APPENDIX F – LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPEAL RESPONSE

Longhedge Solar Farm

22/09/2023

Neo Environmental Ltd	
Head Office - Glasgow: Wright Business Centre, 1 Lonmay Road, Glasgow. G33 4EL **T** 0141 773 6262 **E:** info@neo-environmental.co.uk	
Warrington Office: Cinnamon House, Crab Lane, Warrington, WA2 0XP. **T:** 01925 661 716 **E:** info@neo-environmental.co.uk	**Rugby Office:** Valiant Suites, Lumonics House, Valley Drive, Swift Valley, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21 1TQ. **T:** 01788 297012 **E:** info@neo-environmental.co.uk
Ireland Office: Johnstown Business Centre, Johnstown House, Naas, Co. Kildare. **T:** 00 353 (0)45 844250 **E:** info@neo-environmental.ie	**Northern Ireland Office:** 83-85 Bridge Street, Ballymena, Co. Antrim BT43 5EN **T:** 0282 565 04 13 **E:** info@neo-environmental.co.uk

Prepared For:

Renewable Energy Systems (RES) Ltd.

Prepared By:

Kathryn Blade BSc LA. (Hons), MSc.

	Name	Date
Edited By:	Kathryn Blade	22/09/2023
Checked By:	Eilisann McCann	22/09/2023
	Name	**Signature**
Approved By	Paul Neary	

CONTENTS

1.INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1. In response to Rushcliffe Borough Council's (the "LPA") refusal of planning application reference: 22/02241/FUL (the "Planning Application") dated 30 March 2023 (the "Refusal"), Neo Environmental Ltd. has reviewed the two reasons for refusal and submits this Landscape and Visual Appeal Report ("LVAR").

1.2. The first reason for refusal related to landscape effects and visual amenity as below:

"The magnitude of the scale and nature of the ground mounted solar proposals would have a significant adverse impact on landscape character and visual amenity, contrary to Policy 22 (Development in the Countryside), Policy 34 (Green Infrastructure, Landscape, Parks and Open Spaces) and Policy 16 (Renewable Energy) of LPP2 which both seek to ensure that new development does not have an adverse impact and that any adverse effects can be adequately mitigated and paragraphs 155 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seek to support the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy provided the adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts)."

1.3. A Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA), Technical Appendix 1 of Volume 3 - Planning Reference 22/02241/FUL) was submitted with the Planning Application, which detailed the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on landscape and visual receptors within a 5km radius of the Proposed Development

1.4. The Appeal Site is located between the two villages of Thoroton and Hawksworth. Several site reductions and setbacks were introduced to the Proposed Development throughout the pre-planning process to reduce the impact upon both landscape and visual receptors associated with these settlements.

1.5. Ten viewpoints were submitted with the original LVA, which had been agreed with the LPA, taken from various vantage points within the 5km study area. These viewpoints can be viewed within Appendix 1A, Figures 1.4 - 1.11 of the LVA (Technical Appendix 1 of Volume 3 - Planning Reference 22/02241/FUL). The LVA findings concluded that while a range of visual effects are predicted, there would be no major visual effects during the operation phase of the Proposed Development. There are a number of temporary adverse effects during construction and in the short term (up to approximately 5 years) of the initial operational period. The assessment showed that geographically, the extent of notable visual effects would be low. Visibility would be restricted principally to intermittent points around the Appeal Site and to 160m to the south and 280m northeast and east.

1.6. An external review was undertaken by Wynn-Williams Associates (WWA) (on behalf of the LPA) (the "WWA report") in relation to the LVA submitted with the Planning Application. It should be noted that the WWA report identifies disagreement with three viewpoints,

Viewpoints 2, 4 and 6, stating that; *"Mitigation planting would cause more than a subtle change to the view. Longer distance views to sloping topography and the wider countryside would be replaced by short-distance views…".*

1.7. The Proposed Development locates solar arrays within the existing field structure of nine medium to large arable fields and away from existing hedgerows and Public Rights of Way (PRoW) maintaining buffers to allow vegetation to mature. The Proposed Development would introduce a new vertically low, medium-scale renewable energy feature into a rural landscape of medium to large gently undulating arable fields to the north of Thoroton and east of Hawksworth.

1.8. The overall design of the Proposed Development has considered landscape and visual effects within the confines of the nine arable fields to ensure that any potential effects upon the landscape and visual receptors are limited. To this end, the Proposed Development has gone through an iterative design process and considered landscape and visual effects at each stage. This included excluding any development from more sensitive fields surrounding the Appeal Site, such as sections closest to settlement areas. This also included removing fields to the south of Shelton Road, east of Longhedge Road, and the field to the southeast corner closest to Thoroton. A field (north of Hawksworth) was removed in light of the WWA report. Further detail on the design evolution as well as a field removal drawing (Figure 1 - Design Evolution) can be found in Section 5 within the Statement of Case. These exclusion zones have helped to protect views from and towards the settlement areas, which is evident through the verified views included in the LVA submitted with the Planning Application and this LVAR.

1.9. The LVA, found that the proposed mitigation and enhancement landscape measures within these sections of the Appeal Site, combined with enhancement and management of other existing field boundaries, would reduce the duration of visual effects, whilst retaining and improving the field boundaries, in keeping with local policy and strategies.

1.10. While there is a noticeable change to the composition of view and landscape character within the Appeal Site itself and along its boundary, the overall field scale that is characteristic of the Appeal Site and the surrounding landscape would remain, and views to surrounding features would either be retained or improved due to the proposed range of new intervening mitigation features.

Assessment Approach

1.11. The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition (GLVIA3) indicates that broad-scale character assessments, such as those produced at the national and regional levels, can set the scene and indicate the key characteristics that may be apparent in a study area. GLVIA3 suggests that local authority assessments provide more detail and can be mapped to show how a proposed scheme may relate to them. GLVIA3 acknowledges that it is likely that it will be necessary to carry out specific and more detailed

surveys of a site and its immediate setting or surroundings that is proportionate to the proposal.

1.12. This LVAR adopts this approach by investigating the composition of views from the immediate site context and the sensitivity of the visual receptors, including the users along the PRoW network in relation to the Appeal Site.

1.13. This LVAR considers the intervisibility of the Proposed Development in relation to the conservation villages of Thoroton and Hawksworth. As the LVA concluded, the majority of achievable views will be experienced within the core study area of 300m where open or partial views of the Proposed Development are possible, particularly in views from close proximity to the Appeal Site, up to an approximate 300m radius:

"visual assessment shows that while a range of visual effects are predicted, there are no major visual effects during operation of the Proposed Development. There are a number of temporary adverse effects during construction and during the short term (up to approximately 5 years). The assessment also shows that geographically, the extent of notable visual effect would be relatively low. It would be restricted principally to intermittent points around the site and to 160m to the south and 280m northeast and east".

1.14. This LVAR therefore investigates the core impact zone of up to 300m from the Appeal Site boundary as this is where likely significant impacts (if any) are predicted.

1.15. Building on the LVA, this LVAR aims to provide a finer level of detail within this core impact zone, in response to the LPA's first reason for refusal at paragraph 1.5 above. This LVAR should be read together with the LVA and, for the avoidance of doubt, the same methodology as the LVA has been adopted, including that approach to the Zone of Theoretical Visibility mapping (ZTV) and the preparation of verifiable views. This LVAR aims to provide further evidence that while a range of landscape effects are predicted (the extent of which is extremely limited to within the Appeal Site itself and its boundary; which is to be expected of any change within a landscape) mitigation measures have been proposed to ensure that there are no long-term or permanent major effects during the operation of the Proposed Development.

