



Appendix B: Landscape and Visual Appeal Report





Landscape and Visual Appeal Report

Appendix B

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1. A notice of refusal of planning permission (the Refusal) was received by Rushcliffe Borough Council (the LPA) on the 13th March 2023, as per below:

“The proposals would result in substantial harm to the Green Belt by reason of adverse impact on openness, visual amenity and impact on amenity of users of the well-connected nearby Public Rights of Ways and Bridleways which cross or lie adjacent to the application site. The proposed Very Special Circumstances of the wider benefits of renewable energy generation associated with the application (and other wider environmental benefits) do not outweigh the harm to the Green Belt contrary to paragraph 149 of NPPF which requires substantial weight to be given to any harm to the green belt. In these circumstances, the proposed development is therefore considered to be contrary to Policy 16 - Renewable Energy and Policy 21 - Green Belt of the Rushcliffe Borough Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies together with paragraphs 147, 148 and 149 of the NPPF”

- 1.2. In response to the Refusal, Neo Environmental Ltd. has undertaken a review of the specific concerns raised by the LPA as set out in this report.

- 1.3. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) was submitted as part of the planning application (**ref. 22/00319/FUL**), which detailed the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on landscape and visual receptors within the study area. An external review of the LVA was undertaken by Wynne Williams Associates (on behalf of the LPA) (the WWA Review) in relation to the LVA submitted in support of a planning application for the Proposed Development, located to the south of Gotham. It should be noted that this report found the LVA to be fit for purpose and that the vast majority of the assessment findings were agreed with.

- 1.4. The findings of the LVA demonstrate 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;*
- *protects the landscape setting of listed cultural features (e.g. Listed Buildings, Historic Parks & Gardens);*
- *protects the openness and characteristics of the Green Belt; and*

- *is not visually intrusive, whilst protecting the visual amenity of any residents and users of public rights of way.*
- 1.5. Following comments raised in the WWA Review on the adverse nature of visual impact at two viewpoint locations, Stone House and Cuckoo Bush Farm. To reduce the nature of adverse visual effects on the residents at these viewpoints, a 10m buffer of native woodland and scrub alongside nearby visible edges has also been incorporated into the Proposed Development. Additionally, a detailed Green Belt Assessment has been undertaken to provide further evidence that effects on the Green Belt would not be detrimental to its purposes.
- 1.6. While the LVA examined the effects upon the landscape and visual receptors within the 5km study radius, this report, in response to the reasons for refusal, will look specifically at the openness of the receiving landscape, the visual effects of the Proposed Development upon the visual receptors and upon the amenity qualities of the PRoW network.

Assessment Approach

- 1.7. 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 level, can set the scene, and indicate the key characteristics that may be apparent in the study area. It 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 the site and its immediate setting or surroundings and that it is proportionate to the assessment of a proposed development.
- 1.8. This report takes this approach by investigating the composition of views from the immediate site context, the Proposed Development's interaction with the Green Belt designation and the sensitivity of the visual receptors, including the users along the PRoW network in relation to the Appeal Site. As the LVA report concluded, the majority of significant views will be experienced within the core study area where open or partial views of the development are possible, particularly in views from close proximity to the site, up to approximately 300-500m radius, the assessment made reference to this, concluding: "*...this LVA has clearly demonstrated that visibility in practice is very localised and from almost all of the wider study area, including main settlements and roads, the Proposed Development would be screened from view by dense mature woodlands that surround the site, and intervening built development and landcover in the wider landscape.*". This report will therefore investigate the core impact zone of up to 500m from the Appeal Site as this is where the likely significant impacts are predicted.
- 1.9. Building on the LVA assessment, this report aims to provide a finer level of detail within this core impact zone. This report follows the same methodology outlined in the main LVA for assessing landscape and visual effects. Therefore, this report should be read in combination

with the LVA submitted. This includes the Zone of Theoretical Visibility mapping (ZTV) methodology and the preparation of verified views.

Supporting information

1.10. The following illustrative figures in **Appendix B1** support this report:

- Figure 1 - ZTV with Woodland
- 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
- Figure 6 – Viewpoint A (Viewpoint 2 from original application)
- Figure 7 – Viewpoint B (New, for the purpose of this study)
- Figure 8 – Viewpoint C (New for the purpose of this study)
- Figure 9 – Viewpoint D (New, for the purpose of this study)
- Figure 10 – Viewpoint E (Viewpoint 8 from the original application)

Additional Surveys

1.11. Further fieldwork was undertaken between April 2023 and June 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

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

1.13. Kathryn has over 5 years specialist knowledge in 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 ES, EIA and EIAR chapters, including the preparation of landscape and visual assessment chapters for strategic infrastructure developments, both in the U.K. and Ireland. Other areas of expertise include character assessments, feasibility studies, site suitability assessments and associated mapping.

