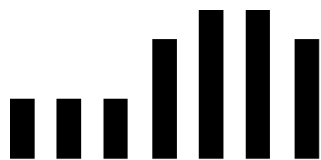




PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF A BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM, ON LAND OFF RADWELL BURY FARM

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Prepared for



BALANCEPOWER

Balance Power Projects Limited

September 2024
3600-01-LVA



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Appendix A – LVIA Methodology



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared with respect to a full planning application made by Balance Power Projects Limited (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant') to construct and operate a Battery Energy Storage System (hereafter referred to as 'BESS' or the 'Proposed Development') associated infrastructure, earthworks, landscaping and access on land at Radwell Bury Farm, off Newnham Road, Baldock, Hertfordshire (hereafter referred to as 'the Site').

1.1.2 The Site is located circa 750 m to the southwest of the village of Newham, circa 1 km northeast of the village of Radwell, circa 1.7 km east of Stotfold and circa 2.5 km north of Baldock. Circa 400 m west of the Site is Baldock Services (situated off Junction 10 of the A1(M)). It is situated adjacent to Newnham Road which aligns with the Site's southern boundary.

1.1.3 This standalone LVA report appraises the effects of the Proposed Development upon landscape character and visual amenity.

1.2 The Proposed Development

1.2.1 A detailed description of the BESS, including its construction and operation, is provided in Section 3.0 of this Planning, Design and Access Statement. The 'Proposed Plan' (which forms one of the planning application drawings) illustrates that the BESS, is proposed to be accommodated in two separate compounds, so as not conflict with the existing overhead power lines. Each compound has been described in turn below.

1.2.2 The northern compound would include a:

- Private Substation Transformer.
- Distribution Network Operators (DNO) Room.
- Control Room and Welfare.
- 132kV Substation Area (including transformer, and other electrical infrastructure set within its own fenced compound).

-
- Pair of Transformers.

1.2.3 The southern compound would include:

- 48 No. Prefabricated containerised modular BESS, grouped into fours and arranged in several rows.
- 12 No. Inverter / transformer modules.
- A Storage Room.
- Laydown area.

1.2.4 The compounds would be surfaced in gravel and secured by fencing and gating with associated CCTV security cameras. An access road would connect the compounds to Newnham Road. There would also be a second emergency access. The compounds would be off set from the existing field boundaries to protect and enhance existing landscape and biodiversity features.

1.3 Purpose of this report

1.3.1 This is a LVA and it provides:

- i) A description of the baseline situation within the site and study area.
- ii) A summary of landscape and visual mitigation embedded within the site selection, layout, and design.
- iii) An appraisal of the landscape and visual effects likely to be associated with the Proposed Development.

2.0 LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 A review of national and local landscape policies and planning guidance that are specifically relevant to the LVA has been carried out, and these are summarised below.

2.2 European Landscape Convention

- 2.2.1 The UK Government is a signatory of the European Landscape Convention¹ (ELC), which became binding in March 2007. The ELC is aimed at the protection, management and planning of all landscapes and raising awareness of the value of a living landscape. It relates chiefly to public bodies and to the policies, plans and programmes produced by these.
- 2.2.2 The LVA is a development specific process which accords with Article 6C. The LVA is informed by extant Landscape Character Assessment studies which more directly relate to the provisions of Article 6C.

2.3 National Planning Policy

- 2.3.1 National planning policy relevant to the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed scheme is found within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, revised December 2023).
- 2.3.2 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning objectives to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: "*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes*" (Para.180 (a) Page 52). It also states the importance of: "*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services*" (Para. 180 (b) Page 52) Additionally, in planning decisions: "*Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing*

¹ Available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/home>

landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues” (Para. 182, Page 52).

2.4 Local Planning Policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance

2.4.1 The Local Planning Authority is North Hertfordshire Council. At the time of drafting, the adopted Development Plan, relevant to the BESS, includes the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 –2031, which was adopted in November 2022. The North Hertfordshire Local Plan is supported by a proposals map which illustrates that the Site is located within a ‘Rural Area beyond the Green Belt’ (Policies SP5 and CGB1).

2.4.2 The following policies of relevance are:

Policy SP9 – Design and Sustainability

2.4.3 This policy states the following: “Design is central to good planning. The achievement of high quality, sustainable design is required by Government guidance. Planning policies should promote high quality, inclusive design in layouts and buildings in terms of function and impact. Design which does not make the most of opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area should be refused.”

