



LVA Addendum: Response to Rushcliffe Borough Council Landscape Review

Kingston Solar Farm

07/12/2022



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1. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1. In response to comments received from Robert Browne of Wynne Williams Associates on behalf of Rushcliffe Borough Council (please see Rushcliffe Borough Council's Planning Portal for PA REF: 22/00319/FUL, document titled External Landscape Adviser, 12th October 2022 for further details) this report sets out an addendum Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) in support of a Planning Application for a proposed solar farm development (herein called the Proposed Development), on lands circa 1.3 km south of Gotham and c. 0.75 km northwest of East Leake, Nottinghamshire.
- 1.2. As with the LVA submitted as part of the Planning Application (ref. 22/00319/FUL), landscape-related issues have been addressed by Douglas Harman Landscape Planning, on behalf of Neo Environmental Ltd. Douglas Harman is a sole practitioner and Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI). The response to Green Belt issues has been addressed by Chloe McDonnell, a Planning Consultant for Neo Environmental.

Key issues and recommendations

- 1.3. In response to the LVA submitted as part of the Planning Application, the Council's Landscape Review provides comments on the:
 - LVA methodology and baseline assessment (section 4.1 of Council's Landscape Review);
 - Landscape effects (section 4.2 of Council's Landscape Review);
 - Visual effects (section 4.3 of Council's Landscape Review);
 - Effects on the Green Belt (section 5 of Council's Landscape Review); and
 - Cumulative effects (section 6 of Council's Landscape Review).
- 1.4. In summary, the Council's Landscape Review identifies the following key issues and associated recommendations:
 - The effects on receptors represented by viewpoints 6 and 7 are judged to be more adverse than what the LVA predicts; as such, the Council's Landscape Review recommends that these effects would be mitigated to a less than significant level if development in field 16 and the southern half of field 15 were omitted from the proposals;

- in considering the predicted visual effects for residents at Cuckoo Bush Farm and Stone House, a greater level of mitigation planting is needed to reduce effects on each property; and
- As a separate Green Belt Assessment has not been submitted, it is recommended that the Applicant produces one.

Key outcomes

1.5. In response to the Council's Landscape Review, the following key outcomes underpin this LVA Addendum:

- To ensure that the visual effects from viewpoints 6 and 7 (representing the views of recreational users along sections of BW5/Midshires Way and BW13), would not be significant, the arrays and associated infrastructure within **field 16 and the southern half of field 15 has been removed from the Proposed Development;**
- To reduce the nature of adverse visual effects on the residents at Stone House and Cuckoo Bush Farm, a 10m buffer of native woodland and scrub alongside nearby visible edges has been incorporated into the Proposed Development; and
- A detailed Green Belt Assessment has been undertaken to provide further evidence that effects on the Green Belt would not be detrimental to its purposes.

Structure of LVA Addendum

1.6. In providing a detailed response to each of the points raised within the Council's Landscape Review, this LVA Addendum is structured as follows:

- *Chapter 2* - LVA methodology and baseline assessment (see section 4.1 of Council's Landscape Review);
- *Chapter 3* - Landscape effects (see section 4.2 of Council's Landscape Review);
- *Chapter 4* - Visual effects (see section 4.3 of Council's Landscape Review);
- *Chapter 5* - Effects on the Green Belt (see section 5 of Council's Landscape Review);
- *Chapter 6* - Cumulative effects (see section 6 of Council's Landscape Review);
- *Chapter 7* - Conclusion;

Supporting information

1.7. The following illustrative figures support this addendum LVA:

- *Figures 1.13 A-C - LEMP*
- *Figure 1.4 - Viewpoints with comparative ZTV*
- *Figure 1.12 - Viewpoint 6 photomontage at year 0 and year 10*
- *Figure 1.9 - Viewpoint 7 annotated photo*

2. METHODOLOGY AND BASELINE ASSESSMENT

2.1. This Chapter sets out our response to the points raised in the Council's Landscape Review (see section 4.1) concerning the LVA methodology and baseline assessment.

