

Appendix D – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment





Sperberry Hill Solar Array and BESS Project

Proposed Development of a Photovoltaic Solar Array, Battery Storage and Associated Infrastructure on Land at Redcoats Farm to the South of St Ippolyts, North Hertfordshire

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Prepared for



Brockwell Energy

October 2024
3732-01-LVIA



Document Control

Revision	Date	Prepared By	Reviewed / Approved By
01	September 2024	TR	ToK

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) follows best practice guidance set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment¹, hereafter referred to as the GLVIA.
- 1.1.2 Landscape and visual effects are separate, although closely related and interlinked issues.
- 1.1.3 Landscape effects are caused by physical changes to the landscape, which may result in changes to the fabric or distinctive character of that landscape and how it is perceived.
- 1.1.4 Visual effects are caused by changes to what can be seen by people as a result of what is proposed. A visual assessment assesses the change in visual amenity undergone by people (either individually or in groups) that would arise from any change in the nature of views experienced.
- 1.1.5 In accordance with guidance set out in the GLVIA, the LVIA adopts an approach proportionate to the likely significant effects of the proposed development. The conclusions of the LVIA have been determined via use of professional judgement, set within a structured assessment framework, and supported by reasoned justification.
- 1.1.6 The LVIA aims to establish the following:
- i) A clear understanding of the Site and its context, in respect of the physical and perceived landscape and in respect of views and visual amenity;
 - ii) An understanding of the proposed development in terms of how this would relate to the existing landscape and views;
 - iii) An identification of the likely significant effects of the proposed development upon the landscape and upon views, throughout the life-cycle of the proposed development;

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013. *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition*. Abingdon: Routledge.



- iv) Potential for mitigation to reduce / eliminate any potential adverse effect on the landscape or views arising as a result of the proposed development; and
- v) A conclusion as to the residual likely significant landscape and visual effects of the proposed development.

1.1.7 The process follows a standard approach, namely:

- i) The establishment of the baseline conditions against which the effects of the proposed development will be assessed, through the identification of landscape and visual receptors;
- ii) The determination of the sensitivity of the receptor likely to be affected;
- iii) A judgement on the magnitude of impact likely to occur;
- iv) An assessment of whether a significant landscape and visual effect would likely be experienced by any receptor, by considering the predicted magnitude of impact together with the sensitivity of the receptor, taking into account any proposed mitigation measures.

1.1.8 Further details regarding the specific methodologies of assessment and determination of significance are included in Appendix 1. The LVIA has been informed by both desk- and field-based studies.

1.1.9 It should be noted that the landscape (including the context in which views are experienced) is dynamic, i.e. it is affected by social, economic, technological and climatic changes, all of which can influence patterns of land use, land cover and land management. As such, the baseline context for the LVIA is not static.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 In February 2022, planning permission (NHDC ref: 22/00709/FP) was sought for a 35.5 hectare solar farm, with associated battery storage, on the same Site as that which is the subject of this planning application. This previous proposal had a 25 megawatt (MW) export capacity, with associated battery storage, and is hereafter referred to as the '2023 Scheme'. On 22 November 2023, NHDC elected to refuse the planning application for the 2023 Scheme.

1.2.2 The planning application set out in this PDAS (hereafter known as the 'Resubmission Scheme') comprises the same application site, description of development and



power generation as the 2023 Scheme, albeit with a number of design improvements including an 9.0% reduction in the area of solar panels proposed.

1.3 Competence

- 1.3.1 The LVIA was undertaken by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) with over ten years' experience in the landscape and visual assessment of major infrastructure projects. The LVIA was directed and reviewed by a second CMLI with over twenty-five years' similar experience.



2.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Proposed Development

2.1.1 The Resubmission Scheme comprises a 25 MW solar farm with associated 25MW of battery storage which would have an operational life of forty years, and would comprise:

- i) Photovoltaic Solar Panels and associated support frames;
- ii) String Inverters;
- iii) 4 No. Transformer Stations;
- iv) 8 No. Battery Storage Containers and associated inverter/transformers;
- v) 1 No. DNO Substation;
- vi) 1 No. Switchroom Building;
- vii) 1 No. Control Room Building;
- viii) Grid Connection Cable to National Grid's Wymondley Substation;
- ix) c.1.3km of new/resurfaced internal access tracks (3.5m wide and constructed using Type 1 stone);
- x) 2 No. improved existing access points off Little Almshoe Lane, and an access point from Stevenage Road;
- xi) Ditch culverts for track crossings;
- xii) c. 4.5km deer/stock fencing;
- xiii) c. 29 No. 4m high CCTV cameras;
- xiv) c. 5,600 m² woodland planting, and
- xv) c. 2,320m hedgerow planting (new and gapping up of existing).
- xvi) New areas of species rich grassland.

2.2 Environmental Design and Management

2.2.1 The landscape proposals that would form part of the Resubmission Scheme are illustrated indicatively on Figure 1, and would be developed in detail prior to commencement of the development.

2.2.2 The Resubmission Scheme has been designed to retain all existing hedgerow and woodland vegetation. A minimum 6m buffer has been allowed between these features and the solar farm boundary fencing. These buffer areas would be sown with a species-rich wildflower and grass mix that would be managed for biodiversity benefits. The arable land within the boundary fence would be seeded with a low



intensity grazing grass mix and hedgerows within the site would be allowed to grow to enhance biodiversity and screening. Additional hedgerows and woodland planting are also proposed to provide further screening, landscape integration and habitat connectivity.

2.2.3 The '2023 Scheme' was reviewed by The Landscape Partnership (TLP) on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council in June 2022 (the 'TLP Review'). Section 5.5 of the TLP Review made four recommendations to reduce the impact of the Scheme on landscape and visual receptors, these were:

- i) "Easing of slopes of the 2.5 m bund to rear of Redcoats Farm from c 1 in 3 to c 1 in 6. This would create a more natural landform and enable planting to establish.
- ii) Adding additional planting to the west of Redcoats Farm boundary.
- iii) Reducing the proportion /or removing blackthorn (currently 30%) in the new hedges as blackthorn will sucker and invade public footpath corridors and could eventually make them impassable. This is most notable along Footpaths Wymondley 14, 15 and 16 through the Site.
- iv) Adding some tree planting to the north-west corner to soften views from residential properties to the edge of St Ippolyts."

2.2.4 The Applicant has considered the above recommendations as part of the design review for the Resubmission Scheme and has adopted the measures set out by TLP. In addition, the Applicant has made additional changes beyond those suggested by TLP to further reduce the impact of the Resubmission Scheme. The changes are summarised as follows:

- i) The bund proposed to the south of Redcoats Farm has been removed with alternative mitigation now proposed. The solar panels (and associated fencing) have now been moved further south to create an open species-rich meadow adjacent to the south of Redcoats Farm. Moving the solar panels further south in this area should also provide benefit due to the topography of the land, with panels further from Redcoats Farm where the ground falls away towards the south, retaining the openness of views. This is in accordance with the recommendation made by the TLP Review.



- ii) The solar panels (and associated fencing) have been moved further away from the western edge of Redcoats Farm and a new block of woodland planting is proposed in this location, as recommended by the TLP Review.
- iii) Blackthorn has been retained in the proposed species mix as it is a characteristic local native species that provides benefits for wildlife, however in accordance with the TLP Review the proportion of blackthorn in the proposed hedgerows has been reduced to reduce suckering.
- iv) An area of solar panels (and associated fencing) has been removed from the north-western corner of the Scheme and a further area of woodland planting is proposed in this location to further soften views from properties to the edge of St Ippolyts, as recommended by the TLP Review.
- v) An area of solar panels (and associated infrastructure) lying south-east of the Hertfordshire Way has been removed from the Scheme. In so doing the Hertfordshire Way would no longer pass through the solar farm but simply run alongside its southernmost boundary. As a consequence, views south from this section of the footpath would remain open.

2.2.5 Alongside the above changes, the landscape proposals inherent in the design are summarised as follows:

- i) Grassland within the perimeter/stock fencing suitable for sheep grazing, with a sward comprising a broad selection of grasses, herbs and clover that are productive for livestock, and which provide pollen and nectar for biodiversity benefit;
- ii) Species-rich grassland between field boundaries and perimeter/stock fencing to contribute to enhancing hedgerow buffer zones for improved ecological connectivity;
- iii) New native-species hedgerows alongside Sperberry Hill and public footpaths for visual screening and ecological connectivity, and for the purpose of landscape integration by restoring boundaries that have likely been lost through historic widening; and
- iv) Gapping up of existing hedgerows around and within the Site which are generally in a poor and declining condition, with fragmentation reducing their function as ecological corridors and potential for visual screening.



- 2.2.6 During the forty-year operational life of the Resubmission Scheme the Site would be grazed by sheep and/or mown in accordance with a Landscape Management Plan. Hedgerows would be managed to increase their height and width, such that existing and proposed hedgerows would be maintained at a minimum of 3m in height.
- 2.2.7 Following decommissioning, the Site could easily be returned to arable use, or retained permanently as pasture. The proposed boundary hedgerows and woodland would be retained permanently to provide long-term landscape and biodiversity benefits.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Legislation and Guidance

- 3.1.1 Details of the planning and policy background, including an appraisal of effects on relevant landscape-related policies as set out in the adopted Statutory Development Plan, are included in the Planning Design and Access Statement.

Planning Policy

- 3.1.2 For details of relevant planning policies, refer to the Planning and Design & Access Statement.

3.2 Assessment Methodology

- 3.2.1 As noted in Section 1, this LVIA has followed a methodology which has been developed using the published good practice guidelines set out in the GLVIA. The detailed methodology followed in undertaking the LVIA is set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.2.2 The LVIA also follows the Landscape Institute's current guidance regarding the production of visualisations². The methodology followed in the production of visualisation material is set out in Appendix 2.

3.3 Study Area

- 3.3.1 The purpose of the study area is to identify the area from which there is likelihood for significant landscape or visual effects. Whilst the Resubmission Scheme may be perceived from beyond the study area, the assessment has considered that the combination of distance, intervening landform and vegetation is such that there would not be significant effects.
- 3.3.2 To inform the extent of the study area, a zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) for the Resubmission Scheme was established.
- 3.3.3 The ZTV on Figure 2 models the visibility of the Resubmission Scheme based on a Digital Surface Model (DSM) which reflects the presence of vegetation, buildings and

² Landscape Institute, 2019. *Visual Representation of Development Proposals. Technical Guidance Note 06/19*



- other structures in the landscape; as such it is considered to be a reasonably realistic representation of where the Resubmission Scheme is likely to be visible from.
- 3.3.4 The methodology for the ZTV is set out in the notes on Figure 2, along with a summary of the process in Appendix 2.
- 3.3.5 Figure 2 demonstrates that there would be no visibility of the Resubmission Scheme from beyond the Site boundary to the north, principally as a result of landform with the Site located across south-facing slopes, but also as a result of the pattern of vegetation close to the northern Site boundary.
- 3.3.6 Figure 2 identifies that visibility of the Site is therefore from the landscape south of the Site, with intermittent visibility demonstrated from the south-east to the south-west, principally relating to areas of higher ground at Mill Hill and Poynders End. The strongly undulating landform means that localised ridgelines interrupt views such that there is generally no visibility from low-lying parts of the landscape south of Mill Hill or west of the Site.
- 3.3.7 Fieldwork was undertaken in Summer 2021 to review the ZTV against the actual visibility of the Site and fix the study area for assessment. The fieldwork considered the potential for seasonal variation between summer and winter based on the characteristics of the vegetation present in the landscape.
- 3.3.8 The study area for the LVIA is not uniform in extent such that it represents the true area of potential intervisibility. The study area is shown on Figure 3 and approximately extends:
- i) along Sperberry Hill and Stevenage Road to the north of the Site, with vegetation along the north side of the road preventing views from further north;
 - ii) 0.6km east of the Site towards Titmore Green and a hill rising south of Lower Titmore Green;
 - iii) 0.6km south of the Site towards Almshoe Bury across Mill Hill;
 - iv) 2.2km south-west of the Site towards the ridgeline at Poynders End; and
 - v) 1.6km west towards Gosmore Hill.
- 3.3.9 As demonstrated by the ZTV, the Site's position on south-facing slopes means it is not visible from the north or north-west, and with very limited visibility in a westerly direction. The Chilterns AONB is approximately 3.8km west-north-west at its closest



point, however due to the position of the Site in relation to the underlying landform and pattern of vegetation, the Site is not distinguishable from the Chilterns AONB and similarly the Resubmission Scheme at approximately 2.4m in height across much of the Site would not be distinguishable from the Chilterns AONB. Field work was undertaken from the Chilterns AONB and no views of the Site could be identified, and therefore no views with the potential to be significantly affected could be identified.

- 3.3.10 Landscape and visual impacts on the Chilterns AONB have therefore been scoped out of the assessment on the basis that any impact would not be significant as a result of distance, the height and scale of the development, and the intervening landform and vegetation pattern.

3.4 Assessment of Significance / Assessment Criteria

- 3.4.1 Not all landscape and visual effects arising as a result of a particular proposal will be significant. Furthermore, where likely significant environmental effects are predicted, this does not automatically mean that such effects are unacceptable. The acceptability of landscape and visual effects is a matter to be weighed in the planning balance alongside other factors. What is important is that the likely effects of any proposal are transparently assessed and described in order that the relevant determining authority can bring a balanced and well-informed judgement to bear as part of the decision-making process.
- 3.4.2 In the case of development (such as that proposed) that does not require Environmental Impact Assessment, there is no requirement to state whether an effect is significant or not.
- 3.4.3 The judgement in relation to this LVIA is that a greater than 'moderate' level of effect is more likely to be significant. This is because such an effect would generally result from larger magnitudes of change on higher sensitivity receptors. This does not preclude a 'moderate' effect or lower being significant, or a greater than 'moderate' effect not being significant. The professional judgement made will depend on the specific circumstances being considered. Refer to Appendix 1 for further details.

Scope of Assessment

- 3.4.4 The scope of this LVIA was originally discussed in relation to the 2023 Scheme with North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) as set out in Appendix 2. The Site



Boundary has not changed for the Resubmission Scheme, with the impacts of the Scheme reducing rather than increasing, and therefore no further consultation has been undertaken in relation to the Resubmission Scheme.

3.5 Limitations

- 3.5.1 Assessment work reflects the level of vegetation cover present at the time of the field visits to the Study Area (July and September 2021), with deciduous foliage in leaf. Where relevant to its conclusions, the LVIA makes assumptions as to the likely visibility of the Resubmission Scheme in winter when vegetation is not in leaf.



4.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

4.1 Data Collection

- 4.1.1 Baseline data for the LVIA has been gathered by both desk- and field-based surveys. These have included a review of extant landscape character assessment studies (see below) and field visits to gain an understanding of the landscape and visual context of the Site.

4.2 The Site and its Surroundings

- 4.2.1 The Site of the Resubmission Scheme is shown on Figure 3 and comprises approximately 35.1ha of arable farmland south of the Wymondley Substation. The Site is split by Little Almshoe Lane, with a 16.4ha parcel to the west of the lane, and an 18.7ha parcel to the east of the lane. Both parts of the Site can be accessed from Little Almshoe Lane, with an additional access available via a track from Stevenage Road to the east of Redcoats Farmhouse.
- 4.2.2 The western part of the Site (west of Little Almshoe Lane) is bounded by Sperberry Hill to the north, Tittendell Lane to the west, and Little Almshoe Lane to the south and east. Access to the field is from a gate along its eastern boundary to Little Almshoe Lane. The field is in arable use and crossed by high voltage power lines linking in to Wymondley Substation to the north, with a single high voltage pylon in the northern part of the field. There is also a line of smaller pylons and power lines across the southern part of the field on a north-east to south-west axis.
- 4.2.3 The eastern part of the Site (east of Little Almshoe Lane) comprises one large irregularly-shaped field to the north, and the western part of a second field to the south. Both fields are in arable use, with access to the fields either from Little Almshoe Lane to the west of the northern field, or via a track from Stevenage Road to the east of Redcoats Farmhouse.
- 4.2.4 The Site is located on south-facing slopes with the highest part of the Site approximately 97m above ordnance datum (AOD) along its northern boundary to Sperberry Hill, and the lowest point at approximately 84m AOD at the boundary between the two fields in the eastern part of the Site.



- 4.2.5 With reference to Figure 3, the west of the Site is on a slight plateau but with a fall to the south and west, and the east of the Site has a fall from north to south before rising slightly at the southern boundary of the Site.
- 4.2.6 West of the Site the land falls sharply towards a valley bottom formed by the Ippollitts Brook at an elevation of between 75m and 80m AOD, with the valley extending south through the study area, and a branch off to its east that crosses the south of the Site. On the south side of the valley the land rises to an elevation of approximately 112m AOD at Almshoe Bury on Mill Hill, approximately 0.5km south of the Site. The west and south-west of the valley is formed by a scarp rising to Poynders End at approximately 150m AOD, 2km south-west of the Site.
- 4.2.7 The landscape around the Site chiefly comprises medium to large scale arable fields divided by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, and tree belts around areas of settlement. Local roads are generally lined by hedgerows such that they contribute to the perception of a fairly enclosed landscape character away from areas of high ground. In places, including along the northern boundary of the Site at Sperberry Hill, the loss of sections of hedgerows has fragmented the landscape fabric and is an indicator of a landscape in decline due to existing agricultural pressures.
- 4.2.8 The Wymondley Substation to the north of the Site is within a quarry-type landform enclosed by vegetation on the slopes such that it is visually screened; however, there are a number of high voltage pylons and power lines crossing the landscape to connect in with the substation, such that it indirectly has a degrading influence on the quality of the surrounding landscape.
- 4.2.9 The Site lies entirely within North Hertfordshire District, to the west of Stevenage, between the small settlements of Titmore Green to its east and St Ippolyts to its west. The closest residential receptors to the Site are along Tittendell Lane and Sperberry Hill to the north and west Site boundaries, and from Little Almshoe Lane / Little Almshoe Lane Round the Wyck close to the southern boundary. The Redcoats Farmhouse Hotel and The Robins also adjoin the northern Site boundary.
- 4.2.10 The Site is crossed by three public footpaths:
- i) Footpath Wymondley 014 which crosses the central part of the Site on a north-south axis between Stevenage Road and Little Almshoe Lane Round the Wick;



- ii) Footpath Wymondley 016 which crosses the southern part of the Site on an east-west axis following a ditch between Lower Titmore Green and Little Almshoe Lane Round the Wick; and
 - iii) Footpath Wymondley 015 (part of the Hertfordshire Way) which crosses the southern part of the Site on a north-east to south-west axis between Lower Titmore Green and Mill Hill.
- 4.2.11 The wider landscape of the study area includes good access to the countryside with a network of public rights of way between settlements. The Hertfordshire Way, which crosses the south of the Site, heads north through Titmore Green, Lower Wymondley, Great Wymondley and beyond; and south-west towards the Chiltern Way trail which it joins west of Mill Hill, and continues towards the ridgeline at Poynders End.
- 4.2.12 The landscape around the Site is influenced by the noise of traffic along the local road network and further afield at the A1(M) and A602, which in combination with visual detractors including pylons and power lines reduces the perception of tranquillity or remoteness in the landscape.

