

Landscape Proof of Evidence

Proposed Solar Farm

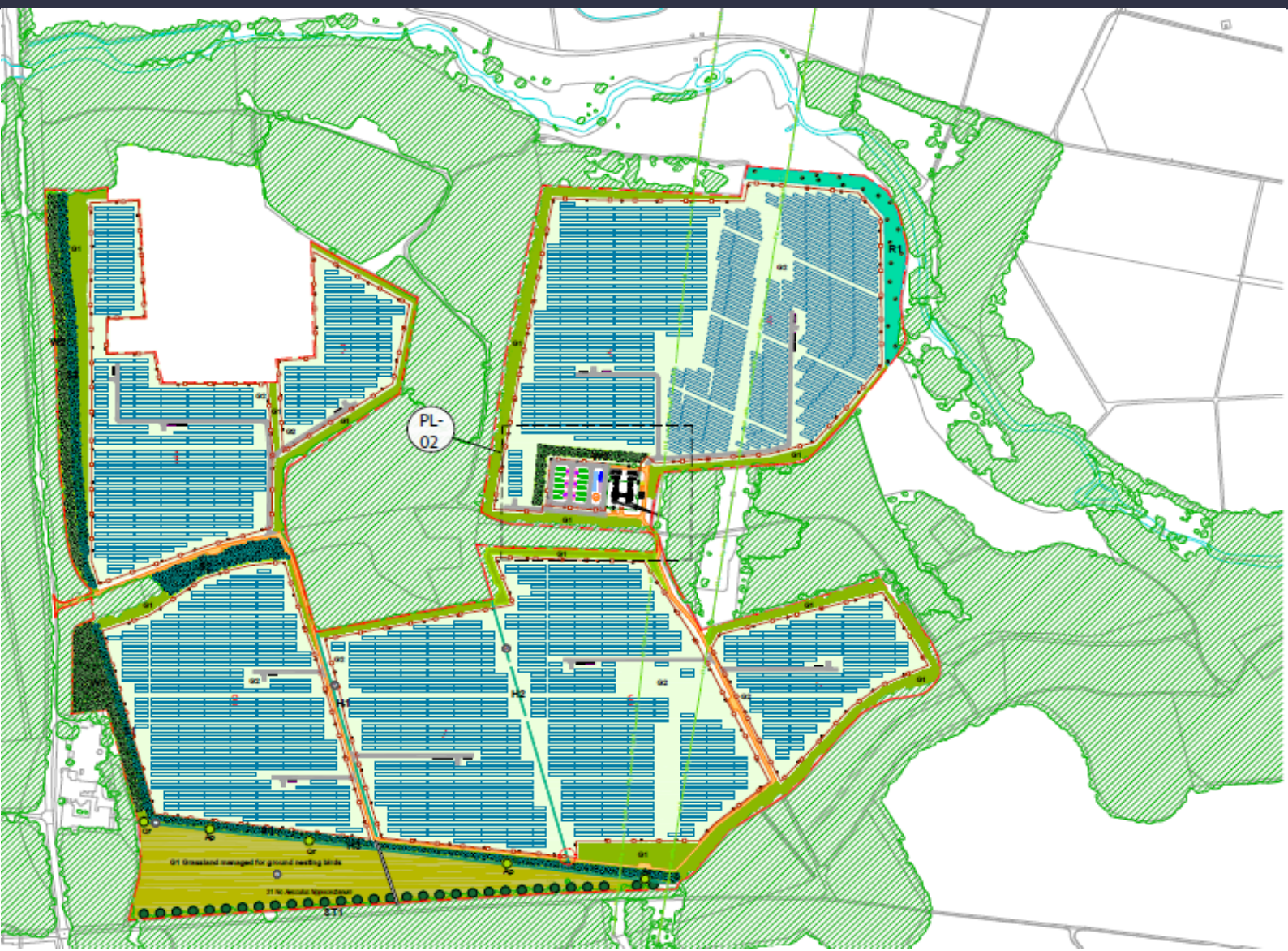
Land adjacent to A614, Worksop

On behalf of One Planet Developments Ltd

Date: 19th December 2025 | Pegasus Ref: P25-2880

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1. Witness Particulars

- 1.1. My name is Andrew Cook, and I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography (BA Hons) and a Master's Degree in Landscape Design (MLD). I am a Chartered Landscape Architect, Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI), Chartered Environmentalist (C Env) and Member of the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (MISEP) (formerly known as the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)).
- 1.2. I am one of the founding Executive Directors of Pegasus Group, which was established in 2003. Since then, the company has grown, establishing fourteen offices across the UK, employing approximately 500 planning and environmental planning professionals and staff. I am Head of the Environment team, in which planning for solar development accounts for a significant part of the business. The company is a corporate member of the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (ISEP) and was a founding member of IEMA's Quality Mark scheme, under my direction.
- 1.3. I have gained over 35 years of landscape planning consultancy experience. Prior to Pegasus, I was an Environmental Director at RPS (formerly Chapman Warren Planning Consultants), where I specialised in addressing landscape planning issues related to a wide range of renewable energy projects. I have had considerable experience of and involvement in a wide range of residential development and built infrastructure projects throughout the UK, many of which have involved sites in Green Belts as well as statutory protected landscapes including National Parks (NP), National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)) as well as non- statutory landscape designations such as a Special Landscape Areas (SLAs), as 'valued landscapes'. I have presented evidence at public inquiries on many occasions to address various landscape planning, design and visual issues, as these relate to landscape character and appearance.
- 1.4. I am based in the Cirencester office of Pegasus, where I manage a team of 28 environmental planners and landscape architects. I and the landscape architects within my team at Pegasus undertake our work in compliance with the Landscape Institute's Code of Standards of Conduct and Practice for Landscape Professionals (May 2012).
- 1.5. This landscape proof of evidence is based on my own professional judgement and is presented in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution, the content of which is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and is presented irrespective of by whom I am instructed.

2. Introduction and Scope of Evidence

Introduction

- 2.1. I am instructed on behalf of One Planet Development Ltd, hereafter referred to as the Appellant, to present evidence relating to landscape and visual matters in respect of a planning inquiry concerning the construction of a solar farm and battery storage together with associated works, equipment, and necessary infrastructure at land adjacent to the A614, Worksop. This evidence should be read in conjunction with the planning proof of evidence prepared by Nigel Cussen and heritage proof of evidence prepared by Amy Jones, which elaborate upon the Appellant's Statement of Case.
- 2.2. I was not involved with the application stage of the project. Sightline Landscape prepared the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the application. The appeal has been lodged on the grounds of non-determination by the Council. I was instructed at that stage. I have visited the site and reviewed all the relevant documentation pertaining to the application, including the LVIA, to determine whether I considered if I could act as an expert witness on behalf of the appellant in support of the scheme.
- 2.3. An application for full planning permission (ref: 24/00384/FUL) was submitted to Bassetlaw District Council (the Council). The application was taken to the Planning Committee on 16th July 2025, which drafted putative Reasons for Refusal at section 11 of that report.
- 2.4. The three putative Reasons for Refusal (RfR) (but now withdrawn as of 17 December 2025) are set out below:

"1. The proposal would erode the open and rural setting to those heritage assets listed above and especially that of Clumber Park, a grade I listed Registered Park & Garden. There are various views into and out of the site from public vantage points which are a key part of the park's open countryside setting along its eastern boundary. The development would fail to preserve this open countryside setting. The scale and nature of this intervention would seriously undermine the setting of the adjacent/nearby designated heritage assets. For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that if permitted, the harm caused would be at the higher end of 'less than substantial', and the perceived public benefits would in no way outweigh the harm identified. The proposal is therefore contrary to Sections 66(1) & 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990; Policy ST40 & Policy 41 of the Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038, paragraphs 202, 207, 208, 210, 212, 213, 215, 219 & 220 of the NPPF.

2. The proposed works are located within open space which would be detrimental visually to the overall character and appearance of the local area. The proliferation of structures on site, results in substantial harm to the open countryside and rural character and appearance of the locality. As such, the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the landscape character of the surrounding contrary to Policies ST8, ST33 and ST35 of the Bassetlaw Local Plan.

3. Insufficient information has been provided to assess the impact on below ground heritage assets contrary to Sections 66(1) & 72(1) of the Planning



***(Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990; Policy ST40 & Policy 41 (6)
of the Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020–2038, Chapter 16 of the NPPF.”***

Scope of Evidence

- 2.5. The former first reason for Reason for Refusal was concerned with heritage assets associated with Clumber Park and is addressed by the Heritage Witness, Amy Jones. For the avoidance of doubt, Amy Jones deals with the historical dimension with regard to landscape and I focus on the present landscape as it currently presents itself in terms of its legibility. That said, I am cognisant of the historical dimension with regard to the site and its local landscape in my analysis, where relevant. Indeed, Appendix 11 is a historic map of the site and surrounding area. I have reviewed Ms Jones’ Proof and have borne in mind her conclusions in carrying out my landscape assessment.
- 2.6. The former second Reason for Refusal alleged harm to the character and appearance of the area which I address in my proof. I also address the visual aspect in the first Reason for Refusal with regards to visibility from Clumber Park of the proposal.
- 2.7. I have set out in my proof my analysis and professional judgement as to how the proposal would have a bearing upon both landscape and visual aspects as these relate to character and appearance. I explain why, in landscape and visual terms, the proposed scheme is considered acceptable given the character of the site and its surrounding development context, recognising that the overall planning balance is for Nigel Cussen to comment upon.
- 2.8. In line with the Appellant’s Statement of Case, I discuss the following in my proof:
- How the character of the site, coupled with the typology, temporary and fully reversible nature of the scheme with proposed planting, would mitigate the harm
 - Effects on landscape character
 - Effects on visual amenity
 - Legacy benefits of the proposed planting
 - Visibility from Clumber Park, from a landscape planning perspective, recognising that Landscape Heritage and setting is covered by Amy Jones
- 2.9. In short, my landscape proof explains how the proposal would affect landscape elements, landscape character, and visual amenity, as it relates to the current landscape.
- 2.10. I also rely upon the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (CD 9.4) between the Appellant and Council, where they consider landscape and visual issues and reflect where the parties have reached agreement.
- 2.11. Where appropriate, I draw upon relevant information from these documents. However, in presenting my evidence and in the interests of brevity, I do not unnecessarily state detailed amounts of information where this has been previously documented. I have reviewed the scheme with reference to the application LVIA viewpoints surrounding the site (Appendix 7). I have set out my own analysis with regard to the scheme in my proof of evidence (Appendix 8). Whilst I note that an LVIA was prepared for the application (CD1.41–1.44); in preparing for this Inquiry, I have undertaken my own analysis, which has assisted me in forming my professional judgements. I rely upon my own professional judgement rather than the LVIA, and therefore my analysis supersedes the application LVIA. There are differences in my findings set out in my proof compared to those set out in the LVIA. This is in part due to the fact that there are differences in the methodologies adopted by Sightline Landscape and the

version which I have used, as set out in my Appendix 9. Other differences comprise matters of professional judgement. Significantly, the LVIA assessed Rev 10, whereas I have assessed Rev 12.

- 2.12. The judgements in terms of effects that I have identified are predicated on my methodology (Appendix 9). On the basis of this methodology, I have reviewed each of the viewpoints that were assessed in the application LVIA. My findings are set out in a schedule which summarises visual impacts in Appendix 8.
- 2.13. In preparing my evidence, I have undertaken an assessment of the operational phase of the scheme, as a worst-case scenario (Appendix 2a).

Landscape Strategy

- 2.14. The appellant has invited the Inspector to determine the Appeal on the basis of an updated Planting Plan Rev C (Appendix 2d) and Layout Plan (Rev 12), referred to hereafter as the "Amended Scheme".
- 2.15. A Case Management Conference (CMC) was held with the Inspector. The Amended Scheme has been accepted by the Inspector and we are proceeding on the basis that the Appeal will be heard on the basis of the amended scheme (Appendix 2a).
- 2.16. As part of the application, a series of drawings were submitted together with a Landscape Masterplan (Planting Plan Rev C, Appendix 2d) that illustrated the mitigation planting as part of the green infrastructure associated with the project. This earlier iteration of the scheme will be hereafter referred to as the 'application scheme'.
- 2.17. The amended plans identify, in detail, the retained and proposed landscape features, including enhanced hedgerows and new native hedgerows with trees, together with areas of meadowland. It is also agreed with the parties that the final specifications and final details of the landscaping will be further controlled by a pre-commencement condition, as identified in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (CD 9.4).