Policy SP12 – Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity

2.4.4 This policy states the following: “This plan sets out a clear strategic approach for the protection, enhancement, creation and management of networks of green infrastructure. Green infrastructure refers to all assets within and between towns and villages, both urban and rural. It is a network of multi-functional open spaces, including urban parks, gardens, woodlands, hedgerows, watercourses and associated buffer zones, and green corridors in addition to protected sites, nature reserves and open countryside.”

Policy CGB1 – Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt



- 2.4.5 This policy states: *“In the Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt, as shown on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted provided that the development:*
- a) Is infilling development which does not extend the built core of a Category B village;*
 - b) Meets a proven local need for community facilities, services or affordable housing in an appropriate location;*
 - c) Is strictly necessary for the needs of agriculture or forestry;*
 - d) Relates to an existing rural building;*
 - e) Is a modest proposal for rural economic development or diversification; or*
- Would provide land or facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and cemeteries that respect the generally open nature of the rural area.”*
- 2.4.6 The above policies have been taken into account when developing the overall layout and design of the Proposed Development, in particular the inclusion of a soft landscape masterplan (3600-01-L-DR Landscape Plan Rev B) for the site is a response to the requirement for development in North Herts to consider its surrounding landscape context and the contribution to a wider network of green infrastructure.

3.0 METHODOLOGY AND GUIDANCE

3.1 Guidance

- 3.1.1 The method of appraisal is based on the principles established in the best practice guidance, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3). GLVIA3 states that any assessment of effects should be tailored to the specific nature and likely potential effects of the development proposed.
- 3.1.2 This LVA has followed a methodology which has been developed using the published good practice guidelines set out in the GLVIA3. A detailed methodology followed in undertaking this LVA is set out in Appendix A.
- 3.1.3 This LVA also follows the Landscape Institute's guidance regarding the production of visualisations TGN 06/19. A methodology describing how visualisations have been produced is set out in Appendix B.

3.2 Scope of the Appraisal

- 3.2.1 This appraisal considers the likely landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development. The appraisal focuses on landscape character (the effect on the landscape resource) and visual amenity (the visual effect on people's views). Given the rural nature of the site, townscape effects are scoped out of this appraisal.
- 3.2.2 The appraisal focuses on the operational phase effects of the Proposed Development with only brief consideration of effects during construction. The appraisal focuses on effects of the Proposed Development immediately after completion of construction and the medium to long term effects when fully operational.
- 3.2.3 The appraisal acknowledges the contribution of heritage features to the landscape and visual baseline but excludes specific appraisal of any effect on the setting of the cultural heritage assets, which are addressed within the Planning, Design and Access Statement .



3.3 Study Area

- 3.3.1 The Study Area comprises a 2km radius around the Proposed Development and is presented in **Figures 1** and **2**. The Study Area extent has been determined through a combination of analysis of a zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV), as presented in **Figure 2**, and through professional judgement based on experience from previous appraisals. A 2km distance is considered more than sufficient for the Proposed Development in this location.
- 3.3.2 The 2km radius Study Area captures all areas that fall within the ZTV of the Proposed Development as shown on **Figure 1**. Outside of this Study Area, whilst visibility is theoretically possible over longer distances, the level of visual effect will diminish with distance and is unlikely to be considered material to the decision maker.

3.4 Assessment Criteria

- 3.4.1 Having applied professional judgement to assess the sensitivity of the baseline landscape and visual environment and to consider the magnitude of potential change that the Proposed Development would cause. These are then combined using further professional judgement to consider the level of effect.
- 3.4.2 An LVA is not typically produced as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and therefore it is not necessary to identify 'significant effects. It is, however, still appropriate to draw attention to any changes to landscape character or visual amenity which may be of particular note to the determining authority when considering the acceptability of a proposal. This approach is supported by GLVIA3 and subsequent clarifications provided by the Landscape Institute.
- 3.4.3 The level of effect can only be defined in relation to each particular development and its specific location. It is for each LVA 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.

- 3.4.4 Refer to **Appendix A** which provides further explanation as to how sensitivity and magnitude are combined to identify the level of effect upon a receptor.

3.5

3.6 Limitations

- 3.6.1 There were no notable limitations to the production of this LVA.
- 3.6.2 The photography was undertaken during summer months when deciduous trees and hedgerow are in full leaf and views are sometimes more restricted than during winter months when trees aren't in leaf. The appraisal has therefore taken an approach to appraise a reasonable 'worst-case' appraisal of visual effects which utilises the experience of the experienced landscape architect overseeing the LVA to estimate the likely increased visibility during winter months.