Landscape Designations

- 4.2.13 The Site and study area are not covered by any statutory landscape designations. As set out at Paragraph 3.3.9, the Chilterns AONB is approximately 3.8 km west-north-west of the Site at its closest point such that it is not within the study area.
- 4.2.14 North Hertfordshire District Council does not currently maintain any non-statutory local landscape designations.

Other Designations

- 4.2.15 A brief summary of landscape and visual impacts relating to openness of the Green Belt is provided at Section 8 of this LVIA.
- 4.2.16 An assessment of the Resubmission Scheme in relation to Green Belt policy is provided in the Planning Design and Access Statement.



4.3 Landscape Character Assessment and Other Studies

National Character Areas

- 4.3.1 159 National Character Areas (NCA) have been identified across England by Natural England. Their broad geographic reach means that the key characteristics identified as typical of a particular character area may not necessarily apply to a specific location within that character area.
- 4.3.2 The Site is located within the eastern edge of *NCA 110: Chilterns*³, as shown on Figure 4. NCA 110 is characterised as an extensively wooded and farmed landscape underlain by chalk bedrock with a north-west facing escarpment offering long views. Away from the scarp, *'views are enclosed within branching valleys sunken routeways and extensive woodland and hedgerow-enclosed fields'*.
- 4.3.3 The Site is on the easternmost fringe of the NCA and therefore was found not to exhibit many of the characteristics described for the wider NCA, which is generally more remote and rural in character than the landscape around the Site.

Regional Landscape Character

- 4.3.4 The *East of England Landscape Framework*⁴ comprises a range of information sources aimed at aiding the planning and management of landscape, both urban and rural, in the East of England region. It includes a consistent, integrated landscape typology, which forms a structured, spatial framework for describing and evaluating the countryside.
- 4.3.5 The Site is located within Regional Landscape Character Type (RLCT) 13: Lowland Village Farmlands, as shown on Figure 5. RLCT 13 is described as a *'well settled, low lying landscape which is often crossed by major river corridors. The high density of settlement, intensive agriculture and major transport infrastructure mean that this is often a busy, rural landscape'*.

³ Natural England. 2014. *National Character Area profile: 110 Chilterns*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles#ncas-in-the-east-of-england> > [accessed 09 Sept 2024]

⁴ Landscape East, undated. *Landscape East* [online]. <<http://landscape-east.org.uk/>> [accessed 09 Sept 2024]



- 4.3.6 Key characteristics are not defined for each landscape type. However, a series of objectives⁵ have been identified for each. Objectives for RLCT 13 which are relevant to the Site and Resubmission Scheme are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Regional Character Types: Key Objectives

Regional Character Type	Key Objective
RLCT 13: Lowland Village Farmlands	• Manage and enhance the agricultural landscape and address loss of biodiversity from agricultural intensification and the impact of 'horseculture' ○ restore gappy hedges and reinstate lost hedgerows adding new features using indigenous species mixes and increased number of hedgerow trees of appropriate locally native species ○ reinstate species rich grassland where feasible and locally in character ○ manage existing woodlands using traditional methods (e.g. coppicing), extend existing woodlands, create new woodlands and create linkages with ancient woodland sites and smaller woodland blocks in the valleys but without creating too much visual enclosure in the landscape

County Character

- 4.3.7 At a county level, Hertfordshire County Council published the *Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment*⁶ in 2003-04 in partnership with the District Councils, including North Hertfordshire District Council.
- 4.3.8 The *Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment* subdivided the county into a series of landscape character areas (LCAs). As shown on Figure 6, the Site is located across two LCAs, with most of the Site within the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA, and a part of the south of the Site within the Langley Valley LCA. These LCAs are considered further in relation to the District Character section below.

⁵ Landscape East, 2010. *Integrated Landscape Character Objectives*

⁶ Hertfordshire County Council, 2004. *Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment* [online]
<<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/landscape/landscape-character-assessment.aspx/>> [accessed 09 Sept 2024]



District Character

- 4.3.9 In 2011, North Hertfordshire District Council published the *North Herts Landscape Study*⁷ as part of their Local Development Framework.
- 4.3.10 The North Herts Landscape Study is based on the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment work completed in 2003-04. The original LCA locations, assessments, and evaluations remain the same as the county-level study. The North Herts Landscape Study only adds sensitivity and capacity to the evaluation, and additional guidelines on built development guidelines to supplement the landscape management guidelines. As such, the District Assessment is referred to as part of this LVIA, rather than the County Assessment.
- 4.3.11 As per the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, in the North Herts Landscape Study the Site lies across two LCAs; the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA, and the Langley Valley LCA.

Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA

- 4.3.12 With reference to Figure 6, the key characteristics of the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA are:
- i) “Rolling chalk landscape;
 - ii) Irregular sized fields in arable with parcels of grazing adjacent to settlements;
 - iii) Historic pattern of small winding lanes and historic place names; and
 - iv) Mature tree cover.”
- 4.3.13 In relation to the visual and sensory perception of the LCA, the study notes that the ‘generally mature, well wooded quality of the area helps to integrate the existing settlements into the landscape, contrasting with landscape ‘engineered’ or highway infrastructure purposes or to support statutory undertakers plant.’

⁷ North Hertfordshire District Council, 2011. *North Herts Landscape Study*. [online] <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ID14%20-%20North%20Herts%20Landscape%20Study%202011%20-%20Part%201.pdf> [accessed 09 Sept 2024].



- 4.3.14 In relation to the rarity and distinctiveness of the LCA, the study notes that the LCA has a well-established, historic landscape character, and is comparatively unusual for its distinctive quality.
- 4.3.15 In relation to visual impact, the study notes that a 'Notable detracting feature is the Wymondley transformer station and associated distributor pylons. The A602 dual carriageway linking Hitchin to Junction 8 of the A1(M), crosses the Character Area.'
- 4.3.16 The study identifies landscape character sensitivities for the LCA, with relevant sensitivities including:
- i) 'The relatively small scale rolling landform landscape with small settlements and scattered farmsteads;
 - ii) Small fields and paddocks with well defined and vegetated boundaries surround the settlements. The area would be vulnerable to the removal of hedgerows and boundary vegetation;
 - iii) The small settlements are characterised by village greens, which would be vulnerable to inappropriate development or unsympathetic management;
 - iv) St Ippollyts church is located on upper ground and is a significant feature in the character area. The landmark would be vulnerable to unsympathetic development;
 - v) There are limited public rights of way in the area. However the Hertfordshire Way does go through the character area and would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development;
 - vi) The character area consists of significant infrastructure including the A602, the railway and it is bordered to the east by the A1. These elements are existing detractors to the character of the area.
 - vii) Wymondley Transformer Station and associated electricity pylons stride through the character area, creating an interrupted and fragmented character. They are an existing detractor to the landscape character.
- 4.3.17 Overall, the Study identifies the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA as being of low to moderate landscape sensitivity as its gently undulating arable farmland creates an enclosed character, but with the area degraded by infrastructure and the electricity transformer station.



- 4.3.18 The study goes on to identify visual sensitivities for the LCA, the following of which are relevant to this LVIA and the Resubmission Scheme:
- i) 'Views of St Ippolytts church on the skyline and views from the church into the valley;
 - ii) Views from the character area into neighbouring parkland style character area (Langley Valley);
 - iii) Setting of the traditional villages and village greens.'
- 4.3.19 Overall, the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA is identified as being of low visual sensitivity, as views '*are degraded by a number of factors including the infrastructure and the electricity transformer station.*'
- 4.3.20 The North Herts Landscape Study identifies that the LCA is of overall low landscape value as although there are a few isolated unusual views with the area, it has many incongruous elements including the transport routes and high levels of human and urban influence.
- 4.3.21 The study evaluates the capacity for the LCA to accommodate different types and scales of development. Whilst solar development is not a form of development evaluated, the LCA is identified as having between a low to moderate capacity for other types of development.
- 4.3.22 The overall strategy for the LCA is to '*conserve and restore*', with relevant guidelines for managing change including:
- i) "Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas;
 - ii) Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas;
 - iii) Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas;
 - iv) Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees;
 - v) Maintain and extend the rights of way network;
 - vi) Encourage the managements of acidic neutral grassland areas;

- vii) Conserve the traditional character of the settlements, ensuring that any development located within or on the edge of the villages uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual impact;
- viii) Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges;
- ix) Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen any new development;
- x) Retain the rural character and intimate scale of Wymondley and Titmore Green, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area;
- xi) Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on upper ground or where they would be visible on the skyline.”

Langley Valley LCA

4.3.23 The key characteristics of the Langley Valley LCA are:

- i) “Rolling chalk landform;
- ii) Dominant large scale arable farming;
- iii) Smaller areas of grazing on steeper chalk slopes to the south of Hitchin;
- iv) Woodland plantations on most pronounced chalk landscape. Relatively little woodland cover elsewhere.”

4.3.24 In relation to the visual and sensory perception of the LCA, the study notes that the ‘valley is a combination of mature, well wooded valley sides in the upper reaches with a wider shallow sided valley washing up against a sub-urban fringe in the north-east. The valley is well defined along its boundary with the Langley scarp to its west.’

4.3.25 In relation to the rarity and distinctiveness of the LCA, the study notes that the landscape is relatively common to the locality.

4.3.26 The study identifies landscape character sensitivities for the LCA, with relevant sensitivities including:

- i) ‘The landform plays a significant role in the character of Langley Valley, consisting of a network of ridges and wet or dry valleys;
- ii) Vegetation is present within valley bottoms and along streams where they are present. This would be vulnerable to removal;



- iii) Settlement is sparse within Langley Valley, consisting of small nucleated villages with historic cores, estates and scattered farmsteads. This would be sensitive to unsympathetic development not in scale with the villages;
 - iv) Hedgerows throughout the Character Area are variable. Some are tall and well managed, whilst others have been removed. Hedgerows would be sensitive to further removal;
 - v) Good public access through rights of way, particularly around Hitchin, including the Chiltern Way and the Hertfordshire Way.'
- 4.3.27 Overall, the Study identifies the Langley Valley LCA as being of moderate landscape sensitivity as its gently undulating network of ridges and valleys creates an enclosed landscape but with some urban influence.
- 4.3.28 The study goes on to identify visual sensitivities for the LCA, the following of which are relevant to this LVIA and the Resubmission Scheme:
- i) 'Expansive open views are possible from the tops of the valleys, often through gaps in vegetation;
 - ii) Views within the valleys are generally more contained by landform;
 - iii) Electricity pylons currently intrude on views within the centre of the Character Area;
 - iv) Langley Valley has a strong visual relationship with the adjacent Langley Scarp.'
- 4.3.29 Overall, the Langley Valley LCA is identified as being of moderate to high visual sensitivity, as panoramic views from vantage points and views along the valleys are important features of the character area and would be sensitive to the introduction of built features.
- 4.3.30 The North Herts Landscape Study identifies that the LCA is of overall moderate to low landscape value as a result of the sense of openness, but with a less memorable landform, lack of remoteness and general human influence on the landscape that detracts from it.
- 4.3.31 The study evaluates the capacity for the LCA to accommodate different types and scales of development. Whilst solar development is not a form of development evaluated, the LCA is generally identified as having a low capacity for other types of development.



4.3.32 The overall strategy for the LCA is to ‘reconstruct’, with relevant guidelines for managing change including:

- i) “Promote planting of new woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora especially in relation to sub-urban fringe areas;
- ii) Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas;
- iii) Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas;
- iv) Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas;
- v) Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees;
- vi) Maintain and extend the rights of way network;
- vii) Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges;
- viii) Retain the rural character and intimate scale of Langley Valley, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to Langley Valley;
- ix) Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in long distance views; and
- x) Avoid the location of new development on visually exposed ridge areas.”

Summary

4.3.33 The landscape character of the study area has been classified at national, regional, county and district levels. It is clear from all levels of classification that the Site sits within a transitional part of the landscape, in an area strongly influenced by peri-urban land uses with more rural land cover to the south and west, and more human influence to its north and east. The evidence for this comes across in the Site’s position towards the fringe of published character areas, or straddling the boundary of character areas, and that it exhibits some but not all of the published key characteristics for areas.

4.3.34 Common to all levels of classification are that the Site is part of a gently undulating landform on the fringe of the Langley Valley, with the Langley Scarp further to the south-west. The landscape is identified as being influenced by intensive agriculture,



major transport corridors, and electricity infrastructure and as such is noted as being a busy, rural landscape. Despite this it is also described as having some historic characteristics with a rural settlement pattern of small winding lanes and a good right of way network.

4.3.35 Key relevant sensitivities to development include:

- i) the preservation of the existing hedgerow network which is noted as being fragmented and contributing to an interrupted character;
- ii) the protection of expansive views from elevated positions in the area, including by the avoidance of development across skylines, and in protecting views towards St Ippollyts church which is identified as a local landmark;
- iii) the protection of the public right of way network, including the Hertfordshire Way; and
- iv) the retention of the rural character of the area, and ensuring the appropriate siting, scale, style and form of development.

Future Landscape Change

4.3.36 In the absence of the Resubmission Scheme, it is considered that the Site would continue in its current state, i.e. in intensive arable use.

4.4 Visual Baseline

4.4.1 To understand the visual context of the Site, desk-based study and fieldwork was carried out across the study area between July 2021 and September 2021.

4.4.2 As set out in paragraphs 3.3.2 to 3.3.8, a ZTV of the Resubmission Scheme was prepared as part of the determination of the LVIA study area.

4.4.3 In summary, the ZTV indicates that there would not be visibility of the Site from the north as a result of the Site's location across south-facing slopes, but also as a result of the pattern of vegetation close to the Site boundary. The ZTV demonstrates the Site's visibility relates to the Site boundary and the rolling valley landscape south of the Site with intermittent visibility from areas of higher ground on the north-facing valley slopes, but no or very limited visibility from low-lying parts of the valley.

4.4.4 Fieldwork was undertaken to verify the visibility of the Site considering the influence of features not captured in the ZTV, such as vegetation, buildings, structures,



- localised changes in landform, and the effect of distance. The purpose of the fieldwork was to identify viewpoints to be taken forward for the visual assessment.
- 4.4.5 Viewpoints have been identified to represent the range of views experienced by visual receptors from various distances and directions around the Site.
- 4.4.6 A total of 15 viewpoints have been identified within the study area. These viewpoints have been discussed with NHDC as the local planning authority, as set out in Section 3 of Appendix 2.
- 4.4.7 Viewpoints can fall into three categories, as set out in the GLVIA:
- i) Representative viewpoints (which represent the experience of different types of receptors in the vicinity);
 - ii) Specific viewpoints (a particular view, for example a well-known beauty spot);
 - iii) Illustrative viewpoints (which illustrate a particular effect / issue, which may include limited / lack of visibility).
- 4.4.8 The locations of viewpoints are shown on Figure 7.
- 4.4.9 Baseline photography has been captured from each of the viewpoints and is presented on Figures 8 to 22, which are annotated where appropriate to highlight key features.
- 4.4.10 The following section provides a summary of the visual amenity of the study area, and views towards the Site, with reference to the 15 viewpoints (VPs).
- 4.4.11 It should be noted that the viewpoint itself is not the receptor; rather the receptor is the people that would be experiencing the view from the viewpoint. Receptors in the vicinity of the Site that are likely to experience views of the development include:
- i) Residents in nearby properties;
 - ii) Users of public rights of way and other routes / land with public access; and
 - iii) Road users.
- 4.4.12 The full narrative on the visual context and judgements on visual value, susceptibility and the sensitivity of visual receptors are set out in Appendix 4.
- 4.4.13 The fieldwork and viewpoint photography undertaken demonstrates the accuracy of the ZTV presented on Figure 2, with visibility of the Site found to be localised to the

Site boundary, and from intermittent footpaths across elevated north-facing slopes to the south-east, south and south-west.