Representative Viewpoints and Visualisations

- 2.18. I consider that the LVIA viewpoint photographs, which were agreed at the application stage with the Council, provide good coverage of the public locations in the locality, representing a range of receptors and being located at a range of distances and orientations.
- 2.19. I consider that the verified visualisations (photomontages) prepared by Sightline Landscape for the application are industry-compliant visualisations.
- 2.20. It is anticipated that the Inspector would visit these representative viewpoints and use all the visualisations, including viewpoint photography and photomontages that have been provided as an aide memoire.
- 2.21. It should be recognised that it is not practical to include viewpoints from every possible location. The viewpoints which have been selected (Appendix 7) and agreed by the Council at the application stage illustrate a range of visual receptors at different distances and directions from the site. I consider that the locations of the viewpoints have been carefully considered, and the photography has been undertaken when atmospheric conditions and visibility were good. I consider that the photography is appropriate given the type and scale

of development. The representative viewpoints and visualisations have been prepared mindful of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) and Landscape Institute guidance relevant at the time of production; however, it is recognised that there is no substitute for visiting the viewpoints in the field to gain a first-hand appreciation of the viewing context.

Professional Judgement

2.22. Mindful of the GLVIA3, I have reviewed the Amended Scheme (as accepted by the Inspector) based on the application viewpoints as part of my field work and site visits. This has allowed me to ascertain both the landscape and visual effects, to make informed professional judgements concerning these matters and to establish both the level and nature of change for landscape and visual effects. My assessment was based on winter views, representing the worst-case scenario in terms of visibility of the site.

2.23. The degree of a landscape or visual effect is identified by means of a descriptive scale as per the GLVIA3. However, it is also necessary to consider the nature of the landscape and visual effects. GLVIA3 assists by noting that with regard to landscape effects (at paragraph 5.37), that:

“One of the more challenging issues is deciding whether the landscape effects should be categorised as positive or negative. It is also possible for effects to be neutral in their consequences for the landscape. An informed professional judgement should be made about this and the criteria used in reaching the judgement should be clearly stated. They might include, but should not be restricted to:

The degree to which the proposal fits with existing character.

The contribution to the landscape that the development may make in its own right, usually by virtue of good design, even if it is in contrast to existing character.

The importance of perceptions of landscape is emphasised by the European Landscape Convention, and others may of course hold different opinions on whether the effects are positive or negative, but this is not a reason to avoid making this judgement, which will ultimately be weighed against the opinions of others in the decision-making process.” (my emphasis)

2.24. With regard to visual effects, paragraph 6.29 of GLVIA3 states that:

“As with landscape effects an informed professional judgement should be made as to whether the visual effects can be described as positive or negative (or in some cases neutral) in their consequences for views and visual amenity. This will need to be based on a judgement about whether the changes will affect the quality of the visual experience for those groups of people who will see the changes, given the nature of the existing views.” (my emphasis)

2.25. In this instance and for the purposes of this proof, the effects upon the landscape are specifically considered in terms of effect upon firstly landscape elements and secondly landscape character. This proof also sets out how the proposal would have a bearing upon

the general visual amenity associated with the area. The proposed design includes integral green infrastructure, which would be in character and in keeping with the rural area. I am aware that people, on the whole, generally adopt an adverse reaction to change, particularly with regard to their local environments, with which they are very familiar, irrespective of whether it is harmful or indeed beneficial. I have adopted a precautionary approach here, and as such, I consider that the proposed solar farm would be adverse in terms of the nature of the effect on landscape character and visual terms unless otherwise stated. There would, however, be beneficial effects for some landscape elements.

- 2.26. I have reviewed the LVIA that was prepared for the application and noted the effects that were identified with regard to landscape character and visual amenity. However, I have undertaken my own assessment as to how the scheme would affect landscape elements, landscape character, and visual amenity. My assessment is based on a methodology which is set out in Appendix 9 to my proof.

Rule 6 Parties

- 2.27. It is understood that there is no Rule 6 Party involved with this Inquiry.

Planning Committee Report

- 2.28. A report was prepared for the Planning Committee by the Case Officer dated 16th July 2025. The report is both paginated and referenced with paragraph numbers. The LPA's concern regarding landscape and visual matters primarily related to changes with regard to the site rather than the wider landscape.

Visual Amenity and Landscape Character

- 2.29. Internal para. 10.25 onwards addresses visual amenity and landscape character, noting that the application was accompanied by a LVIA and was reviewed by the Council's Consultant Landscape Architect. Para. 10.27 goes on to refer to Policy ST35 of the Local Plan which states that proposals that contribute to the nature and quality of the landscape will be supported where it can be demonstrated that firstly the proposal protects and where possible enhances the distinctive qualities of the relevant landscape character policy zone as identified in the Bassetlaw Landscape Character Assessment by conserving, restoring, reinforcing or creating relevant landscape forms and features, and refers to site allocations which does not apply here.

Visual Amenity

- 2.30. Para. 10.30 refers to views from West Drayton Avenue which is a public right of way and which was a historic approach to Clumber Park, and as a result, the applicant has modified the layout to pull the panels away from this avenue. The new layout proposes planting a line of Horse Chestnut trees along the line of the avenue just outside an existing line of avenue trees. The existing trees will be retained but are in decline and the new planting would ensure that this feature continues into the future. As a further benefit, it is proposed to reinstate the line of a second avenue that extended east from Clumber Park's Normanton Gate. The solar panels would be located north of the Normanton Gate line and the intervening land down to West Drayton Avenue would remain grassland. The report concludes that the avenue trees and hedge combined with the set back of the panels, would reduce their visibility from West Drayton Avenue.

- 2.31. The report goes on to address effects on the character of the site itself at internal para. 10.32, noting that the LVIA is considered to be correct stating that the proposed development would substantially alter the character of the fields in which the solar farm is located, replacing the rural character with one of a landscape containing low level electrical infrastructure.
- 2.32. Internal para. 10.33 notes that the proposals would lead to a long-term minor adverse effect on the character of the surrounding landscape. However, it is important to note that this would be restricted to a limited geographic extent. The proposed development is likely to be perceived through existing and proposed trees but this perception would be heavily reduced by the vegetation.
- 2.33. The report goes on to note at para. 10.34 that information submitted within the LVIA and associated addendum documents broadly accords with the methodology outlined in GLVIA3.

Conclusions/Planning Balance

- 2.34. The planning balance is set out at the end of the report, where para. 10.69 notes the proposal would result in an unacceptable level of harm to landscape and visual impacts. However, I note that this conclusion was based on Rev 10 of the proposed Site Layout Plan. This has been subject to a further slight enhanced amendment accepted by the Inspector at this Inquiry and is referred to as Rev 12 (Appendix 2a).
- 2.35. In light of the slight amendment to the layout and it being accepted for the Inquiry, a Landscape Statement of Common Ground (LSoCG) (CD 9.4) has been agreed with the Council with regard to landscape character and appearance. This LSoCG now concludes that the Council considers that on the basis of the amended scheme the former putative reason for refusal in relation to landscape is withdrawn and landscape matters should be afforded limited weight overall in the planning balance.

Council's LVIA Review

- 2.36. The Bassetlaw District Council commissioned Wynne-Williams Associates to undertake a review of the application LVIA, and they submitted a report to the Council dated March 2025 (CD3.53). The report reviews the LVIA prepared by Sightline Landscapes and in addition considered the landscape proposals as submitted on the application drawings. Internal para. 2.1 noted that the LVIA included a methodology that accords with the relevant guidance GLVIA3. Section 3 of the report provides a conclusion and noted that the submitted LVIA and associated addendum documents broadly accord with the methodology outlined in GLVIA3 but had concerns regarding the application of the methodology, i.e., professional judgement applied.

Landscape Statement of Common Ground (LSoCG)

- 2.37. A Landscape SoCG (CD 9.4) has been prepared by myself, as Landscape Consultant, for the appellant and Bassetlaw District Council. It notes a number of aspects where matters are not in dispute. At para. 2.5, the report notes that on the basis of the revised landscape plans submitted with the appeal, the Council no longer consider that the appeal should be refused on landscape grounds and accordingly withdraws this Reason for Refusal. The report also notes at para. 2.18, the majority of Clumber Park will be visually unaffected. There would be very limited heavily filtered or slight glimpse views from a few locations. The degree of visual effect on these location would be negligible. It goes on to note the Holborn Amendment

noting that the application was considered on the basis of the proposed Layout Plan Rev 10. The appellant has made minor modifications to this layout which is referred to as the Holborn Amendment, shown on drawing reference Rev 12, and there is a Planting Plan corresponding to this referred to as Rev C to reflect the Holborn Amendment (Appendix 2a and 2d).

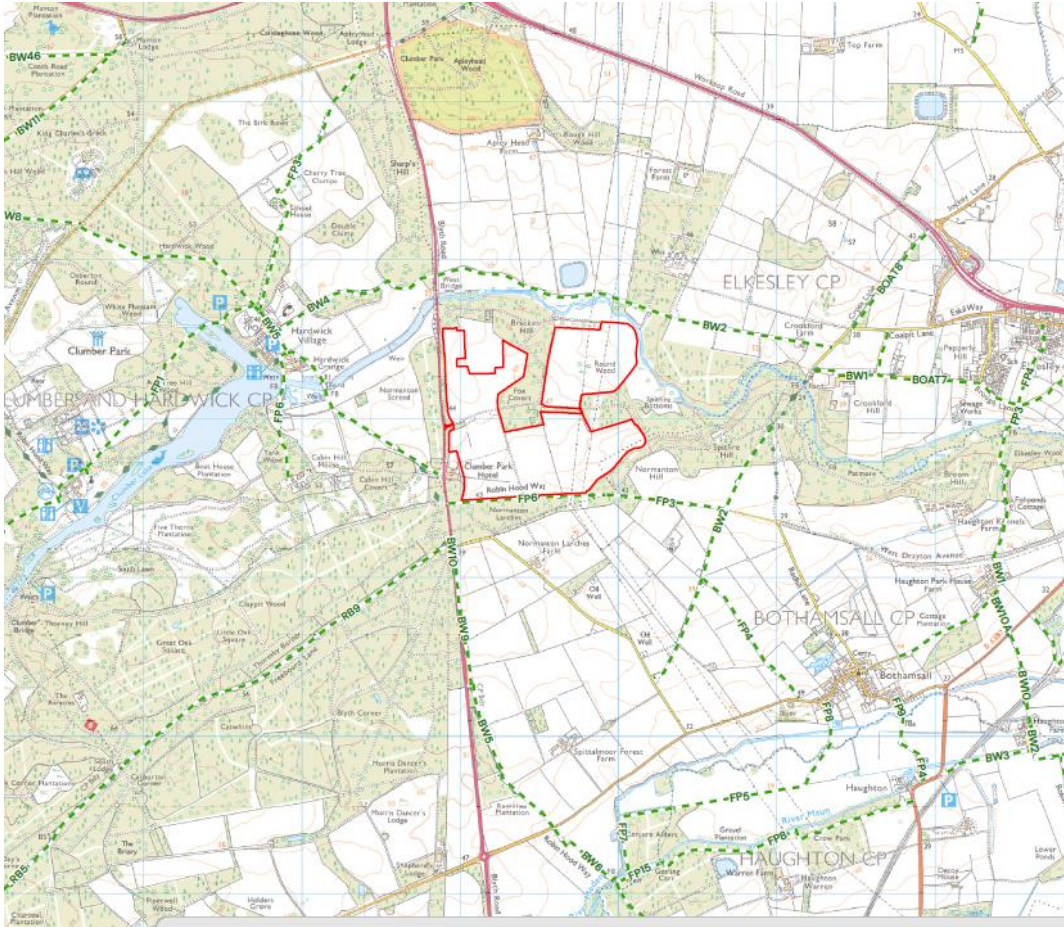
2.38. It is now common ground that:

- The site does not form part of a valued landscape.
- That the project is proposed to be fully decommissioned at the end of its operational life.
- The Council raised no objection with regard to tree loss as part of the application.
- That the visual envelope would be very limited.
- That the LVIA Methodology accords with GLVIA3 guidance.
- The photomontages prepared follow best practice methodology and are proportional for the proposed project.
- The mitigation planting within the southern part of the is considered beneficial in landscape character terms.
- The effects upon landscape character are very limited and highly localised.
- Post-decommissioning the proposal would result in a beneficial legacy in landscape character and visual amenity terms.

2.39. Section 3 of the report (CD 9.4) confirms that there are no matters in dispute with regard to landscape and visual issues.

3. Description of the Site and its Context

- 3.1. The proposal site relates to an area of land which lies adjacent to the eastern aspect of the A614 on the outskirts of Worksop. I note that there are a number of heritage assets in the surrounding area, including the grade I listed 'Clumber Park' Registered Park and Garden, the grade I listed 'Thoresby Park' Registered Park and Garden, the grade II* listed 'Gate Piers and Flanking Walls to Normanton Gate'; the grade II* listed 'Drayton Gate'; and the grade II listed 'West Bridge', which is itself also designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, though there are no heritage assets within the site itself
- 3.2. The site itself is comprised of several fields that are located along the eastern side of the A614 road. The boundaries of the site are defined by tree cover and woodlands. The site runs parallel to the main thoroughfare of the A614, which encompasses the site's western boundary. The southern boundary of the site runs parallel with West Drayton Avenue, which is itself a public footpath. The northern boundary of the site runs roughly parallel with the southern banks of the River Poulter, beyond which lies another public footpath. The eastern boundary of the proposal site abuts a swath of mature woodland.
- 3.3. The site is formed of a collection of agricultural fields, which are used for arable farming. The field pattern is considered to be medium in scale, situated within an area which contains medium to small scale fields. The perimeter boundaries of the fields are, on the whole, well defined by a mix of woodland and tree cover.
- 3.4. The topography of the site exhibits gentle gradients.
- 3.5. A series of large-scale pylons are located within the site, crossing the eastern part of the site and continue across the adjacent landscape, joining into the extensive networks of electricity infrastructure, which is a notable linear feature in the wider landscape, frequently punctuating the well wooded skyline in views.
- 3.6. The landscape has long been associated with energy infrastructure, with many of these elements visible in the landscape beyond the site. The various tall metallic and pale coloured elements are visible in the locality.
- 3.7. Robin Hood Way PRoW passes along the southern boundary of the site. On the western boundary lies Blyth Road (A614).
- 3.8. Beyond the site, the pattern of settlements becomes more dispersed, connected by a network of A roads and narrower local lanes. Beyond these settlements, dispersed farmsteads are visible.