2. ZTV ANALYSIS

Visual Baseline

- 2.1. Computer-generate ZTV maps have been prepared to illustrate where the Proposed Development is potentially visible from within the study area and along the PRoW network.
- 2.2. The 'bare ground' ZTV map, shown below in Image 1-2, 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. The ZTV's below show the 2km study boundary, **figures 1 to 4** within this report shows the wider study context at 5km.

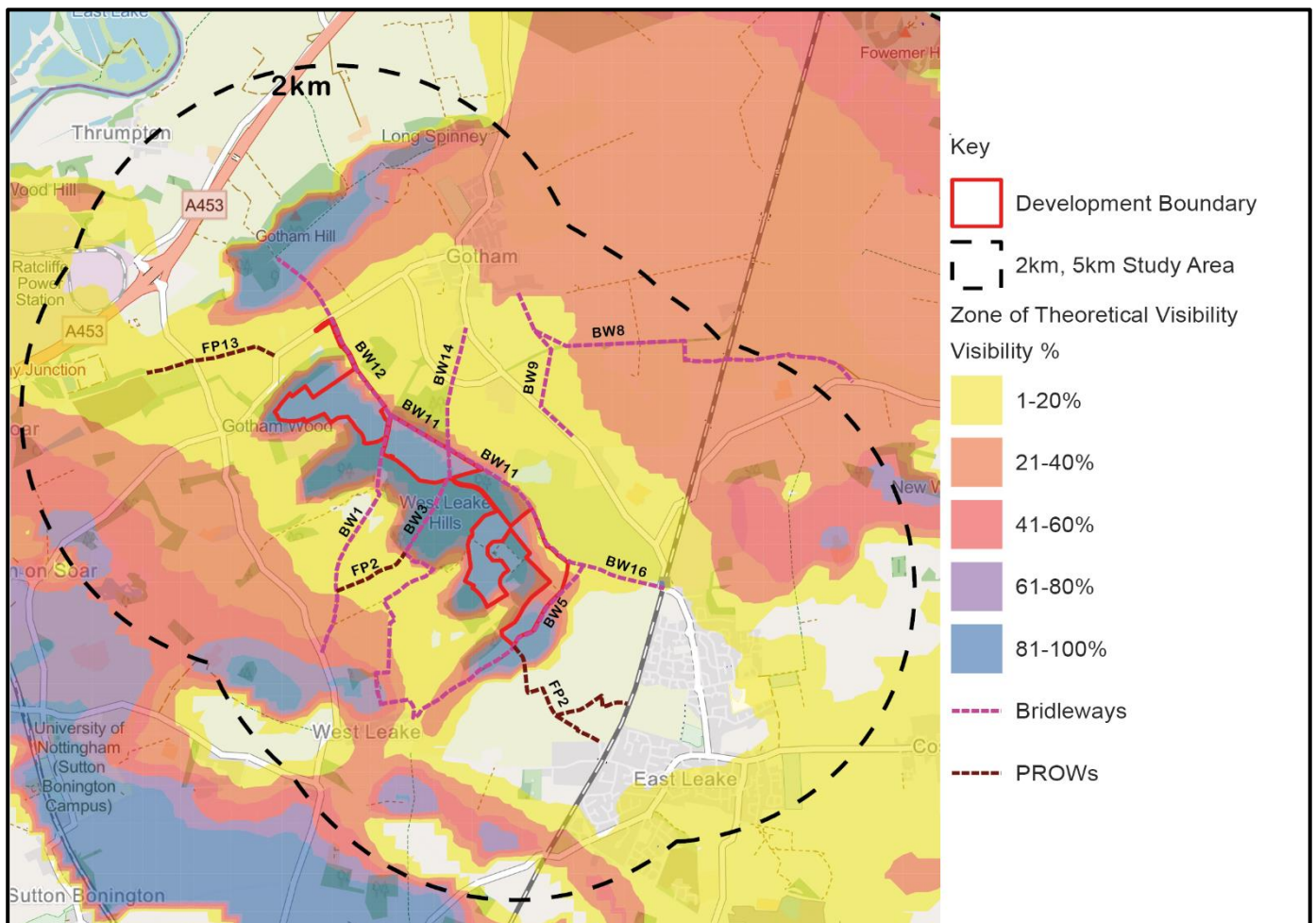


Image 1-2: Standard (bare ground) ZTV map (Refer to Figure 2 for larger scale version)

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

- Visibility is reasonably comprehensive within the site itself and to the immediate south of the Appeal Site. To the north and within approximately 200m of the Appeal Site, views of the Proposed Development tend to dissipate.
- Outside the Appeal Site, northeast and southwest of the study area features low partial visibility, however further towards the 2km study area there is a variable 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 southwestern extent of the 2km study area.
- Partial visibility is shown for the majority of the PRow network, apart from Bridleway 3, which shows to have 81-100% visibility of the Proposed Development. The PRow's adjacent to the Appeal are only partially visible ranging from 1 to 60%.