4.4.14 The viewpoints included in the LVIA are set out in Table 2:

Table 2 Viewpoint Locations

Viewpoint (VP)	British National Grid Co-ordinates	Viewpoint Details
VP 1: View south-east from Sperberry Hill	519956, 226792	Representative of views available to residents, and of road users
VP 2: View south from Sperberry Hill	520427, 226604	Representative of views available to road users
VP 3: View south from PRoW Wymondley 014 close to Sperberry Hill	520679, 226490	Representative of views available to footpath users, local residents, and visitors to Redcoats Hotel
VP 4: View east from Tittendell Lane	520021, 226550	Representative of views available to footpath users and local residents
VP 5: View north-east from corner between Little Almshoe Lane and Tittendell Lane	520099, 226224	Representative of views available to road users and footpath users
VP 6: View north from Little Almshoe Lane Round the Wyck	520163, 226039	Representative of views available to residents
VP 7: View north-east from PRoW Ippollitts 018	520463, 226198	Representative of views available to residents and footpath users
VP 8: View north from PRoW Ippollitts 021, part of the Hertfordshire Way	520673, 225499	Representative of views available to footpath users of the Hertfordshire Way
VP 9: View north from PRoW Ippollitts 021 at the Site boundary	520894, 225848	Representative of views available to footpath users of the Hertfordshire Way
VP 10: View south-west from PRoW Wymondley 015, part of the Hertfordshire Way	521154, 226161	Representative of views available to footpath users of the Hertfordshire Way
VP 11: View west from PRoW Wymondley 017, part of the Hertfordshire Way	521293, 226483	Representative of views available to footpath users of the Hertfordshire Way and local residents
VP 12: View north-west from PRoW Wymondley 022	521607, 225624	Representative of views available to footpath users
VP 13: View east from the B656	519620, 226369	Representative of views available to footpath users and local residents
VP 14: View east from PRoW Ippollitts 008 at Preston Road	518568, 225945	Representative of views available to footpath users and local residents
VP 15: View north-east from PRoW Langley 001, part of the Chiltern Way	519217, 224817	Representative of views available to footpath users and local residents of the Chiltern Way

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

5.1 Embedded Mitigation

5.1.1 A series of measures have been incorporated into both the design of the Resubmission Scheme and the drawing up of the construction and operational procedures, which are intended to provide embedded mitigation against potentially adverse landscape and visual effects and other environmental effects. These measures include:

- i) The landscape proposals set out in Section 2.2 and shown on Figure 1;
- ii) The development of an 'on demand' external security and maintenance lighting system in accordance with best practice measures, which would minimise the generation of obtrusive light/ light spillage when in use; and
- iii) The implementation of a project-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which would govern construction activities, and would include measures to protect existing vegetation and control construction lighting.

5.1.2 The landscape and visual effects of the Resubmission Scheme (as assessed below) therefore relate to a project that has benefited from mitigation by design.

5.2 Construction Phase

Overview

5.2.1 Construction would be managed in accordance with a CEMP, setting out how environmental issues would be managed in compliance with any limitations imposed by the planning permission, as well as in compliance with relevant legislation, regulations and best practice guidance.

5.2.2 Items to be addressed by the CEMP that pertain to landscape and visual effects are likely to include:

- i) Measures for ensuring the successful retention of existing vegetation (for example, use of protective fencing);
- ii) Measures taken to limit the effects of temporary construction lighting;



- iii) Approximate protocols governing the establishment of the temporary contractor's compound(s), to reduce any potential adverse effects upon the amenity of the surrounding area).
- 5.2.3 Construction would, by necessity, require the use of specialist vehicles and other plant, some of which would be readily apparent by virtue of their colour, size or movement. In particular, cranes used to install the transformer stations and battery containers would be particularly visible due to their height. However, these would only be on Site for a small number of days.
- 5.2.4 The timing and phasing of the different elements of construction are not known in detail. However, the assessment assumes the Resubmission Scheme would take approximately thirty-six weeks to build and commission. Different activities would take place at different times during this period and, as such, construction effects would vary over time and would not occur on a consistent basis throughout the construction stage, but rather are likely to vary in intensity with specific effects of shorter duration occurring.
- 5.2.5 Temporary lighting may be required to ensure the health, safety and welfare of those on Site during poor light conditions, and in particular at the beginning and end of the working day in winter. This would require mobile task lighting. Some use of low-level lighting of compounds for security purposes may be required through the night. Potential for adverse effects upon amenity arising from such lighting would, as stated above, be addressed by the CEMP.

Construction Effects

- 5.2.6 Temporary construction compounds would be required within the Site. There would be some loss of arable farmland to accommodate the compounds, but this would be reinstated post-construction.
- 5.2.7 Construction activities would be temporary and localised and would take place in the context of existing periodic movements of large farm vehicles in the local landscape. Construction activities would be temporary and intermittent in nature, having only a limited influence upon the character of the wider landscape outside the Site and upon views beyond the site boundary.



- 5.2.8 The increased presence/ movement of staff, plant and machinery would have obvious effects on views for users of footpaths which cross the Site, which would not be obstructed during the construction process and from which there would be close, direct views of construction; and for local road users along Sperberry Hill, residents at The Robins / Redcoats Farmhouse, and footpath users across north-facing ridgelines to the south. This would represent a localised and temporary change to the existing views during the thirty-six week construction period. The CEMP would include provisions for public communication to inform local people and footpath users about construction activities at the Site.
- 5.2.9 Night-time construction effects resulting from lighting would be limited. Lighting would generally not be present outside of normal working hours, other than low-level security lighting triggered by motion sensors, and the CEMP would include measures to minimise any effects on amenity.

5.3 Operational Phase: Landscape

Landscape Fabric

- 5.3.1 The fabric of the Site comprises medium- to large-scale intensively farmed arable fields bounded and subdivided by hedgerows which are frequently gappy and in poor or declining condition, with occasional trees in field boundaries. The Site is undulating, forming the south-facing side of a localised valley landform. Little Almshoe Lane separates the west of the Site from the east of the Site.
- 5.3.2 The farmland and hedgerows are easy to recreate if necessary (although the loss of hedgerows should always be avoided if possible). As such, their susceptibility to change is low to medium. These are relatively functional elements which are not rare and, considering the poor or declining condition of some of the hedgerows, are judged to be of low value.
- 5.3.3 The scattered trees within hedgerows have a medium to high susceptibility to change as they cannot be recreated on a like-for-like basis in the short term, requiring time for replacement planting to mature. The value of these features is low to medium as their presence within the Site does not notably contribute to any sense of enclosure, or visual screening.
- 5.3.4 The undulating landform is distinctive for its relationship to the valley, and any substantial changes (such as terracing by cut-and-fill) to landform are difficult to



- reverse such that the susceptibility of the landform is considered to be medium. The value of the landform as a landscape element is considered to be medium as a result of its relationship to the valley.
- 5.3.5 The overall sensitivity of the landscape fabric is judged to be low to medium.
- 5.3.6 The Resubmission Scheme would introduce new solar panels and associated infrastructure, thereby removing the Site from arable agricultural use. Existing trees and hedgerows within the Site and around the Site boundary would be protected and retained by ensuring a 6m buffer. Gaps in existing hedgerows would be planted up and existing hedgerows would be maintained to a minimum height of approximately 3m, and would be cut less regularly to enhance biodiversity and screening value. New hedgerow and woodland planting within the Site and around the Site boundary would strengthen the landscape framework around the Site by restoring and reinforcing historic boundary features. There would be no substantial changes to the landform as the solar panels would be constructed such that they follow and retain the existing contours.
- 5.3.7 During the operational life of the Resubmission Scheme, grazing by sheep would be introduced in combination with mowing/strimming. This would maintain the agricultural usage of the Site, albeit the pasture grassland would be relatively static compared to constantly changing landscape fabric associated with arable crop rotation.
- 5.3.8 As the existing landform, tree and hedgerow vegetation would be retained, there would be no adverse effect on these elements of the landscape fabric.
- 5.3.9 A minor effect on the farmland within the Site would occur, associated with the change from arable use to pasture or mowing activities. This change would be easily reversible following decommissioning, and the land could be returned to arable use. As such, the effects on the underlying landscape fabric would not be significant.
- 5.3.10 The introduction of new woodland belts and lengths of hedgerow and the changes to the management of existing hedgerows would have a beneficial effect in respect of the long-term landscape fabric of the area and would be retained following decommissioning. The new species-rich grassland seeding would also have a beneficial effect during the operational life of the solar farm.

- 5.3.11 The landscape proposals would accord with the stated landscape objectives for landscape fabric in the Lowland Village Farmlands regional character type, and the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA and Langley Valley LCA, supporting the strategies to 'conserve and restore', or 'reconstruct' the landscape fabric.

Landscape Character

- 5.3.12 A detailed assessment of effects upon landscape character is set out in Appendix 3 based on the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA, and the Langley Valley LCA. The conclusions regarding effects on landscape character are summarised below.
- 5.3.13 The introduction of the Resubmission Scheme would increase the perception of built development in the vicinity of the Site, which would have a degrading influence at a localised level, but with a limited widespread impact across either the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA or Langley Valley LCA. The limited nature of the impact is in part due to the Site location on the fringe of the two LCAs which is considered to be less susceptible to change, and that the local landscape is already influenced by peri-urban land uses and energy infrastructure. The introduction of built form into the landscape would not therefore be perceived as wholly out of place, notably in the context of the pylons and electricity lines across and in the vicinity of the Site.
- 5.3.14 In the medium- and long-term the proposed mitigation planting around the Site would provide a greater level of landscape integration such that the perception of the built form would reduce, notably in the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA. In addition, the condition of declining features such as hedgerows would be improved.
- 5.3.15 In relation to the specific key sensitivities identified for the local landscape character, the Resubmission Scheme:
- i) would preserve the existing hedgerow network, and seek to restore and reconstruct fragmented or lost field boundaries to improve landscape integration, visual screening, and the connectivity of local habitats;
 - ii) would avoid development across the skyline of key views due to its low height, and would not impact on views towards St Ippollitts church which is a local landmark. There would be some impact to the expansive views from intermittent, highly localised elevated positions within the Langley Valley LCA;
 - iii) would retain and protect the public right of way network through the Site by providing 10m wide corridors between the fencelines that would separate the



development area from the footpaths. This would also help with wayfinding across the right of way network as routes are better delineated compared to the existing routes which cross centrally through arable fields (refer to Figure 10a and 10c for example); and

- iv) would have a slight impact on the rural character of the area through the introduction of new built form that would be somewhat degrading to the countryside characteristics at a local level, which is an inevitable side effect of any greenfield development. Consideration of scale has been given in the development process by the specification of relatively low solar arrays at 2.4m in height; to siting by the positioning of the Site away from Titmore Green and by incorporating buffers to close residential receptors, and by locating the battery storage containers and DNO substation infrastructure in a low-lying less visible part of the Site.

5.3.16 The overall effect on the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA is judged to be moderate adverse in the short-term, but reducing to moderate / minor adverse in the medium- and long-term. This effect would be experienced across a small part of the south of the LCA and the direct impact on the character of the settlements of Wymondley, Titmore Green and St Ippolyts would be very limited due to distance and limited intervisibility.

5.3.17 The overall effect on the Langley Valley LCA is judged to be minor adverse in the short- and long-term principally as a result of intervisibility from some elevated positions that currently benefit from expansive views across the valley. The degree of intervisibility would be limited by the Site's position on a side valley to the main Langley Valley, and therefore across most of the Langley Valley the landscape character would be unchanged. In the long-term the proposed planting would have some beneficial change to the landscape, which would reduce the overall impact of the Resubmission Scheme, but not reduce the overall classification of effect.

5.3.18 Upon decommissioning of the Resubmission Scheme the landscape character could be easily restored to the baseline situation, albeit the enhancements from the proposed mitigation planting would be retained to leave a permanent improvement.



5.4 Operational Phase: Visual

5.4.1 A detailed assessment of visual effects from each Viewpoint is set out in Appendix 4. The results of the visual assessment are summarised below.

5.4.2 Short-term (Major through to Moderate) adverse visual effects would occur for:

- i) Viewpoint 2 (Figure 9): Sperberry Hill, which adjoins the northern boundary of the Site and where intermittently the hedgerow between the road and the Site has been historically removed such that there would be views of the Resubmission Scheme for road users;
- ii) Viewpoint 3 (Figure 10a, 10b, 10c): PRoW Wymondley 014, and residents of Redcoats Farmhouse & The Robins. The residents of Redcoats Farmhouse and The Robins adjoin the Site and would have direct views through the tree belt along their boundary of the Resubmission Scheme. PRoW Wymondley 014 passes through the Site and as such would have close views of the Resubmission Scheme;
- iii) Viewpoint 7 (Figure 14a, 14b, 14c): PRoW Ippollitts 018 which approaches the southern boundary of the Site and as such would have close, direct views of the Resubmission Scheme, including partial skyline views of the upper part of the DNO Substation, battery compound and switchroom building;
- iv) Viewpoint 8 (Figure 15a, 15b, 15c): PRoW Ippollitts 021 (Hertfordshire Way), which crosses Mill Hill to the south of the Site and as such has an open, panoramic view of the Resubmission Scheme from an elevated position;
- v) Viewpoint 9 (Figure 16): PRoW Ippollitts 021 (Hertfordshire Way), which adjacent to the Resubmission Scheme such that there would be close, direct views to the north; and
- vi) Viewpoint 10 (Figure 17a, 17b, 17c): PRoW Wymondley 015 (Hertfordshire Way), which approaches the eastern boundary of the Site and as such would have close, direct views of the Resubmission Scheme.

5.4.3 In each of these views, the introduction of solar panels and associated infrastructure would be prominent due to the proximity of the receptor and angle of view, and the Resubmission Scheme would be contrasting with the existing rural characteristics of the view.



- 5.4.4 In the medium- and long-term, the proposed mitigation planting around the boundaries of the Resubmission Scheme and alongside the PRoW that cross the Site would be established and maturing. The planting would contribute to screening the Resubmission Scheme and integrating it with the landscape fabric such that it would be more compatible with the existing rural characteristics of views. The magnitude of impact experienced by receptors would therefore reduce with the exception of Viewpoint 8 at Mill Hill where due to the elevation, distance and angle of view the mitigation planting would not reduce the visual effect, with major to moderate adverse effects continuing in the medium- and long-term.
- 5.4.5 Short-term visual effects which are considered to be between a moderate and minor effect include:
- i) Viewpoint 4 (Figure 11): Tittendell Lane, which adjoins the western boundary of the Site, but is principally a route between tall mature hedgerows with limited views out. Where gaps in the hedgerow allow views into the Site the views are simply of an arable field with existing dominant pylons overhead. In this context, whilst some moderate adverse effects may exist along the lane due to the close proximity of the Resubmission Scheme, the effects are considered at the lower end of the scale and therefore not significant;
 - ii) Viewpoint 12 (Figure 19): PRoW Wymondley 022, which crosses a hill south-east of the Site and south of Titmore Green. From the crest of the hill on the north-facing side there are brief views towards the Site where the Resubmission Scheme would be partially visible. The visual effect would be moderate to minor adverse, but on balance due to the very limited extent of the footpath from which the Site would be prominent, and that this location and view is not distinctive or a recognised viewpoint, it is considered to be at the lower end of the scale and therefore not significant; and
 - iii) Viewpoint 15 (Figure 22): PRoW Langley 001 (Chiltern Way), which is on the north-facing slope of the Langley scarp, 1.6km to the south of the Site. As with Viewpoint 12, from higher ground there are distant views towards the Site where the Resubmission Scheme would be partially visible and somewhat contrasting with the existing views of the countryside. However from this distance much of the detail of the Resubmission Scheme would not be visible and therefore whilst it would visibly be a change in land use, it would be of a uniform appearance and have a degree of compatibility with the view. It is therefore considered that the

magnitude of change would be at the lower end of the scale, and therefore not significant.

- 5.4.6 In the medium- and long-term, at Viewpoint 4 the proposed mitigation planting along the western boundary of the Site would screen the Resubmission Scheme such that the visual effect would reduce to minor adverse. At Viewpoint 12 and 15 due to the elevation and angle of view towards the Site, the proposed mitigation planting would not cause any additional screening in the long-term and therefore there would be no reduction in the visual effect, which would remain not significant.
- 5.4.7 At the remaining six viewpoints, visual effects would not be significant in either the short-, medium- or long-term as a result of either existing screening by intervening landform or vegetation, and / or because of distance to the Site.

Pattern of Visual Effects

- 5.4.8 The broad pattern of visual effects can be inferred by reference to the ZTV presented on Figure 2, and by the assessment of visual effects set out in Appendix 4 (supported by Figures 8 to 22). The pattern of landform and vegetation cover in the surrounding area is such that clear visibility of the new solar panels and other structures would be relatively restricted.
- 5.4.9 Major through to moderate adverse visual effects would be experienced in the short-term from intermittent locations around the Site boundary, from within the Site, and from Mill Hill to the south of the Site. In the medium- and long-term the magnitude of impact on these locations would be reduced to below moderate from all locations with the exception of Mill Hill. In this context, despite the extent of the Site, the greatest level of adverse visual impacts resulting from the Resubmission Scheme would mostly be highly localised to the Site boundary, which is to be expected from almost any form of development.
- 5.4.10 From the wider landscape away from the Site boundary there are intermittent locations relating to high ground to the south-east, south, and south-west of the Site at varying distances where the Resubmission Scheme would be visible. At the closest of these locations from Mill Hill, there would be a major to moderate adverse effect on the north-facing slopes due to the proximity of the Resubmission Scheme, elevation, and the angle of view. From the south-east and south-west, views would be more distant and at a more oblique angle to the Resubmission Scheme with a



greater level of intervening screening. As such, views from further afield would not all experience a level of effect less than moderate adverse.

- 5.4.11 In relation to local residents, for residential properties to the north-west of the Site, represented by VP 1, the existing height and density of the hedgerows along with the offset between the field boundary and the solar panels is such that there would be minor visual effects. For residents at Redcoats Farmhouse and The Robins, Redcoats Farmhouse is on the north side of The Robins such that views of the Resubmission Scheme would be filtered or screened by The Robins, but The Robins would have partial views of the Resubmission Scheme. The impact on these views would be reduced by the substantial offset between The Robins and the solar panels, the change in elevation, and the proposed planting that would screen the Resubmission Scheme in the medium- and long-term. From other close residential properties at Almshoebury Cottages, The Wyck and The Red House either the Resubmission Scheme would not be visible; or distance, landform or intervening vegetation would reduce the visual impact such that the effect would be reduced to less than moderate adverse in the medium- to long-term.

Operational Phase: Glint and Glare

- 5.4.12 A separate Glint and Glare Assessment is included with the Planning Application. This considers effects on dwellings and roads within approximately 1km to the east, south and west of the Resubmission Scheme.
- 5.4.13 The glint and glare assessment reports that due to the existing screening and / or proposed screening in the landscape, there would be no significant glint and glare impacts that require mitigation or further consideration. There is therefore no additional mitigation proposed to reduce glint and glare effects over and above the embedded landscape proposals.