Site Location Plan (Appendix 1)

4. Description of the Landscape Proposals

Introduction

- 4.1. My Proof of Evidence has been prepared on the basis of the Amended Scheme Rev 12 (Appendix 2a), which has been subject to consultation. The proceeding paragraphs provide a detailed description of this appeal scheme from a landscape mitigation design perspective.
- 4.2. When the application was submitted, the original proposed site layout plan was illustrated on drawing revision 7. This layout was subject to a number of minor amendments up to revision 10 where further minor amendments were made reflected in drawing revision 12 which has been accepted by the Inspector for the purposes of this appeal and is consistent with the planting plan drawing referenced as revision C. I proceed to comment upon the latest revision layout accordingly in the proceeding paragraphs.

Description of the Proposals

- 4.3. The solar panels would be mounted on steel mounted frames, the height of which would be 0.91m above ground level at the lowest part of the panel, rising to a back ridge height of 3m. There would also be 12 BESS containers with an overall height of 2.9m, and 3.2m in height with the 30cm foundations above ground included.
- 4.4. The Amended Scheme Rev 12 (Appendix 2a) layout was taken into account when preparing my Proof of Evidence.
- 4.5. The proposed layout incorporates many built-in mitigation measures and takes into account the existing boundary vegetation and offsets to avoid overshadowing from mature trees. The relatively wide buffer also provides a generous maintenance zone and helps avoid any long-term management risks, which could result in the need for future tree works. The proposed tree planting would include species which are prevalent in the locality.



Amended Scheme Landscape Masterplan Rev 12 (Appendix 2a)

- 4.6. The proposed hedgerows would include hedgerow trees, which would interrupt views of the solar panels and would strengthen the well-treed character of the local landscape.
- 4.7. As part of the built-in mitigation measures, the proposed access tracks have been aligned along the existing field edges and boundary vegetation to reduce their visibility. Access points into the individual fields have been purposely located where the existing gaps in the vegetation, or where field accesses are already present, to avoid unnecessary removal of the boundary vegetation.
- 4.8. Internal access tracks have been designed to be as narrow as technically possible and would be constructed from crushed aggregate to act as a permeable surface, with the aggregate sourced locally to reflect the local geology and to give a rural appearance. It is envisaged that with time, the edge of the surface tracks would be colonised by pioneering grass species, which would soften their appearance, like country lanes.
- 4.9. The solar development areas have been grouped and deer-fenced together to minimise existing vegetation losses and to reduce the quantum of fencing, thus its visibility, but allowing the maintenance and management of the solar panels and facilitating the management of pasture land beneath the panels.
- 4.10. As a principle, all of the internal and perimeter field boundaries would be retained and reinforced with further hedgerow species, as appropriate. In addition, the retained hedgerows

would be subject to an ongoing management to ensure their longevity, good condition, and structure, to maximise ecological benefits. At the same time, some of the site's hedgerows would be allowed to develop into wider and taller landscape features (and maintained at approximately 3m height, where currently lower) to increase their screening potential. Site-specific design solutions have been guided by a detailed analysis of inter-visibility between the site and publicly accessible locations in the locality.

- 4.11. In summary, the overarching strategy for the landscape associated with the site is:
- to enhance and strengthen its field boundary vegetation in order to reinforce the positive characteristics of the local landscape, and
 - to increase the sense of enclosure and decrease the level of inter-visibility with the local landscape.
 - The existing arable crop and grassland margins would be replaced by a mixture of tussock grassland and species-rich meadow grassland and managed to increase biodiversity.
- 4.12. With regard to the ecology, the proposed hedgerows would be species-rich and, along with the retained and enhanced hedgerows, would be allowed to grow out to provide better resources and habitats for mammals and birds. The less stringent hedgerow management regime would allow the retained and new hedgerows to develop into taller and wider hedgerows, enhancing the overall landscape framework associated with the site.

Broad Landscape Proposals

- 4.13. The landscape strategy has been designed in response to the opportunities that the site offers. The green infrastructure would deliver other benefits which include:
- Conserve and reinforce local landscape character;
 - Protect and enhance existing green infrastructure assets, namely the trees and hedgerows so that they can be appreciated and valued by everyone for future generations;
 - Provide a resilient and adaptive environment in the face of climate change.
 - Investment in the proposed green infrastructure brings benefits to wildlife and the environment generally.
 - Protecting and enhancing the host landscape and biodiversity by using land improvements and management to deliver biodiversity gain and overall landscape enhancement.

Detailed Landscape Proposals (Appendix 2d)

Field 1

- 4.14. The northern boundary of Field 1 is in an irregular shape as it takes into account archaeology and is defined by a perimeter deer fence as a security fence. The western boundary is framed by an existing wide mature tree belt. Immediately adjacent to this tree cover there would be further woodland planting to create an additional tree belt which would integrate with the existing to create a wider tree belt. This would be further framed by a belt of shrubs to create a shrub layer which would in turn be framed by grassland. The southern boundary would be demarcated by a deer fence, whilst the eastern boundary would form a grassland corridor.

Field 2

- 4.15. Much of the western boundary would be defined by a deer fence taking into account the local archaeology exclusion zone. The northern boundary would be framed by existing young woodland which also wraps around the eastern and southern boundaries of Field 2. The margins on these sides of the field would be framed by grassland beyond the deer fence.

Field 3

- 4.16. The northern boundary of Field 3 would be defined by a deer fence beyond which would lie a corridor of grassland beyond which lie retained tree cover and scrubland which forms part of the River Poulter corridor. The western boundary is framed by mature woodland which would be retained. A tree belt also frames the southern boundary which would have a grassland margin. The southern part of Field 3 would accommodate the substation and the BESS facility. The western and northern boundaries of which would be framed by a new tree belt.

Field 4

- 4.17. The northern and eastern boundaries would be planted and managed as riparian scrub with species rich meadowland. North of this lies further scrubland whilst to the east lies existing woodland. The southern boundary is mainly framed by existing young woodland which would be separated from the security fence by a grass margin.

Field 5

- 4.18. The northern, eastern, and southern boundaries are framed by existing woodland, the margins of which would be managed as grassland and beyond which would lie the deer fence.

Field 6

- 4.19. The northern boundary of Field 6 is framed by a mature tree belt which would have a grassland margin. The majority of the western boundary would be defined by an existing hedgerow which would be reinforced. The south-west corner of Field 6 would require the removal of a limited amount of hedge vegetation to accommodate the perimeter fence. The southern part of the field would have a wide grassland margin beyond which lies existing mature woodland. South of the panels a shrub belt would be planted on the south side of which a hedge would be reinstated punctuated by several standard trees.

Field 7

- 4.20. The northern boundary of Field 7 is framed by existing woodland. The western boundary is defined with a short section of existing hedgerow. A new hedge would be introduced to reinstate a historic hedge along this boundary. The southern boundary would be reinforced with proposed shrub planting together with a new hedge reinstating a historic hedge. The eastern boundary of Field 7 would see the reinforcement of an existing hedge.

Field 8

- 4.21. The northern boundary of Field 8 would be framed by a block of scrubland comprising native shrub species whilst the western section of the northern boundary would retain existing tree cover. The western boundary is framed by tree cover which frames the Clumber Park Hotel. This tree cover would be reinforced with woodland planting to reinforce the visual

containment of Field 8. The eastern margin of this new wooded area would be framed by proposed shrub planting. The southern boundary would be defined by a deer fence, a belt of shrub planting together with a new hedgerow reinstated on the alignment of a historic hedge and would be punctuated with a few standard trees.

Field Letter B

- 4.22. Field letter B would not accommodate any solar arrays and would remain as an agricultural field and managed as pasture given its size and shape. The northern boundary of this field would be defined by a new reinstated hedgerow reinforced with a shrub belt and standard trees along its length. The western boundary would be framed by existing mature tree cover. The southern boundary is also framed by woodland known as Normanton Larches. Running close and parallel to this woodland, a line of horse chestnut trees would be planted to create a single avenue alongside the existing wood to augment the declining mature remnant trees associated with West Drayton Avenue.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 4.23. The Amended Scheme has been measured against the latest version of the metric, which has identified that, based on the Amended Scheme (Rev 12), there would be a significant net gain of both habitat and hedgerow units.

Vegetation Growth Rates

- 4.24. The residual effects, assessed in this proof, are based on the assumption that the proposed mitigation planting has been implemented in accordance with the proposed landscape proposal plans for the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a), has been subject to an appropriate management regime which an appropriately worded condition can secure, and that the vegetation has established.
- 4.25. Whilst the precise growth rate is difficult to establish, as it depends on the species, soil type, nutrients, and water availability, ongoing management, competition for resources from other plants, and the effects of climate change. However, for the purpose of this proof, the growth of the proposed hedgerows and trees is assumed to be approximately 0.5 m per annum, which is conservative.

Decommissioning

- 4.26. The scheme comprises solar farm, a BESS facility together with ancillary infrastructure including a substation, all of which is reversible. Planning is sought on a temporary basis of 40 years, and as such, it is proposed that all of this energy infrastructure would be removed and that there would be restoration of the site. There would be limited loss of land from agricultural production on a temporary basis to accommodate the access tracks, substation and BESS. The mitigation and enhancement planting proposed, including the hedgerows, trees and shrubs, would also remain in place post-decommissioning. The landowner post-decommission stage would have the opportunity to either continue to practice pastoral farming or convert to arable use, where such decisions do not require any planning permission.

5. Effect on Landscape Elements

Introduction

- 5.1. This section of my proof assesses the effects on those landscape elements (features) that currently characterise the site itself. It particularly considers the introduction of the new elements as part of the scheme and how these would physically affect the existing features present within the site. It also explains why the scheme would result in some beneficial effects for some landscape elements.

Topography

- 5.2. The site is located in a very gently undulating landscape. The gradually sloping gradients across the site mean that only limited earthworks would be necessary to accommodate the proposed scheme. The susceptibility of the topography to the type of development proposed is considered to be medium, which, combined with a medium value, would result in a medium sensitivity.
- 5.3. Changes to the topographic profile would be reversible and would be only very localised and relate to the construction of tracks and the creation of platforms for the proposed Battery Energy Storage Solutions (BESS) and substation. Consequently, there would not be any requirement for large-scale remodelling of the existing landform within the site. I consider that the overall magnitude of change to the ground profile of the site would be negligible. With a medium sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change, the overall effect on the topography would be negligible (adverse) in terms of the scale of effect.

Trees/Tree Cover

- 5.4. Trees and tree cover are notable landscape components within and on the periphery of the site. The existing tree resource is considered to be of high value in overall terms and of high susceptibility to changes arising from the proposed development. With a high value and susceptibility, the overall sensitivity of the tree resource is considered to be high. As illustrated by the amended Landscape Masterplan (drawing ref: Rev 12) (Appendix 2a), there is tree cover around the periphery as well as internally within the site that would be retained as part of the green infrastructure. This would be reinforced with significant new tree planting at the boundaries of the site. Only a few trees are required to be removed to accommodate the Amended Scheme, meaning there would be a substantial net gain in terms of tree resource relating to the site itself.
- 5.5. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment was prepared and submitted with the application, prepared by Elliott Consultancy Limited with the report dated November 2024 (CD1.38). The scope of the study was to identify any trees to be removed, to facilitate development, along with tree cover to be retained. Internal para. 4.3 of this report notes that construction of the proposed access of Blyth Road would require the removal of a small number of trees, along with a small section of one hedge to be removed to construct an internal access track. It goes on to note at para. 4.7, trees either side of Blyth Road access junction may need to be pruned to ensure suitable visibility splays. This analysis is illustrated in one of the diagrams which forms Appendix 4, referred to as Tree Protection Plan. The legend identifies trees and a section of hedge to be removed in 3 locations. A detailed mitigation planting plan can be secured by means of a suitably worded condition.

- 5.6. Overall, given the notable net gain in trees proposed, the magnitude of change is assessed as medium, which when combined with a high sensitivity, would result in a major (beneficial) effect on the tree resource of the site. The proposed mitigation planting in terms of trees would reflect the type of vegetation which is characteristic of the locality and reinforce the presence of these elements.