1.16. This LVAR also aims to provide detail on how the landscape is experienced as a receptor moves around the Appeal Site and a series of views have been presented within this LVAR to examine this journey.

Supporting information

1.17. The following illustrative figures support this LVAR:

- Appendix F1 - LVAR Figures

  – Figure 1- ZTV with Visual Barriers

  – Figure 2 - Bare Ground ZTV with % Visibility

- Figure 3 – Woodland ZTV with % Visibility
- Figure 4 – Proposed Vegetation/Mitigation ZTV with % Visibility
- Figure 5 – Viewpoint Location Map with ZTV
- Figure 6 – Viewpoint A&B
- Figure 7 – Viewpoint C&D
- Figure 8 – Viewpoint E&F
- Figure 9 – Viewpoint G
- Figure 10 – Viewpoint F PM (Previously VP6 in Original Planning Application)
- Figure 11 – Viewpoint G PM (Previously VP5 in Original Planning Application)
- Figure 12a – Landscape and Ecology Management Plan ("LEMP") Overall
- Figure 12b - LEMP Sheet 2
- Figure 12c - LEMP Sheet 3
- Figure 12d - LEMP Sheet 4
- Figure 13 – Permissive Path Section

- Appendix F2: Updated Net Gain Assessment ("NGA")

Additional Surveys

1.18. Further fieldwork was undertaken in April 2023 to review the desktop analysis, verify the statements within the published landscape character assessments, analyse the landscape character, describe baseline views and determine the Proposed Development's likely visibility from within the PRoW network's immediate confines.

Statement of Authority

1.19. This LVAR was prepared by Neo Environmental's Principal Landscape Architect, Kathryn Blade, BSc (Hons), MSc.

1.20. Kathryn has almost 8 years specialist knowledge as a landscape architect including conducting Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments for projects ranging from industrial, power and grid infrastructure developments, solar farms, wind farms, leisure developments and residential developments. Kathryn has developed and prepared Environmental Statements, Environmental Impact Assessments and Environmental Impact

Assessment Report chapters, including the preparation of landscape and visual assessment chapters for Strategic Infrastructure Developments and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects), both in the UK and Ireland. Other areas of expertise include character assessments, feasibility studies, residential visual amenity assessments, site suitability assessments and associated mapping.

2.LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT REVIEW

Landscape and Visual Assessment Findings

2.1. The LVA submitted within the original planning application investigated all landscape and visual receptors within a 5km radius, assessed their sensitivity, value and predicted impacts as a result of the Proposed Development. The LVA explored 10 verified viewpoints, presented as representative viewpoints of the receptors identified.

2.2. The LVA found that adverse effects arising from the Proposed Development would be limited to the Appeal Site itself and isolated points on its boundary. As such, no notable effects would be predicted on wider landscape character areas, landscape designations or receptors beyond these locations, within the 5km study area. Within the Appeal Site, landscape adverse effects are only predicted during construction and in the short term (up to approximately 5 years).

2.3. Potential residual effects could occur once the proposed landscape mitigation boundary planting has established and matured approximately 5 years from the date of planting.

2.4. During this time, mitigation planting along the Appeal Site's boundaries would have matured with hedgerows reaching approximately 3-4m and trees reaching up to 8-10m which, along with the existing field hedgerows reaching up to 5-6m, would help to contain the Proposed Development from any potential sensitive close-range views. At other viewpoints the mitigation and enhancement areas within the northern section of Field 5 and southern sections of Field 1 will have matured to 8-10m to help filter views from key sensitive locations to the north and west (see **Field Number Drawing - Appendix C of Statement of Case**). This will soften the edges of the Proposed Development and provide enhanced areas of landscape and visual amenity with characteristic wooded field boundaries and wildflower meadow planting (Field 5), helping to integrate it into the local landscape.

2.5. After the approved operational period ceases, the above-ground structures would be removed from the Appeal Site during decommissioning. The enhanced field boundary hedgerows and environmental enhancement areas to the west, as shown in the LEMP (**Appendix F1, Figure 12a-d)**, would be left in situ which, together with the reversion of the land to its former agricultural use, would have **Minor beneficial** effects upon the landscape character and quality of the Appeal Site and surrounding landscape. A review of the mitigation planting heights and species have been refined on further examination and can be seen within the updated **LEMP**, submitted in **Appendix F1** to this **LVAR** (**Figure 12a-12d**) where mitigation planting has been kept to a maximum height of 3.5m. The NGA has therefore been recalculated accordingly (see **Appendix F2 – Updated NGA**).

2.6. The LVA demonstrated that the Proposed Development is:

- sensitively sited with a design and layout that positively integrates with its local context;
- conserves and enhances local landscape character;
- protects and enhances Green Infrastructure with greater access, connection and amenity enhancements;
- the historic environment and heritage assets and their settings are protected including Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas;
- protects the settlement pattern and residential amenity; and
- is not visually intrusive, whilst protecting the visual amenity of any residents and users of public rights of way

The WWA Report

2.7. Although the WWA report agreed with many findings of the LVA, there were aspects within the LVA which WWA disagreed with, summarised as follows;

"Many of the points of disagreement relating to levels of visual effect relate to proposed mitigation planting. It is my opinion that in many places, although the mitigation planting will screen built elements of the proposed development, it will also obscure views to the wider rural context. This will replace open countryside views with contained views of native hedge planting. In Field 5, woodland mitigation planting will also restrict views to Thoroton and specifically the spire of St Helena's Church from parts of the PRoW. This is correctly identified as a sensitive view within the LVA. It is therefore my opinion that the LVA also underestimates the predicted visual effects of the proposed development. Although mitigation planting will screen the proposed solar panels over time, it will also act to restrict characteristic views to open countryside."

2.8. An additional site visit, field work and desktop studies have been carried out in response to this observation by WWA. While mitigation does screen the panels from view (which the author notes that WWA acknowledged), there is no design intent to block views further afield. A review of the mitigation planting heights and species have been refined on further examination and can be seen within the LEMP, submitted in Appendix F1 to this LVAR (Figure 12a-12d) where mitigation planting has been kept to a maximum height of 3.5m.

2.9. There is agreement between the LVA and WWA report that visibility of the Proposed Development would be restricted principally to intermittent points around the Appeal Site. Therefore, this LVAR will investigate the level of visibility, the composition of views (open countryside or restricted) and the effect upon the receptors with the introduction of the Proposed Development, including the mitigation measures put in place.

3.ZTV ANALYSIS

Visual Baseline

3.1. A computer-generated ZTV map has been prepared to illustrate where the Appeal Site is potentially visible from within the study area and along the publicly accessible areas, including the PRoW and road networks.

3.2. The 'bare ground' ZTV map, shown below in Image 1-1, is based solely on terrain data (bare ground visibility) and ignores features such as trees, hedges or buildings, which may screen views. Given the complex vegetation patterns within this landscape, the main value of this form of ZTV mapping is to determine those parts of the landscape from which the Proposed Development will not be visible due to terrain screening within the immediate site context, being approximately 300m from the Appeal Site boundary.