3.7 Data Collection

- 3.7.1 Baseline data for this LVA has been gathered by both desk and field-based surveys. These have included reviews of extant landscape character assessment studies (see below) and a field visit in June 2024 to gain an understanding of the landscape and visual context of the Site and to take photographs.

3.8 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

- 3.8.1 ZTV mapping has been used to help identify the extent of expected visibility of the Proposed Development. The ZTV shown on **Figure 2** reflects the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development based upon a transformer height of circa 6.8m, substation height of circa 4.0m, DNO room height of circa 4.0m and BESS Container Unit heights at a height of circa 2.5m.
- 3.8.2 The ZTV was produced using a Digital Surface Model (DSM), supplied by DEFRA. This is derived from terrain information, which influences the ZTV output to the greatest extent, and also surface screening features such as buildings and vegetation.



- 3.8.3 This data source gives a reasonably accurate analysis of visibility of the Proposed Development. However, it should be noted that any ZTV analysis should be seen as a tool which aids desk and site studies rather than being an absolute indicator of visibility.

3.9 Site Visit

- 3.9.1 A site visit was carried out in May 2024.
- 3.9.2 During the site visit, viewpoint photography was captured and the assessor gained familiarity with the wider Study Area by walking along public footpaths, across open access land, and by walking and driving along lanes and roads.
- 3.9.3 Viewpoint locations were initially confirmed with the relevant landscape officer (at the Council) and subsequently refined during the site visit to avoid localised screening and to select camera positions to illustrate the most representative views.



4.0 BASELINE

4.1 Data Collection

- 4.1.1 Baseline data for the LVA has been gathered by both desk and field based surveys. These have included 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 is located 750 m to the southwest of the village of Newham, 1 km northeast of the village of Radwell, 1.7 km east of Stotfold and 2.5 km north of Baldock. 400 m west of the Site is Baldock Services (situated off Junction 10 of the A1(M)). More specifically the Site is surrounded by agricultural fields with overhead power lines (supported by metal pylon towers) oversailing part of the Site.
- 4.2.2 The Site comprises part of a much larger agricultural field which is partially screened by vegetation along its eastern and southern boundaries. It's northern and western boundaries are open and extend across the wider agricultural field. As illustrated by the topographical drawing, the wider field in which the Site is situated is gently sloping with a high point of 75m AOD in its centre, which slopes down to 72m AOD to the west and 62m AOD to the east, where the Site is located. The landform slopes down to the north where it reaches its lowest point of 58m AOD.
- 4.2.3 The closest residential properties are situated circa 450 m north of the Site (Radwell Grange). Other properties are located off Newnham Road and Ashwell Road to the northeast of the Site at a greater distance. It is also worthy of note that a hotel operates within the services, 550 m to the west of the Site.

4.3 Landscape Designations

- 4.3.1 The site and study area is not covered by any landscape designations.



4.4 Landscape Character

National

4.4.1 At a national level, 159 National Character Areas (NCA) have been identified by Natural England. Descriptions of each NCA is available via the Natural England website ².

4.4.2 These NCAs provide background and context to more detailed landscape character assessments produced at local authority levels. Their broad geographic reach means that the key characteristics identified as typical of a particular NCA may not necessarily apply to a specific location within that NCA. The Site is located within **NCA87: East Anglian Chalk** and the key landscape characteristics of relevance to this appraisal are identified as:

“Distinctive chalk rivers, the River Rhee and River Granta, flow in gentle river valleys in a diagonally north-west direction across the NCA.

The chalk aquifer is abstracted for water to supply Cambridge and its surroundings and also supports flows of springs and chalk streams; features associated with a history of modification include watercress beds, culverts and habitat enhancements. The rolling downland, mostly in arable production, has sparse tree cover but distinctive beech belts along long, straight roads. Certain high points have small beech copses or ‘hanger,’ which are prominent and characteristic features in the open landscape. In the east there are pine belts.

Remnant chalk grassland, including road verges, supports chalkland flora and vestigial populations of invertebrates, such as great pignut and the chalkhill blue butterfly.

Archaeological features include Neolithic long barrows and bronze-age tumuli lining the route of the prehistoric Ickniel Way; iron-age hill forts, including that at Wandlebury; impressive Roman burial monuments and cemeteries such as the Bartlow Hills; a distinctive communication network linking the rural Roman landscape

² Natural England, 2014. *National Character Area profiles*. [online]
<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>> [accessed Feb 2024]



to settlements and small towns, such as Great Chesterford; the four parallel Cambridgeshire dykes that cross the Chalk: the Anglo-Saxon linear earthworks of Devil's Dyke, Fleam Dyke, Heydon/Bran Ditch and Brent Ditch; ridge-and-furrow cultivation remains of the open field systems of the earlier medieval period; and large numbers of later moated enclosures, parklands created, sheepwalks, arterial routes and nucleated villages that emphasise the land use change of this period.