Hedgerows

- 5.7. Across the site, there are a few hedgerows of varying heights which demarcate the field boundaries. While these are in good condition, where there are existing gaps, these would be 'gapped up' with indigenous shrubs to aid in screening views and assimilating the proposals into the landscape.
- 5.8. At a number of locations across the site, there are two very short sections of existing hedgerows that are proposed to be removed to accommodate access tracks and security fencing (see Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report (CD 1.38)). However, the scheme would include substantial additional new hedgerow planting, resulting in an overall net gain.
- 5.9. As a result of the extensive new planting proposed, the magnitude of change is assessed as high. The susceptibility of the hedges is considered to be medium, which, when combined with a medium value, results in a medium sensitivity. A medium sensitivity combined with a high magnitude of change would result in a major beneficial degree of effect. The proposed mitigation planting in terms of hedgerows and scrub would reflect the type of vegetation which is characteristic of the locality and reinforce the presence of these elements.

Land Use/Land Cover/Openness

- 5.10. There would be an inevitable change in the existing land cover of the site with the proposed scheme in place. The existing land cover, under arable, would be converted to pastoral use. Therefore, to accommodate the solar farm, the land would retain its agricultural function managed as pasture, whilst still accommodating the solar array infrastructure. The notable point here is that there would be a very limited loss of agricultural land throughout the operational years, and upon decommissioning, it would allow arable to be reintroduced. Switching between pastoral and arable use is an integral part of farm management, either short or long term and does not require planning permission.
- 5.11. With a medium susceptibility and medium value, resulting in a medium sensitivity combined with a medium magnitude of change (retained fields with solar panels which would remove some sense of openness across the pastoral fields) would result in a moderate (adverse) degree of effect with regard to land cover associated with the site.
- 5.12. My analysis, which I have set out here is based on a number of considerations relating to this aspect of the scheme and is noted in the following paragraphs.
- 5.13. The land is currently farmed as arable land. The land management can change from arable to pasture as good farming practice without the requirement for planning permission.
- 5.14. With the scheme as proposed (Appendix 2a) the land would be managed as pasture where the solar panels are located within the existing fields.



- 5.15. This land cover would be retained across the entire site, with the solar panels superimposed over this managed grassland, in contrast to development that sits in the land and is permanent.
- 5.16. The amount of actual loss of agricultural land as a result of the scheme would be minimal, given the overall size of the site. Apart from elements such as the substation, BESS, and access tracks, the other infrastructure, such as the solar panels, would be superimposed over the grass sward on steel supports.
- 5.17. It is good practice to break the agricultural cultivation of the land with the land left fallow and retained as pasture to allow the soil ecology to recover. This scheme would allow the land to effectively rest from arable use for the life of the project. At the end of the period, the soil resource would be a better-quality enriched resource for farming as a consequence. There will be as a result, long-term benefits for the soil from being rested for 40 years.
- 5.18. The fields are currently free of built development however, large pylons are present with their overhead lines. There is a sense of openness associated with the field units. The introduction of the solar panels whilst extending across the topography at an approximate height of 3m above ground, would nonetheless result in some reduction concerning the sense of openness associated with the field units. This aspect would result in an adverse nature of effect as it relates to land cover, though the actual physical impact would be limited in scale across the site.
- 5.19. The installation of the solar arrays would not seal the land, nor would it cause any downgrading of quality. I understand that the installation and decommissioning process would not have any significant or long-term adverse effects on the soil resource subject to the proposal, following good practice in terms of pasture management and maintenance.

Public Rights of Way

- 5.20. There are a number of public rights of way in the locality of the site (Appendix 1). All those beyond the site would be physically unaffected with the scheme in place. There are no PRoWs located within the site. Users of these off-site routes would be affected in visual amenity terms only which is addressed in section 8 of my proof.
- 5.21. With regards to the off-site PRoWs, no diversions of any PRoWs are required to facilitate the proposed scheme, with the existing routes retained on their current alignments. PRoWs are considered to be of high susceptibility, value, and sensitivity, which when combined with no magnitude of change, result in no degree of effect on the public right of way as a resource and facility. Visual amenity effects appreciated by users of the PRoWs are considered in Section 8 of this proof of evidence which deals with visual amenity.

Water Features

- 5.22. There are no water features associated with the site per se, such as ponds, drainage ditches, etc that are of note. As such, there would be no physical effects upon water features to enable this scheme to be implemented.

Summary of Effects upon Landscape Elements

Table 1: Summary of Effects on Landscape Elements	
Element	Landscape Effect
Topography	Negligible
Trees	Major (beneficial)
Hedgerows	Major (beneficial)
Land Use/Land Cover/Openness	Moderate (adverse)
Public Rights of Way	None
Water Features	None

- 5.23. The scheme (Appendix 2a) would result in some beneficial effects upon the landscape elements within the site when considered in the round, as summarised in Table 1.
- 5.24. In overall terms, the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) would result in some beneficial effects with regard to the landscape elements that currently define the landscape character of the site, which would change from a series of arable and improved grassland fields to one of a solar farm set within grassland and field pattern vegetation. However, the elements that currently contribute to defining the character of the site, namely trees and hedgerows would be retained and enhanced, albeit set within the context of a solar farm with the land managed for pasture. The introduction of the solar farm would introduce some infrastructure though this would be limited given its low-profile nature, combined with its light footprint and would result in a limited and moderate degree of harm with regard to the perceived openness of the landscape as it relates to the site.
- 5.25. It is also worth reiterating that the scheme has an operational life of 40 years, with the land cover being temporary; meaning that it will be possible for the land to be returned to its previous arable use. Solar energy developments are characterised by their low profile, light footprint, and permeable and reversible nature. The timescale of 40 years is similar for some other elements in the landscape such as timber crop production, hops or orchards.
- 5.26. During the decommissioning stage all energy infrastructure would be removed and the new planting introduced would have matured along with the ongoing management and maintenance of the other retained features and as a result, there would be a clear beneficial legacy from this project in terms of landscape elements which collectively would also enhance landscape character as advocated in the published Landscape Character Assessments. See other sections of my proof.
- 5.27. I recognise that the scheme would bring about a change to the character of the site itself, introducing solar panels and associated infrastructure superimposed over grassland, which



can be managed for pasture. However, such a change would in physical terms be confined to within the boundaries of the site.

6. Valued Landscape

Introduction

- 6.1. As agreed in the Landscape SoCG (CD 9.4), the site is not considered to be a valued landscape as per paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However, my analysis of value has been carried out in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note O2/21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations (TGN O2/21) which effectively supersedes Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 to establish the value of the site.

Landscape Designations

- 6.2. The site does not fall within any areas afforded a level of protection and value as a result of regional or national landscape designations. The site represents a typical 'everyday' example of an intensively managed arable farmland. The landscape is therefore not of high value in the context of paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024). The site does not fall within any Registered Park and Garden. In contrast, the adjacent landscape to the west, which forms Clumber Park, is subject to an RPG, which extends up to the Blyth Road, A614 which I consider is a valued landscape.

Natural Heritage

- 6.3. The site comprises actively managed farmland and is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations. There are no areas of Ancient Woodland within the site or its locality. Similarly, there are no ecologically designated sites, such as a Local Wildlife site. The arable fields and associated boundary features are characteristic of the local landscape, including hedgerows and tree cover. There are also no clearly identified, distinctive landscape-related geological or geomorphological features, noting the site is within the wide low-lying vale of the River Poulter, which is not particularly distinctive. The site has been subject to hedge removal for agricultural intensification.

Cultural Heritage

- 6.4. A full assessment relating to Cultural Heritage is contained within Ms Jones' Proof of Evidence. There are no historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. follies, monuments, avenues, tree roundels) located within the site itself. Clumber Park is a Registered Park and Garden located to the west of the site and Blyth Road (A614). However, Clumber Park is not experienced or seen from within the site itself, and it does not materially influence the present day 'working' landscape character of the site itself.
- 6.5. The condition of the site is variable, and this is confirmed in the published landscape character assessment. Over time, field boundaries across the site have been removed, creating the larger-scale field pattern which is visible today. Vegetation across the site is of varying quality and condition, leading to field boundaries being fragmented, lacking structure and being substantially gappy in sections.
- 6.6. The site does not form part of a Registered Park and Garden or its appreciation.

Associations

- 6.7. The definition in the TGN is for a ***"Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts."*** Having reviewed the local landscape character assessments for the

area, the author is not aware of the site having any particular associations with well-known literature, poetry, art, TV/film or music that contribute to perceptions of the landscape; associations with science or other technical achievements; links to a notable historical event; or notable associations with a famous person or people.

Distinctiveness

- 6.8. The site does not lie within a rare landscape character area at either a national or local level. The landscape character is judged to be typical of that found in the locality and as set out in the published landscape character assessments. The few landscape features present within the site are not rare or unusual but representative and typical of those that can be found within the locality. Mature landscape features on or adjacent to the site include mature trees both within field boundaries and within woodland, such as the Apleyhead Wood, Bracken Hill Wood and Rough Hill Wood which all lie adjacent to the site. However, as identified during the site visit and when reviewing the published character assessments, these particular features are not rare in the local area, with several well-established woodlands located beyond the site. The site is an ordinary 'everyday' landscape.

Recreational

- 6.9. The site itself contains no public rights of way, nor is there any public open access land. There are a number of PRoWs in the locality of the site but none of these physically relate to the site.

Perceptual – Scenic

- 6.10. In terms of its scenic qualities, the site can be described as a generally pleasant 'everyday' landscape which is not in any way remarkable or striking. The gently undulating landscape within which the site is located offers short-range views, and these are characterised by a combination of wooded horizons punctuated by large-scale pylons with frequent tree cover foreshortening the views and restricting the appreciation of the local field pattern. The site is essentially self-contained.
- 6.11. In terms of distinctive features, the site is comprised of very gently sloping topography, which cannot be described as dramatic; equally, it contains no distinctive or notable ridgelines. The site is set within a wooded landscape, with woodland in various forms being a key defining characteristic of the locality.
- 6.12. The land cover is predominantly arable, so whilst at certain times of the year the crop can appear as ephemeral or striking in the landscape (when compared to features such as grassland), these crops are replaced annually and are not a long-term element in landscape terms.

Perceptual – Wildness and Tranquillity

- 6.13. Human presence is self-evident with noise audible from the nearby busy Blyth Road (A614). It is neither wild nor particularly tranquil due to its proximity to the Clumber Park Hotel and adjacent trunk road.
- 6.14. Factors to consider in this category include the "Presence of wild land and perceptions of relative wildness (resulting from a high degree of perceived naturalness, rugged or otherwise challenging terrain, remoteness from public mechanised access and lack of modern artefacts)." None of these characteristics are exhibited on or near the site.

Functional

- 6.15. The site is a simple ordinary arable landscape comprising open fields with some associated boundary vegetation, including hedgerows and trees. Apart from its agricultural use, the site does not feature any special functional characteristics; nor does it contribute to the 'healthy functioning of the landscape' with examples given as ***“natural hydrological systems/ floodplains, areas of undisturbed and healthy soils, areas that form carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands and oceans, areas of diverse landcover (benefits pest regulation), pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows.”***

Value

- 6.16. Based on the above analysis, I consider that the value of the site is assessed as being medium when considered in the round.

Susceptibility

- 6.17. The site comprises a number of arable fields and is best described as an intensively farmed landscape; for instance, the remnants of old hedgerows illustrate the removal of internal historic field boundaries. The arable crop is also currently grown close up near the field edge. Despite these characteristics of an intensively farmed landscape, the site sits within the countryside, where many established trees, hedgerows and woodland extend through the landscape.
- 6.18. The historic map (see Appendix 11) illustrates that many of the internal field boundaries across the site have been lost and the smaller fields amalgamated to form the larger scale fields. As a result, the smaller-scale field pattern, which is a key characteristic of the local landscape character assessment, have been lost due to agricultural intensification. Views from the surrounding farmland into the site are frequently interrupted by intervening tree cover and woodland cover.
- 6.19. Solar farms and their associated infrastructure and cables are characterised by their light footprint, and permeable and low profile, with the panels following and reflecting the underlying topography.
- 6.20. On that basis, the susceptibility of the site to this type of development is assessed as medium.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 6.21. Based on the above analysis of medium value and medium susceptibility, I consider that that the site is of medium sensitivity to solar energy development.

7. Effect on Landscape Character

Introduction

- 7.1. This section of my proof explains how the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) would have a bearing on the landscape character of the site and the surrounding area. As defined in the GLVIA3 glossary landscape character is defined as ***“A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different to another...”***.
- 7.2. To further clarify a distinction in the use of terms, Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) are discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape, as opposed to Landscape Character Types (LCTs), which are defined in GLVIA3, page 157 as follows:
- “These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes.”***
- 7.3. A number of landscape character assessments (Appendices 5 and 6) have been undertaken in recent years to identify landscape character types and areas and have been published to assist professionals in understanding how development can affect landscape character, and to inform appropriate decision making.