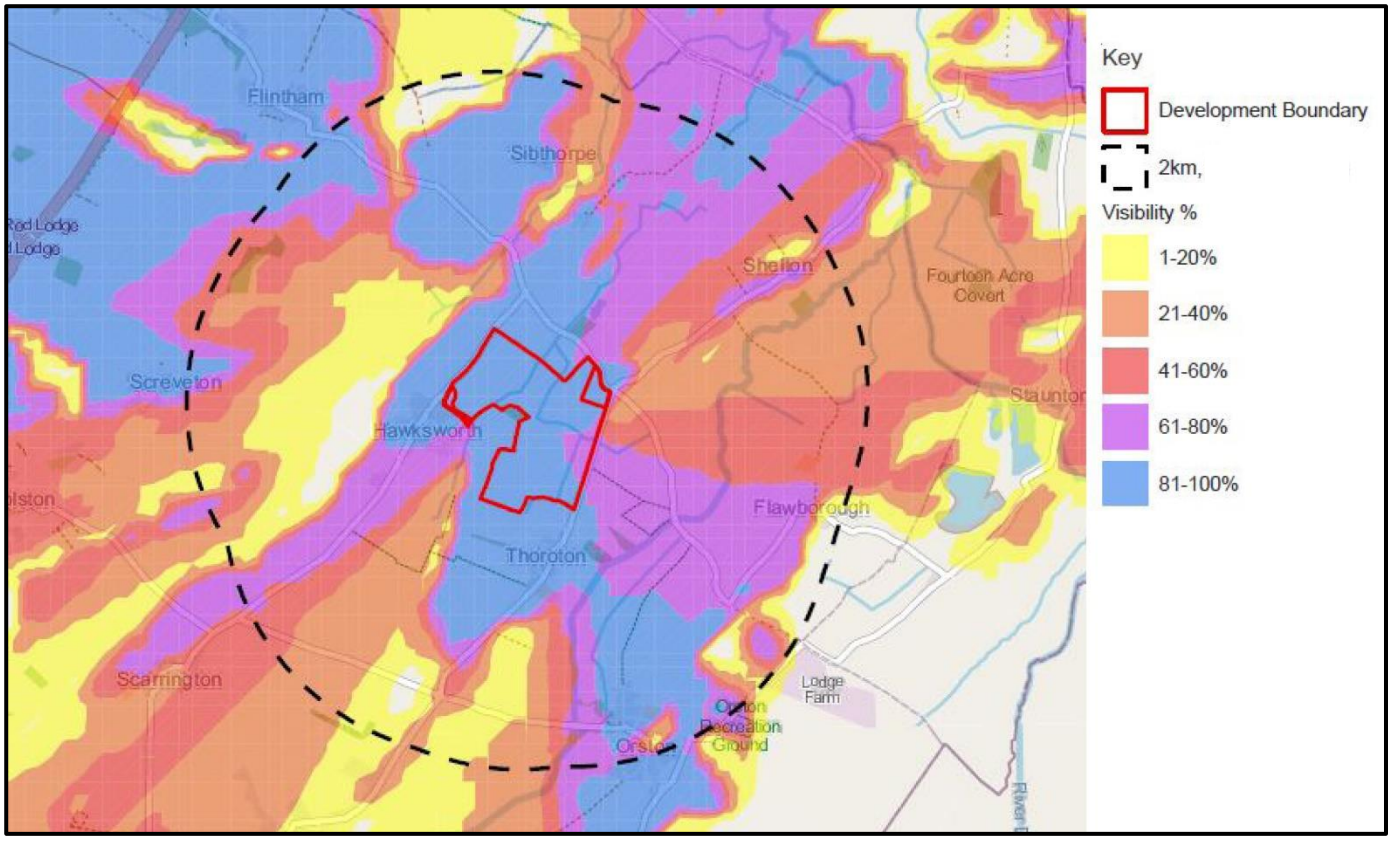


Image 1-1: Standard (bare ground) ZTV map (Refer to Figure 2 for larger scale version)

3.3. The following key points are illustrated by the 'bare ground' ZTV Map:

- Visibility is reasonably comprehensive within the Appeal Site, however beyond the immediate Appeal Site boundary, views of the Proposed Development tend to dissipate, particularly to the east, northeast and southwest;

- Beyond the Appeal Site, the northwest and southeast of the study area features a band of higher visibility within the rolling elevated ridges;
- The degree of visibility increases with distance from the Appeal Site, reaching full theoretical visibility at the elevated northwestern extent of the 2km study area; and
- Between Hawksworth and Thoroton there is partial visibility of the Appeal Site, limiting intervisibility of the villages and solar arrays.

3.4. The most important point in respect of this 'bare ground' ZTV map is that it is theoretical. The proposed solar arrays will not rise more than 2.8m above the underlying terrain and will therefore be considerably screened by surrounding and intervening hedgerow vegetation, trees and numerous buildings, walls and embankments scattered throughout the study area, resulting in a much lesser degree of actual visibility.

3.5. The second form of ZTV mapping relies on woodland land data, which gives indicative heights for the neighbouring woodland and registered woodlands within the study area. This is of far more value in determining the likely visibility of the solar panels. This ZTV map (Image 1-2) is discussed below.