Table 1-1: Methodology and baseline assessment

Council's Landscape Review	Our response
<i>The report includes a methodology in line with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3) and Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002). The LVA includes the necessary level of information for a development of the size proposed.</i>	We welcome that methodology is considered to be in accordance with the <i>Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment</i> and that the scope of information provided is fit for purpose.
<i>The method for the ZTV is outlined in the LVA and is sufficiently thorough. Within the identified study area, the existing conditions and context are appraised through a review of the local designations and baseline landscape character studies. The correct local baseline documents are referred to and relevant sensitivities have been highlighted.</i>	We welcome that the ZTV analysis is sufficiently thorough and that correct baseline and associated sensitivities have been correctly identified.
<i>Although the report does not refer to national scale precedent landscape studies, this does not undermine the baseline assessment of landscape character.</i>	Although the omission of the national scale landscape character does not undermine the assessment, it should be noted that this data set was excluded from the LVA due to the very limited application of national scale data at the local level. As such, the LVA was initially mapped based on information contained within the <i>Nottinghamshire Landscape Character Assessment</i> , (2009) although as information on the key characteristics of all Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) is not freely available, the appraisal has been supplemented with more detailed information based on Landscape Character Units (LCUs), as mapped and described in the <i>Melton and Rushcliffe Landscape Sensitivity Study: Wind Energy Development</i> , (2014).
<i>When considering the existing landscape value of the site and surroundings, the report appears to rely on elements suggested with GLVIA3 Box</i>	As noted in the <i>Technical Guidance Note 02-21</i> , this updated guidance is not intended to replace Box 5.1 of the

<p><i>5.1. This methodology has been superseded by Technical Guidance Note 02-21 Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations, published by the Landscape Institute in 2021. Utilising this newer guidance would encourage a finer grained assessment of landscape value, however it is not likely to lead to a different conclusion.</i></p>	<p>GVLIA, rather than supplement existing advice to practitioners. Nonetheless, we acknowledge this additional guidance and as with the Council's review, it's application to the Proposed Development would not lead to a different conclusion to the <i>medium-high</i> rating of landscape value as stated in the LVA.</p>
<p><i>I agree with all assessments of landscape sensitivity provided in Tables 1-7, 1-8, 1-9, 1-10, and visual sensitivity in Table 1-11.</i></p>	<p>In setting out a robust baseline, we welcome that the ratings of landscape sensitivity are agreed with.</p>

3. LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

- 3.1. This Chapter sets out our response to the points raised in the Council’s Landscape Review (see section 4.2) concerning the assessment of landscape effects.

Table 1-2: Landscape effects

Council’s Landscape Review	Our response
<p><i>Landscape effects are assessed at specific viewpoints alongside visual effects. Although general summaries relating to each landscape receptor group are also provided, the approach can be somewhat confusing. Nevertheless, I am in agreement with the main summaries of landscape effects provided in Table 1-12 of the report.</i></p>	<p>The magnitude of landscape effect is assessed at each viewpoint (in addition to visual effects) to help inform an overall assessment of landscape effects. In addition to providing evidence to inform the general assessment, it is important to note that landscape change and associated effect will vary from one place to another; without this level of detail, the assessment would therefore be less informed. However, we welcome that the LVA summaries of effects are agreed with and to this end, it is clearly apparent that as evidenced throughout the LVA, no significant effects are predicted on any landscape character types/areas or landscape designations within the study area.</p>
<p><i>An area that could be clearer in the report is the predicted level of landscape effect that is generally predicted for the site itself as a whole. This is not specifically stated. Using the descriptors within the Applicant’s methodology, I assess the significance of landscape effects on the site itself to be major adverse during operation.</i></p>	<p>Although the LVA does not specify the landscape effect on the site itself, a <i>moderate-major</i> effect, rather than <i>major</i>, is predicted. Either way, this would be significant and in considering the introduction of relatively extensive infrastructure in a rural setting, this level of effect at the site level is to be expected for a development of this nature.</p>
<p><i>However, as highlighted within the LVA, it is important to note that, although landscape effects will be long term, they are also considered temporary as the site could reasonably be returned to the existing state after decommissioning. I agree that the proposed planting and biodiversity enhancement measures would result in a minor beneficial landscape effect for the site following decommissioning. However, this will rely on successful management of the landscape in line with the principles set out in the Landscape and Ecology Management Plan.</i></p>	<p>We welcome the acknowledgment that landscape effects are considered temporary and that the proposed planting and biodiversity enhancement measures would result in a minor beneficial landscape effect for the site following decommissioning. In taking forward the principles of the Landscape and Ecology Management Plan, appropriate Conditions should be attached to the granting of any Planning Consent. As illustrated in Figures 1.13A-C, the Proposed Development now incorporates a 10 m buffer of native woodland and scrub alongside nearby visible edges. This includes field 5 around Cuckoo Bush Farm and fields 13 and 14 near Stone House, although as there are no apparent</p>