Effect on the Character of the Site

- 7.4. I have provided in the preceding chapter some narrative to explain how the proposed scheme would have a bearing upon the landscape elements of the site. With regard to the site itself as set out in the previous paragraphs, I consider this to be quite unremarkable in landscape character terms and in this regard consider the site to be of medium value and of medium susceptibility and sensitivity with regard to this proposal. This combined with a low magnitude of change (given the retention and enhancement of green infrastructure, combined with the limited built form) would result in an overall minor adverse effect upon the character of the site itself.
- 7.5. I proceed to consider the landscape character of the ‘wider’ landscape beyond the site itself.

National Level – National Character Area 49: Sherwood

- 7.6. The site and the surrounding area are located within the National Character Area (NCA) 49: Sherwood (Appendix 6). This NCA forms part of an assessment of the character of England’s landscape, first undertaken by the Countryside Agency but now the responsibility of Natural England. The key characteristics of this NCA are described on internal page 5 of the document as follows:
- ***“A gently rolling landform of low rounded sandstone hills, which principally coincide with an outcrop of the Permo–Triassic Sherwood Sandstone Group. The sandstone gives rise to well drained, acidic, sandy soils.***

- ***Magnesium limestone and marl are exposed to the west of the area and underlie the sandstone, forming the base of a major aquifer.***
- ***Woodland is a distinctive feature of the area with a mosaic of broadleaved, mixed and coniferous woodlands, including ancient oak wood pasture and parkland, and pine plantations.***
- ***Wooded horizons frame extensive areas of open arable farmland with large, geometric fields contained by low, often treeless, hawthorn hedges.***
- ***Commercial agriculture, especially in the north of this character area, is focused on root crops, although pig and poultry units are also characteristic.***
- ***The free draining geology and acidic soils support many areas of unenclosed lowland heathland and acid grassland often associated with the wood pasture areas, but also found on marginal agricultural land, on rail and roadsides and on restore colliery sites.***
- ***Narrow river corridors, associated with marshy flats and flood meadows, drain the area and dry valleys are characteristic because of the permeable geology.***
- ***A dispersed settlement pattern of small villages and farmsteads is common in the agricultural area, with larger settlements surrounding the perimeter of the area. Characteristic building materials are local red sandstone, and red brick and pantiles.***
- ***Large country houses, their associated parklands and, in some cases, their narrow engineered lakes, are a distinctive feature of this character area.***
- ***Coal measures beneath the sandstone have been extensively mined and the industrial heritage is visible in the landscape. Disused sites are progressively being restored.***
- ***The area, especially Sherwood Forest, is intrinsically linked to the internationally renowned legend of Robin Hood.” (My emphasis)***

- 7.7. All of these key characteristics identified would remain and prevail beyond the appeal site with the scheme in place.
- 7.8. The NCA provides a summary of the character area on internal page 3 and notes that large estate parklands, heathland, open arable land and a strong mining heritage characterise the area which also contains the settlements of Worksop, as well as Mansfield, Retford and Ollerton. The document sets out 3 statements of environment opportunity (SEOs). SEO
- 7.9. 1 seeks to protect, enhance and promote Sherwood as a landscape of international environmental and cultural significance by securing and expanding the iconic mosaic of woods, heaths and parklands and enhancing recreation and education opportunities. SEO 2



seeks to promote sustainable agricultural practices to help protect the major underlying aquifer, manage issues with soil erosion and increase farmland birds.

- 7.10. The document provides further detailed description of the area. On page 7 it notes that the coal industry has played a significant role in shaping the area and its decline has left behind a legacy of former colliery sites and spoil tips. Many of these have been reclaimed to agriculture, heathland, woodland, business, community and amenity uses, and some mining relics are now landscape features. Furthermore, the network of railways and roads have also added to the transformation of a once simple wood pasture and agrarian landscape to one with an industrial focus.

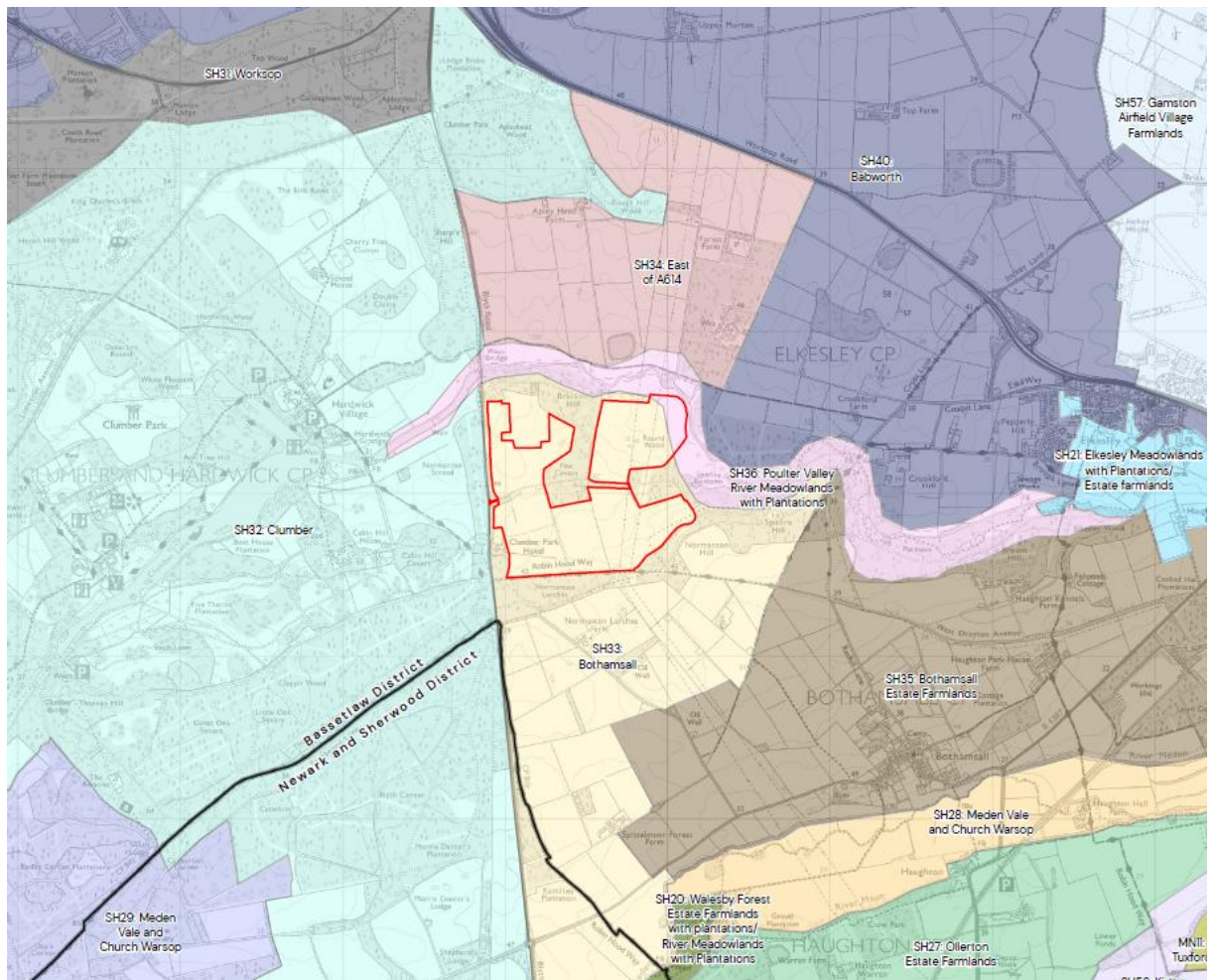
Statement of Environmental Opportunity 2 (SEO 2)

- 7.11. SEO 2 is concerned with promoting sustainable agricultural practices to help protect the major underlying aquifer, manage issues with soil erosion and increase farmland birds and is illustrated by a number of exemplar management strategies. One of these recommends creating new areas of woodland, tree belts, and hedgerows to provide windbreaks across open farmland. Another objective is to promote the management of arable land to deliver habitat for farmland birds.
- 7.12. The document also advocates enhancing the rectilinear hedgerow pattern weakened by the loss of some field boundaries, by replanting lost hedgerows and using traditional hedge laying techniques. It also recommends strengthening the existing hedgerow pattern through less regular and severe trimming, allowing hedgerows to become denser and taller, thus increasing their use to reduce soil erosion and to contribute to the ecological network. It finally recommends increasing the number of native hedgerow trees through this area, which are currently predominantly English or Sessile Oak and create/restore species-rich hedgerows where appropriate.
- 7.13. All of these key characteristics identified above would remain and prevail beyond the site with the scheme in place.
- 7.14. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) would introduce new hedgerow planting within the site. It also recommends using native, preferably of local provenance, and species characteristic of the National Character Area. The Amended Scheme (Rev 12) presents the opportunity to accord with these recommendations.
- 7.15. With the proposal in place, the field pattern, hedgerows and hedgerow trees and the grain of the landscape would all remain in place. The only material change would be that instead of there being arable land, it would all be managed as pasture with solar arrays introduced in the fields, consistent with existing field boundaries. There would be no loss of any features other than the arable use; the only difference is that the solar panels would be introduced along with the other infrastructure within the framework of the fields. In character terms, beyond the site, there would be no change to the physical and experiential (such as tranquillity and remoteness) characteristics of the landscape.
- 7.16. The site would remain in agricultural use, just not so obviously, given the solar panels and associated infrastructure. There would be no net loss of any features other than the current arable land use; the only difference is that the solar panels would be introduced along with the other infrastructure within the framework of the fields. In character terms, beyond the site, there would be no change to the physical elements and characteristics of the landscape.

- 7.17. The overall key characteristics of the NCA reveal a settled and farmed landscape with many specific references to built infrastructure. This Natural England document is inevitably a high-level character assessment, but it provides a useful overview to understand the character of the local and wider landscape and its surroundings. At this higher level, it is considered that the Amended Scheme would bring about no change to the key characteristics of this NCA as identified above.
- 7.18. Apart from the Clumber area, beyond the boundaries of the site, the surrounding landscape LCAs have a medium susceptibility and value, resulting in a medium sensitivity to change. With no magnitude of change there would be no effect in landscape character terms.

The Bassetlaw Landscape Character Assessment

- 7.19. Bassetlaw District Council commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment which is dated August 2009, the purpose of which was to define the landscape character of the district and is designed to be used by BDC to aid development control decisions on planning applications. The document provides information about character, condition and sensitivity of the landscape to provide an understanding of what makes the landscape within the district locally distinctive. The study identifies policy zones across 5 landscape character types. For each policy zone, there are landscape actions identified which range from conserve through to reinforce and create. The site and the river corridor of the river Poulter to the north, the woodland area surrounding the site, the area of farmland to the south of the site, and the landscape associated with Clumber Park to the west all fall within the “conserve” categorisation.
- 7.20. The Local Character Area within which the site is located is referred to as Bothamsall and is referenced SH33. This is a large area that lies to the east of the A614 and extends northward to the river Poulter and the site lies in the northern part of this area. A small area in the north-east corner of the site is located in the adjacent Landscape Character Area referenced SH36, called the Poulter Valley Meadowlands and Plantations. The land to the west of the A614 primarily relates to Clumber Park, is referenced SH32, and known as Clumber.



Landscape Character Plan (see Appendix 4)

Bothamsall (SH33)

- 7.21. With regard to Policy Zone 33 Bothamsall, the document provides a summary with regard to the character of the landscape as follows:

“The area lies south of the Poulter valley and east of Blyth Road [A614] which forms the western boundary. The village of Bothamsall is located outside the Policy Zone boundary to the southeast and Elkesley lies in the north-east. The River Meden follows the south-eastern boundary but lies just outside the area. Clumber Park is located immediately west of the Policy Zone.

Topographically the Policy Zone is gently undulating with flat areas, sloping from higher ground in the east down towards the west. Elevated landform in the south allows open views across the area towards flatter, lower lying land in the north.

The northern section of the Policy Zone is dominated by interlocking areas of woodland and plantation, these are surrounded by arable fields which also occupy much of the remaining area. A pig farm covers part of the Policy Zone in the east, south of Normanton Larches Farm, an oil well is also located in close proximity, south-east of the farm. Spittalmoor Forest Farm is situated further south. Clumber Park Hotel is located on the western edge of the Policy Zone fronting Blyth Road [A614].

An historic avenue of trees remains along West Drayton Avenue which extends from Clumber in the west to West Drayton further east of the Policy Zone. This avenue now forms part of the Robin Hoods Way.”

7.22. Over the page, it notes 4 key characteristics, as follows:

- ***“Intensive open arable farmland with significant woodland and plantation blocks***
- ***Pig farm, part of adjacent policy zone***
- ***No settlement areas, only isolated farm houses.***
- ***Narrow hedged lanes”***

7.23. All of these key characteristics identified would remain and prevail beyond the appeal site. The landscape character of Bothamsall would remain unchanged beyond the site itself with any effects being limited to areas of glimpsed visibility, which are highly localised.