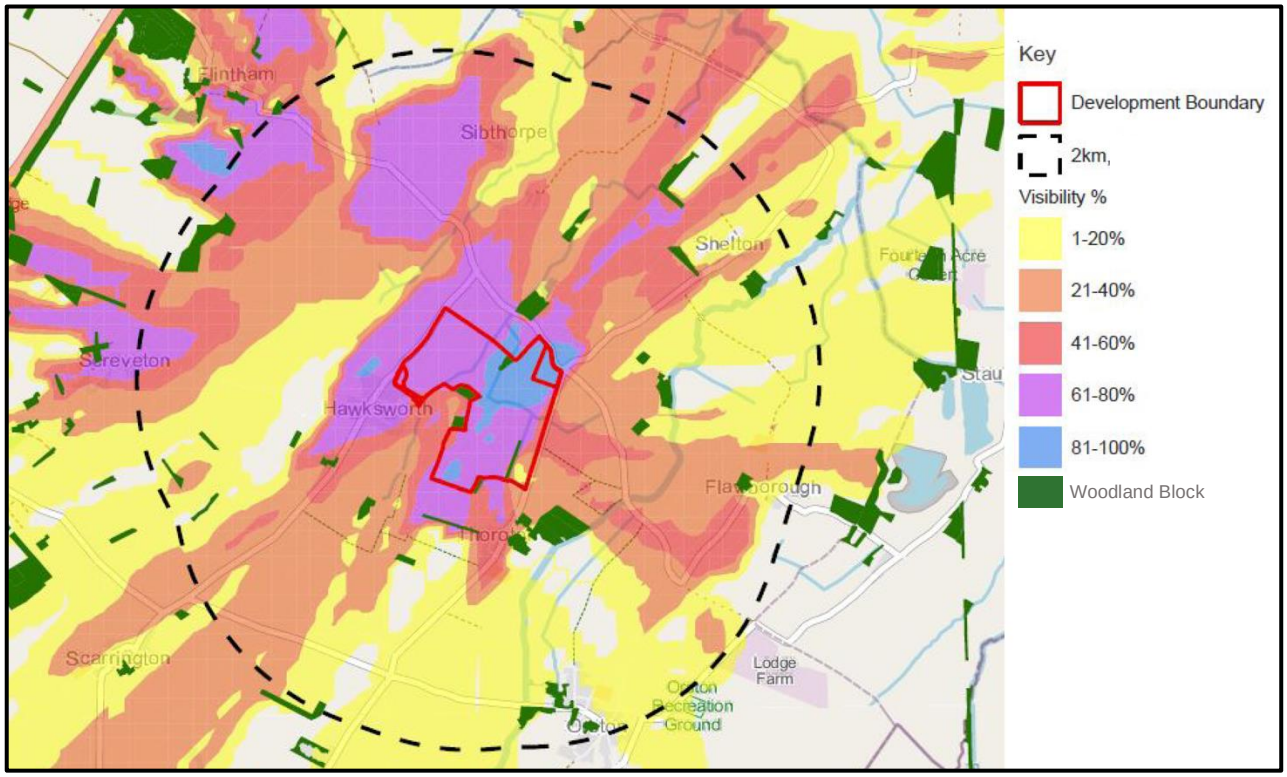


Image 1-2: Woodland based ZTV map accounting for screening by surface elements such as hedgerows, trees lines and forestry. (Refer to Figure 3 for larger scale version)

3.6. The following observations have been made from the comparison of the 'bare ground' ZTV map (Image 1-1) and the Woodland based ZTV map (Image 1-2):

- There is a dramatic reduction in the visibility of the proposed solar array once existing vegetation is accounted for, including within the Appeal Site, reducing from 81% range to 61% range. Whilst residual site visibility remains along the PRoW, which traverses the north of the Appeal Site network, this will only be in full visibility for approximately 100m, along the western most part of the PRoW.

- It should be noted that the verified views, as presented in section 4 of this LVAR, show the actual visibility of the immediate study area to be extremely limited. Therefore, while the ZTV mapping suggested that visibility falls within the 61% percentile, in reality it is much less. Photomontages from the wider study area were included within the original LVA, which also confirmed the extent of visibility to be extremely limited.

- As noted during the site visit informing this LVAR, the Proposed Development is located in an area with large bands of vegetation and mature hedgerow planting. While elevated to the north, the Appeal Site quickly becomes enclosed by vegetation screening.

- The ZTV shows the existing vegetation's effect on the Proposed Development's visibility. Existing vegetation will quickly provide partial or full screening to receptors along the PRoW network within the 2km study radius.

3.7. Another layer of the ZTV analysis adds the mitigation vegetation to the ZTV model to observe the additional reduction of the Proposed Development's visibility (Image 1-3).

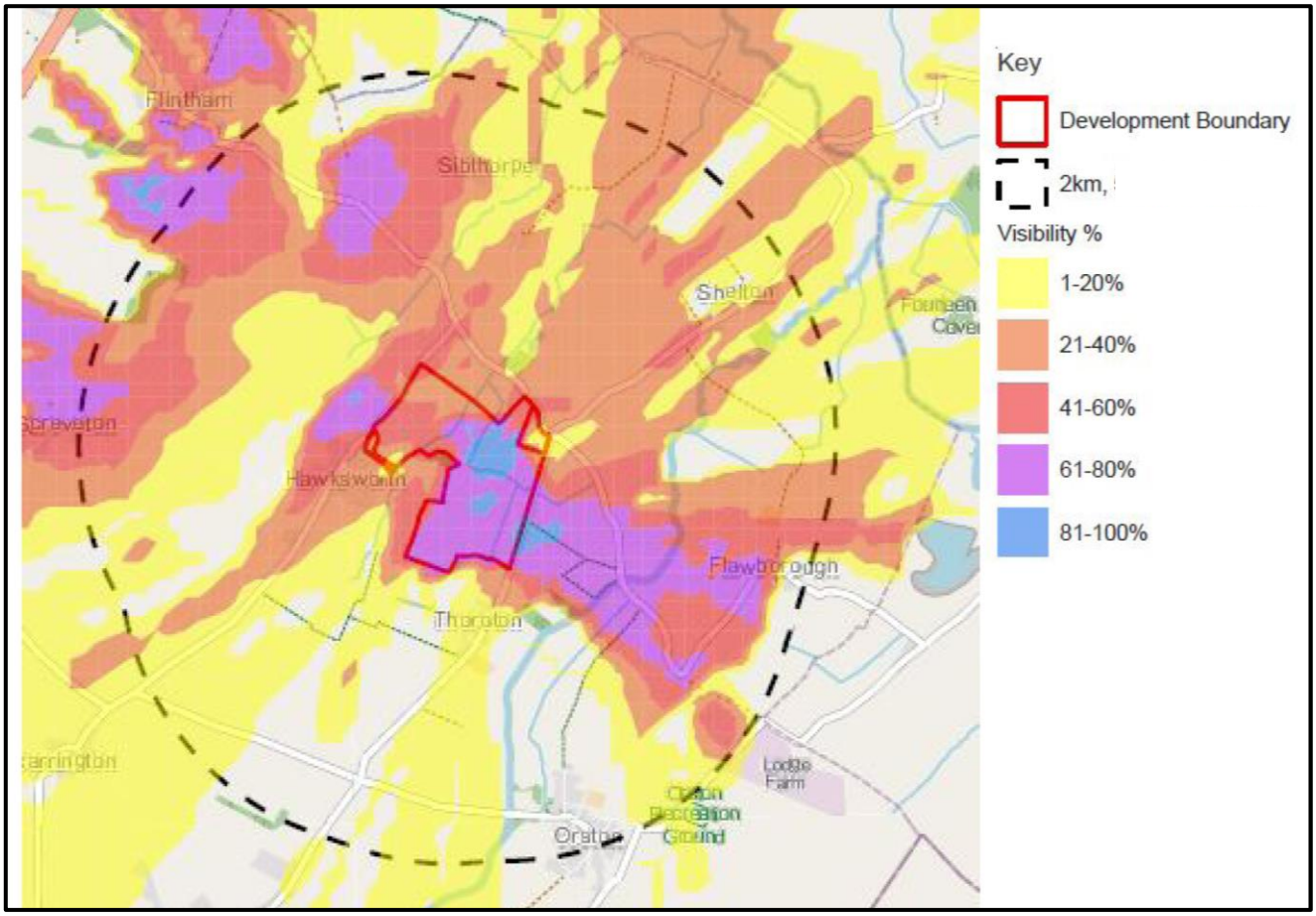


Image 1-3: Mitigation based ZTV map accounting for screening by surface elements such as hedgerows, trees lines and forestry. (Refer to Figure 4 for larger scale version)

3.8. The following observations have been made from the comparison of the 'Woodland' ZTV map (Image 1-2) and the Mitigation based ZTV map (Image 1-3):

- While there is no significant reduction in the visibility of the proposed solar array as seen previously within the Woodland ZTV, there are areas of partial visibility which have been reduced, particularly between Hawksworth and Thornton; and
- The mitigation interventions are localised reductions in visibility and can be clearly observed within the verified views displayed in Section 4 of this LVAR once existing vegetation is accounted for. Whilst residual site visibility remains, visibility from the Appeal Site is confined to its immediate boundary, before dissipating almost entirely through hedgerows and terrain screening. Therefore, mitigation planting along the Appeal Site's boundaries will greatly reduce the already partial visibility of the Proposed Development.