Council's Landscape Review	<i>Our response</i>
	views towards fields 11 and 12, no mitigation is considered necessary along these edges. Once planting matures, effects on these dwellings are predicted to be not significant.

4. VISUAL EFFECTS

- 4.1. This Chapter sets out our response to the points raised in the Council's Landscape Review (see section 4.3) concerning the assessment of visual effects.

Table 1-3: Visual

Council's Landscape Review	Our response
<i>When considering visual effects of the proposals, the LVA uses representative viewpoints that were agreed in advance with the Local Authority, this is good practice. Viewpoint photography is clear and well labelled.</i>	We welcome the acknowledgement that the viewpoints and associated presentation of viewpoint photography is fit for purpose.
<i>I am in agreement with predicted effects for the majority of viewpoints (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10). I also agree with the assessment of visual effects at viewpoint 5, but it is my opinion that the rating of minor-moderate adverse is limited to views from the PRoW at the northern end of development field 15.</i>	We welcome that the large majority of the visual effects predicted at the viewpoints are agreed with.
<i>I assess the significance of effects from views along the same ProW towards the southern end of field 15 to increase to a moderate-major level at Year 10.</i>	As detailed in the next table row, development within the southern part of field 15 has now been removed from the proposals. As such, this would mean that effects from the ProW towards the southern end of field 15 would be not significant .
<i>The assessments that I disagree with are for viewpoints 6 and 7, where I consider the LVA to underestimate the adverse effects. For receptors represented by both viewpoints, the LVA assesses visual effects to be moderate-major at Year 0 and moderate by Year 10. It is my opinion that effects will be major at Year 0, reducing to a moderate-major significance by Year 10.... It is my opinion that these effects would be mitigated to a less than significant level if development field 16 and the southern half of field 15 were omitted from the proposals.</i>	Notwithstanding any disagreement with the LVA findings at viewpoints 6 and 7, the arrays and associated infrastructure within field 16 and the southern half of field 15 has been removed from the Proposed Development (see Figures 1.13 A-C). The effect of removing development from the southern half of field 15 is illustrated in Figure 1.12 hereby there would be a much greater degree of separation between the Proposed Development and recreational users of the PRoW. As such, the arrays would be much less evident within the view, particularly as mitigation planting matures. As a result of removing all development from field 16, Figure 1.9 illustrates there would be no visibility of the Proposed Development. From viewpoints 6 and 7

Council's Landscape Review	Our response
	therefore, effects would be not significant .
<p><i>The LVA correctly highlights that visual effects will be significant from residential properties adjacent to the proposed development, Cuckoo Bush Farm, Fox Hill Farm, Stone House, and The Cottage. I agree that intervening trees at The Cottage and Fox Hill Farm would screen views from the main dwellings. However, I am concerned by the potential visibility from Cuckoo Bush Farm and Stone House. My Photo 1 in Appendix B shows the view from close to Stone House and LVA viewpoint 3 illustrates the relationship between Cuckoo Bush Farm and development field 6. It is my opinion that a greater level of mitigation planting is needed to reduce effects on each property. This should be more in line with the proposed planting adjacent to Hillside Farm, at the northern end of the site, and include more native shrub planting as well as additional trees.</i></p>	<p>As illustrated in Figures 1.13 A-C, the Proposed Development now incorporates a 10 m buffer of native woodland and scrub alongside nearby visible edges to Cuckoo Bush Farm and Stone House. Once planting matures, effects on these dwellings are predicted to be not significant.</p>