7.24. It goes on to note that the landscape condition is very good and that there is a unified pattern of elements with few detracting features within the policy zone but does reference pylons and high voltage powerlines, though overall the area has a strongly unified visual appearance. That the land is under intensive arable use interspersed with strong plantation and woodland blocks. There is some evidence of missing field boundaries in localised areas, but generally the historic field pattern is intact. Pylons within the east of the area being the only urban influence. In terms of sensitivity, the document notes that the area has an enclosed nature and the landform is apparent resulting in low visibility. There is a strong sense of place combined with low visibility which gives an overall moderate landscape sensitivity.

7.25. With regard to landscape actions, it notes with regard to landscape features to conserve historic field pattern, maintain existing hedgerows, restore and reinforce poor hedgerow boundaries where necessary. Conserve and enhance woodland/plantation blocks and connectivity across the area. Conserve and enhance hedgerow and tree planting along roadsides. Conserve ecological diversity and seek opportunities to restore arable land to pastoral. With regard to built features containing new small-scale development within existing field boundaries.

7.26. I would note that the proposed landscape design as mitigation and as part of the overall layout design accords with these objectives which collectively are about conserving and enhancing the landscape.

Poulter Valley Meadowlands and Plantations (SH36)

7.27. The north-eastern part of the site falls within zone 36, associated with the river Poulter valley. The character of the area is summarised in the document as follows:

This LCP consists of the narrow valley of the river Poulter and is generally flat with land sloping gently down to the river. Views are often enclosed by woodland to the south, but there are more open views to the north and west enclosed by wooded skylines. Land use is predominantly woodland with small areas of pasture and arable land. There is a significant wetland to the west surrounded by scrubby vegetation to the valley sides. Pylons run from north to south. The Robin Hood Way crosses the area with footbridges across the river. A bridleway runs from the A614 in the west to Crookford Farm in the east. There is a timber recycling centre at Crookford Hill. The woodland is of mixed types. The river is fringed with tree cover. There are strong hawthorn hedges present.

7.28. The key characteristic visual features are identified as follows:

- **“Continuous belt of woodland along river valley**
- **Deciduous woodland**
- **Coniferous plantations**
- **Poplar plantations**
- **Some views to wooded ridgelines**
- **Healthy vegetation along tracks and rides”**

7.29. All of these key characteristics identified would remain and prevail beyond the appeal site. The landscape character of this character area would remain unchanged beyond the site itself, with any effects limited to areas of glimpsed visibility, which are highly localised.

7.30. With regard to landscape condition, the document notes that the zone is assessed as very good and that the pattern of elements is visually unified with view detracting features but references the powerlines and sections of the A614. It notes that the landscape area is of moderate sensitivity, that the land form is apparent and enclosed by woodland giving a low visibility in and out of the area. With a strong sense of place, with a low visibility results in a moderate landscape sensitivity.

7.31. With regard to landscape actions focused on conserving, it notes with regards to landscape features to conserve the pastoral character of the area, to promote heathland creation schemes and conserve the river channel diversity and that with regard to built features, new development should take account of distinctive ecological elements.

7.32. I would note that the proposed green infrastructure and layout design takes into account and accords with these landscape objectives.

Clumber (SH32)

7.33. The character of the Clumber area is summarised in the document and notes that the area is bounded by the B6034 to the west and the A614 to the east. Netherfield Lane connects the A616 and the A614 near to the southern boundary. The landform of this area is gently undulating with Clumber Lake to the centre of the area. There are medium distance views with frequent wooded skylines and views are more enclosed within the wooded areas. The zone consists of 75% of the parkland landscape of Clumber Park and Thoresby Park which are visitor attractions with their woodlands, lakes, tracks, and footpaths. There is also stock grazing within the parkland with cattle and sheep. There are extensive areas of coniferous woodland, arable farmland contains clumps of mature trees with mature parkland trees within grassland. A particular landscape feature is the double lime avenue on the entrance road from the A614 into Clumber Park. Hardwick village contains estate houses belonging to the Clumber estate and provides tourist facilities. Identified threats include the loss of hedgerows due to increased arable land use and loss of parkland due to additional coniferous planting and additional visitor pressure on the parklands resulting in the expansion of facilities.

7.34. The characteristic features of Clumber are as follows:

- ***“Undulating land form***
- ***Sparsely settled landscape***

- *Views framed by woodland edges*
- *Extensive broad leaved, mixed, and coniferous woodlands*
- *Country houses set in ornamental parklands*
- *Narrow manmade lakes along river valleys*
- *Extensive areas of unenclosed heaths*
- *Unfenced minor roads*

7.35. All of these key characteristics identified would remain and prevail beyond the appeal site. There would be no change to the character of Clumber with any effects being limited to areas of glimpsed visibility, which would be highly localised and considered negligible within the extensive Clumber Park landscape.

7.36. With regard to landscape analysis, it notes that the area has very good landscape condition overall. The landform is dominant which results in moderate visibility. It has a very strong sense of place, combined with moderate visibility, gives a very high landscape sensitivity overall. It goes on to identify landscape actions with regard to landscape features and notes the conservation of this historic parkland, woodland, hedges and habitats, and with regard to built features, notes the conservation of the sparsely settled and undeveloped character of the landscape and opportunities to restore arable land to pasture.

7.37. I note that the proposed development would not conflict with these landscape objectives with regard to this Landscape Character Area.

Analysis Concerning Effect on Landscape Character

7.38. At the national, regional, and local landscape character area level, the proposed development would not change existing topography, vegetation, or drainage pattern, and would not change the local distinctive nature of these features and proposed changes would be imperceptible at this scale.

7.39. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) would represent a change from arable fields to pastoral fields accommodating a solar farm. The proposed development would be contained within the existing landscape pattern and scale. Existing hedgerows would be retained with opportunities for hedge and tree planting to maintain and reinforce the key characteristics of the landscape.

7.40. I assess that the wider landscape comprised in the regional and local character areas generally has a medium susceptibility to change. I assess that the wider landscape has a medium value and therefore an overall medium sensitivity having regard to the published landscape assessments. However, I consider that the value, susceptibility and sensitivity of the Clumber Landscape Character Area SH32 to be high due to its quality and cultural associations.

7.41. The Amended Scheme would bring about a low magnitude of change to the site itself which with a medium sensitivity would result in a minor adverse effect. However, as the proposed planting across the site matures, this level of adverse effect would further reduce over time.

7.42. The proposed development would introduce some built form but is not considered to be a substantial feature in the landscape like housing. The wider landscape character areas

beyond the site would remain unaffected whilst any negligible effects would be highly localised visual effects within a very well contained visual envelope.

- 7.43. Visibility of the proposal would be essentially restricted to heavily filtered views from a short section of Blyth Road, A614. The general physical character of Blyth Road would not change except that the tree belt accommodates a field access into the site which would be slightly widened and several trees removed to accommodate the new access track arrangement, consistent with other local road junctions
- 7.44. The immediate landscape character associated with the village of Hardwick would remain unchanged with the proposed scheme in place.
- 7.45. The eastern boundary is defined by a tree belt and the curtilage of Clumber Park Hotel and Blyth Road (A614). The character of the landscape to the east of this road will not physically change with the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) in place. The character of the road itself, framed by tree belts on either side, would not change with the Amended Scheme in place. The well-treed boundary of Clumber Park Hotel would be framed by new woodland planting.
- 7.46. The western boundary of the site is defined by an existing tree belt. The overall character of the farmed landscape and woodland beyond the site would not change with the proposed solar farm in place. The adjacent areas would be unchanged in terms of their physical character.
- 7.47. Robin Hood Way PRoW runs parallel to and close to the southern boundary of the site. From this long distance, public footpath, there would be a limited opportunity to observe the proposal from a short section of the overall route and where visible would be heavily filtered views through mature tree cover associated with the edge of a woodland known as Normanton Larches. The proposed mitigation planting includes an avenue of horse chestnut trees immediately to the north of Normanton Larches beyond which would be a narrow pasture field, and beyond that, would be a new reinstated historic hedgerow to the north of which would lie a belt of shrub planting, and in the medium term, would screen the proposed development from the short section of Robin Hood Way.
- 7.48. In summary, there would be no change to the character of the landscape beyond the site itself.
- 7.49. Potential permanent loss of land from agricultural production will be limited to the extent of land for habitat enhancement. Furthermore, the landscape enhancements, such as reinforced field boundaries, would remain. There would be some long-term beneficial effects on the local landscape character arising from the mitigation measures brought forward as part of the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) which include enhancements to the characteristic landscape elements and biodiversity within the site.
- 7.50. Whilst any construction or decommissioning works would involve machinery operating within the site boundary, which would disturb the tranquillity of the area to some degree, this would be short term, temporary and not notably different to other existing farming practices in the locality.

Summary

- 7.51. In overall terms, I consider that there would be a minor adverse effect upon the landscape character of the site itself. No off-site works are required to enable this scheme to be

implemented. Beyond the boundaries of the site, the physical character of the surrounding landscape would remain and prevail unchanged with the proposed solar farm in place.

- 7.52. In terms of landscape character associated with the site, this is defined by the combination of various landscape elements, principally topography and land cover, hedgerows, tree cover, and the configuration of the fields themselves. The field pattern is sometimes referred to as the "grain" of the landscape. With the exception of some small areas of development such as the substation and inverters, all of these landscape elements would be retained and remain as part of the landscape whilst the scheme is in place. The solar farm would be operational with the agricultural land use retained.
- 7.53. The hedgerows would be reinforced with further hedgerow planting and the tree cover resource associated with the site would also be reinforced with additional tree planting. The hedgerows would be managed such that some of them would be maintained at a slightly higher level than is currently the case, 3-4m in height.
- 7.54. The trees over the project lifetime, both those existing and those introduced as part of the landscape proposals would all continue to grow developing larger canopies apart from those trees that are already fully mature. This growth over a 40-year period which is a significant period of time for both hedgerow and tree growth would result in reinforcing the defining positive characteristics of the site, with regard to these features. Furthermore, the increased vegetation growth would create a stronger sense of physical and visual containment associated with the site. This change would mitigate and reduce the visual effects that would come about over the project timescale.
- 7.55. Upon completion of the decommissioning phase, the built infrastructure would be removed. The management and growth of the hedgerows and trees across the site would continue to remain as part of the landscape post-decommissioning phase and would leave a positive legacy in terms of landscape character given that trees and hedgerows contribute to the landscape character locally.
- 7.56. Beyond the boundaries of the site, the landscape character of the area would remain unchanged. With the proposed scheme in place, the character of the fields within the site would change as they would now accommodate solar arrays, but the underlying character of the fields would still be there and would fully return with the decommissioning of the solar farm in the longer term. However, it is proposed that as an integral part of the scheme, new hedgerows and tree planting would be introduced, and meadows created with arable land converted to pasture as advocated in the Council's own landscape character documents. All of these elements would remain after full decommissioning as a positive legacy of the scheme and bring about enhancement to the landscape character in the long term, realising the objectives of the landscape character assessments.
- 7.57. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) involves solar arrays and some associated infrastructure located in several adjacent fields. Some of these are managed for arable use. However, depending on farm management and maintenance and crop rotation, these fields could revert to pasture for a fallow period without any recourse to planning and similarly, managed as pasture, again without any recourse to planning, such is the minor consequence of such a change of use in farming circumstances. It is intended that whilst the solar arrays would be installed and operational, the fields would continue to function as fields.
- 7.58. The existing landscape elements, vegetation, trees, and hedges would continue to remain and be reinforced. Therefore, the general agricultural character of the fields would remain,



accepting that they would also accommodate a solar farm, a renewable energy generating installation and as such, would change the current existing character of those developed fields. Some parcels of land within the red line would remain materially unchanged in terms of their character as farmland. Beyond the confines of the site boundary, again there would be no change to the physical fabric of the landscape character of the areas beyond the site. The site itself is to a substantial degree framed by a mosaic of hedgerows and woodland areas and the physical character of the fields, hedges and woodlands would not change with the proposed scheme in place. The existing field pattern with its hedgerows and tree cover enables the site and the proposals to benefit from a high degree of physical and visual containment from the rest of the surrounding countryside.