Operational Phase: Night-time Effects

- 5.4.14 The Resubmission Scheme would not be lit (with the exception of on demand security lighting at the Transformer Stations, Control Centre and Switchroom Building), once operational, and as such night-time landscape and visual effects would not occur.



6.0 MITIGATION

- 6.1.1 No further mitigation measures are proposed, over and above those embedded into the design of the Resubmission Scheme, which are described in Section 2.2.



7.0 SUMMARY, RESIDUAL EFFECTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 The landscape and visual effects of the Resubmission Scheme have been assessed in accordance with good practice guidance set out in the third edition of *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*. The assessment has been undertaken over a study area extending up to approximately 2.2km from the Site, and is supported by visualisation material, including ZTV mapping and photomontages.
- 7.1.2 The Site comprises medium- to large-scale intensively farmed arable fields bounded and subdivided by hedgerows which are frequently gappy and in poor or declining condition, with occasional trees in field boundaries. The Site is undulating, forming the south-facing side of a localised valley landform, that is a spur to the wider Langley Valley to the south-west. Little Almshoe Lane separates the west of the Site from the east of the Site, with access to the Site from either Little Almshoe Lane or Stevenage Road.
- 7.1.3 The Resubmission Scheme comprises a commercial solar farm and battery storage facility, and would therefore introduce new solar panels and associated infrastructure such that there would be a change in land use across the Site from agricultural land, to land with a twin function of renewable energy generation and continued agricultural use through livestock farming.
- 7.1.4 Existing trees and hedgerows within the Site and around the Site boundary would be protected and retained. Gaps in existing hedgerows around the Site would be planted up, and existing hedgerows would be maintained to a minimum height of approximately 3m. New hedgerow and woodland planting within the Site and around the Site boundary would strengthen the landscape framework around the Site by restoring and reinforcing historic boundary features. There would be no substantial changes to the landform as the solar panels would be constructed such that they follow and retain the existing contours.
- 7.1.5 The landscape proposals would accord with the stated landscape objectives that relate to landscape fabric in the Lowland Village Farmlands regional character type, and the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA and Langley Valley LCA, supporting the strategies to 'conserve and restore', or 'reconstruct' the landscape fabric.



- 7.1.6 The introduction of the Resubmission Scheme would increase the perception of built development in the vicinity of the Site, which would have a degrading influence at a localised level, but with a limited widespread impact across either the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA or Langley Valley LCA. The limited nature of the impact is in part due to the Site location on the fringe or transitional point between the two LCAs which is considered to be less susceptible to change, and that the local landscape is already influenced by peri-urban land uses and energy infrastructure. The introduction of built form into the landscape would not therefore be perceived as wholly out of place, notably in the context of the extent of pylons and electricity lines across and in the vicinity of the Site.
- 7.1.7 The overall effect on the Wymondley and Titmore Green LCA is judged to be moderate adverse in the short-term, but reducing to moderate / minor adverse in the medium- and long-term. This effect would be experienced across a small part of the south of the LCA and the direct impact on the character of the settlements of Wymondley, Titmore Green and St Ippolyts would be very limited due to distance, the perception of separation, and limited intervisibility.
- 7.1.8 The overall effect on the Langley Valley LCA is judged to be minor adverse in the short- and long-term principally as a result of intervisibility from some elevated positions that currently benefit from expansive views across the valley. The degree of intervisibility would be limited by the Site's position on a side valley to the main Langley Valley, and therefore across most of the Langley Valley the landscape character would be unchanged.
- 7.1.9 In the long-term the proposed planting would have some beneficial change to the landscape, which would reduce the overall impact of the Resubmission Scheme, but not reduce the overall classification of effects.
- 7.1.10 The ZTV indicates that there would not be visibility of the Site from the north as a result of the Site's location across south-facing slopes, but also as a result of the pattern of vegetation close to the Site boundary. The ZTV demonstrates the Site's visibility relates to the Site boundary and the valley landscape south of the Site with intermittent visibility from areas of higher ground on the north-facing valley slopes, but no or very limited visibility from low-lying parts of the valley.
- 7.1.11 Major through to moderate adverse visual effects would be experienced in the short-term from intermittent locations at the Site boundary, from within the Site, and from



Mill Hill to the south of the Site. In the medium- and long-term the magnitude of impact on these locations would be reduced, but greater than moderate adverse effects would remain from Mill Hill. The greatest level of adverse visual impacts resulting from the Resubmission Scheme would mostly be highly localised to the Site boundary, which is to be expected from almost any form of development.

7.1.12 From the wider landscape away from the Site boundary there are intermittent locations relating to high ground to the south-east, south, and south-west of the Site at varying distances where the Resubmission Scheme would be visible. At the closest of these locations from Mill Hill, there would be a major to moderate adverse effect from the north-facing slopes due to the proximity of the Resubmission Scheme, elevation and the angle of view. From the south-east and south-west, views would be slightly more distant and at a more oblique angle to the Resubmission Scheme with a greater level of intervening screening. As such, views from further afield would experience a level of effect less than moderate adverse.

7.1.13 At the end of the operational life of the Resubmission Scheme (which is currently assumed to be 40 years) it would be decommissioned, and the landscape and visual effects would be reversible. Following decommissioning there would be long-term benefits for landscape character and views from the retention of the proposed hedgerows and woodland belts that would have established over the life of the project.

7.2 Comparison with 2023 Scheme

7.2.1 The Resubmission Scheme has adopted a number of important design changes that demonstrably reduce the visual impact of the Resubmission Scheme at two key receptors around the Site: the Redcoats Farm complex, and the Hertfordshire Way long distance recreational trail.

7.2.2 At the Redcoats Farm complex, the design changes respond to recommendations made in the TLP Review and increase the buffer between the solar arrays and the curtilage, with increased planting to the western boundary of Redcoats Farm as set out in Section 2.2. This has the benefit of reducing the medium- to long-term visual effect to Minor to Moderate Adverse, compared with Moderate Adverse for the 2023 Scheme.



- 7.2.3 At the Hertfordshire Way, the design changes ensure the footpath follows the edge of the development, rather than passing through the solar arrays. This creates an open side to the footpath such that views would be open to the east in the short and long-term. This has the benefit of reducing the medium-to long-term visual effect to Minor to Moderate Adverse, compared with Moderate Adverse for the 2023 Scheme.
- 7.2.4 From all other locations where the Resubmission Scheme is visible, the Resubmission Scheme would result in a reduced impact compared to the 2023 Scheme due to a reduction in footprint and increase in planting, but would not reduce the impact far enough to result in a change to the level of effect assessed for the 2023 Scheme. An example of this is from Viewpoint 8 at Mill Hill where the Resubmission Scheme shown on Figures 10b and 10c of this LVIA appears across a slightly narrower part of the view due to the omission of the solar arrays south-east of the Hertfordshire Way, which whilst beneficial, does not reduce the overall visual impact from the location.

8.0 GREEN BELT

- 8.1.1 The Site is located within the Green Belt to the west of Stevenage.
- 8.1.2 As set out in paragraph 137 of the NPPF, the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Case law has established that the openness of Green Belt has a visual dimension⁸, and therefore the findings of the LVIA are often referred to when considering the acceptability of a Resubmission Scheme in the Green Belt. However, the visual impact of development on openness of the Green Belt is but one matter that may be considered as part of a wider planning judgement on potential harm to the Green Belt⁹.
- 8.1.3 In relation to the landscape and visual impacts of the Resubmission Scheme on the openness and permanence of the Green Belt, it is judged that:
- i) The Resubmission Scheme would have an impact on the perceived openness of views at intermittent locations around the Site boundary and from Mill Hill through the introduction of solar panels and associated infrastructure into the foreground and middle ground of views;
 - ii) From the wider landscape, the low height of the Resubmission Scheme and the distant and expansive nature of views are such that whilst the Resubmission Scheme may be visible it would form a small proportion of the overall view and would generally be seen in the context of existing development in the view, such that a reduction in the perceived openness of views would be limited; and
 - iii) The landscape and visual effects are easily reversible either during or at the end of the 40-year operational period, such that once decommissioned the Site's existing characteristics could be restored at any time. In this context, in landscape and visual terms the Resubmission Scheme can be considered temporary.

⁸ *Turner v. SSCLG, 2016.*

⁹ *Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and others) v North Yorkshire County Council, 2020*



Appendix 1 – Methodology



Appendix 1 – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to systematically identify and assess the nature and significance of the effects of a proposed development upon the landscape and upon views and visual amenity. The purpose of the LVIA is to identify the level and nature of effect arising from a proposed development and if necessary, through an iterative design process, to inform changes to the development and evolution of mitigation strategies which avoid or reduce significant adverse effects wherever possible.
- 1.1.2 The methodology for this LVIA is informed by guidance contained within the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013), often referred to as 'the GLVIA'. The LVIA aims to establish the following:
- i) A clear understanding of the development site and its context, in respect of the physical and perceived landscape and of views and visual amenity;
 - ii) An understanding of the proposed development in terms of how this would relate to the existing landscape and views;
 - iii) An identification of likely significant effects of the proposed development upon the landscape and upon views, throughout the life-cycle of the development, including cumulative interactions with other developments;
 - iv) Those mitigation measures necessary to reduce or eliminate any potential adverse effect on the landscape or views arising as a result of the proposed development; and
 - v) A conclusion as to the residual likely significant effects of the proposed development.
- 1.1.3 Professional judgement is a very important part of the LVIA process at every stage of the assessment. This judgement must be exercised within an assessment framework that transparently sets out the steps in the assessment process which have led to the overall conclusions. This is emphasised in Box 3.1 (page 37) of the GLVIA, which advocates a structured approach that considers the sensitivity of the



receptor and magnitude of the impact when determining if an effect is significant or not.

1.1.4 To ensure transparency in the assessment and professional judgements made, the LVIA follows a standard approach, namely:

- i) The establishment of the baseline conditions, against which the effects of the proposed development will be assessed;
- ii) The determination of the nature of the receptor likely to be affected, i.e. its sensitivity;
- iii) The prediction of the nature of the effect likely to occur, i.e. the magnitude of change; and
- iv) An assessment of whether a likely significant effect would occur upon any receptor, by considering the predicted magnitude of change together with the sensitivity of the receptor, taking into account any proposed mitigation measures.

1.1.5 The GLVIA clarifies that the guidance concentrates on

[1.20] “...principles while also seeking to steer specific approaches where there is a general consensus on methods and techniques. It is not intended to be prescriptive, in that it does not provide a detailed ‘recipe’ that can be followed in every situation. It is always the primary responsibility of any landscape professional carrying out an assessment to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the particular circumstance”.

1.1.6 As set out above, use of professional judgement within a structured assessment framework is a very important element of the assessment of landscape and visual effects. As discussed in the GLVIA:

[2.23] “...Whilst there is some scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters, ...much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgement, for example about what effect the introduction of a new development or land use change may have on visual amenity, or about the significance of change in the character of the landscape and whether it is positive or negative”.

[2.24] “...In all cases there is a need for the judgements that are made to be reasonable and based on clear and transparent methods so that the reasoning applied at different stages can be traced and examined by others...”

[2.26] “...In carrying out an LVIA the landscape professional must always take an independent stance, and fully and transparently address both the negative and positive effects of a scheme in a way that is accessible and reliable for all parties concerned”.



- 1.1.7 Landscape and visual matters are separate issues, and although closely related and interlinked, are dealt with as such throughout the LVIA. The methodologies for assessing both are outlined separately below.

2.0 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

- 2.1.1 The landscape assessment considers the potential effects of the proposed development on the components of the landscape as an environmental resource. Landscape receptors which could be affected by a proposed development may include:

- i) Individual constituent elements and features of the landscape (sometimes referred to as landscape fabric);
- ii) Specific aesthetic and perceptual qualities of the landscape;
- iii) The overall character and key characteristics of the landscape as experienced in different areas (e.g. landscape character areas or types).

Sensitivity

- 2.1.2 The nature of a landscape receptor likely to be affected, i.e. its **sensitivity** is determined by considering two factors, namely:

- i) Susceptibility to change; and
- ii) Value.

Susceptibility to Change

- 2.1.3 Susceptibility to change is defined in the GLVIA as follows:

[5.40] *“This means the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies”*

[5.41] *“The assessment may take place in situations where there are existing landscape sensitivity and capacity studies, which have become increasingly common. They may deal with the general type of development that is proposed, in*



which case they may provide useful preliminary background information for assessment. But they cannot provide a substitute for the individual assessment of the susceptibility of the receptors in relation to change arising from the specific development proposal”.

2.1.4 To understand susceptibility to change, the various characteristics/factors that make up a particular landscape must be identified and consideration given as to how these will be affected by the proposed development. Consideration is given to physical and perceptual factors which are considered together to derive an overall susceptibility to change. Factors influencing the susceptibility of a landscape to change resulting from a *commercial-scale solar farm* are set out below:

- i) **Scale:** A larger scale landscape (relative to the development proposed) will typically be less susceptible than a smaller scale landscape;
- ii) **Pattern/Complexity:** The susceptibility of a receiving landscape to change will be influenced by the specific pattern of features and elements present and by the complexity of this pattern;
- iii) **Development/Human Influence:** A landscape that includes obvious alterations to natural ground levels, contemporary development, or that is clearly functional/utilitarian in land use will typically be less susceptible than one where development is more traditional in style, or where natural influences and natural or long-established landforms are predominant;
- iv) **Connections with adjacent areas:** A landscape which has a clear relationship with other surrounding landscapes, for example in relation to views in and out, will typically be more susceptible than one where such relationships are not present;
- v) **Visual Interruption:** A landscape where views are frequently interrupted by screening features, for example vegetation cover or variations in landform, will typically be less susceptible than one where there are few / no screening features.

2.1.5 A particular landscape may have different characteristics that are more or less susceptible to change. As such, the overall susceptibility to change is allocated using professional judgement based upon consideration of the various factors outlined above and the relative weight attached to these (which will vary from landscape to landscape). The assessment of susceptibility is expressed using a three point verbal scale of high, medium or low. Where appropriate, intermediate levels such as medium/high or low/medium are used to refine the assessment. The rationale in



support of the assessment of susceptibility is set out for each receptor in the assessment, so that it is clear how each judgement has been made.

Value

- 2.1.6 The value of the landscape receptor is independent of any development proposal. The absence of a formal landscape designation does not necessarily imply that a landscape is of lower value. Value is defined in the GLVIA as:

[5.19] “...the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons...Landscapes or their component parts may be valued at the community, local, national or international levels...”

- 2.1.7 Factors that can help in identifying valued landscapes include:

- i) Presence/absence of statutory landscape designations;
- ii) Presence/absence of local landscape designations and associated policies;
- iii) Landscape quality/condition;
- iv) Scenic quality;
- v) Rarity of particular elements/features;
- vi) Representativeness;
- vii) Conservation interest;
- viii) Recreation value;
- ix) Perceptual aspects; and
- x) Cultural associations.

- 2.1.8 The assessment of value is expressed on a similar basis to that described for susceptibility of change above. Table 2.1 indicates how the above factors have been used to determine landscape value.

Table 2.1: Landscape Value Criteria

	Criteria tending towards higher or lower value	
	Higher ←	→ Higher
Value	Unique, and/or strongly positive landscape character, often with strong associations or (non-landscape) environmental designations. Nationally designated landscape (protected by statute).	Widespread or common landscape character. Negative character. Lack of other environmental qualities. Landscape without formal designation and with limited positive contribution to the locality.

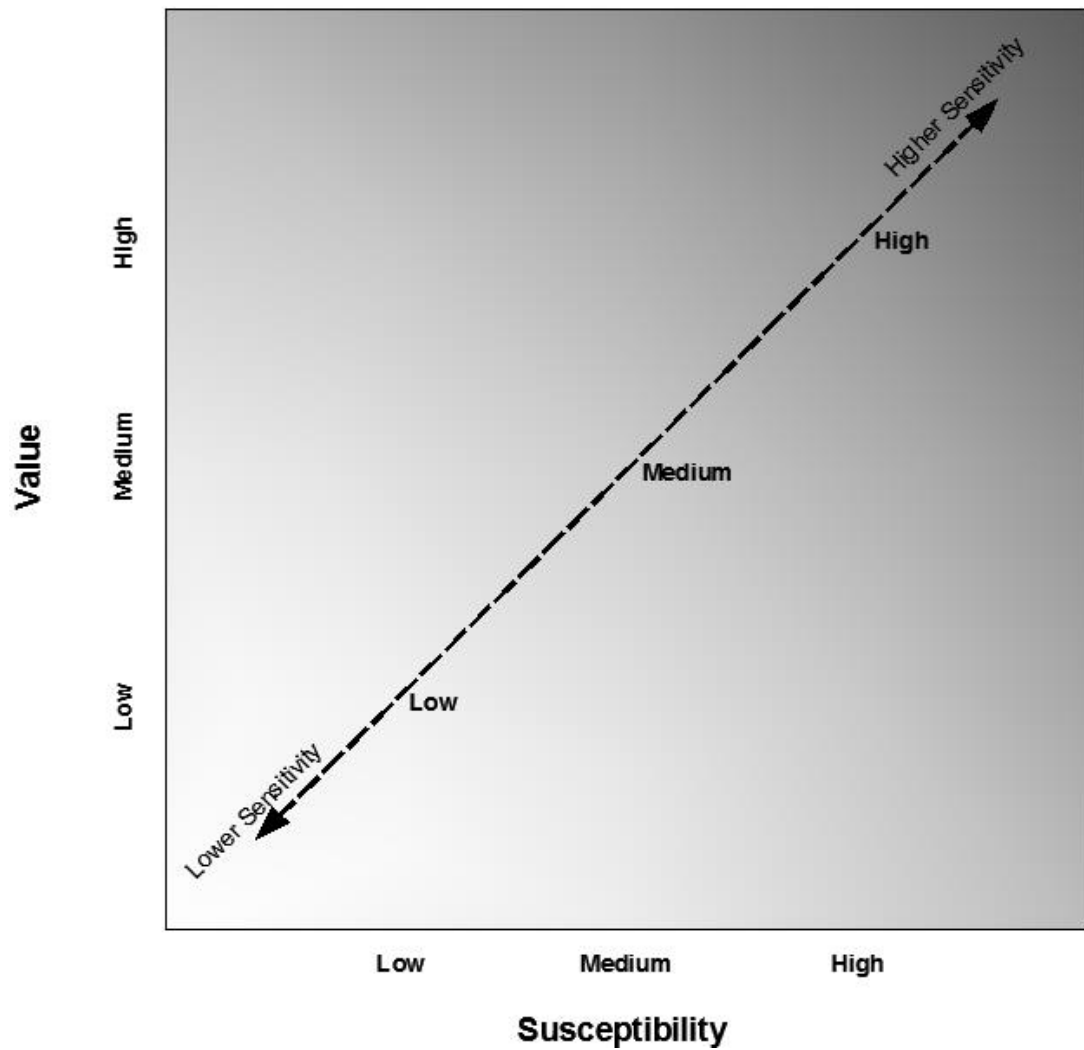


Sensitivity

- 2.1.9 Susceptibility to change and value are considered together to determine the sensitivity of the receptor. It should be noted that the relationship between susceptibility to change and value can be complex and is not linear. For example, a highly-valued landscape (such as a National Park) may have a low susceptibility to change, due both to the characteristics of the landscape and the nature of the change proposed. Figure 2.1 (below) provides a guide as to how susceptibility and value can be combined to assess sensitivity (with the grey shading indicative of the increasing sensitivity of receptors with increasing susceptibility and / or value). However, the final assessment of sensitivity is one of professional judgement based on consideration of the susceptibility and value assessments.