5. GREEN BELT EFFECTS

5.1. Section 5 of the Council's Landscape Review states:

"The submitted LVA correctly highlights that the site falls completely within the Nottingham and Derby Green Belt. However, there is no specific assessment included within the LVA to determine the effects of the proposals on the openness of the Green Belt. Nevertheless, the conclusion states, "In relation to the landscape policy context therefore, (see Section 4), the findings of this LVA demonstrate that the Proposed Development ... protects the openness and characteristics of the Green Belt." (Page 63)

5.2. This statement is made without:

"justification. I am also not aware of any separate Green Belt Assessment being submitted with the application. I recommend that the Applicant carries out a Green Belt Assessment to assess the baseline contribution that sites make to the five NPPF purposes of the Green Belt, before considering how the proposals may affect this"

5.3. The Green Belt Assessment has been submitted in conjunction with the LVA Addendum. The Proposed Development site has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) five purposes of including land in the Green Belt, which are outlined below;

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other land.

5.4. The Green Belt Assessment assesses the environmental impacts of the proposed solar development on the surrounding Green Belt and provides insight to the environmental benefits of the solar farm and associated mitigation measures. The assessment takes into consideration the five purposes in the NPPF and demonstrates that the proposed development will be environmentally beneficial to the Green Belt.

6. CUMUALTIVE EFFECTS

6.1. Section states of the Council's Landscape Review states:

This application is one of several solar farm proposals currently being considered by Rushcliffe Borough Council. I have also provided separate landscape reviews for 22/00809/FUL (Land at Church Farm, Kingston on Soar) and 22/00303/FUL (Land at Highfields Farm, Costock). Due to intervening vegetation, topography, and elements of built development, I do not identify any intervisibility between the three proposed sites and therefore do not consider there to be cumulative visual effects. In addition, if all were to be approved, I do not believe the scale of landscape change would lead to significant cumulative landscape character effects. There may be a low-level change noticed by people travelling by car or walking along the Midshires Way on routes that come close to multiple solar farm sites, but this would be minor across the wider landscape character areas (the East Leake Rolling Farmland and the Gotham and West Leake Hills and Scarps)."

6.2. We welcome the acknowledgment that due to intervening vegetation, topography, and elements of built development, there would not be any intervisibility between the three proposed sites and therefore, **no discernible cumulative visual effects.**

7. SUMMARY

- 7.1. We welcome the useful comments provided Wynne Williams Associates (on behalf of Rushcliffe Borough Council) in relation to the LVA submitted in support in support of a Planning Application for a proposed solar farm development to the south of Gotham. In particular, we welcome the recognition that the approach to the LVA is fit for purpose and that most of the assessment findings are agreed with. In response to concerns raised on the adverse nature of visual impact at viewpoints 6 and 7, the arrays and associated infrastructure within field 16 and the southern half of field 15 have been removed from the Proposed Development. To reduce the nature of adverse visual effects on the residents at Stone House and Cuckoo Bush Farm, a 10m buffer of native woodland and scrub alongside nearby visible edges has also been incorporated into the Proposed Development. Additionally, a detailed Green Belt Assessment has been undertaken to provide further evidence that effects on the Green Belt would not be detrimental to its purposes.
- 7.2. In considering the additional information provided in this Addendum LVA, it is apparent there is agreement between both parties that:
- **No significant** effects are predicted on any landscape character types/areas or landscape designations within the study area;
 - In considering the removal of development from the southern half of field 15, effects from the PRoW towards the southern end of field 15 would be **not significant**;
 - In considering the removal of development from the southern half of field 15 and all of field 16, effects from viewpoints 6 and 7 would be **not significant**;
 - Once planting matures, effects on Stone House and Cuckoo Bush Farm are predicted to be **not significant**; and
 - There would no discernible cumulative visual effects.
- 7.3. In summary therefore, it is clearly apparent that in considering the revised layout and associated LEMP, all landscape-related concerns raised in the Council's Landscape Review have been successfully addressed. As such, the Proposed Development raises **no major conflicts** in landscape-related policy.

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