8. Effect on General Visual Amenity

- 8.1. Character and appearance are two different aspects. As discussed above, the physical character of the surrounding landscape would remain unaltered with the scheme in place.
- 8.2. In order to gain a better understanding of the extent and nature of the change brought about by the scheme on the appearance of the local landscape, I examine the effect of the proposed scheme on the general visual amenity of the landscape and the perception of those visual receptors (people) using the landscape.
- 8.3. My assessment relates to the representative LVIA viewpoints (Appendices 7 and 8).
- 8.4. Visual amenity is defined on page 158 in the Glossary of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (April 2013) as:
- “The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area.”***
- 8.5. The analysis demonstrated that much of the landscape within the locality would be visually unaffected by the proposed scheme. In reality, the actual visual envelope from where the proposed scheme would be seen would be very limited and highly localised owing to the layering effect of vegetation, principally the extensive woodlands and hedges in the intervening landscape between the visual receptor (person) and the site boundary. Detailed analysis is set out in the LVIA, which I do not repeat in my proof. Notwithstanding this analysis, I have undertaken my own analysis, which I rely upon rather than the LVIA analysis. I have assessed each of the LVIA viewpoints and set out my findings, see Appendix 8.
- 8.6. The appreciation of views from the countryside is mainly gained from vantage points accessible to the public. The two main ways in which members of the public can gain an appreciation of views when in the countryside are primarily from public highways and by using the various PRowWs that pass through the landscape.
- 8.7. Within the local area, the network of public highways is limited. Other than the A-Road to the adjacent to the site, it includes a number of local roads (Appendix 1) that connect the various settlements in the landscape. The typical character of these minor roads tends to be narrow, with hedgerows, hedgerow trees and built form situated immediately beyond the metalled surface of the carriageway. Consequently, within the local landscape, the presence of such roadside vegetation and built form means that a road user using these highways often has only a restricted opportunity to gain views of the countryside. The view of the user is most often channelled along the lane itself in the direction of travel. The user’s appreciation of the wider countryside is very much limited to the direction of travel and to a narrow landscape corridor associated with the highway in front of the vehicle. There is no opportunity to gain a panoramic appreciation of the landscape and of the proposed solar farm within the site from local roads.
- 8.8. I comment here to provide a further narrative to my visual analysis (Appendix 8). There are a number of public highways and PRowW in the vicinity of the site, which I proceed to address with regard to the cardinal points of the compass.

8.9. With regard to the magnitude of visual effects, it is noted that each of the visual effects identified needs to be evaluated in terms of its **size or scale**, the **geographical extent** of the area influence and its **duration** and **reversibility**. These are criteria, which are referenced in GLVIA3 at paragraph 6.38 onwards. The author is mindful of these three aspects in drawing conclusions. With regard to size or scale, judging the magnitude of the visual effects, it identifies the need to take account of:

- **The scale of the change** in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development.
- **The degree of contrast or integration** of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour, and texture.
- **The nature of the view** of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time of which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses.

8.10. The geographical extent of the visual effect will vary with different viewpoints and is likely to reflect three aspects:

- The **angle of view** in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The **distance** of the viewpoint from the proposed development; and
- The **extent of the area** over which the changes would be visible.

8.11. With regard to **duration** and **reversibility** of visual effects, it is noted that these are also considerations to be taken into account. The categories are on a three-point descriptive scale, namely: short term, medium term, and long term. All of these aspects have been taken into account in the analysis concerning magnitude.

Views of the Solar Farm from the Countryside to the North

8.12. There are relatively few highways immediately to the north of the site. At approximately 1.5km to the north lies the major highway A1 Worksop Road and north of that lies the Mansfield Road (B6420). Both of these highways would be visually unaffected by the proposal due to topography and tree cover in the intervening landscape (Appendix 7).

8.13. A short distance to the north of the site lies a bridleway orientated east-west, linking Blyth Road A614 to the west with Crookford Farm and Cross Lane to the east. This bridleway also lies to the north of the river Poulter. Views southward from this bridleway look towards a large area of woodland known as Bracken Hill Wood and an associated tree belt, along with an area of riparian scrubland associated with the watercourse, and as such there would be a very limited opportunity to observe the proposed scheme from this route and would be affected to a negligible degree (Appendix 7).



View from the countryside to the north of the site

Views of the Solar Farm from the Countryside to the East

- 8.14. In terms of highways, there are few roads in the immediate vicinity to the east of the site. Approximately 1km to the east lies a network of unclassified lanes associated with the village of Elkesley, and include Coalpit Lane, Eskil Way, and Brough Lane. None of these routes would be visually affected by the proposal due to extensive tree cover in the intervening landscape, nor would the village of Elkesley itself (Appendix 7).
- 8.15. There are a few PRowWs to the east of the site. A bridleway runs east-west alongside Crookford Farm which connects into Cross Lane. A further long-distance way-marked trail known as Robin Hood Way utilises some of the country lanes in the vicinity of Elkesley village. This route also utilises woodland tracks through the Spitfire Hill Wood which is a route orientated north-south and extends southward towards Normanton Hill. Further east, this route also passes through further woodland associated with Elkesley Wood as it extends southward towards the village of Walesby. None of these PRowWs would be visually affected due to tree cover and topography in the intervening landscape (Appendix 7).



View from the countryside to the east of the site

Views of the Solar Farm from the Countryside to the South

- 8.16. A short distance to the south of the site lies an unclassified lane that links the Blyth Road A614 to the west, with the village of Bothamsall to the east, along with several other lanes connecting into this village, including Redhill Lane. All of these routes would be visually unaffected as views northward terminate on Normanton Larches Wood, such that the proposed scheme would not be visible from these highways (Appendix 7).
- 8.17. Immediately to the south of the site lies a long distance promoted footpath known as Robin Hood Way which is orientated east-west along West Drayton Avenue and runs alongside the northern boundary of Normanton Larches Wood, and slightly set into the wood itself, such that there is tree cover on the north side of this route before the site's southern boundary is reached. Within the eastern part of Normanton Larches, the route passes through the tree cover and as such would be visually unaffected by the proposed scheme. Where the Robin Hood Way PRoW is close to the site's southern boundary, there would be the occasional open framed view and heavily filtered views through the tree cover of the proposed scheme at year 1. However, the proposed solar farm would be observed in the middle distance and would be seen in the context of the existing pylons and overhead lines and adjacent to the busy A614 and the recently planted trees, hedge and shrubbery (Appendix 7).
- 8.18. It is proposed that as part of the mitigation planting, an avenue of horse chestnut trees would be planted along the northern edge of Normanton Larches Wood and slightly further north, a new hedgerow would be introduced to reinstate a historic hedgerow line which would be punctuated by some standard trees behind which a shrub belt would be proposed. This planting would obtain a height of 3m within 5 years, at which point, the proposed solar farm to the north of this hedgerow line would be substantially screened in terms of views from Robin Hood Way within Normanton Larches Wood. The final section of this route as it approaches the A614 cuts into the Normanton Larches Wood itself and the proposed scheme

would not be visible from this section due to the tree cover flanking the footpath (Appendix 7).



View from the countryside to the south of the site

Views of the Solar Farm from the Countryside to the West

- 8.19. Immediately to the west and forming the site's western boundary lies Blyth Road the A614, a very busy highway orientated north-south, linking the settlement of New Ollerton to the south with Worksop Retford to the north. Traffic travels along this road travels at high speed and it is heavily trafficked. The sections both north and south of the site would be visually unaffected due to tree cover in the intervening landscape. A short section of approximately 1km in length north of Clumber Park Hotel is flanked on both sides by tree belts. The tree belt on the eastern side of this highway is mature and dense in structure, and as such, any views at year 1 of the proposal would be observed obliquely, at speed, heavily filtered and difficult to appreciate visually given the dark recessive nature of the proposed solar farm as a backdrop to this tree belt (Appendix 7).
- 8.20. As part of the mitigation planting strategy, it is intended that this tree belt would be reinforced with further woodland planting to effectively substantially extend the width of the tree belt whilst its eastern margin would be framed with a further belt of shrubbery, effectively forming an understorey shrub belt. With the establishment and growth of this shrub belt within 5 years to 3m in height, there would be negligible visibility of the solar farm from this highway year-round. There are no other notable highways within several kilometres west of the site. There are several unclassified lanes at approximately 3km distance west of the site. The nearest one being Limetree Avenue, though none of these highways would be visually affected by the proposals due to tree cover in the intervening landscape. Only a short section of Blyth Road would be visually affected in the short term, and only during the winter months when foliage is absent. Traffic along this straight road travels at high speed with the focus on driving rather than side views of the countryside such that the magnitude and degree of effect would be very limited (Appendix 7).



View from the countryside to the west of the site

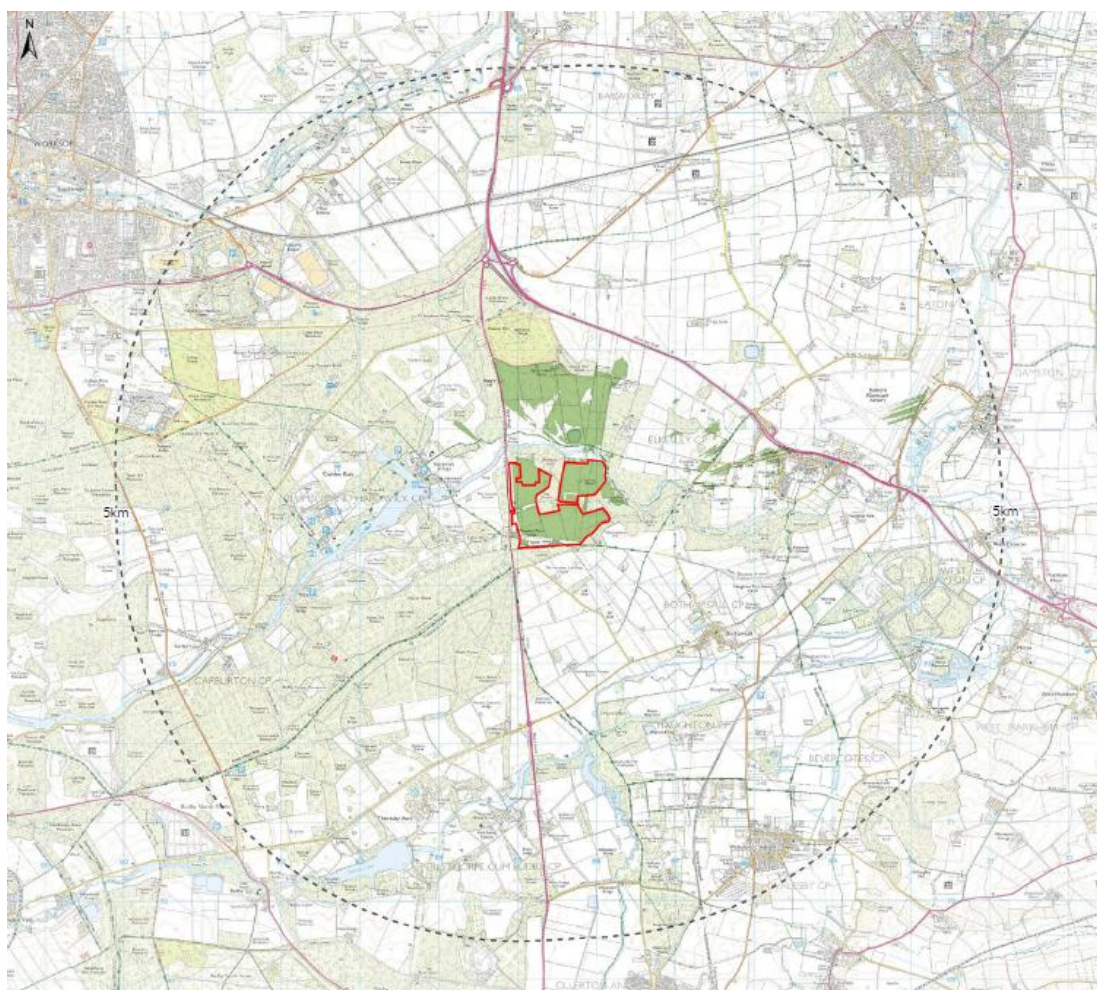
Views from Clumber Park

- 8.21. There is a network of PRoWs to the west of the site and the Blyth Road which pass through Clumber Park estate including the way-marked trail Robin Hood Way. From the vast majority of these routes there would be little opportunity to observe the proposed scheme. More specifically, the Robin Hood Way bridleway passes diagonally from the Clumber Park Hotel to Hardwick village across pasture. Views from this route eastward fall on the wide tree belt which frames the boundary of the park adjacent to the A614. Whilst white polyethene on the fields within the site may be discernible from this route, the dark recessive nature of the solar panels would not be so self-evident and virtually undiscernible, such that there would be a negligible degree of effect upon this bridleway with the proposed scheme in place (Appendix 7).
- 8.22. There is a further bridleway which is orientated east-west linking Hardwick village to the west with Blyth Road A614 to the east. Most of this route passes along side or through woodland such that views would be visually unaffected from this route. There is a short section close to Hardwick village and where there is a gap between woodlands where it is possible to gain glimpsed views eastward towards a small part of the site through a narrow gap in the tree belt adjacent to the A614. However, with the existing vegetation and also the proposed planting in place associated with the additional tree belt and shrub belt on the site's western boundary, there would be no views of the adjacent solar panels that would be very difficult to observe resulting in a negligible degree of effect, even from year 1. The line of sight extends across the northern part of Field 1 which is generally absent of solar panels for archaeological reasons. In summary, there would be negligible of visual effect with regard to PRoWs within Clumber Park with the proposed scheme in place which is evident when the photo views are considered as set out in the LVIA (Appendix 7).