4. VISIBILITY OF THE PROPOSED DEVLEOPMENT

Visual Amenity Assessment

4.1. The visual assessment within the LVA shows that adverse effects arising from the Proposed Development are limited to the Appeal Site itself and isolated points on its boundaries. As such there would be no notable effects predicted on wider landscape character areas, landscape designations or receptors beyond these locations, within the 5km study area. Within the Appeal Site landscape adverse effects are only predicted during construction and in the short term, before mitigation planting has had time to establish (approximately 5 years from planting).

4.2. To investigate the effects of the Proposed Development on the landscape and visual receptors within close proximity to the Appeal Site boundary, a number of additional viewpoints have been included within this LVAR to illustrate the extent of visibility of the Proposed Development and how the PRoW network will be experienced with the inclusion of the Proposed Development. These additional viewpoints are shown in **Image 1-4** and **Appendix F1 Figure 5**.

4.3. The LVA shows that geographically, the extent of notable visual effects would be relatively low and restricted principally to intermittent points around the Appeal Site and to 160m to the south and 280m northeast and east. This is summarised below for the different key receptor groups (PRoW users, residents and road users)

4.4. From the representative viewpoint assessment below it can be seen that:

- There are **no Major adverse effects** on landscape character;
- The extent of **Major to Moderate** visual effects, where the Proposed Development would form an extensive change to the composition of the existing view such that the baseline would be fundamentally changed, would be limited to locations either within the Appeal Site, on PRoWs shown in Viewpoints F and G of this LVAR, or at locations directly on the Appeal Site boundary where there are likely to be sensitive receptors, such as walkers or nearby residents. This would be during construction, Year 1 and in the short term (up to approximately 5 years), before mitigation planting has established;
- Beyond the Appeal Site, there would be some isolated **Moderate** effects from Shelton Lane on the north side of Thoroton for the short term (up to approximately 5 years). These would be isolated and limited or glimpsed views through a field access gate, as noted along the Hawksworth to Thoroton link road, near Viewpoint C, and would not

notably interrupt the wider view from the majority of residential receptors within Thoroton;

- Generally, beyond 160m to the south and 280m at isolated points to the northwest and east of the Appeal Site, adverse visual effects are limited to no more than Moderate to Minor. Visual effects will be further limited once the mitigation planting and replacement of hedgerows along the Appeal Site have matured filtering and screening views of the Proposed Development with characteristic wooded tree belts and hedgerows; and

- Outside these very localised areas, the Proposed Development would largely be screened from visual receptors by a combination of local landform variations and landcover patterns. In the alternative, the Proposed Development would form a very limited change in views, being seen in heavily filtered views with low levels of visibility, particularly from publicly accessible locations.

4.5. Adverse effects would be subject to seasonality, with views more heavily filtered during summer months and in the short term with mitigation planting designed to screen the Proposed Development and enhance the intervening view with characteristic wooded field boundary planting.

4.6. There would also be short-term Moderate effects at one further point at approximately 160m to the south which relates to an isolated view through the access gate to Field 8, seen in Viewpoint C of this LVAR (see below). Any effects at that location would be transient for road users and of short-term duration, approximately 5 years. These effects will reduce to no more than Minor in the medium term, approximately 10 years, as the mitigation planting, in the form of trees (up to 10 years) and shrub planting (up to 5 years) to provide a wooded edge, matures and the management of the boundary vegetation around the Appeal Site is established to provide fuller vegetated screens, further screening, filtering and softening views towards the Proposed Development. For the avoidance of doubt, this is a single, short gap in the boundary vegetation and the remainder of the Appeal Site boundary is well screened.

4.7. For the remaining viewpoints, identified effects would be Minor to Negligible with views restricted from most points beyond the Appeal Site to the west, 160m to the south and beyond 280m to the north and east. This is in line with local policy, as outlined in Section 7 within the Statement of Case for effect on amenity, particularly residential amenity of adjoining properties or the surrounding area. When considered together with the effects on all relevant key receptor groups present, including those more sensitive residential receptors and the principal zones of visibility noted above, the overall effect on visual amenity within the Study Area is considered to be Low. This is due to the nature and context of the existing setting within a large-scale farmland landscape with fields now

excluded from the Proposed Development to ensure further separation from the settlements of Thoroton and Hawksworth.

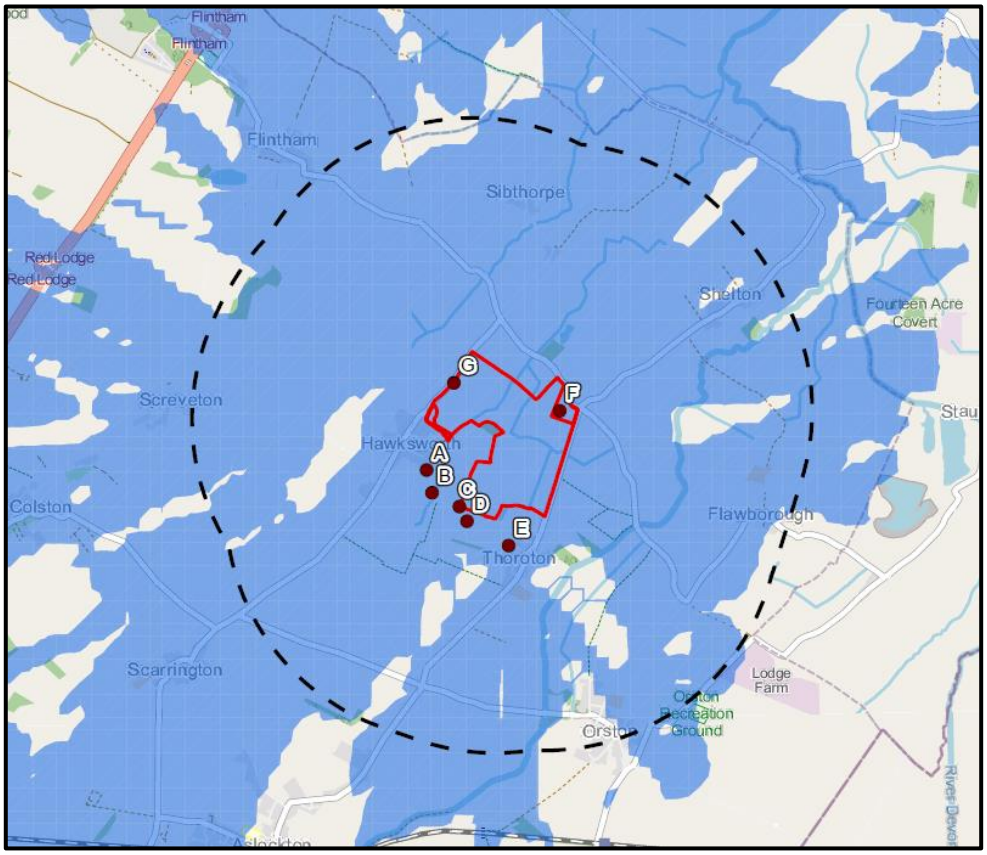
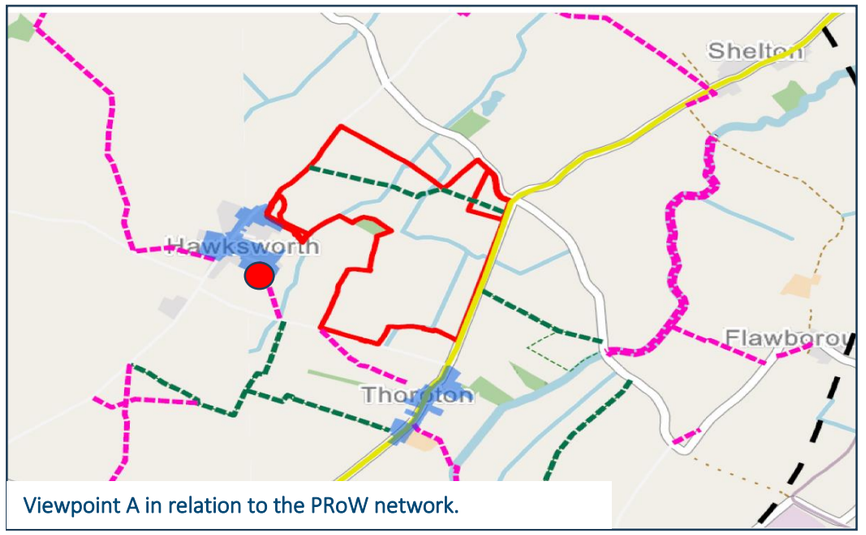