Settlement is focused in small towns and in villages. There are a number of expanding commuter villages located generally within valleys. Letchworth Garden City is a nationally significant designed garden city.

The NCA is traversed by the Icknield Way, an ancient route that is now a public right of way. Roads and lanes strike across the downs perpendicularly and follow historical tracks that originally brought livestock to their summer grazing. Today major roads and railways are prominent landscape characteristics of the NCA.

Local

- 4.4.3 The relevant and most up-to-date published landscape character study comprises the following document:
- i) North Hertfordshire District Council and Stevenage Borough Council (2011)
North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment
- 4.4.4 The relevant landscape character areas within this study are shown on **Figure 2**. The Study Area includes three Local Character Areas:
- i) LCA 224: North Baldock Chalk Uplands, which the site is located within.
 - ii) LCA 225: Hinxworth Lowlands, located to the northern extents of the Study Area.
 - iii) LCA216: Arlesey – Great Wymondley, located towards the south western extents of the Study Area.
- 4.4.5 From a review of **Figure 2** and the ZTV shown on **Figure 1**, the Proposed Development is most likely to result in landscape effects on the host LCA only; **North Baldock Chalk Uplands**. Effects on the other LCA's within the Study Area will not be assessed due to the negligible potential visual influence of the Proposed Development which is evidenced by the ZTV in **Figure 1** which demonstrates that visibility is constrained to the host LCA only.



- 4.4.6 The characteristics of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands LCA are outlined below.

North Baldock Chalk Uplands

- 4.4.7 The Site is located towards the north-western extents of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands LCA. All viewpoints are located within this LCA (**Figure 1**). The summary description of this LCA is: *“Rolling chalk landform, eroded by a complex network of shallow dry valleys. Small rounded chalk knolls common. Large scale arable fields often with remnant field boundaries, mainly well trimmed hawthorn hedges. The core has a pattern of regular rectilinear fields often with curving boundaries. Boundaries often based on older more organic pattern of lanes and primary boundaries. To the east of the Ashwell to Slip End Road and west of Newham field patterns become more regular with stronger patterns of more rectilinear fields.”*

- 4.4.8 Its key characteristics are:
- “Rolling chalk landform*
 - Small rounded chalk knolls*
 - Large rectilinear fields in arable*
 - Large to medium regular geometric plantations*
 - Nucleated settlements*
 - Distinctive features include:*
 - A1(M), A505, railway*
 - Telecommunications masts (Lodge Farm)*
 - Lower Icknield Way*
 - Abuts suburban edge of Baldock*
 - Pylons crossing the western edge”*

4.5 Visual Baseline

General visual context and ZTV

- 4.5.1 The ZTV included on **Figure 1** demonstrates that visibility of the Proposed Development is relatively limited and would be strongly influenced by topographic undulations and field boundary vegetation within the Study Area. There are large



areas of the Study Area with no visibility and where there is theoretical visibility, there are a low number of potential visual receptors, primarily comprising users of footpaths or local roads.

- 4.5.2 The site is broadly flat while the study area is gently undulating. The site is located in a very shallow bowl shape which gives some enclosure to it from the wider area and is the most defining influence on the ZTV.
- 4.5.3 The highest point is located towards the western and southern boundary at 67m AOD. The surrounding landscape is gently undulating with the landform rising up to the north-east to a small hill which reaches 91m AOD, approximately 0.8km from the site boundary, which screens views from further north. The Site's visibility is contained by the vegetation associated with the rail line located on the western boundary and a combination of the surrounding woodland plantations and an undulating landform in the rest of the study area.
- 4.5.4 There are footpaths and bridleways throughout the Study Area, however the ZTV covers only a small proportion of the wider network of paths therefore views would be screened from the majority of publicly accessible locations. There are little or no views of the site from residential receptors. Radwell Grange, located just to the north-west of the site, would have glimpsed views from the grounds, however it is well screened by trees on the property.
- 4.5.5 The line of pylons which runs across the site is a prominent visual feature within the study area and is evident in all views of the site.

Visual Receptors and Representative Viewpoints

- 4.5.6 For the purposes of this LVA, five representative viewpoints were selected to form the basis of the visual appraisal. The viewpoints are set out in the table below. The locations of the viewpoints are shown on **Figure 1**.