Figure 2.1: Indicative Sensitivity Assessment



Magnitude

- 2.1.10 The nature of the effect that is likely to occur, i.e. its **magnitude**, is determined by considering four separate factors, namely:
- i) Size/scale;
 - ii) Geographical extent;
 - iii) Duration;
 - iv) Reversibility.
- 2.1.11 The size and scale of an effect is determined by considering the amount of change experienced by a receptor, including:

- i) The extent of existing landscape elements that would be lost, the proportion of the total extent that this represents and the contribution of that element to the wider character;
 - ii) The degree to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscapes are altered by the removal, or introduction of new landscape components; and
 - iii) Whether change affects the key characteristics of a landscape.
- 2.1.12 The geographical extent of an effect is the area over which effects will be experienced. It is not the same as size / scale, as a small-scale change may be experienced over a wider area, or vice-versa.
- 2.1.13 The duration of an effect simply relates to the length of time for which it would be experienced, as follows:
- i) Long-term: 10+ years: or the change could not reasonably be considered temporary in nature;
 - ii) Medium-term: 3-10 years;
 - iii) Short-term: 0-3 years.
- 2.1.14 The reversibility of an effect relates to the prospects and practicality of an effect being able to be wholly or partially reversed, or whether the change cannot realistically be reversed, i.e. it is permanent.
- 2.1.15 These four factors are then considered together to derive an overall magnitude of change for each receptor, which is determined by use of professional judgement. The assessment of the magnitude of change is expressed using a four point verbal scale of large, medium, small or negligible. Where appropriate, intermediate levels such as medium / large or small / medium are used to refine the assessment. Table 2.2 (below) indicates how the above factors have been used to inform magnitude of change. As the circumstances of each specific receptor will vary, a reasoned narrative is set out in the LVIA in order to justify the particular magnitude of change allocated to each receptor.

Table 2.2: Magnitude of Landscape Change Criteria (indicative)

Magnitude	Description
Large	A substantial change in landscape characteristics and/or over extensive geographical area and/or which may result in an irreversible landscape impact.
Medium	A moderate change in landscape characteristics and/or which may be over a large geographical area, and/or which may be reversible over a long duration of time.
Small	A small change in landscape characteristics and/or which may be over a relatively localised geographical area, and/or which may be reversible over a short duration of time.
Negligible	A barely perceptible change in landscape characteristics and/or which is focused on a small geographical area, and/or which is almost or completely reversible.

3.0 VISUAL ASSESSMENT

- 3.1.1 A visual assessment is concerned with the potential effects upon the population likely to be affected (i.e. the views experienced by people). As for landscape effects (Section 2.0), the sensitivity of the receptor affected is identified, as is the magnitude of the change that would occur. These are then considered together to determine the level and significance of effect.
- 3.1.2 A key part of the visual assessment is the assessment of effects from a number of predetermined viewpoints, which reflect views available to different groups of people. The viewpoint itself is not the receptor; rather it is the people that would be experiencing the view. These people will generally have different responses to a change in view depending upon their location, their activity and other factors, including the weather and time of day or year. Viewpoints fall into three categories (as set out in the GLVIA):
- i) Representative viewpoints (which represent the experience of different types of receptors in the vicinity);
 - ii) Specific viewpoints (a particular view, for example a well-known beauty spot);
 - iii) Illustrative viewpoints (which illustrate a particular effect or issue, which may include limited or lack of visibility).
- 3.1.3 Private viewpoints, such as from specific residential properties are not typically included in the LVIA. It is often impractical to visit all affected properties and access to private land may not be granted. Representative or specific viewpoints from nearby publicly accessible locations can often give an impression of what effects from private land would be.



Sensitivity

3.1.4 The nature of a visual receptor likely to be affected, i.e. its **sensitivity** is determined by considering two factors, namely:

- i) Susceptibility to change;
- ii) Value.

Susceptibility to Change

3.1.5 The GLVIA identifies susceptibility to change in view/visual amenity as:

[6.32] “...mainly a function of:

- *The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and*
- *The extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations”.*

3.1.6 Susceptibility to change is, in part, classified based upon the indicative criteria, provided in the GLVIA, as set out in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Typical Visual Susceptibility to Change Criteria (indicative)

Criteria Level	Description
	<i>Susceptibility to Change</i>
High	Residents at home; People engaged in outdoor recreation, whose attention/interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or particular views, including from public rights of way; Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience; Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents; Travellers on scenic routes.
Medium	Travellers on road, rail, or other transport routes.
Low	People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work / activity and not their surroundings.

3.1.7 It is important to note that the examples set out in GLVIA and Table 3.1 above only address the first bullet point and part of the second bullet point in paragraph 3.5 above (which are focussed on the occupation or activity of the people and the extent to which their attention is focussed on the view).



- 3.1.8 As such, the assessment of susceptibility in Table 3.1 and GLVIA (pages 113 & 114) needs to be adjusted to reflect the requirements of the final part of the second bullet point, namely the visual amenity that people currently experience. GLVIA identifies clearly that the division between categories of susceptibility to change:

[6.35] “...*is not black and white and in reality there will be a gradation in susceptibility to change. Each project needs to consider the nature of the groups of people who will be affected and the extent to which their attention is likely to be focused on views and visual amenity...*”

- 3.1.9 For example, the presence of existing detracting features in any given view may reduce the visual amenity of those experiencing the view. This may therefore reduce their susceptibility to certain types of change and ultimately their sensitivity.
- 3.1.10 The assessment of susceptibility to change is made on the same basis as for landscape effects (Section 2.0 above). A three-point scale (with intermediate levels where appropriate) is used, supported by a reasoned narrative that explains the judgement made.

Value

- 3.1.11 In accordance with paragraph 6.37 of the GLVIA, when considering the value of a view experienced, this should take account of:
- i) Recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets or through planning designations;
 - ii) Indicators of the value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearances in guidebooks or on tourist maps, provision of facilities for their enjoyment and references to them in literature or art.
- 3.1.12 For this reason, whilst not specifically referenced in the current edition of GLVIA, the number of people likely to be affected can influence the value assigned to a particular view.
- 3.1.13 The assessment of value is made on the same basis as the assessment of susceptibility to change.



Sensitivity

- 3.1.14 Susceptibility to change and value are considered together as discussed above for landscape sensitivity and illustrated above in Figure 2.1. Again, professional judgement determines the final judgement of sensitivity, due to the non-linear and complex relationship between susceptibility and value. A reasoned narrative is set out in the LVIA in order to justify the particular sensitivity assessed for each receptor, so that it is clear how each judgement has been made.

Magnitude

- 3.1.15 The nature of the visual effect that is likely to occur, i.e. its **magnitude**, is determined by considering four separate factors, namely:
- i) Size/scale;
 - ii) Geographical extent;
 - iii) Duration;
 - iv) Reversibility.
- 3.1.16 The size and scale of an effect is determined by considering the following:
- i) The scale of change in view, in respect of the loss of or addition of features, and change in composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the development;
 - ii) The degree of contrast or integration of new features or other changes;
 - iii) The nature of the view, namely the relative amount of time it would be experienced for and whether the views would be full, partial or glimpsed.
- 3.1.17 The geographical extent of an effect will vary from viewpoint to viewpoint and will reflect the following:
- i) The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
 - ii) The distance from the proposed development;
 - iii) The extent over which a change in view would be visible.
- 3.1.18 The duration of an effect simply relates to the length of time for which it would be experienced, as follows:
- i) Long-term: 10+ years; or the change could not reasonably be considered temporary in nature;



- ii) Medium-term: 3-10 years;
- iii) Short-term: 0-3 years.

- 3.1.19 The reversibility of an effect relates to the prospects and practicality of an effect being able to be wholly or partially reversed, or whether the change cannot realistically be reversed, i.e. it is permanent.
- 3.1.20 These four factors are then considered together to derive an overall magnitude of change for each receptor, which is determined by use of professional judgement. The assessment of the magnitude of change is expressed using a four-point verbal scale of large, medium, small or negligible. Where appropriate, intermediate levels such as medium/large or small/medium are used to refine the assessment. Table 3.2 indicates how the above factors have been used to inform magnitude of change. As the circumstances of each specific receptor will vary, a reasoned narrative is set out in the LVIA in order to justify the particular magnitude of change allocated to each receptor.



Table 3.2: Magnitude of Visual Change Criteria (indicative)

Magnitude	Description
Large	A change affecting a large proportion of a view, which may be seen across an extensive area or experienced from a long section of a route, and/or a longer-term effect, and/or contrasting with the existing view.
Medium	A change affecting a moderate proportion of a view, which may be seen across a wider area or experienced from a section of a route, and/or a medium-term effect, and/or broadly compatible with the existing view.
Small	A change affecting a smaller proportion of a view, which may be seen from a limited area or experienced from a short section of a route, and/or a shorter-term effect, and/or compatible with the existing view.
Negligible	A change which is barely perceptible in the view, and/or which is only glimpsed from a route.

4.0 LEVEL AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECT

4.1.1 The purpose of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is to determine the likely significant effects of a development proposal. Not all landscape and visual effects arising as a result of a particular proposal will be significant. Furthermore, a significant effect does not necessarily mean that such an effect is unacceptable to decision-makers. This is a matter to be weighed in the planning balance alongside other factors. What is important is that the likely effects of any proposal are transparently assessed and described in order that the relevant determining authority can bring a balanced and well-informed judgement to bear as part of the decision-making process.

4.1.2 *The State of Environmental Impact Assessment Practice in the UK* (Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment 2011) identifies a range of different factors that should be considered when evaluating the significance of an effect, including:

- i) Knowledge and experience of significance from previous assessments;
- ii) Details of the development proposal, such as construction and operational activities, and the nature of the effect associated with such activity;
- iii) Details about the environmental sensitivity of the area that will be affected;
- iv) Feedback from scoping and consultation;
- v) The wider legal and policy context, which offers protection to the environment and community.

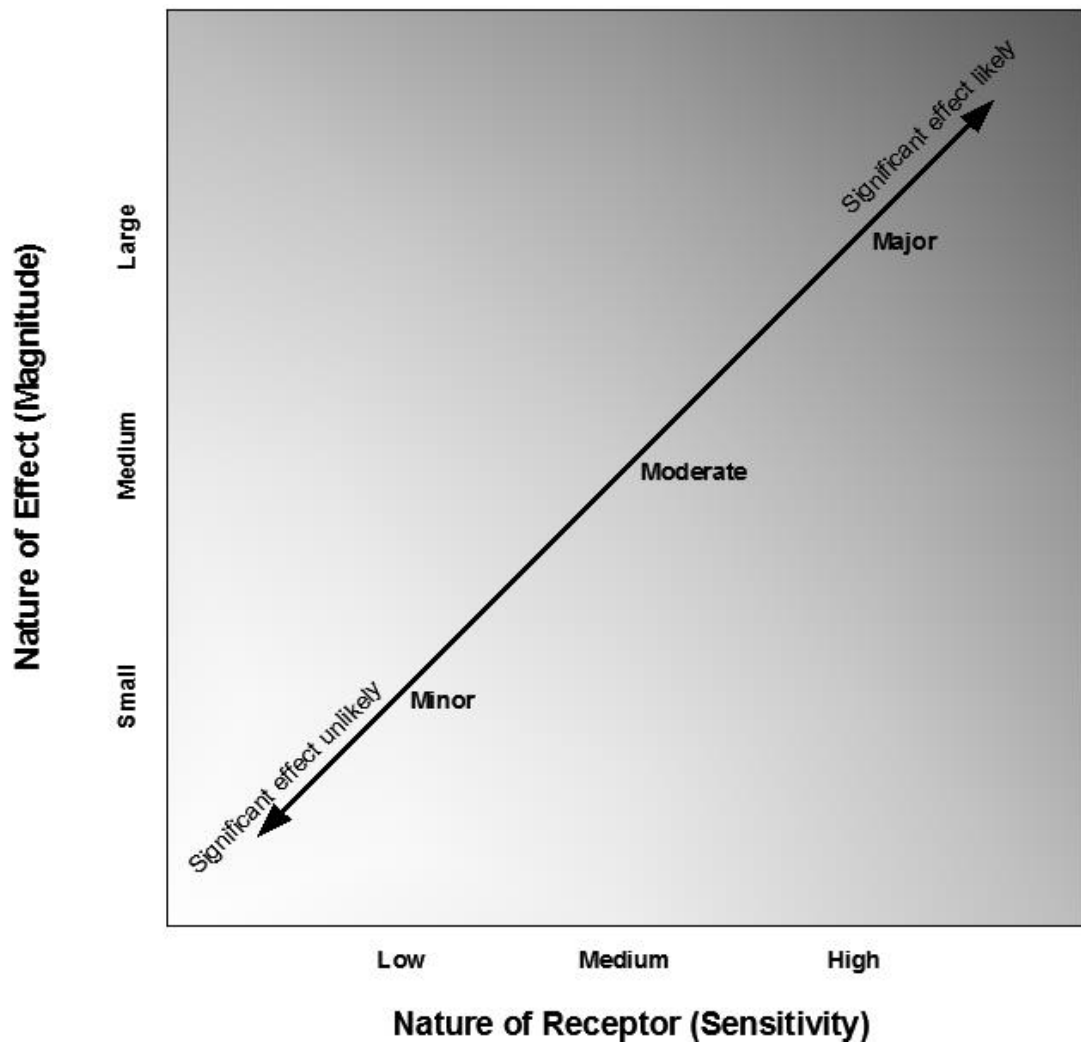
4.1.3 The level of effect can only be defined in relation to each particular development and its specific location. It is for each LVIA to determine how judgements about receptor sensitivity and the magnitude of change should be combined to derive the level of



effect and to clearly explain how this assessment has been made, and if the level of effect is considered significant.

- 4.1.4 Figure 4.1 (below) provides a guide as to how sensitivity and magnitude can be combined to identify the level of effect upon a receptor (with the grey shading indicative of the increasing level of effect with increasing sensitivity and/or magnitude). However, the final assessment of the level of effect and whether this is significant for decision makers is one of professional judgement.
- 4.1.5 Where magnitude of change is identified as 'negligible', then effects are automatically considered not to be significant due to the minimal level of change from baseline (which would often not be perceptible).
- 4.1.6 The judgement for this particular assessment is that greater than 'moderate' effects are more likely to be significant. This is because they would generally result from larger magnitudes of change on higher sensitivity receptors. This does not preclude a 'moderate' effect or lower being significant or a greater than 'moderate' effect not being significant. This judgement will depend on the specific circumstances being considered.

Figure 4.1: Level of Effect Matrix (indicative)



4.1.7 The GLVIA identifies that:

[3.32] *“The Regulations require that a final judgement is made about whether or not each effect is likely to be significant. There are no hard and fast rules about what effects should be deemed ‘significant’ but LVIAs should always distinguish clearly between what are considered to be significant and non-significant effects...*

[3.33] *It is not essential to establish a series of thresholds for different levels of significance of landscape and visual effects, provided that it is made clear whether or not they are considered significant. The final overall judgement of the likely significance of the predicted landscape and visual effects is however, often summarised in a series of categories of significance reflecting combinations of sensitivity and magnitude. These tend to vary from project to project but they should*

be appropriate to the nature, size and location of the proposed development and should as far as possible be consistent across the different topic areas of the EIA”.

[5.56] & [6.44] “There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and [landscape]¹ context and with the type of proposal”.

- 4.1.8 It should be noted that effects may be either adverse (negative) or beneficial (positive). An effect can be significant and adverse, or significant and beneficial. If change occurs, with no obvious deterioration or improvement resulting, this can be said to be neutral.

¹ The word landscape is present in paragraph 5.56 of the 3rd edition of GLVIA only. Otherwise, the sentence quoted from paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44 is identical.