Image 1-4: Viewpoint Location Map. (Refer to Figure 5 for larger scale version)

Viewpoint A: PRoW “Historical Path”

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Commentary
Viewpoint A **Located along a PRoW south of Hawksworth. View sweeping between the Proposed Development and Thoroton.**	Receptors: PRoW users Sensitivity: High	350m	The Proposed Development will be barely perceptible within this viewpoint as existing vegetation screens the majority of the panels from view. There is no change in character of this view. The existing baseline view shows a view of the immediate field, with the surrounding landscape being intermittently screened by a patchwork of mature vegetation. The proposed solar arrays will not alter this view. The Proposed Development will result in **Low** to **Very Low** visual change with the addition of the mitigation planting, resulting in **Minor** significance ofvisual effects.



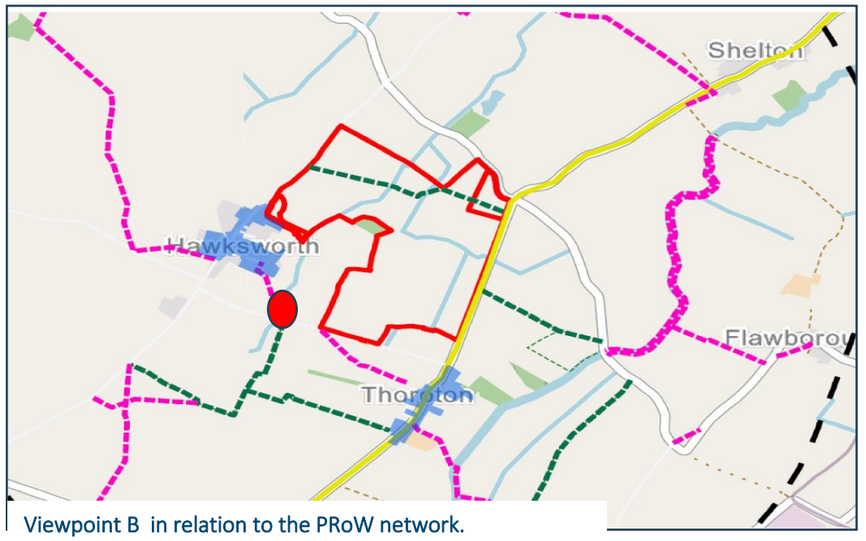
Viewpoint A in relation to the PRoW network.


Baseline View

Viewpoint A

Viewpoint B: PRoW "Historical Path"

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Commentary
Viewpoint B **Located along a ProW south of Hawksworth. View sweeping between the Proposed Development and Thoroton**	Receptors: PRoW users Sensitivity: High	310m	The Proposed Development will be barely perceptible within this viewpoint, with existing vegetation screening the majority of the panels from view. The Proposed Development will not change the character of this view. The existing baseline view shows a view of the immediate field and the field behind, however distant views are not achieved. The proposed solar array will not alter this view. The Proposed Development will result in **Low** to **Very Low** visual change with the addition of the mitigation planting, resulting in **Minor** significance of visual effects.



Viewpoint B in relation to the PRoW network.

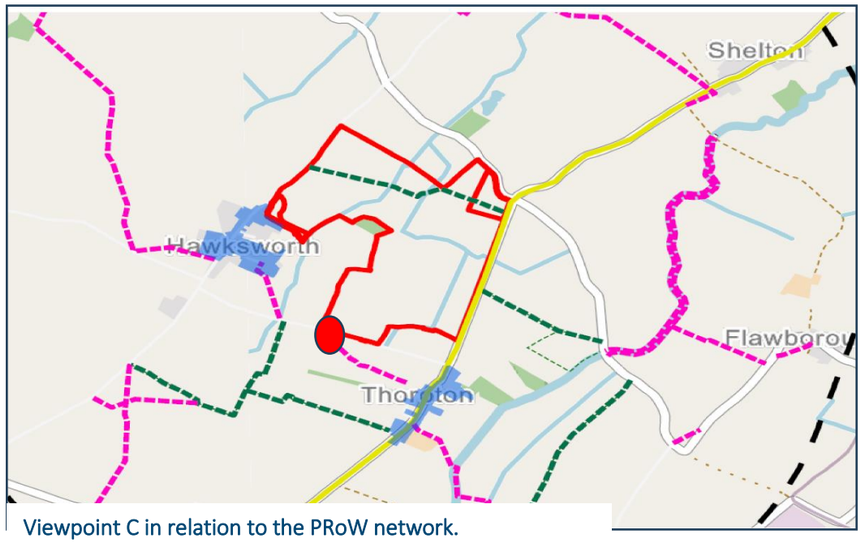

Baseline View

Viewpoint B

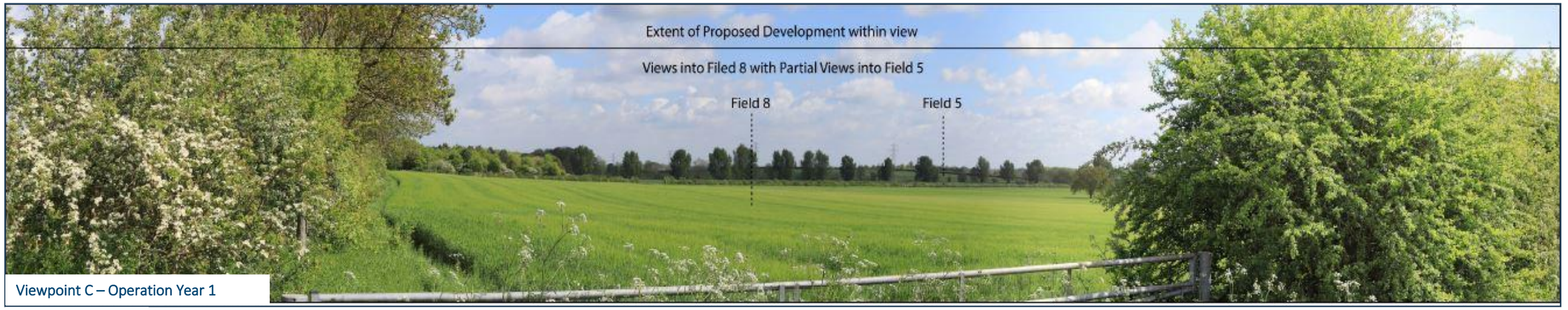
neo ENVIRONMENTAL

Viewpoint C – Thoroton Road between Thoroton and Hawksworth

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Commentary
Viewpoint C **Along Thoroton road between Thoroton and Hawksworth**	Receptors: Road users Sensitivity: Medium	2m	This view is taken on the boundary of the Appeal Site. Close-distance visibility of the Proposed Development can be achieved within this view. It is only achieved through a gap in the hedgerow over a gateway for field access. An alternative view, shown in the second image below, shows the view further right of the photographer. This view shows the real extent of screening available along this route. Given the context of this view being glimpsed, the Proposed Development will result in **Low** visual change with the addition of the mitigation planting, resulting in **Minor** significance of visual effects.