Table 4.1: Viewpoints

Viewpoint	British National Grid Coordinates & Elevation (AOD)	Receptors
1 – Newnham Road (south-west of site)	523959, 236523 66m	Road users, located approximately 50m south-west of the western Site boundary
2 – Public Footpath (south-west of Newnham)	524251 , 236925 66m	Footpath users, located approximately 250m to the east of the eastern Site boundary
3 - Public Footpath (west of Newnham)	523968 , 237296 57m	Footpath users, located approximately 380m to the north of the northern Site boundary
4 – Caldecote Road (north-west of Newnham)	524049 , 237949 57m	Road users, located approximately 1km to the north-west of the northern Site boundary
5 – Restricted Byway (south-east of the Site)	524900 , 235915 93m	Restricted Byway users, located approximately 1.1km to the south-east of the southern Site boundary

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

5.1 Incorporated Mitigation

5.1.1 A description of the Proposed Development is set out in in the Planning, Design and Access Statement and is summarised briefly in Section 0. A series of measures have been incorporated into both the design of the Proposed Development and the drawing up of the construction and operational procedures, which are intended to provide embedded mitigation to limit potentially adverse landscape and visual effects and other environmental effects. These measures include:

- i) Positioning the development in the south-eastern extent of the surrounding field. This benefits from a relatively short access route into the site and takes advantage of screening by existing field and road boundary vegetation.
- ii) Clustering adjacent to the pylons which run across the site. This limits further development into the wider field.
- iii) A proposed woodland belt along the northern and western boundaries to provide structure to the site and visual containment, separating it from the wider field.
- iv) Species rich meadow grassland within the majority of the site. This would soften the internal site environment and create habitat connectivity with the wider area.
- v) Individual tree planting along the proposed access road to create an avenue to benefit landscape and visual amenity.

5.1.2 The landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development as assessed subsequently, thus relate to a project that has benefited from mitigation by design.

5.2 Construction Stage

5.2.1 Refer to the Planning, Design and Access Statement for a full description of the construction stage of the Proposed Development.

5.2.2 Construction sites feature distinctive elements that are likely to draw attention, including temporary signage and fencing, and site operatives wearing high-visibility clothing. Construction also, by necessity, requires the use of suitable vehicles and other plant, some of which would potentially be readily apparent by virtue of their colour, form and movement. A temporary contractor's compound would be located



within the footprint of the Proposed Development, which would also feature potentially visible built forms including site offices, welfare facilities, storage, etc.

- 5.2.3 Construction of the Proposed Development would chiefly involve elements that are relatively low in height, and which would typically benefit from the level of screening provided by vegetation in the surrounding landscape. Nevertheless, some visibility of construction activity would occur such as temporary cranes (if required) that would be visible above the perimeter vegetation. There would inevitably be short-term landscape and visual effects during the construction phase, however these would be temporary in duration, limited in extent and no greater than the effects of the operational development.

5.3 Operational Stage Landscape Effects

Landscape Character

- 5.3.1 An appraisal of effects upon the character of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands is discussed in Section 5.4 above and is summarised below.

North Baldock Chalk Uplands

- 5.3.2 The defining characteristics of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands which indicate its susceptibility to the type of changes associated with the Proposed Development, are:
- i) The landscape is largely rural in nature and comprises shallow valleys in a rolling chalk landform, which indicates a higher level of susceptibility.
 - ii) Its general character is typical of an urban fringe landscape, featuring transport, energy and telecoms infrastructure which indicates a lower level of susceptibility to change.
 - iii) Intervisibility is limited due to the enclosure provided by the strong network of rectilinear field boundaries, combined with the gently undulating landform. This reduces the visibility of built form within the landscape, indicating a lower level of susceptibility to change.
 - iv) This is a relatively large scale change LCA which predominantly comprises intensely farmed, agricultural land reducing its level of susceptibility to change.