Appendix 2 – Visualisation Methodology



Appendix 2 – ZTV & Visualisation Methodology

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 The purpose of this methodology is to provide an understanding of how visualisation material prepared to support the planning application for the Proposed Development has been produced. The methodology addresses the production of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping and viewpoint visualisations.
- 1.1.2 It should be recognised that production of visualisations is only one component of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), which will consider a range of other factors when identifying and assessing changes to the landscape and to views. The use of visualisations is a useful aid when undertaking LVIA, but the assessment process is not dependent on them. LVIA may be undertaken without use of visualisation material, although for major developments the inclusion of visualisations is accepted practice.
- 1.1.3 Current good practice regarding the production of visualisations is set out in:
- i) Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (2013), *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition*. This document is referred to hereafter as ‘the GLVIA’;
 - ii) Landscape Institute (2019), *Visual Representation of Development Proposals. Technical Guidance Note 06/19*. This document is referred to hereafter as ‘TGN 06/19’.
- 1.1.4 The remainder of this Methodology document is structured as follows.
- 1.1.5 Section 2.0 addresses the production of the ZTV mapping that informs the LVIA.
- 1.1.6 Section 3.0 gives details of how Viewpoints were selected for inclusion in the LVIA, and includes the details required as part of the ‘Visualisation Types Methodology’ that forms part of the Technical Methodology specified in Appendix 10 of TGN 06/19.
- 1.1.7 Section 4.0 gives details of how the viewpoint visualisation material was produced, and includes the remaining details required by the Technical Methodology specified in Appendix 10 of TGN 06/19.



2.0 ZONE OF THEORETICAL VISIBILITY

2.1.1 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map has been generated in order to better understand the likely extent of the surrounding landscape across which the Proposed Development would be visible.

2.1.2 The ZTV is presented on LVIA Figure 2.

Data Source

2.1.3 The ZTV was produced using a commercial 2m Photogrammetric Digital Surface Model (DSM) obtained from Bluesky International. This is derived from aerial photography captured in June 2019 and April 2020, and takes account of screening features such as building and vegetation.

2.1.4 This DSM data consists of a series of spot levels at 2m intervals. The horizontal 'root mean square error' (RMSE) of the data is 1m, and the vertical RMSE is 1.5m.

ZTV creation

2.1.5 The ZTV was calculated and created using QGIS open source software. The ZTV calculation process takes account of the curvature of the earth's surface and light refraction. The eye height of the receptor in the computer model was set at 1.7m above ground level in accordance with guidance set out in GLVIA.

2.1.6 The ZTV was generated to illustrate the theoretical visibility of the proposed solar panels (height 2.4m above existing ground level), using a series of marker points distributed evenly across the area where the panels would be located. A total of thirty-six markers were placed.

2.1.7 Colour banding is used to indicate the proportion of marker points visible.

Limitations

2.1.8 A ZTV, as use of the term theoretical implies, is not an absolute indication of the extent of visibility but rather a computer-generated aid that utilises available relative data to indicate areas of inter-visibility and screening in relation to a specific modelled object. ZTVs are tools to assist the LVIA. The technique aims to give a better understanding of the areas where visibility is likely and unlikely but imperfections in data are such that it must only be seen as an aid to understanding. This limitation needs to be recognised when interpreting the ZTVs.



- 2.1.9 A further caveat is that the ZTVs simply illustrate that part of a structure would be theoretically visible. As such, it makes no distinction between a clear view of all or most of a proposed feature and a view of a very small proportion of a feature (for example one corner of a building roof, or the top of a stack). This is especially relevant in the case of the Proposed Development, where views from the surrounding area are often limited by localised changes in vegetation cover and landform.
- 2.1.10 The ZTV produced using the DSM does reflect the presence of screening features in the landscape. However, it should be recognised that the DSM reflects a single moment in time. In reality, the extent and / or height of vegetation cover is dynamic and changes as vegetation inevitably increases in stature over time and / or is planted, trimmed or removed. Similarly, there is potential for buildings to have been erected, demolished or modified, subsequent to the data being captured.
- 2.1.11 Additionally, the DSM tends to assume that vegetation captured forms a solid visual barrier, when in reality views can sometimes be available through leaves and branches, especially in winter when deciduous foliage is absent. As such, the real-world visibility of the Proposed Development may be underestimated in places.
- 2.1.12 The DSM does not distinguish between the ground surface and the surface of structures and vegetation. As a consequence, the ZTV output may indicate visibility from areas known to be occupied by woodland and buildings. Whilst in theory it may be possible for people to experience the views from such locations (by climbing onto roofs, or into the tops of trees), this is not representative of typical day to day visibility, and as such there is the potential to overstate the actual visibility of the Proposed Development. Ordnance Survey open mapping data (OS Zoomstack Buildings, and OS Zoomstack Woodland) have been added to the ZTV figures, to mask out mapped areas of development and tree cover..



3.0 VIEWPOINT SELECTION

Introduction

- 3.1.1 The aim of this Section is to present, in a transparent format, the process that has been followed in arriving at an appropriate number and range of viewpoints.
- 3.1.2 When considering which viewpoints to include as part of an assessment it is important to not assess too few or too many viewpoints. A proportionate approach to viewpoint selection is necessary, in line with the recommendations of the GLVIA (*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd edition 2013, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment).
- 3.1.3 The absence of a viewpoint from any location does not imply that there would be no view of a proposed development, nor that views from such a location have not been considered in the LVIA.

Viewpoints

- 3.1.4 Following pre-application consultation with North Hertfordshire District Council, and after initial analysis of the ZTVs, a total of sixteen viewpoints were proposed, as per the below table:

Viewpoint	Viewpoint Details
1: Sperberry Hill, looking south-west adjacent to Site boundary	Representative of views available to residents, and of road users
2: Sperberry Hill, looking south adjacent to Site boundary	Representative of views available to road users
3: PRoW Wymondley 014, looking south from within the Site	Representative of views available to footpath users, local residents, and visitors to Redcoats Hotel
4: Tittendell Lane, looking east adjacent to Site boundary	Representative of views available to footpath users and local residents
5: Corner between Little Almshole Lane and Tittendell Lane, looking north-east adjacent to Site boundary	Representative of views available to road users and footpath users
6: Minor road, looking north	Representative of views available to residents
7: PRoW Ippollitts 018, looking north-east	Representative of views available to residents and footpath users
8: PRoW Ippollitts 021 (Hertfordshire Way), looking north	Representative of views available to footpath users of the Hertfordshire Way



9: PRoW Ippollitts 021 (Hertfordshire Way), looking north adjacent to Site boundary	Representative of views available to footpath users of the Hertfordshire Way
10: PRoW Wymondley 015 (Hertfordshire Way), looking south-west	Representative of views available to footpath users of the Hertfordshire Way
11: PRoW Wymondley 017 (Hertfordshire Way), looking west	Representative of views available to footpath users of the Hertfordshire Way and local residents
12: PRoW Wymondley 022, looking north-west	Representative of views available to footpath users
13: B656, looking east	Representative of views available to footpath users and local residents
14: PRoW Ippollitts 008, looking east	Representative of views available to footpath users and local residents
15: PRoW Langley 001 (Chiltern Way), looking north-east	Representative of views available to footpath users and local residents of the Chiltern Way
16: Chilterns AONB, looking east (not shown on attached figure, suggested location in the area of point TL 14337 27842)	Representative of views available from the Chilterns AONB

- 3.1.5 North Hertfordshire District Council reviewed these viewpoints and confirmed that they covered everything they would expect and as such they had no further recommended viewpoints.
- 3.1.6 The precise location of the proposed viewpoints was then determined in the field, as part of the site visit to shoot the photography. This identified that there was no view available towards the Site from the Chilterns AONB, and therefore views from the AONB were subsequently scoped out of the LVIA, as set out in Paragraphs 3.3.9 and 3.3.10 of the LVIA.
- 3.1.7 Appendix 10 of TGN 06/19 sets out details of what should be included in the Technical Methodology for Viewpoint Visualisations (i.e. in this Methodology document). The list of required information is stated to be indicative.
- 3.1.8 Part of the required information is a 'Visualisation Type Methodology' including
- i) The anticipated purpose/ users of the viewpoint visualisations;
 - ii) The indicative assessment of sensitivity and magnitude, and resulting likely indicative overall degree or level of effect; and
 - iii) Other factors influencing the selection of the visualisation type.



- 3.1.9 The purpose of the Viewpoint Visualisations is to inform the LVIA and the decision-making process. Users are likely to be landscape professionals, other environmental professionals and planning officers, consultee bodies and interested members of the public.
- 3.1.10 On the basis that the LVIA includes a detailed assessment of visual effects from each viewpoint, including a description of the sensitivity of receptors, the magnitude of change in view that would occur, and the resultant effect, it is considered that there is little benefit in providing an indicative assessment in this Methodology document.
- 3.1.11 The LVIA and the accompanying Appendix 4 that addresses effects on Viewpoints, both include details of the type of receptors that each viewpoint seeks to represent, and a brief description of the viewpoint location. It is considered that this information should be sufficient to indicate the factors that have influenced the selection of the viewpoint.
- 3.1.12 Baseline photography is provided from each viewpoint, which is annotated where deemed appropriate to highlight key features. Photomontages illustrating how the Proposed Development would appear are also included from selected viewpoints.

4.0 VIEWPOINT VISUALISATIONS

Photography

- 4.1.1 All photography for this assessment was taken using a Canon EOS 5D Mark II digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with a full-frame sensor, using a 50mm lens. The camera was mounted on a tripod to ensure a stable support and minimise camera shake. The camera was mounted on a panoramic tripod head with built-in spirit level (Nodal Ninja 3 MkII), which allows for the rotation of the camera at fixed intervals around a fixed point in vertical alignment with the camera lens, thereby eliminating parallax error. The camera was levelled using an auto-leveller device (Nodal Ninja EZ-Leveler II). Camera height was 1.5 m above the ground.
- 4.1.2 Photographs were taken over a full 360 degree sweep from each viewpoint location. The precise location of each photograph was recorded using a hand-held Garmin Oregon 600 GPS device (which has an accuracy of approximately 3m). Following the Site visit, the GPS data was loaded into Google Earth, and the GPS waypoints were moved manually where necessary to reflect the tripod location. A spreadsheet was completed recording information about the viewpoint.



3D Model

- 4.1.3 A digital model of the Proposed Development was created using industry standard software (Autodesk 3DStudioMax), along with the viewpoint data recorded on site (as discussed above). This enables a series of 'camera' points to be created within the model, reflecting the view from each viewpoint towards the Proposed Development.
- 4.1.4 A series of markers were added to the model, representing real-world locations such as topographic features, electricity pylons, vegetation and buildings. The locations of these markers were determined via the use of aerial imagery (e.g. Google Earth) and by the Environmental Agency 1m Digital Surface Model (DSM) LIDAR data.
- 4.1.5 For those viewpoints where photomontages have been produced, the models were then lined up with the individual photographs that focus on the Site. The markers were used to ensure that the model lines up both horizontally and vertically as accurately as possible with the photograph (by matching the markers with the real-world equivalent), and to assist with identifying which features in the photograph would appear 'in front' of the Proposed Development, which would appear 'behind' and which, if any would be removed.
- 4.1.6 Once the models are lined up as accurately as possible, the Proposed Development was rendered, having regard to the particular materials and colours that are to be used, and to reflect light conditions typical of the time and date of the photography.

Photo Stitching

- 4.1.7 The full sweep of photos taken from each viewpoint were stitched together using the software package PTGui. The software reads the exif data attached to each individual photograph file to identify the specifications of the camera and lens, ensuring accurate production of the stitched panoramic image.

Photomontages

- 4.1.8 Photomontages are computer generated images, showing images of the Proposed Development superimposed upon the existing photography, with the aim of producing a visualisation that should give a realistic impression of how the Proposed Development would appear within the landscape. Photomontages have been produced from four of the LVIA viewpoints, these being locations where the Proposed Development would be visible, and where the photomontage would help



the reader understand the appearance of the Proposed Development or the level of effect from different parts of the landscape.

4.1.9 In some instances, where new planting is proposed in order to mitigate against adverse visual effects, a series of photomontages are produced, which illustrate the anticipated height of proposed vegetation approximately 10 years after planting. Where planting is included, it is shown at the following heights:

- i) Hedgerows: approximately 3m high; and
- ii) Woodland: up to approximately 7m high (based on growth of approximately 0.5m per annum).

4.1.10 The resulting stitched viewpoint image was loaded into Adobe Photoshop. Any parts of the Proposed Development that would not be visible from an individual viewpoint due to the presence of intervening features were cropped out.

Limitations

4.1.11 It should be understood that viewpoint visualisations can never provide an exact match to what is experienced in reality. Visualisations are tools in the assessment process but independent from it. They illustrate the likely change in view in the context of a specific date, time and weather conditions, that would be seen within a photograph and not as seen by the human eye. As such, visualisations need to be used in conjunction with site visits and should be considered in the context of the totality of views experienced from the viewpoint and not just focussed on the Proposed Development.

4.1.12 Photography was taken in September 2021. The photographs reflect the level of foliage present at that time of year.

4.1.13 The software (3DStudioMax) used to produce the model of the Proposed Development from each Viewpoint does not take account of the curvature of the earth's surface, and assumes a flat horizon. The effects of the earth's curvature do influence what is visible, especially in longer range views. If a flat horizon is assumed, then a feature located approximately 5km away from any viewpoint would appear approximately 1.7m higher than in reality. As such the model slightly exaggerates the height that the Proposed Development would appear in each view. As all of the viewpoints are located within 2.5km of the Proposed Development, it is considered that this is not material to the conclusions of the LVIA.



Presentation & Viewing

- 4.1.14 Once the final viewpoint images have been produced, they are inserted into a Figure template, which also includes information about the viewpoint, including the date and time of photography, details of the camera used, and British National Grid coordinates.
- 4.1.15 In relation to the viewpoint visualisations, these are displayed as follows.
- 4.1.16 For each Figure, the existing baseline view is displayed as the first sheet, annotated with the location of notable features including the approximate extents of the Site.
- 4.1.17 Where photomontages have been produced, further sheets show rendered photomontages of the Proposed Development (including with and without proposed planting).
- 4.1.18 The Proposed Development would occupy a wide field of view. The images presented are displayed at 100% of the original size, in a cylindrical projection. This accords with the guidance set out paragraph 4.5.22 of TGN 06/19 and in Table 5 of the same document.
- 4.1.19 Each sheet should be printed at the size stated on it. In some instances, this may require unconventional paper sizes (e.g. A1 width and A3 height). All printed sheets should be viewed held **flat at a comfortable arm's length**.



Appendix 3 – Landscape Effects



Appendix 3 – Effects on Landscape Character

North Hertfordshire Landscape Study: Wymondley and Titmore Green Landscape Character Area					
Susceptibility to Change: Medium to Low		Lower	↔	Higher	Value: Medium to Low
Scale	Medium- to small-scale landscape with a fairly strong sense of enclosure due to the extent of vegetation and boundary features such as walls and hedgerows that are associated with settlement. There are some more open areas where hedgerows have been removed such as alongside roads.		■		- No landscape designations; - Fairly limited recreational access, but including the Hertfordshire Way; - Some cultural interest with listed buildings dispersed in the area, and a conservation area at St Ippolyts; and - Local-level nature conservation interest at Wymondley Substation.
Pattern/ Complexity	The LCA has a fairly complex pattern of settlement, highway infrastructure, and energy infrastructure that results in the perception of an interrupted and fragmented landscape. The local roads are principally lanes enclosed by hedgerows and belts of trees that are susceptible to change, with the intermittent loss of hedgerows alongside arable fields contributing to a declining landscape fabric. The settlements of Little Wymondley, Titmore Green, and St Ippolyts are fairly well defined, with scattered farmsteads and small-scale commercial land uses in the area.		■		
Development/ Human Influence	The LCA has evidently been heavily influenced by development and human influence, notably the major transport infrastructure which cuts through the area, and the site of the Wymondley Substation. Electricity pylons are prominent across the LCA but most notably in the vicinity of the substation. The extent of settlement and infrastructure and its associated audible and visual influence on the area reduces a perception of tranquillity or remoteness in the LCA.		■		



Connections with adjacent areas	There is a fair network of public rights of way across the LCA including the Hertfordshire Way, however the narrow yet busy nature of many of the local roads which generally do not have pavement make it somewhat challenging to move between areas. Major road infrastructure causes a sense of severance within the landscape.		
Visual Interruption	Views are generally short-range as a result of the sense of enclosure provided by vegetation alongside roads and in field and property boundaries. Highway and electricity infrastructure interrupts and detracts from views in the area.		
Sensitivity: Medium to Low A medium- to small-scale settled landscape with associated enclosure in property boundary vegetation. The area has been heavily influenced by human activity, major transport infrastructure and energy infrastructure and as such has a medium to low susceptibility to change from energy infrastructure. There are no landscape designations for the area, and only local-level landscape and cultural designations. Overall, landscape sensitivity is judged to be medium to low.			
Size/ Scale of Effect: • Introduction of solar panels and associated infrastructure would result in a change in land use at a Site level; • The change in land use would be inconsistent with the agricultural land use, but is in an area already influenced by peri-urban land uses, and disrupted by pylons and the Wymondley Substation such that whilst it is an intensification of the land use, it is not wholly out of place; • There would be an increase in the perception of built development at a localised level; • No loss to existing landscape elements, such that there would be no adverse impact to landscape fabric; • The public right of way network would not be disrupted by the Proposed Development, with existing routes across the Site retained; • Improvements to the hedgerow network and introduction of woodland belts would improve the condition of the landscape fabric, and accord with the stated landscape objectives for the landscape by: • Promoting the creation of buffer zones, improving semi-natural habitat, and linking habitat areas; • Restoring hedgerow boundaries to improve the character of the lanes and reduce the existing fragmentation where hedgerows have been removed; and • Planting of broadleaved woodland to assist in screening new development.		Geographical Extent: • Localised change within the LCA that due to the low height of the Proposed Development would not be widely perceived from within the LCA.	