Viewpoint C in relation to the PRoW network.



Viewpoint C – Operation Year 1

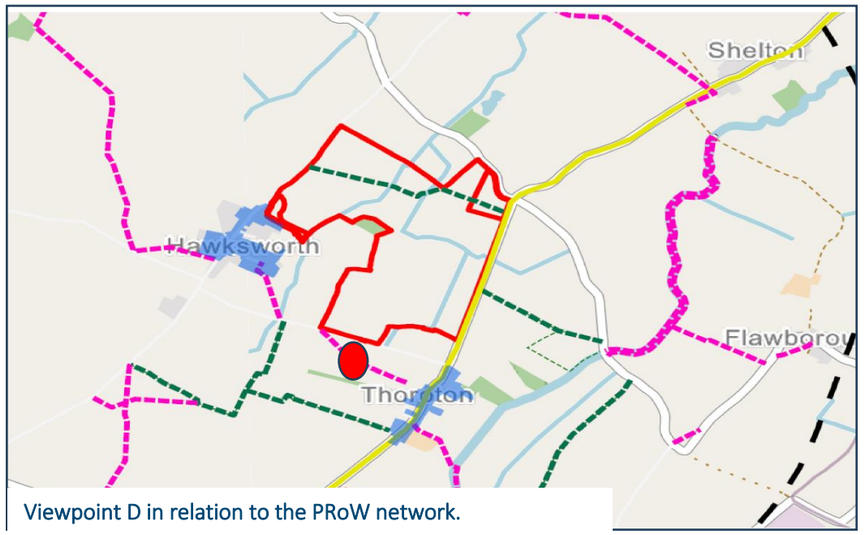
Operation Year 1

Viewpoint C1 – showing screening provided by vegetation.

neo ENVIRONMENTAL

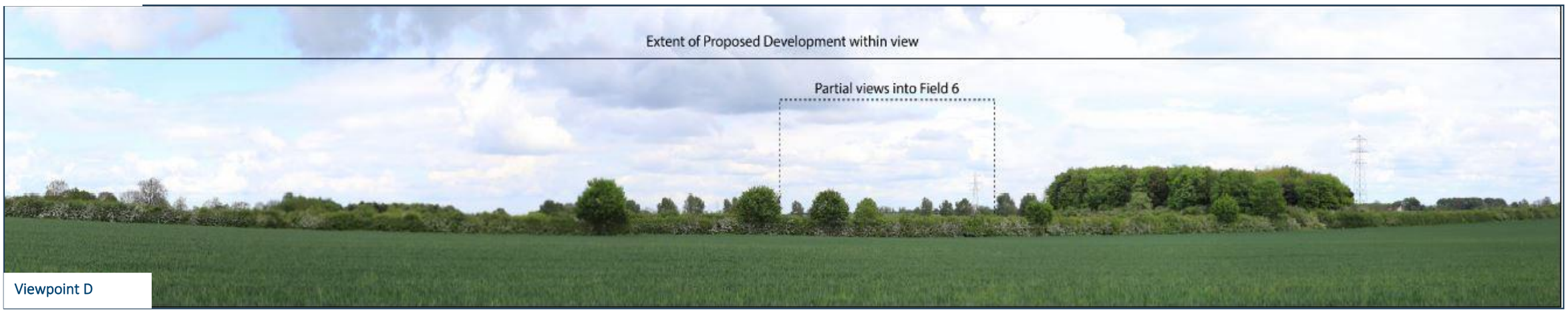
Viewpoint D – PRoW between Thoroton and Hawksworth

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Commentary
Viewpoint D: Along PRoW between Thoroton and Hawksworth	Receptors: PRoW users Sensitivity: High	100m	The Proposed Development will be barely perceptible within this viewpoint with existing vegetation screening the majority of the panels from view. The existing baseline view shows a view of the immediate field and the field behind, however distant views are not achieved. The proposed solar array will not alter this view. The Proposed Development will result in **Low** to **Very Low** visual change with the addition of the mitigation planting, resulting in a **Minor significance of** visual effects.



Viewpoint D in relation to the PRoW network.

Baseline View

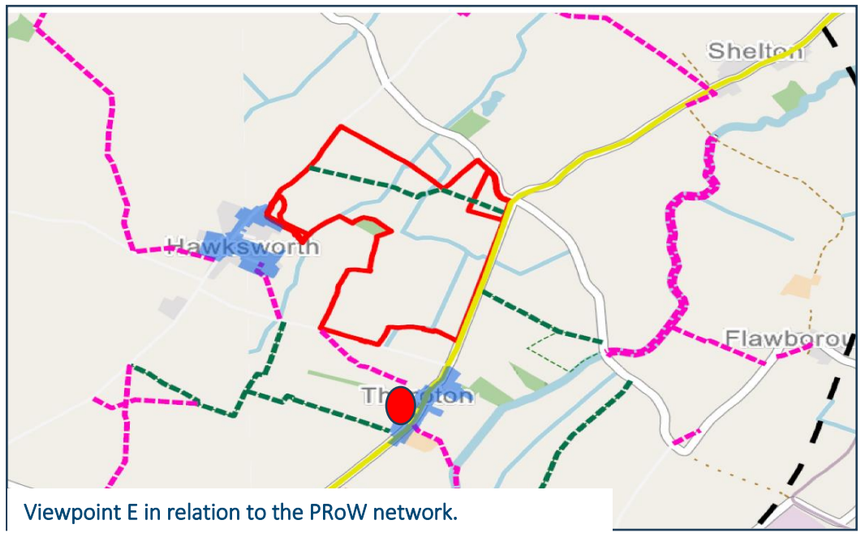


Viewpoint D

neo ENVIRONMENTAL

Viewpoint E – Along PRoW between Thoroton and Hawksworth

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Commentary
Viewpoint E **Along PRoW between Thoroton and Hawksworth**	Receptors: PRoW users Sensitivity: High	200m	The Proposed Development will be barely perceptible within this view, with existing vegetation screening the majority of the panels from view. However, the view will not change the character of this view. The existing baseline view shows a view of the immediate field, with the surrounding landscape being intermittently screened by a patchwork of mature vegetation. The proposed solar array will not alter this view. The Proposed Development will result in **Low** to **Very Low** visual change with the addition of the mitigation planting, with the resulting significance of visual effects being **Minor**



Viewpoint E in relation to the PRoW network.