-
- 5.3.3 Taking these characteristics into account, the susceptibility of this LCA is considered to be **Low**.
- 5.3.4 There are a number of footpaths and bridleways within the LCA, connecting local farms and small settlements, which indicate recreational value however there are no designations within the study area and it is considered to be of no more than local, or **Low** value. Considering the susceptibility of the landscape and its value, the overall sensitivity is judged to be **Low** to the type of development proposed.
- 5.3.5 The Proposed Development would introduce a built development, with a utilitarian appearance, into a large, arable field. While not located directly adjacent to other buildings, it would be adjacent to a pylon and close to a local road, with a logical position at the south-eastern extent of a large-field.
- 5.3.6 The development would be relatively low-level, with the transformers being the tallest element at circa 6.8m high above ground level and the majority of the development being lower than this. In addition, there are notable urban elements within the wider character area such as: the A1(M); Baldock Services; and the line of pylons.
- 5.3.7 Undulations in the surrounding landscape, combined with the screening effect of boundary hedgerow and occasional tree blocks, would limit the influence of the Proposed Development on the wider landscape.
- 5.3.8 In summary, this is a Low sensitivity LCA and the Proposed Development would introduce landscape features such as a woodland belt which will support the integration of the Proposed Development into the surrounding landscape. There are existing built features evident throughout the LCA, including the directly adjacent pylons, therefore reducing its influence on the overall LCA and avoiding notable change to any key characteristics. The degree of landscape change is therefore considered to be **Small**.
- 5.3.9 The Proposed Development would alter a relatively small geographical area in the context of this landscape and therefore the change is considered to be **Localised**. The duration of operation would be **Temporary**. The project would be



decommissioned at the end of its life. As such, the landscape effect would be **Reversible** given the avoidance of loss of any trees for construction.

- 5.3.10 Combining all these criteria, it is considered that there would be a **Minor Adverse** level of landscape effect on the North Baldock Chalk Uplands LCA.

5.4 Operational Stage Visual Effects

Representative Viewpoints

- 5.4.1 A detailed assessment of effects from each of the viewpoints included in the LVA is provided below.

Table 5.1: Effects on Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint 1 – Newnham Road	
Distance and direction from the Site	50m southwest of the Site
Receptors	Drivers on Newnham Rd
Baseline view	This viewpoint is representative of the vicinity of the Site entrance on Newnham Road. This is a relatively busy road for local and farm traffic. The viewpoint looks out north-eastwards over the arable field on which the Site is located. The village of Newnham is located to the north-east but is obscured from view by the topographic undulation and tree cover. The site is located to the east of Baldock service on the A1(M), with the woodland to the east of the services making up the eastern site boundary. Newnham Road is directly to the south with the boundary made up of intermittent hedgerow and the north-western and north-eastern boundaries made up of mixed woodland and hedgerow. A drainage ditch runs alongside the north-eastern perimeter. The site is surrounded with scattered woodland and an existing national grid pylon runs directly through the Site.
Sensitivity	Low Road users on Newnham Road are unlikely to take a particular interest in the view and are of Low susceptibility to change. The view does not include any designated landscapes and is therefore of Low value.
Visibility of the Proposed Development	The majority of the Proposed Development would be visible from Newnham Road although it would be partly screened by the existing hedgerow and trees growing at the field boundaries. The Proposed Development is in an area of slightly lower ground and would not break the skyline when viewed from this location. The Proposed

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	Development would create a limited visual change to the view and, given the topographic undulation of the study area it would represent a small adjustment to the wider views.
Magnitude of visual change	Small The majority of the proposed development would be visible from this location and other sections of Newnham Road. The Proposed Development would be evident and would create some change from this viewpoint, however it would represent a small adjustment to the wider views. Views from Newnham Road include a variety of features including electricity pylons, agricultural buildings, the Baldock services and wind turbines, which break up the view and would limit the visual change created by the Proposed Development. The undulating topography of the study area means it would only be visible from the surrounding high ground, and the height of the existing pylons would draw the eye and reduce the perceived scale of the proposed development which would be low-level and small scale in comparison.
Residual level of visual effect	Minor Adverse The Viewpoint represents Low sensitivity receptors, and combining this with the Small change to the view, the overall level of effect would be Minor Adverse.
Viewpoint 2 – Public Footpath (south-west of Newnham)	
Distance and direction from the Site	250m to the east Site
Receptors	Footpath users
Baseline view	This viewpoint is representative of the view from the footpath between Newnham Road and Newnham village. The footpath appears little used and crosses a large, open arable field planted with rapeseed at the time of the photos. The view from the footpath looks out towards the Site in the adjacent field to the south-west with the two fields separated by an area of lower ground and a ditch. The landscape comprises arable farmland with large fields and broken-field boundaries of hedgerow and woodland. To the rear of The Proposed development in the background of the view is the services and A1(M) at Baldock which is obscured from view by the woodland which makes up the eastern site boundary. The view also takes in the national grid pylons which form a prominent feature within the view.
Sensitivity	Low-Medium This footpath appears little used and users are likely to take a moderate interest in the view which indicates Medium susceptibility to change. The view does not include any designated landscapes and is therefore of Low value.
Visibility of the Proposed Development	The majority of the Proposed Development would be visible from this footpath, although it would be partly screened by the existing hedgerow and trees growing at the field boundaries. The Proposed Development is within an area of lower ground and would not break