Duration: Long-term	Reversibility: Reversible (40-year lifespan)
Magnitude: Short-term: Medium; Long-term: Medium to Small The introduction of the Proposed Development would result in a direct impact through the change in land use from arable field to solar electricity generation, and the introduction of solar panels, batteries, associated infrastructure, perimeter fencing and new boundary planting. This would be inconsistent with the agricultural land use but not wholly out of place with the peri-urban character of the area which is already influenced by energy infrastructure. The Proposed Development would not result in an adverse loss to landscape fabric through a change in landform or vegetation clearance, and the public right of way network would be retained. In the short-term, the Proposed Development would have a degrading influence on local landscape character due in principal to the perception of an intensification in built-form. The magnitude of change would be medium. In the medium- and long-term the proposed mitigation planting would provide a greater level of landscape integration and screening, whilst according with objectives to restore the landscape fabric through the reinstatement and improved management of hedgerows. In the medium-term and long-term the landscape impact would reduce as the perception of built form reduces within the LCA. The magnitude of change would slightly reduce to medium-small.	
Effect: Short-term: Moderate; Long-term: Moderate to Minor In the short-term the Proposed Development would result in a moderate level of effect to the LCA, with the effect in the long-term reducing to a moderate/minor level of effect.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	



North Hertfordshire Landscape Study: Langley Valley Landscape Character Area

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to Low		Lower	↔	Higher	Value: Medium to Low
Scale	Large- to medium-scale arable landscape with some smaller-scale fields in proximity to settlement. The undulating landform provides some enclosure to the which is generally lower-lying than the adjoining areas, but with a sense of openness from elevated positions.	■			• No landscape designations; • Fairly limited recreational access, but including the Hertfordshire Way and Chiltern Way.
Pattern/ Complexity	The pattern of the LCA generally comprises rural lanes following lower-lying contours with scattered individual properties sparse along the valley bottom. The local roads are principally lanes enclosed by hedgerows and belts of trees that are susceptible to change, with the intermittent loss of hedgerows alongside arable fields contributing to a declining landscape fabric.		■		
Development/ Human Influence	The LCA has a principally rural and countryside character lying beyond the peri-urban fringe to the north and east. Human influence is however evident with prominent electricity pylons crossing the area. The area therefore has a partial sense of tranquillity.		■		
Connections with adjacent areas	There is a limited network of public rights of way across the LCA, but it does include part of the Hertfordshire Way and Chiltern Way. The narrow lanes in the area provide good links to adjoining areas. The LCA has a visual connection with the valley sides to the east and west which influence the sense of remoteness and enclosure in the area.		■		
Visual Interruption	Views are generally short- to mid-range along the valley bottom towards the valley sides, but with some more expansive views at intermittent locations from elevated positions. There are generally limited visual detractors in the area.		■		
Sensitivity: Medium					

A medium- to large-scale predominantly rural landscape in agricultural use, with a sense of enclosure from the adjoining areas of elevated landform that provide containment. There is limited perception of built development in the LCA, but with high voltage pylons a prominent feature at localised parts of the LCA. There are no landscape designations for the area, and only local-level landscape and cultural designations.

Overall, landscape sensitivity is judged to be medium.

Size/ Scale of Effect:

- Introduction of solar panels and associated infrastructure would result in a change in land use to a very small part of the LCA;
- The change in land use would be inconsistent with the agricultural land use, but is in a part of the LCA already influenced by peri-urban land uses, and disrupted by pylons such that it is not wholly out of place;
- There would be an increase in the perception of built development at a localised level;
- No loss to existing landscape elements, such that there would be no adverse impact to landscape fabric;
- The Proposed Development would avoid the introduction of built development in prominent locations such as ridgelines that could influence the character of the wider LCA;
- The public right of way network would not be disrupted by the Proposed Development, with existing routes across the Site retained;
- Improvements to the hedgerow network would improve the condition of the landscape fabric, and accord with the stated landscape objectives for the landscape by:
 - Promoting the creation of buffer zones, improving semi-natural habitat, and linking habitat areas;
 - Restoring hedgerow boundaries to improve the character of the lanes and reduce the existing fragmentation where hedgerows have been removed.

Geographical Extent:

- Localised change within the LCA that due to the low height of the Proposed Development would not be widely perceived from within the LCA.

Duration:

- Long-term

Reversibility:

- Reversible (40-year lifespan)

Magnitude: Short-term: Small; **Long-term:** Small

The introduction of the Proposed Development would result in a direct impact across a very small part of the LCA, and in a part of the LCA less representative of the wider LCA, and on the fringe of the LCA. The Proposed Development is partially across a valley side but is across land that has a visual relationship contained to a side valley to the main Langley Valley, and therefore would not widely influence the character of the LCA. Intervisibility with the Proposed Development across this LCA would be limited and therefore the perception of large-scale built development intruding on the LCA would be small. In the short-term and long-term the magnitude of change is judged to be small.

Effect: Short-term: Minor; **Long-term:** Minor

In the short-term and long-term the Proposed Development would result in a minor level of effect to the LCA, but this would only be experienced across a small part of the overall LCA.

Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial:

The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.



Appendix 4 – Visual Effects



Appendix 4 – Effects on Viewpoints

Viewpoint 1 (VP 1): View south-east from Sperberry Hill

Grid Ref: 519956, 226792

The view is taken from the northern verge of Sperberry Hill road, close to the point where Tittendell Lane meets Sperberry Hill at the southern end of St Ippolyts. Residential properties along this part of Sperberry Hill and nearby on the west side of Tittendell Lane are generally behind tall boundary hedges, with the road having a strong sense of enclosure.

The photograph is from the banked verge, and therefore at a slightly higher elevation than the road itself. The photograph demonstrates that the hedgerow on the northern boundary of the Site is tall at this location, such that in summer it provides effective screening of views towards the south. In winter it is likely that views are more open into the north of the Site.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High

- Residents
 - Have a high susceptibility to a change of view.
- Road users
 - Have a medium susceptibility to change.

Value: Low

- Not a recognised viewpoint; and
- View contained by vegetation.

Sensitivity: Medium to Low

The viewpoint is representative of views available to residents and road users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium to low, considering the medium to high susceptibility of the receptors, but the low value of view which is principally just of the road.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - No change to the view during summer, likely to be filtered views of the Proposed Development in winter albeit the fencing and solar panels are offset from the Site boundary to the south.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Oblique
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** 20 to 30m
- **Extent of area over which changes to would be visible:** approximately 350m of Sperberry Hill, 225m of Tittendell Lane

- Existing infrastructure in the view, change limited by intervening vegetation. Nature of the View: - Contained view.	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Low to Negligible (short-term); Negligible (medium and long-term) The hedgerow in the foreground of the view would screen views of the fencing and solar panels, which are offset to the south of the hedgerow. In winter there would be more open views of the panels and fencing, albeit the proposed mitigation planting would provide some filtering of views in addition to the existing hedgerow. In the short-term the visual impact would be negligible in the summer months, and low in the winter months. In the long-term the management of the existing hedgerow and proposed mitigation planting would be established such that there would be year-around screening of the Proposed Development, and the visual impact would be negligible.	
Effect: Minor to Negligible (short-term); Negligible (medium and long-term) In the short-term the visual effect would be negligible when during summer months, increasing to minor in the winter when vegetation is not in leaf. In the long-term the visual effect would be negligible year-around.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	



Viewpoint 2 (VP 2): View south from Sperberry Hill**Grid Ref:** 520427, 226604

The view is from Sperberry Hill road close to the junction with Little Almshoe Lane. The photograph demonstrates that along this part of the road road widening and/or field boundary management has resulted in the loss of sections of hedgerow such that there are intermittent gaps allowing views into the Site to the west of Little Almshoe Lane, and views across the Site towards the Langley scarp to the south-west.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium

- Road users
 - Have a medium susceptibility to change.

Value: Medium to Low

- Not a recognised viewpoint;
- Generally limited views out from the road;
- Brief glimpsed view; and
- Not part of a scenic route.

Sensitivity: Medium

The viewpoint is representative of views available to road users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium to low considering the medium susceptibility to change and the medium to low value of view, which is a brief glimpsed view along a road where views are principally contained by hedgerows.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of the Proposed Development to the south;
 - Solar panels and fencing would form a new horizontal feature that would interrupt views of the lower-lying part of the valley and towards the south;
 - As the proposed mitigation planting establishes in the medium- and long-term, the Proposed Development would be screened in the view. However, views of the lower-lying parts of the valley would remain interrupted.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - Pylons are prominent across part of the view, but otherwise built development is fairly sparse in the view such that there would be a

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Oblique
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 30 to 40m to the panels
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** approximately 200m section of road

fairly high degree of contrast at this proximity. • Nature of the View: • Brief view for people travelling along the road.	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Large (short-term); Small (medium and long-term) The introduction of the Proposed Development into the field west of Little Almshoe Lane would be prominent in the view and contrast with the existing view across the field. In the short-term the visual impact would be large due to the proximity of the Proposed Development and the lack of existing screening. In the medium-and long term the proposed mitigation planting would screen the Proposed Development and whilst the introduction of a hedgerow would also curtail views south, it would be consistent with the character of views along Sperberry Hill road. The visual impact would therefore reduce to small.	
Effect: Major to Moderate (short-term); Minor (medium and long-term) In the short-term the visual effect would be major to moderate, but this would reduce to minor in the medium- and long-term as the proposed hedgerow alongside the road established and screens the Proposed Development from the view.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	



Viewpoint 3 (VP 3): View south from PRow Wymondley 014 close to Sperberry Hill

Grid Ref: 520679, 226490

The view is from a public footpath that crosses the Site, with the location of the viewpoint at the most elevated part of the footpath close to Redcoats Farmhouse, The Robins and Sperberry Hill road. The road behind the viewpoint location is lined by hedgerows, and similarly Redcoats Farmhouse and The Robins are bounded by mature vegetation albeit with some more open views into the Site. In winter it is likely these views would be more open when vegetation is not in leaf.

The photograph demonstrates that there are open views from the footpath across the falling landform of the Site in the foreground, with the ridgeline at Mill Hill in the mid-ground and views of the wooded Langley Scarp in the distant background.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High

- Residents
 - Have a high susceptibility to a change in view.
- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are a part of the experience.

Value: Medium to Low

- Not a recognised viewpoint; and
- High voltage pylons across part of the view.

Sensitivity: Medium

The viewpoint is representative of views for the footpath users, and is the closest view used to represent view from Redcoats Farmhouse and The Robins. The sensitivity is judged to be medium considering the medium to high susceptibility to change, and the medium to low value of view which is not from a recognised route or viewpoint, and whilst of countryside is somewhat degraded by pylons.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of the Proposed Development;
 - Change across the view as the viewpoint is within the Site;
 - Views towards the south-west remain, looking over the solar infrastructure towards the horizon;
 - As the proposed mitigation planting establishes in the medium- and long-term the hedgerows and

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Direct
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** 0m
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** approximately 275m

woodland planting would screen the Proposed Development, but with views to the south remaining open; • Degree of contrast / integration: • The Proposed Development would contrast with the existing view. • Nature of the View: • Direct view from footpath.	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Medium to Large (short-term); Small to Medium (medium and long-term) As shown on Figure 10b, in the short-term the Proposed Development would result in a change to the view from the introduction of solar panels, fencing, and associated infrastructure. The development is offset from the boundary to Redcoats Farm such that due to a combination of the distance and the ground level falling away, open views towards the horizon would be retained. The magnitude of change would be medium to large. As shown on Figure 10c, in the medium-and long-term the proposed mitigation planting would establish, softening views and screening the infrastructure of the Proposed Development in the summer months, but with filtered views of the infrastructure likely to remain in winter months. Open views across to Almshoe Bury and the rolling wooded horizon would be retained. The magnitude of change would reduce to small to medium as the Proposed Development would be screened, with views of hedgerow in the foreground and the Langley Scarp in the background consistent with the character of the baseline view.	
Effect: Moderate to Major (short-term); Minor to Moderate (medium and long-term) In the short-term the visual effect would be moderate to major, reducing to minor to moderate in the medium-and long term.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	

Viewpoint 4 (VP 4): View east from Tittendell Lane**Grid Ref:** 520021, 226550

The view is from a part of Tittendell Lane where there is a gap in the hedgerow that lines in the eastern side of the lane, and as a result there are views into the western part of the Site. In summer the ruderal vegetation in the verge to the lane filters views into the Site, but in the winter this vegetation would die back such that there would be open views into the Site.

The photograph demonstrates that the view is of arable field with high voltage pylons and power lines a dominant feature of the view due to their proximity to the receptor.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to Low

- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are judged to be incidental to the receptors use of the route.

Value: Low

- Not a recognised viewpoint; and
- High voltage pylons dominant in the view.

Sensitivity: Medium to Low

The viewpoint is representative of views available to footpath users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium to low considering the medium to low susceptibility of the receptor, and the low value of view which is not from a designated route and is a fairly ordinary view across a field.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of the Proposed Development;
 - Solar panels, fencing and the associated infrastructure would form a new horizontal feature that would interrupt views into the field;
 - At the proposed mitigation planting establishes it would screen views of the Proposed Development.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - Pylons are already a dominant feature in the view and as such the Proposed Development would not

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Direct
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 15m
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:**

be wholly out of place when introduced. • Nature of the View: • Intermittent view from gaps in vegetation.	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Large (short-term); Small (medium and long-term) The introduction of the Proposed Development would be prominent in the view and contrast with the existing view into the field. In the short-term the visual impact would be large due to the proximity of the Proposed Development and the lack of existing screening. In the medium-and long term the proposed mitigation planting would screen the Proposed Development and whilst the introduction of a hedgerow would also curtail views, it would be consistent with the character of views along Tittendale Lane. The visual impact would therefore reduce to small.	
Effect: Moderate to Minor (short-term); Minor (medium and long-term) In the short-term the visual effect would be moderate to minor adverse, but this would reduce to minor adverse in the long-term as the proposed hedgerow establishes.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	

Viewpoint 5 (VP 5): View north-east from corner between Little Almshoe Lane and Tittendell Lane

Grid Ref: 520099, 226224

The view is from the juncture between Little Almshoe Lane and Tittendell Lane and is representative of road users and rights of way users.

The photograph demonstrates the maturity and height of hedgerows that line much of Tittendell Lane, such that from most of Tittendell Lane there are no views into the Site. Similarly, the photograph demonstrates the extent of hedgerow along Little Almshoe Lane. Views from this route are therefore limited to intermittent points such as brief gaps in hedgerows and field gates. High voltage pylons and power lines are a prominent feature in the view.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to Low

- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are judged to be incidental to the receptors use of the route.
- Road users
 - Have a medium susceptibility to change.

Value: Low

- Not a recognised viewpoint; and
- High voltage pylons across the view.

Sensitivity: Low

The viewpoint is representative of views available to road users and footpath users. The sensitivity is judged to be low considering the medium to low susceptibility to change, and the low value of view which is not a designated route and an ordinary view along the road lined by hedgerows.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of the Proposed Development through a gap in the hedgerow, but otherwise screened by the existing hedgerows.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - Pylons across the skyline, but otherwise no built development in the view.
- **Nature of the View:**

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Oblique
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 30m
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** along Little Almshoe Lane and Tittendell Lane

• Brief view.	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Small (short-term); Negligible (medium and long-term) The hedgerows alongside the road and Tittendell Lane would predominantly screen the Proposed Development such that views of the fencing, solar panels and associated infrastructure would only be available at gaps in the vegetation. Views of the Proposed Development would be brief. The magnitude of change would be small in the short-term, and as the proposed hedgerow planting establishes and fills the gaps in the hedgerow the magnitude of change would reduce to negligible in the medium- and long-term.	
Effect: Minor (short-term); Negligible (medium and long-term) In the short-term the visual effect would be minor, reducing to negligible in the medium- and long-term once the Proposed Development is screened by vegetation.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	

Viewpoint 6 (VP 6): View north from Little Almshoe Lane Round the Wyck
Grid Ref: 520163, 226039

The view is from Little Almshoe Lane Round the Wyck road to the south of the west of the Site, from a gap in the hedgerow close to Little Almshoe Cottage. The photograph demonstrates the rising landform between the viewpoint and the Site, and the intervening vegetation along both Little Almshoe Lane and Little Almshoe Lane Round the Wyck road. The landform and vegetation collectively screen views into the Site. High voltage pylons and power lines are a prominent feature along the skyline.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High

- Residents
 - Have a high susceptibility to a change in view.
- Road users
 - Have a medium susceptibility to change.

Value: Low

- Not a recognised viewpoint; and
- High voltage pylons across the view.

Sensitivity: Medium

The viewpoint is representative of residents and local road users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium considering the medium to high susceptibility to change, but the medium to low value of view which is a fairly ordinary view across a field with detracting elements across the skyline.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - The Proposed Development would not be visible.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - n/a
- **Nature of the View:**
 - Brief view

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Oblique
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 220m
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** along Little Almshoe Lane Round the Wyck

Duration: Long-term.

Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).

Magnitude: No change (short-term); No change (medium and long-term)

The intervening landform and vegetation would screen the Proposed Development. There would be no change to views.

Effect: Neutral (short-term); Neutral (medium and long-term) The Proposed Development would have a neutral effect on views.
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: There would be no change in views.



Viewpoint 7 (VP 7): View north-east from PRow Ippollitts 018

Grid Ref: 520463, 226198

The view is from a public footpath east of the Little Almshoe Lane Round the Wyck road, to the east of The Wyck property, and at a higher elevation than the road or The Wyck.

The photograph demonstrates that there are open views towards the Site boundary from the public footpath, but with the ground level of the Site partially screened by boundary vegetation. High voltage pylons and electricity infrastructure is visible across the skyline of the view and is prominent locally.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High

- Residents
 - Have a high susceptibility to a change in view.
- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are judged to be incidental to the receptors use of the route.

Value: Medium to Low

- Not a recognised viewpoint; and
- High voltage pylons across the view.

