



North Hertfordshire District Council
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 3JF

18/02/2025

Dear Ben Glover,

Ref: 24/02713/FP - Land At Radwell Bury Farm Newnham Road Newnham Hertfordshire

Thank you for consulting us on the Installation of Battery Storage System with associated infrastructure, earthworks, landscaping and access.

This review is based on a desktop study and site visit (31/01/2025) of the above-named application.

Summary

We assess that some of the judgements provided may have underassessed the impacts, however our difference in judgement is not deemed substantial. We judge the proposed development could be accommodated within this location alongside a suitable mitigation strategy that reduces the visual effect of the scheme from surrounding receptors.

Site Context

The application site is located to the east of Baldock Services on the A1, accessed via Newnham Road. The Site comprises a rectangular shaped parcel of land which is part of a larger arable field. The south-east and north-east boundaries are defined by the existing field boundaries, which includes occasional established trees and fragmented hedgerow. Existing overhead cables cross the application Site, with a pylon located on the immediate north-eastern site boundary and are dominant features within the landscape. Baldock Services are located to the west however the extent of landscape planning which has established around this area screens this developed area from the site. The surrounding landscape comprises open arable countryside.

Policy Context

Policies to be considered within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (Adopted 2022) that are relevant to landscape include Policies ENV3, ENV5, NE1, NE2 and SP12.

Review of Submitted Information

The application has been supported by the submission of a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) produced by Axis. The assessment broadly follows the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) and assessed sensitivity (value and susceptibility) magnitude of change and overall effects. Viewpoint photography was undertaken in June 2024 when there was full leaf cover, and therefore does not represent the worst-case scenario. However, Limitations (Para 3.6.2) state that *"the appraisal has therefore taken an approach to appraise a reasonable 'worst-case' appraisal of visual effects which utilises the experience of the experienced landscape architect overseeing the LVA to estimate the likely increased visibility during winter months"*.

Landscape Character

The North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment (2011) identifies the site as being located in Area 224 'North Baldock Chalk Uplands'. Key characteristics of this LCA includes rolling chalk landform, large scale arable fields, remnant field boundaries, rectilinear field pattern, nucleated settlements. Telecommunications and major transport routes (A1) are strong features of the landscape.

For LCA 224, the LVA (Section 5.3) assesses a **low value** and **low susceptibility**, forming an overall **low sensitivity** to this LCA. The LVA also assesses a **small** degree of landscape change, resulting in an overall **minor adverse** level of landscape effect.

We would judge that the susceptibility judgement is too low. The “*large scale open landscape*” is a characteristic feature of this countryside landscape and increases the susceptibility, owed to the limited screening provided by the boundary vegetation enclosure, and therefore lessens the ability of the landscape to accommodate change. We consequently judge that the **low sensitivity** is too low.

Notwithstanding this, where our judgements may differ, these would still not constitute significant effects on LCA 224.

Visual Amenity

We note that the submitted viewpoint photography has been undertaken in both summer months when vegetation is in full leaf cover, and also not on a clear day where the view appears foggy.

While the viewpoints selected are suitable, we would have recommended that an additional viewpoint was taken from Newnham Road at the existing gateway (Figure 1) into the application site, representing the most close-distance view. Based on the included Methodology (Appendix A), we would judge that this view would have a **low-medium** sensitivity, and a **medium** magnitude of change and an overall **moderate-minor adverse** level of effect.



Figure 1: View from site entrance on Newnham Road

However, we acknowledge Para 3.9.3 of the LVA which states that “*Viewpoint locations were initially confirmed with the relevant landscape officer (at the Council) and subsequently refined during the site*

visit to avoid localised screening and to select camera positions to illustrate the most representative views”.

The LVA (Section 5.3) assesses that Viewpoint 1 has **low sensitivity**, combined with a **small change** to judge a **minor adverse** overall level of effect. Viewpoint 2 has **medium-low sensitivity**, combined with a **small change** to judge a **minor adverse** overall level of effect.