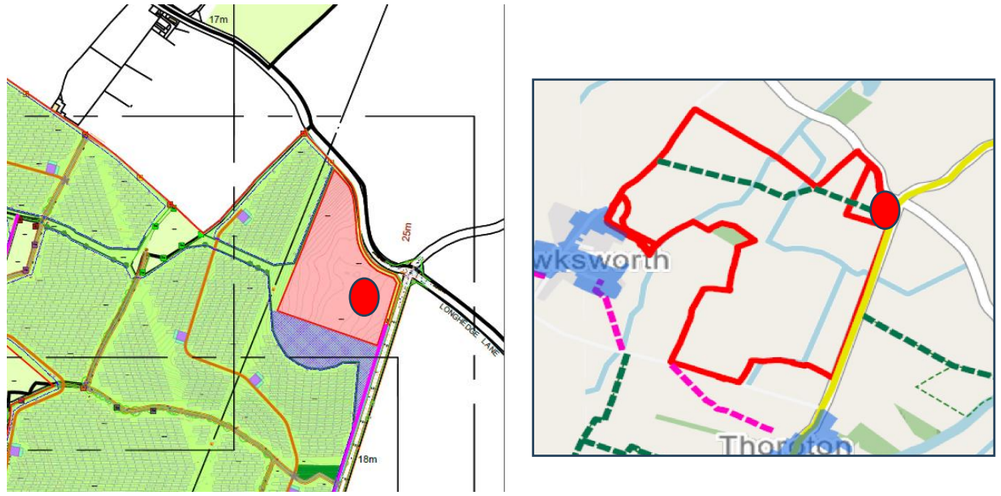
Baseline View

Viewpoint E

neo ENVIRONMENTAL

Viewpoint F – Along BW6 within the northern section of the site

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Commentary
Viewpoint F **Along BW6 within the northern section of the Appeal Site**	Receptors: PRoW users Sensitivity: High	The Proposed Development would be visible to the south, sitting on the lower-lying sloping ground to the south with a large offset from the PRoW and away from key views to the church spire at this location. The view from Viewpoint F includes views of the fencing and mitigation planting and views to the rear of the panels. However, through design evolution the solar arrays have been set back from the PRoW by up to 50-100m and the panels located north of this viewpoint have also been removed to help protect key views to the south as shown in the visual. The mitigation planting in the form of new field boundary hedgerow and new wildflower meadows along the PRoW and by year 5 would have matured up to 3-4m to screen, filter and soften views towards the Proposed Development The Proposed Development will result in a Medium – Low visual change with the addition of the mitigation planting, resulting in Minor Significant visual effects.



Viewpoint F in relation to the PRoW network and Appeal Site boundary

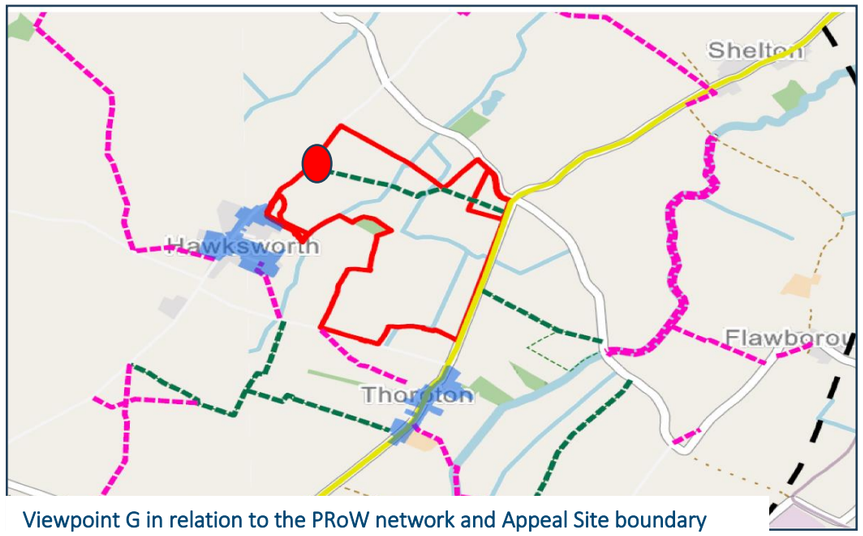
Operation Year 1

Operation Year 5

neo ENVIRONMENTAL

Viewpoint G – PRoW Network/BW6

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Commentary
Viewpoint G **View looking from BW6 south towards Hawksworth.**	Receptors: PRoW users Sensitivity: High	0m	Solar arrays would be seen in views from the rear in Field 1 to the south of the PRoW and largely to the side of rows of panels to the north of the PRoW in Field 2. To the east, the low-lying nature of the panels and rising ground to the east would help to retain some views across to the surrounding vegetation patterns that enclose the view, whilst also filtering and screening further views to Fields 4 and 5 to the east and Field 1 to the south. Mitigation planting in the form of new field boundary hedgerows along the PRoW by year 5 would have matured up to 3-4m to screen, filter and soften views towards the Proposed Development, such that the Proposed Development would not be that discernible and only visible during winter months in heavily filtered views. The Proposed Development will result in a Medium visual change with the addition of the mitigation planting, resulting in Moderate Significant visual effects.



Viewpoint G in relation to the PRoW network and Appeal Site boundary


Operation Year 1


Operation Year 5

neo ENVIRONMENTAL

5.SUMMARY

Impact upon landscape character and visual amenity

5.1. The Proposed Development would introduce a new vertically low, medium-scale renewable energy feature into a rural landscape of medium to large gently undulating arable fields to the north of Thoroton and east of Hawksworth.

5.2. Throughout the planning process, the Proposed Development's design and setting has greatly considered landscape and visual effects within the confines of the nine arable fields to ensure that any potential effects upon the landscape and visual receptors are limited. To this end, the Proposed Development has gone through an iterative design process and considered landscape and visual effects at each stage.

5.3. It has been found, through the LVA, WWA report and this LVAR that the extent of notable landscape and visual effect would be relatively low. These effects are also restricted principally to within the Appeal Site and along the Appeal Site boundary.

5.4. These effects are also restricted to PRoW, where the amenity route passes near the solar array, for approximately 100m as shown in Viewpoints F and G above, as the user passes through the Appeal Site while travelling along the PRoW network. However, mitigation measures have ensured only glimpsed views are possible when mitigation has been established. This is shown within Viewpoint F and Viewpoint G of this LVAR (and included as Appendix F1 Figures 8-11), which presents the worst-case scenario taken at less than 20m back from the solar array.

5.5. Proposed mitigation and enhancement landscape measures within these sections of the Appeal Site, combined with enhancement and management of other existing field boundaries, would reduce the duration of visual effects, whilst retaining and improving the field boundaries, in keeping with local policy and strategies.

5.6. Views of the Proposed Development from beyond the Appeal Site are extremely limited. Viewpoint C above shows a view achieved through a gateway entrance to the Appeal Site, where there is a break in the hedgerow vegetation. The alternative view (Viewpoint C1), a view looking towards Thoroton, shows the extent of the vegetation screening within the immediate road network, completely screening any achievable view towards the Appeal Site.

5.7. The remaining viewpoints show the levels of screening that exist within this landscape and screen views of the Proposed Development in its majority, with only glimpses or partial views of the Proposed Development as the recreational user of the PRoWs moves through the network.

5.8. This LVAR demonstrates minimal visual impacts on the landscape and other receptors from the Proposed Development.

5.9. To summarise:

- There are no significant effects predicted on any landscape character types/areas or landscape designations within the study area;
- Effects upon the visual amenity of visual receptors within the core study area of 2.5km are not of major significance; and
- Once planting matures, effects on the remainder of the PRoW network are not significant.