Sensitivity: Medium

The viewpoint is representative of residents and footpath users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium considering the medium to high susceptibility to change and the medium to low value of view which is not from a designated route or viewpoint, and is a fairly ordinary view across a field with detracting elements on the skyline.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views towards Proposed Development, which would be partially screened by the existing intervening hedgerow.
 - The DNO Substation, batteries, and associated infrastructure would be partially visible from this location.
 - As the intervening vegetation is managed to be taller it would function more effectively as screening for the Proposed

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Direct
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 100m
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** approximately 175m of footpath

Development such that views of the panels would be reduced. • Degree of contrast / integration: • There are pylons across the skyline but otherwise there is limited development in the view, such that the Proposed Development would contrast with the baseline. • Nature of the View: • Open view	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Medium (short-term); Medium to Small (medium and long-term) As shown on Figure 14b, in the short-term the existing hedgerow on the Site's south-west boundary would partially screen the Proposed Development, but with the upper parts of panels seen above the hedgerow, and views of the DNO Substation compound visible in the background. The magnitude of change would be medium in the short-term. As shown on Figure 14c, in the medium and long-term the change in management to the intervening hedgerow would increase its height such that it would provide more effective screening of the Proposed Development. However, the Proposed Development would still be partially visible. The magnitude of change would reduce to small to medium.	
Effect: Moderate (short-term); Moderate to Minor (medium and long-term) In the short-term the visual effect would be moderate, reducing slightly in the long-term to moderate to minor.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	

Viewpoint 8 (VP 8): View north from PRow Ippollitts 021, part of the Hertfordshire Way

Grid Ref: 520673, 225499

The view is from the Hertfordshire Way as it crosses Mill Hill close to Almshoe Bury, and taken from a point where a bridleway and the Hertfordshire Way meet. The farmstead at Almshoe Bury to the south is enclosed by vegetation such that it was found there was no direct views towards the Site from the property.

The photograph demonstrates that there are open and panoramic views from the footpath across the undulating arable farmland towards the Site. The Site is visible across the middle ground of the view with a wooded backdrop. High voltage pylons and power lines are visible across the skyline in the background of the view.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High

- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are a part of the experience.

Value: Medium

- Not a recognised viewpoint;
- Part of the Hertfordshire Way;
- Expansive views; and
- High voltage pylons across the view.

Sensitivity: Medium

The viewpoint is representative of views available to footpath users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium considering the medium to high susceptibility to change, and the medium value of view which is somewhat expansive from a designated route, but with detracting elements across the view.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of the Proposed Development;
 - The Proposed Development would be seen across the middle ground of the view.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - There are pylons across the skyline but otherwise there is limited development in the view, such that the Proposed Development would contrast with the baseline.
 - The Proposed Development would sit visually within the existing field pattern, and the underlying

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Direct
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 400m
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** Parts of the footpath network across higher ground on Mill Hill to the south of the Site

topography could still be appreciated. • Nature of the View: • Open, panoramic view.	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Large to Medium (short-term); Large to Medium (medium and long-term) As shown on Figure 15b, in the short-term there would be direct views of the Proposed Development which would be seen across the middle ground of the view and would be partially contrasting with the existing views of countryside, however the perception of open fields and countryside in the foreground of the view would be unchanged. The transformer stations would be intermittently visible across the Site. The battery containers, DNO substation and switchroom building would be visible. Due to the characteristics of solar farms in that they are of a low height; retain existing landscape fabric such as vegetation and landform; and visually are of a fairly uniform if utilitarian appearance; the perception of the existing landscape pattern would be retained. I.e. the existing boundaries and features of the view could still be identified, and the underlying undulating valley landform could still be appreciated through the undulating appearance of the solar farm. As such, it is considered there is a degree of compatibility with the view. In the short-term the magnitude of change would be large to medium. As shown on Figure 15c, in the medium- and long-term the establishment of the proposed mitigation planting would somewhat soften the appearance of the boundaries to the Proposed Development, due to the elevated position of the receptor the overall magnitude of change would be unchanged.	
Effect: Major to Moderate (short-term); Major to Moderate (medium and long-term) In the short-term the visual effect would be major to moderate, and although the proposed mitigation planting would somewhat soften views of the Proposed Development, the long-term effect would remain major to moderate.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	

Viewpoint 9 (VP 9): View north from PRow Ippollitts 021 at the Site boundary
Grid Ref: 520894, 225848

The view is from the Hertfordshire Way at the southern boundary of the site, such that the viewpoint is within the Site.

The photograph demonstrates that this part of the Site is at a low-lying position, with views towards the rising land towards the Wymondley Substation and Redcoats Farmhouse to the north. There are high voltage pylons and electricity infrastructure across the skyline, middle ground and background of the view.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High

- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are a part of the experience.

Value: Medium

- Not a recognised viewpoint;
- Part of the Hertfordshire Way; and
- High voltage pylons across the view.

Sensitivity: Medium

The viewpoint is representative of views available to footpath users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium considering the medium to high susceptibility to change, and the medium value of view which is somewhat expansive from a designated route, but with detracting elements across the view.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of the Proposed Development;
 - Widespread change across the view as the viewpoint is within the Site;
 - As the proposed mitigation planting establishes in the medium- and long-term the hedgerows and woodland planting would screen the Proposed Development;
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - The Proposed Development would contrast with the existing view.
- **Nature of the View:**
 - Direct view from footpath.

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Direct
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** 0m
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** approximately 200m of footpath

Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Medium to Large (short-term); Small to Medium (medium and long-term) The Hertfordshire Way would follow the southern boundary of the Proposed Development. There would be close views to the north of the solar panels, fencing and associated infrastructure, whilst views to the east would remain open across fields in the foreground. Looking along the footpath there would therefore be development only on one side of the route. The magnitude of change would be medium to large due to the close proximity of the Proposed Development. In the medium-and long-term the proposed mitigation planting would establish, screening views of the Proposed Development in the summer months, but with heavily filtered views of the infrastructure likely to remain in winter months. Open views across the fields to the east would remain, and the introduction of the a hedgerow lining one side of the footpath would not be out of character with the local landscape. The magnitude of change would reduce to small to medium.	
Effect: Moderate to Major (short-term); Minor to Moderate (medium and long-term) The visual effect would be moderate to major in the short-term, but in the medium-and long-term would reduce to minor to moderate as the hedgerow screens the Proposed Development.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	

Viewpoint 10 (VP 10): View south-west from PRoW Wymondley 015, part of the Hertfordshire Way

Grid Ref: 521154, 226161

The view is from the Hertfordshire Way looking south-west towards the Site, from a point where two public footpaths meet in the corner of the field.

The photograph demonstrates that there are open views as the footpath crosses the field, with views of arable farmland, hedgerows and a wooded backdrop. The undulating landform is apparent. High voltage pylons and power lines are visible to the west. The Site is visible in the foreground to the west.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High

- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are a part of the experience.

Value: Medium

- Not a recognised viewpoint; and
- Part of the Hertfordshire Way.

Sensitivity: Medium

The viewpoint is representative of views available to footpath users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium considering the medium to high susceptibility to change, and the medium value of view which is somewhat expansive from a designated route, but with detracting elements across the view.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of the Proposed Development;
 - Solar panels and fencing would form a new horizontal feature that would partially interrupt views across the field, but not interrupt views towards higher ground and the background of the view;
 - As the proposed mitigation planting establishes in the medium- and long-term, the Proposed Development would be screened in the view.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - Pylons are prominent across part of the view, but otherwise built development is fairly sparse in the view such that there would be a

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Direct
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 200m
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** short sections of footpath in local area

fairly high degree of contrast at this proximity. • Nature of the View: • Open, panoramic view	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Medium (short-term); Small (medium and long-term) As shown on Figure 17b, in the short-term there would be direct views of the Proposed Development along the far edge of the field that the footpath crosses. The solar panels would appear as a new horizontal feature beyond the stock fencing. The low height of the panels and fencing is such that they would not break the skyline, and from the low-lying parts of the valley there would therefore still be an appreciation of Mill Hill and the more distant Langley Scarp. The magnitude of change would be medium. In the medium- and long-term the proposed hedgerows would have established, introducing a new vegetated field boundary into the view which would screen the Proposed Development. The new hedgerow planting would not be out of place with the existing local views of the countryside and would allow an appreciation of the wider valley landscape to the south. The magnitude of change would therefore reduce to small.	
Effect: Moderate (short-term); Minor (medium and long-term) The visual effect would be moderate in the short-term, reducing to minor in the medium- and long-term.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	

Viewpoint 11 (VP 11): View west from PRow Wymondley 017, part of the Hertfordshire Way

Grid Ref: 521293, 226483

The view is from a public footpath on the western side of Titmore Green.

The photograph demonstrates that the smaller-scale field pattern to the settlement edge, with the field in pastoral use rather than arable, with hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees providing some enclosure. There are partial views towards the wooded ridgeline of the Langley scarp to the west and south-west. The ground level of the Site is not easily distinguishable as a result of the intervening landform and vegetation.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High

- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are a part of the experience.

Value: Medium to Low

- Not a recognised viewpoint; and
- High voltage pylons across the view.

Sensitivity: Medium

The viewpoint is representative of footpath users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium considering the medium to high susceptibility to change and the medium to low value of view which is not a designated viewpoint or route.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of Proposed Development;
 - Change limited to a narrow part of the view;
 - Solar panels and fencing would form a new horizontal feature in the middle ground of the view;
 - As the proposed mitigation planting establishes in the medium- and long-term, the Proposed Development would be screened in the view.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - Some development in the view at a similar distance, and electricity infrastructure crossing the view.
- **Nature of the View:**

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Oblique
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 0.45km
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** footpaths along the western edge of Titmore Green

• Open view from footpath.	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Small (short-term); Negligible (medium and long-term) In the short-term, the fencing and solar panels of the Proposed Development would be partially visible through gaps in the existing vegetation, but would form a narrow part of the view, and due to the low height of the panels would not be visible above the treeline or skyline in the background. The compound containing the DNO Substation, battery containers and associated infrastructure would be screened by the existing vegetation as it is at a lower elevation to the south within the Site. The magnitude of change is judged to be small. In the medium- and long-term, once the proposed mitigation planting is established it would screen the Proposed Development. The proposed mitigation planting would be in keeping with the characteristics of the view. The magnitude of change would reduce to negligible.	
Effect: Minor (short-term); Negligible (medium and long-term) The visual effect would be minor in the short-term, reducing to negligible in the long-term.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The introduction of the Proposed Development would be adverse.	

Viewpoint 12 (VP 12): View north-west from PRoW Wymondley 022**Grid Ref:** 521607, 225624

The view is taken from an elevated position on a bridleway (PRoW Wymondley 022) south of the Site, south of Titmore Green, and west of Stevenage. From along this route, mature hedgerow cover alongside the footpath generally limits the availability of views out towards the north-west, but intermittently there are views available.

The photograph demonstrates that where there are views they are far-reaching due to the elevated position of the footpath, with views extending towards the Chilterns. The undulating nature of the landform is apparent, with the Site partially visible across the middle ground of the view. High voltage pylons and power lines are visible, extending from the foreground into the background of the view.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High

- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are a part of the experience.

Value: Medium

- Not a recognised viewpoint; and
- High voltage pylons across the view.

Sensitivity: Medium

The viewpoint is representative of views for footpath users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium considering the medium to high susceptibility to change and the medium value of view which is far reaching but includes detracting elements.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of the Proposed Development;
 - Change limited to a narrow part of the view due to distance to the Proposed Development.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - Built development within the view, and energy infrastructure (high voltage pylons) visible across the skyline;
 - Degree of contrast with the Site on elevated ground in the middle ground of the view.
- **Nature of the View:**

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Oblique, narrow view
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 0.7km at closest point
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** Localised to high ground south of Titmore Green

• An open, but brief view in the context of the footpath.	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Medium to Small (short-term); Medium to Small (medium and long-term) In the short-term and long-term the Proposed Development would be partially visible in the middle ground of the view, with the western part of the Site and lower-lying part of the south of the Site predominantly screened by landform and vegetation. The elevated part of the central part of the Site south of Redcoats Farmhouse would be visible and would introduce a change in land use from the existing arable farmland to the view, which would somewhat contrast with the existing views of countryside in the middle ground of the view. There would be a degree of contrast as a result of the change in land use, however the underlying undulating landform and surrounding landscape fabric and features could still be identified and appreciated. The magnitude of change would be medium to small.	
Effect: Moderate to Minor (short-term & long-term) The Proposed Development would have a moderate to minor effect on views in the short- and long-term.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The presence of the Proposed Development in the view would have an adverse effect.	

Viewpoint 13 (VP 13): View east from the B656 Grid Ref: 519620, 226369 The view is from the B656 which follows the bottom of the Langley valley, with open views from this part of the road where there are no verge hedgerows to the east. The photograph demonstrates the elevation change between the Site and the road, with the landform rising steeply to the east. The Site is not visible as a result of the change in elevation and intervening hedgerows and vegetation along the hill and skyline. High voltage pylons and power lines are a dominant feature in the view.	
Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High - Residents - Have a high susceptibility to a change of view. - Road users - Have a medium susceptibility to change.	Value: Medium to Low - Not a recognised viewpoint; - Not part of a scenic route; and - High voltage pylons across the view.
Sensitivity: Medium The viewpoint is representative of views for residents and road users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium considering the medium to high susceptibility and the medium to low value of view.	
Size / Scale of Effect: Scale of Change in view: - The Proposed Development would not be visible. Degree of contrast / integration: - n/a Nature of the View: - Brief view	Geographical Extent: Angle: Oblique Distance to Proposed Development: approximately 0.5km Extent of area over which changes would be visible: Along the B656
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: No change (short-term); No change (medium and long-term) The intervening landform and vegetation would screen the Proposed Development. There would be no change to views.	

Effect: Neutral (short-term); Neutral (medium and long-term)

The Proposed Development would have a neutral effect on views.

Adverse/ **Neutral**/ Beneficial:

There would be no change in views.



Viewpoint 14 (VP 14): View east from PRoW Ippollitts 008 at Preston Road
Grid Ref: 518568, 225945

The view is from a public footpath at Gosmore Hill close to Preston Road.
The photograph demonstrates that from this part of the footpath there are open and panoramic views across the undulating landform, with high voltage pylons and power lines a prominent feature across the view extending from the foreground to the background, with a concentration of pylons in the direction of the Site associated with the Wymondley Substation. Part of the west of the Site is partially visible in the middle ground of the view amongst pylons. The hospital in the north of Stevenage is also prominent in the background of the view.

Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High

- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are a part of the experience.

Value: Medium to Low

- Not a recognised viewpoint; and
- High voltage pylons across the view.

Sensitivity: Medium

The viewpoint is representative of footpath users. The sensitivity is judged to be medium considering the medium to high susceptibility to change and the medium to low value of view which is far-reaching but degraded by the scale of pylons in the view.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of the Proposed Development;
 - Change limited to a narrow part of the view due to distance to the Proposed Development.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - Built development prominent within the view, and energy infrastructure (high voltage pylons) visible across the skyline;
 - Degree of contrast with the Site on elevated ground in the middle ground of the view.
- **Nature of the View:**
 - An open, but brief view in the context of the footpath.

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Direct
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 1.6km
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** localised area of high ground

Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Small (short-term); Small (medium and long-term) In the short-term and long-term the Proposed Development would be partially visible in the middle ground of the view, but with only the westernmost edge of the Proposed Development visible. The remainder of the Proposed Development would be screened by landform and vegetation. The Proposed Development would be visible forming a thin horizontal band across a small proportion of the wide, panoramic view. The Proposed Development would be assimilated within the woodland in the background of the view and whilst visible would not be prominent. There would be a degree of contrast as a result of the change in land use, however the underlying undulating landform and surrounding landscape fabric and features could still be identified and appreciated. The magnitude of change would be small.	
Effect: Minor (short-term & long-term) The Proposed Development would have a minor effect on views in the short- and long-term.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The presence of the Proposed Development in the view would have an adverse effect.	

Viewpoint 15 (VP 15): View north-east from PRow Langley 001, part of the Chiltern Way

Grid Ref: 519217, 224817

The viewpoint is from an elevated position along the Chiltern Way located approximately 4.5km south-east of the Chilterns AONB. From south of the viewpoint, views are more enclosed by vegetation, but as the Chiltern Way emerges onto the steep north-east facing slopes there are panoramic views across the landscape.

Views are of an undulating arable landscape interspersed with belts of trees and vegetation. Settlement is evident across the view, with the towns of Stevenage and Hitchin visible. There are high-voltage pylons across the middle ground of the view which often break the skyline, and a wind farm in the distance to the north on the horizon.

The Site is partially visible in the middle ground of the view.

Susceptibility to Change: High

- Walkers
 - At this location, the views available over the surrounding landscape are an important part of the experience

Value: Medium

- Not a recognised viewpoint;
- Part of the Chiltern Way;
- High voltage pylons across the view;
- Expansive and panoramic views.

Sensitivity: High

The viewpoint is representative of footpath users on the Chiltern Way where due to the prominent elevation views are an important part of the experience of the route. The sensitivity is judged to be high considering the high susceptibility to change and the medium value of view.

Size / Scale of Effect:

- **Scale of Change in view:**
 - Direct views of the Proposed Development;
 - The Proposed Development would be seen across the middle ground of the view.
- **Degree of contrast / integration:**
 - There are pylons across the skyline but otherwise there is limited development in the view, such that the Proposed Development would contrast with the baseline.
 - The Proposed Development would sit visually within the existing field

Geographical Extent:

- **Angle:** Direct
- **Distance to Proposed Development:** approximately 1.6km at closest point
- **Extent of area over which changes would be visible:** The location is representative of views from a short section of the Chiltern Way.

pattern, and the underlying topography could still be appreciated. • Nature of the View: • Open, panoramic view.	
Duration: Long-term.	Reversibility: Reversible (40 year lifespan).
Magnitude: Medium to Small (short-term); Medium to Small (medium and long-term) The Proposed Development would be partially visible in the middle ground of the view and would be somewhat contrasting with the existing views of countryside, however the perception of open fields and countryside in the foreground of the view would be unchanged. From this distance much of the detail of the Proposed Development would not be distinguishable, with the Proposed Development forming a visible change in land use of somewhat uniform appearance, but of an apparent utilitarian character. The perception of the existing landscape pattern would be retained. I.e. the existing boundaries and features of the view could still be identified, and the underlying undulating valley landform could still be appreciated through the undulating appearance of the solar farm. As such, it is considered there is a degree of compatibility with the view. In the short- and long-term the magnitude of change would be medium to small.	
Effect: Moderate to Minor (short-term & long-term) The visual effect would be moderate to minor in the short- and long-term.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: The presence of the Proposed Development in the view would be adverse.	

