outweigh harm through application of the test within Paragraph 202 of the NPPF (revised July 2021). In applying this test, it should be noted that it is not to be applied as a simple balance. Public benefits must not simply outweigh harm but must do so to a sufficient degree to justify departure from the statutory presumption against granting planning permission arising from the 1990 Act as recognised by the need to give 'great weight' to preservation as stated in paragraph 199..

I note the requirement within Paragraph 200 of the NPPF for a clear and convincing justification for causing harm and that this precedes the balancing exercise within Paragraph 202. The implications of the Forge Field Society and Barnwell Manor cases is that if causing harm can be avoided, then it is difficult to see how choosing to proceed in a way which does cause harm could be justified. In such circumstances proposals are therefore objectionable under Paragraph 200 even if the benefits outweigh harm. It would seem counter-intuitive to accept harm on the basis of the benefits which allowing it would secure, if those benefits could be secured whilst avoiding harm.

Finally, should a grant of planning permission be considered, it is recommended that a condition be attached making clear that once the site is no longer required for energy generation not only should all of the panels, associated infrastructure and access tracks be removed but any hedges that have been removed should be replanted on their original alignments and thereafter retained, and any hedges which have been allowed to grow tall to provide screening should be laid back to their current height to reinstate, as far as reasonably practical, the existing rural character of the landscape and the degree to which it is widely visible.

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