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	the skyline when viewed from this location. The Proposed Development would be evident from this viewpoint, creating a limited visual change, however given the topographic undulation of the study area and the screening effect of the existing and proposed hedgerows and trees it would represent a small adjustment to the wider views.
Magnitude of visual change	Small The majority of the proposed development would be visible from this location and at other points along this footpath. The Proposed Development would be evident and would create some change from this viewpoint however it would represent a small adjustment to the wider views from here. Views from this footpath include electricity pylons, large arable fields, Newnham Road and occasional agricultural buildings, which break up the view and would limit the visual change created by the Proposed Development. The low position of the Site and the height of the existing pylons would reduce the scale of the proposed development within the view.
Residual level of visual effect	Minor Adverse The Viewpoint represents Low-Medium sensitivity receptors, and combining this with the Small change to the view, the overall level of effect would be Minor Adverse.
Viewpoint 3 – Public Footpath (west of Newnham)	
Distance and direction from the Site	380m to the north of the Site
Receptors	Footpath users
Baseline view	This viewpoint is representative of the view from a footpath linking Newnham village and Stotfold via the A1(M). This footpath also appears little used and crosses a large, open arable field. The view from the footpath is orientated towards the Site in the adjacent field to the south with the two fields separated by an area of lower ground and a ditch. The landscape is one of arable farmland with large fields and broken-field boundaries of hedgerow and woodland. To the rear of the Proposed development, in the background of the view, is the services and A1(M) at Baldock which are obscured from view by the woodland. The view also takes in the national grid pylons which form a prominent feature within the landscape.
Sensitivity	Low-Medium This footpath appears little used and users are likely to take a moderate interest in the view which indicates Medium susceptibility to change. The view does not include any designated landscapes and is therefore of Low value.
Visibility of the Proposed Development	The majority of the Proposed Development would be visible from this footpath although it would be partly screened by the existing hedgerow and trees growing at the field boundaries. The Proposed Development would be within an area of lower ground and would not break the skyline when viewed from this location. The Proposed Development

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	would be evident from this viewpoint, creating a limited visual change to the view, however given the topographic undulation of the Site and the screening effect of the existing and proposed hedgerows and trees it would represent a small adjustment to the wider views.
Magnitude of visual change	Small The majority of the proposed development would be visible from this location and at other points along this footpath. The Proposed Development would be evident and would create some change from this viewpoint however it would represent a small adjustment to the wider views from here. Views from this footpath include electricity pylons, large arable fields, Newnham Road and agricultural buildings, which break up the view and would limit the visual change created by the Proposed Development. The undulating topography of the study area means it would only be visible from the surrounding high ground, and the height of the existing pylons further reduces the scale of the proposed development which would be very small scale in comparison.
Residual level of visual effect	Minor Adverse The Viewpoint represents Low-Medium sensitivity receptors, and combining this with the Small change to the view, the overall level of effect would be Minor Adverse.
Viewpoint 4 – Caldecote Road (north-west of Newnham)	
Distance and direction from the Site	1000m to the north of the Site
Receptors	Road users between Newnham and A1(M)
Baseline view	This viewpoint is representative of the view from Caldecote Road linking Newnham village and the A1(M). This road runs adjacent to a large, open arable field. The view from the road looks out towards the Site to the south with two fields, some broken woodland and some areas of lower ground separating this viewpoint from the Proposed Development. The landscape comprises arable farmland with large fields and broken-field boundaries of hedgerow and woodland. To the rear of The Proposed Development in the background of the view is the services and A1(M) at Baldock which is obscured from view by the woodland which makes up the eastern site boundary. To the right on the opposite ridge are the building making up Radwell Grange The view also takes in the national grid pylons and transmission poles which form a prominent feature within the landscape.
Sensitivity	Low This footpath appears little used and users are unlikely to take interest in the view and it would be of low susceptibility to change. The view looks out across arable fields within the North Baldock Chalk Uplands and is therefore of Low value.
Visibility of the Proposed Development	The Proposed Development would be partly screened by undulations in the intervening landscape and by the existing hedgerow and trees at