View from Clumber Park

Summary of Visual Effects



Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (Appendix 10)

- 8.23. It is evident from both the LVIA and my visual analysis in preparation for this proof that the proposed solar farm would be visually well-contained due to the low visual profile of the scheme with the panels at a low height level. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) would be set within a number of existing fields and within a wider field pattern and woodland landscape where field boundaries are demarcated by mature hedges and substantial woodland areas. With the existing and new hedgerow planting maintained at approximately 3m in height, this vegetation would substantially limit the opportunity to observe the scheme and would reduce the degree of effect to a low level through such measures (Appendix 10).
- 8.24. From my analysis, I conclude that visibility would be restricted by a combination of tree cover and landform, distance from the site and the enclosure provided by intervening vegetation surrounding the site, principally woodland areas. The topography forms local undulating high ground to the north-west of the site which would provide further visual containment across a broader area. Due to the low profile of the panels, they would not be readily perceptible in most distant views from most publicly available viewpoints, and the layering effects of intervening vegetation would successfully integrate them into the wider landscape (Appendix 10).
- 8.25. Having reviewed this information and assessed the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a), I consider that the geographical extent of visibility associated with the proposal would be very limited and highly localised in close proximity to the boundaries. Where visible, only small elements of the scheme would be apparent with no opportunity to experience the full extent of the proposal from any one location. The site itself is to a substantial degree framed by a mosaic of woodlands, tree belts and hedges. The physical character of this woodland landscape would not materially change with the proposed scheme in place, nor would the general character of the countryside beyond the boundaries of the site and the scheme's visual envelope. The existing topography, hedges, and woodlands would enable the site and the proposals to benefit from a high degree of physical and visual containment from the rest of the surrounding countryside (Appendix 10).

9. Effect on Residential Visual Amenity

Public Interest Test

- 9.1. It is right to make a distinction between residential and general visual amenity. The latter term from a planning policy perspective usually relates to the public realm and the wider landscape whilst the former is concerned with the private visual amenity of an individual residential property.
- 9.2. The separation between what is a private interest and what should be considered in the public interest is clear and has no status in terms of being part of statutory documentation, planning policy or guidance. Furthermore, it is noted that no individual has the right to a particular view but there does come a point where, by virtue of the proximity, size and scale of a given development, residential property or properties would be rendered so unattractive as a place in which to live that planning permission should justifiably be refused. The test relates to the position which would pertain with the Proposed Development in situ, irrespective of the position beforehand. In other words, the test is not whether, in relative terms, a property would become a substantially less attractive place to live, the test is whether viewed objectively and in the public interest, a property would become an unattractive place in which to live. Such a situation if left unchecked would lead clearly to undesirable consequences. In this regard, Inspector Lavender within the Carland Cross Appeal Decision (APP/DO840/A/O921030260) summarised within paragraph 23:

“The planning system is designed to protect public rather than private interests, but both interests coincide here where, for example, a visual intrusion is of such a magnitude as to render a property an unattractive place to live. This is because it is not in the public interest to create such living conditions where they did not exist before. This I do not consider that simply being able to see a turbine or turbines from a particular window or part of a garden of a house is sufficient reason to find the visual impact unacceptable (even though a particular occupier might find it objectionable). However, when turbines are present in such number, size and proximity that they represent an unpleasantly overwhelming and unavoidable presence in main views from a house or garden, there is every likelihood that the property concerned would come to be widely regarded as unattractive (rather than simply less attractive, but not necessarily uninhabitable) place in which to live.”

- 9.3. The test of what would be unacceptably unattractive should be an objective test, albeit professional judgment is required in its application to the circumstances of each particular case. There needs to be a degree of harm over and above an identified substantial adverse effect on a private interest to take a case into the category of refusal in the public interest. Change in the outlook from a property is not sufficient; indeed, even a fundamental change in outlook is not necessarily unacceptable.
- 9.4. It is worthy of note that the visual component of residential amenity should be addressed “in the round” taking into account factors such as distance, the direction of the view, the size of

¹ Paragraph 23, Carland Cross Appeal Decision (APP/DO840/A/O921030260)

the solar farm and its layout, the layout of particular dwellings in terms of their floor plans, their garden environment, and the lines of sight towards the scheme.

- 9.5. The author has visited the site and noted that there are some residential properties in the surrounding landscape, which are shown on the site Location Plan (Appendix 1).
- 9.6. Given the position of the solar panels and the distances between these and the existing residential properties, mindful that there are substantial existing mature trees and hedgerows along the boundary between the properties and the solar farm, and mindful of the proposed additional planting, any effect on the outlook for the elevations of these properties and their garden spaces, the author is of the view that the Amended Scheme would not breach the public interest test here.

Planning Committee Report

- 9.7. The report covers the effect on residential amenity in paragraphs 10.37 to 10.40.
- 9.8. Para. 10.37 refers to Policy 46 of the Local Plan which states that proposals for development should be designed to avoid and minimise impacts on the amenity of existing and future users through loss of privacy, overshadowing, or overbearing impacts, and not generate unacceptable levels of noise, light, air, odour, vibration or other pollution. It goes on to note and refer to para. 135 of the NPPF which states that planning decisions should ensure that developments that create places that are safe, inclusive, and accessible, and which promote health and wellbeing with a high standard of amenity for existing future users. It goes on to also refer to para. 191 of the NPPF referring to how new development has a bearing upon living conditions that could arise from a given development. The report concludes there would be no direct residential neighbours adjacent to the site, there may be some impacts during the construction phase due to potential traffic movements, however, it is considered that there would be no material impact on recreation or local amenity (including the Robin Hood Way or any other public rights of way) as a result of glint and the noise impact assessment which confirms there would be no noise impacts. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has not raised any concerns.
- 9.9. In conclusion, the report notes at para. 10.40 that the nature and location of the proposed development being such that no other impacts of recreation or local amenity are likely to arise from this, and as such, the proposal is considered to comply with the relevant policies.

Summary

- 9.10. Given my analysis which is common ground with the Committee Report, the proposal would not render any properties unattractive places in which to live, mindful of the public interest 'Lavender' test.

10. Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

- 10.1. I am instructed on behalf of One Planet Developments Limited, hereafter referred to as the Appellant, to present evidence relating to landscape and visual matters in respect of a Planning Inquiry concerning the construction of a solar farm and battery storage together with associated works, equipment, and necessary infrastructure land to the east of the A614, Worksop. This evidence should be read in conjunction with the planning proof of evidence prepared by Nigel Cussen and heritage proof of evidence prepared by Amy Jones, which elaborate upon the Appellant's Statement of Case.
- 10.2. Having visited the site and surrounding area and having reviewed all the relevant documentation pertaining to this scheme, I have drawn the following conclusions which are set out in the preceding paragraphs.

Scale, Location, Layout and Appearance

- 10.3. With regard to scale, the proposal seeks to deliver a solar farm to contribute towards the renewable energy targets in light of the climate emergency. The quantum of development that is anticipated would extend over several fields, however, there would be no opportunity to appreciate the entire scale of this scheme from any one location given the existing lowland topography together with mature tree cover, tree belts, and hedges in the intervening landscape which would mean that there would be very limited opportunity to appreciate the scale of the scheme.

Effect on Landscape Elements

- 10.4. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) would have a negligible adverse effect on topography. In terms of trees, with the additional planting, there would be a major beneficial effect and with regard to hedges a major beneficial effect. There would be a moderate (adverse) effect with regard to land cover, with the introduction of the solar farm superimposed over pasture land. However, I consider that there would be some beneficial effects with regard to landscape elements that would form the green infrastructure of the site as part of the solar farm.

Effect on Land Cover

- 10.5. Land cover is a specific term which refers to the way in which the land is managed. The site is currently managed for arable use. Alternating between pasture and arable is not a matter subject to planning. The scheme would require the host fields to be managed as pasture for the duration of a project.
- 10.6. Furthermore, the introduction of meadows would bring about material ecological enhancements. The local published Landscape Character Assessments advocate the management of pasture, which is precisely what this scheme would seek to achieve. It is accepted that solar panels would be suspended above the grass swards. The introduction of the solar farm would have a moderate (adverse) degree of effect with regard to land cover associated with the site, given the arable land is converted to pasture with panels. This also acknowledges that the openness of the field parcels within the site would also be inevitably reduced with the solar farm in place, but the character of the landscape beyond the site would remain unchanged with the scheme in place and that would apply to the surrounding

Landscape Character Areas. Only a fraction of the local character area would physically change in terms of its defining character, which would be an inevitable consequence of delivering renewable energy infrastructure.

Effect on Visual Amenity

- 10.7. With regard to visual amenity, of particular note from my perspective is that this is an extensive solar scheme across a number of fields yet given the level and gently undulating nature of the lowland topography, combined with the field and hedgerow network and surrounding woodlands, the actual visual envelope and the degree to which this scheme would be seen from the surrounding area would be very limited indeed.
- 10.8. There are a few public rights of way in the locality and some paths in the immediate vicinity and as such, there would be some opportunity to observe parts of the scheme. Energy infrastructure is an integral part of the current local landscape, with large-scale pylons located on the site frequently punctuating the skyline in views observed on the site and the locality. The scheme's effect upon the visual amenity of the area would be limited in degree and very localised in extent.
- 10.9. The visual effects would be very limited despite the scale of the proposal. Policies require careful integration through existing landscape features and new planting to mitigate adverse effects to acceptable levels. No policy in the Development Plan specifies absolutely no visibility whatsoever. I consider that setting such a high bar would be impossible to achieve.
- 10.10. In overall terms, the visual effects of the Amended Scheme (Rev 12) (Appendix 2a) would be very limited due to its substantial visual containment as a result of a combination of topography and surrounding hedges and trees. Where seen only small elements of the Amended Scheme would be observed and it would not be possible to appreciate the totality of the Amended Scheme from any one viewpoint location.

Effect on Landscape Character

- 10.11. In terms of landscape character associated with the site, this is defined by the combination of various landscape elements principally topography, land cover, hedgerows, tree cover and the configuration of the fields themselves, the field pattern is sometimes referred to as the "grain" of the landscape. With the exception of some small areas of development (such as the substation and inverters which would require some small loss of agricultural land), these landscape elements would be retained and remain as part of the landscape whilst the scheme is in place. Hedge removal would be minimal. The solar farm would be located within fields which would continue to have an agricultural function as pasture land.
- 10.12. The hedgerows would be reinforced with further hedgerow planting and the tree cover resource associated with the site would also be reinforced with some additional tree planting. Some of the hedgerows would be managed such that they would be maintained at a slightly higher level than is currently the case, 3m in height.
- 10.13. The trees over the project lifetime, both those existing and those introduced as part of the landscape proposals would all continue to grow developing larger canopies apart from those trees that are already fully mature. This growth over a 40-year period which is a significant period of time for both hedgerow and tree growth would result in reinforcing the defining positive characteristics of the site, with regard to these features. Furthermore, the increased vegetation growth would create a stronger sense of physical and visual containment

associated with the site. This change would reduce visual effects that would come about over the project timescale.

- 10.14. Upon completion of the decommissioning phase, all of the built infrastructure would be removed. The management and growth of the hedgerows and trees across the site could continue to remain as part of the landscape post-decommissioning phase and would leave a positive legacy in terms of landscape character, given that trees and hedgerows contribute to the landscape character locally.
- 10.15. Beyond the site, the landscape character of the area would remain unchanged. With the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) in place, the character of the fields within the site would change as they would now accommodate solar arrays, but the underlying character of the fields would still be there and would fully return with the decommissioning of the solar farm in the longer term. However, it is proposed that as an integral part of the scheme, new hedgerows and tree planting would be introduced, and wildflower meadows created with arable land converted to pasture, as advocated in the landscape character documents. All of these elements could remain after decommissioning as a positive legacy of the scheme and bring about enhancement to the landscape character in the long term.
- 10.16. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2a) involves solar arrays and some associated infrastructure located in several fields which are managed for arable use. However, depending on farm management and maintenance and crop rotation, these fields could revert to pasture for a fallow period without any recourse to planning and similarly, managed as pasture, again without any recourse to planning, such is the minor consequence of such a change of use in farming circumstances terms. The site would continue to have an agricultural use.
- 10.17. Most of the existing landscape elements, vegetation, trees, and hedges could continue to remain and be reinforced post-decommissioning stage. Therefore, the character of the fields would remain accepting that they would also accommodate a solar farm, a renewable energy generating installation and as such, would change the current existing character of those particular fields. Beyond the site, there would be no change to the physical fabric of the landscape character of the area.
- 10.18. In overall terms, I consider that there would be a minor (adverse) effect upon the landscape character of the site itself. The wider local landscape character areas would be unchanged. Beyond the site, the character of the surrounding landscape would remain and prevail unchanged with the proposed solar farm in place.
- 10.19. In terms of general visual amenity, the appeal scheme benefits from a high degree of visual containment.

Conclusions

- 10.20. For the reasons articulated in the preceding paragraphs, it is my professional judgement that whilst there would be some limited adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity, these would be highly localised. I therefore consider that there are no substantive landscape character or visual amenity reasons from a landscape planning perspective for refusing planning permission for the proposed solar farm at land east of A614, Worksop, and the Inspector is respectfully requested to uphold this Appeal insofar as landscape planning matters are concerned with regard to landscape character and appearance.



Appendices

(see separate document)

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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