Longer distance views from Viewpoints 4 and 5 are judged to have **negligible** overall level of effect.

Part of the justification for the **small change** assessment includes that there is a variety of features including pylons and turbines in the view which limit the visual change. However, as noted in Views 1 and 2, there are limited ground level built structures within the arable countryside, particularly at this close range. Particularly during construction, the proposals would introduce urbanising features including tall fences and buildings into a countryside landscape.

Notwithstanding the difference in judgements, the overall effects of the development proposals are able to be mitigated within the landscape through appropriate landscape proposals.

Review of Submitted Information

The submitted Planning Design and Access Statement (PDAS) identifies the maximum height for any proposed infrastructure (Para 3.2.3) as 4.1m (control room and welfare building).

Whilst the submitted LVA judges that Viewpoint 1 has only low sensitivity and minor adverse effects, judge that this is one of the more sensitive views and additional mitigation measures should be sought to reduce the impact of the urbanising features.

Guidelines for LCA 224 state; “*Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees*”. In addition to the additional trees proposed on the site edges, we advise that the existing hedgerows are enhanced.

Given the scale of the SuDS basins we would advise that further planting is proposed to provide biodiversity.

We advise that hedgerow and tree planting is proposed on the west and north edge of the application site, designed to screen and filter views of the proposed security fences.

Some additional information could be submitted regarding the proposed lighting. We anticipate that security lighting will be proposed which could be timed/sensor activated. We advise that some additional information is submitted demonstrating what measures have been proposed to reduce the potential light pollution within the countryside.

Overall, we assess that some of the judgements provided may have underassessed the impacts, however our difference in judgement is not deemed substantial. We judge the proposed development could be accommodated within this location alongside a suitable mitigation strategy that reduces the visual effect of the scheme from surrounding receptors.

We advise the following conditions are considered:

SUBMISSION OF LANDSCAPE DETAILS

Prior to commencement of landscape works hereby approved, details comprising plans and particulars shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority showing precise details of the hard and soft landscaping which shall form part of the development hereby permitted. Any scheme of landscaping details as may be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority shall show the existing trees, shrubs, and hedgerows on the site where to be retained and shall include details of:

- *A specification of soft landscape works, include a schedule of species, size, density and spacing of all trees, shrubs and hedgerows to be planted.*

- areas to be grass seeded or turfed, including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment.
- paved or otherwise hard surfaced areas including the extent, together with the type and specification of all surfaces.
- existing and finished levels shown as contours with cross-sections, if appropriate.
- specification of all means of enclosure and all boundary treatments, all boundary treatments around the perimeter of the site.
- external lighting on the boundary of, and within the site.

Such details as may be agreed, shall be implemented in their entirety during the first planting season (October to March inclusive) following approval, or in any other such phased arrangement as may be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure adequate control over design and to ensure a satisfactory appearance in the interests of visual amenity in compliance with Policy SP12 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN (LMP)

No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority a landscape management plan for a minimum of 5 years. This should include:

- a) Drawing/s showing the extent of the LMP i.e. only showing the areas to which the LMP applies, areas of private ownership should be excluded
- b) Written Specification detailing:
 - All operation and procedures for soft landscape areas; inspection, watering, pruning, cutting, mowing, clearance and removal of arisings and litter, removal of temporary items (fencing, guards and stakes) and replacement of failed planting.
 - All operations and procedures for hard landscape areas; inspection, sweeping, clearing of accumulated vegetative material and litter, maintaining edges, and painted or finished surfaces.
 - All operations and procedures for surface water drainage system; inspection of linear drains, basins and swales, removal of unwanted vegetative material and litter including inlets and outlets.
- c) Maintenance task table which explains the maintenance duties across the site in both chronological and systematic order.
- d) Mechanism for monitoring and review of the management plan and operations.

Reason - To support plant establishment and ensure appropriate management is carried out and to maintain functionality and visual aesthetic in accordance with Policy SP12 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

If you have any queries relating to the above, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Yours sincerely,

Megan Cowell BA (Hons) MA
Landscape Consultant