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	the intervening field boundaries. The Proposed Development would be located in an area of slightly lower ground and would not break the skyline when viewed from this location. The Proposed Development would be glimpsed from this viewpoint, creating a barely perceptible visual change to the view.
Magnitude of visual change	Negligible The Proposed Development would be glimpsed at most from this location with the intervening landform screening its lower levels.
Residual level of visual effect	Negligible
Viewpoint 5 – Restricted Byway (south-east of the Site)	
Distance and direction from the Site	1100m SE of the Site
Receptors	Restricted Byway Users
Baseline view	This view is representative of the view from the restricted byway linking the A507 north of Baldock with Ashwell Road north of Bygrave. This restricted byway also appears relatively little used and runs adjacent to the boundary of several large, open arable fields along a south-west to north-east ridge which forms part of the North Baldock Uplands. The view looks out across a large open field from an elevated position to the north towards the Site. The landscape is one of arable farmland with large fields and broken-field boundaries of hedgerow and woodland. To the rear of The Proposed development in the background of the view is the services and A1(M) at Baldock which is obscured from view by the woodland which makes up the eastern site boundary. The view also takes in the national grid pylons which form a prominent feature within the landscape.
Sensitivity	Low-Medium This footpath appears little used and users are likely to take a moderate interest in the view which indicates Medium susceptibility to change. The view does not include any designated landscapes and is therefore of Low value.
Visibility of the Proposed Development	The top levels of the Proposed Development would be glimpsed at most from the restricted byway, although it would be partly screened by the existing hedgerow and trees growing at the field boundaries. The Proposed Development is in an area of slightly lower ground and would not break the skyline when viewed from this location. The Proposed Development would be glimpsed from this viewpoint, creating a barely perceptible visual change to the view.
Magnitude of visual change	Negligible The Proposed Development would be glimpsed at most from this location with the intervening landform screening its lower levels.

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Residual level of visual effect	Negligible
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5.5 Summary of Visual Effects

5.5.1 The production of a ZTV, the detailed appraisal of the five representative viewpoints and site studies have established the following with regards key visual effects of the Proposed Development:

- i) The visual influence of the Proposed Development would be relatively limited and views would only be possible from a small number of publicly accessible locations. The subtle undulation in the landscape and the presence of existing hedgerow and tree belts would screen the development.
- ii) The main views would be from the adjacent Newnham Road, which passes directly beside the site. Road users would experience a fleeting view of the Proposed Development when passing.
- iii) There is a pylon directly adjacent to the site and this draws the eye from the existing view of the site, which is an open arable field.
- iv) There would be occasional, mainly glimpsed, views from the surrounding footpath network. However, this appeared not to be well used and evidently provides historic links between farms and small clusters of properties.
- v) The Proposed Development would be relatively low level and would cluster with the adjacent pylon, limiting its visual influence.
- vi) Proposed mitigation planting would further integrate the Proposed Development into the surrounding landscape and visual context, limiting the change that would occur.

5.5.2 Overall, there would be some close to medium range views of the Proposed Development from the adjacent road and footpaths to the north, east and south. However, changes to views would be limited considering the low sensitivity of receptors due to existing human influences such as the pylon network. Once the proposed planting has fully established, the Proposed Development would appear as a relatively small-scale element set within a wider large-scale agricultural landscape.



6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 Within this appraisal, judgements have been made regarding the likely landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development. Landscape and visual mitigation is embedded in the design to minimise both the shorter and longer-term landscape and visual effects and this focuses on the design of the Proposed Development. The Development would be set away from any notable tree and hedgerow cover, thereby avoiding vegetation losses, and benefits from visual containment by the surrounding landform undulations.
- 6.1.2 The appraisal has concluded that the level of longer-term residual landscape effects of the Proposed Development would be limited, particularly on the host character areas: North Baldock Chalk Uplands. A Minor Adverse level of effect has been identified on this LCA as the Proposed Development would have some influence on this LCA as demonstrated by the ZTV. However, this is a Low sensitivity LCA and the Proposed Development would introduce landscape features such as a woodland belt which will support the integration of the Proposed Development into the surrounding landscape. There are existing built features evident throughout the LCA, including the directly adjacent pylons, therefore reducing its influence on the overall LCA and avoiding notable change to any key characteristics.
- 6.1.3 This appraisal has also concluded that there would be some close-range views of the Proposed Development from the road immediately south of the Site and from the adjacent road and footpaths to the north, east and south. However, changes to views would be limited considering the low sensitivity of receptors due to existing human influences such as the pylon network. Once the proposed planting has fully established, the Proposed Development would appear as a relatively small-scale element set within a wider large-scale agricultural landscape.
- 6.1.4 Overall, despite some localised adverse effects due to the introduction of the Proposed Development, this would be a visually contained development which would give rise to a minor change to existing landscape character and visual amenity.

Appendix A – LVIA Methodology