2.4. The most important point to make in respect of this 'bare ground' ZTV map is that it is theoretical. The proposed PV panels 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.

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 is discussed overleaf.

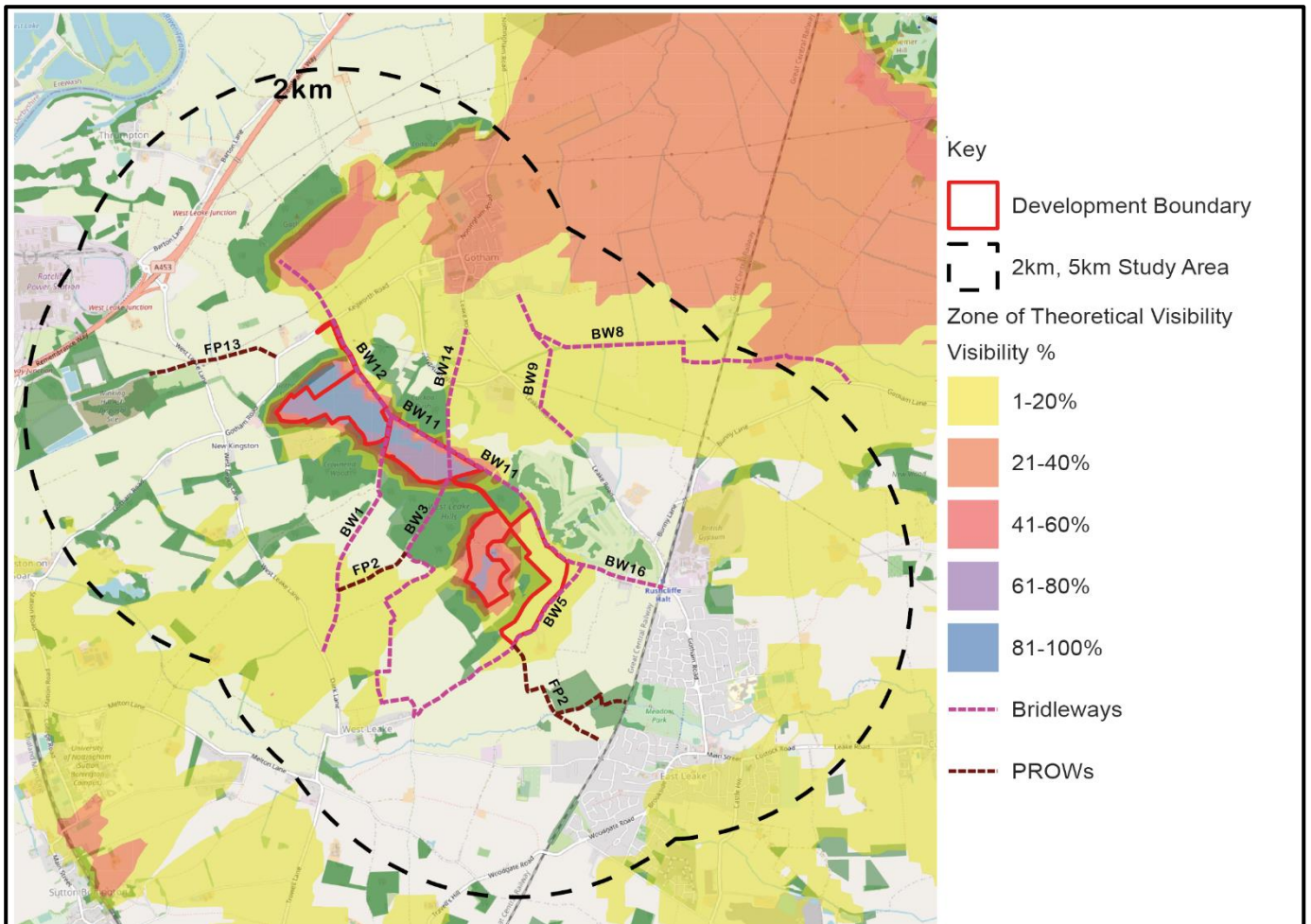


Image 1-3: Woodland based ZTV map accounting for screening by surface elements such as hedgerows, trees lines and forestry. (Refer to Figure 3 for larger scale version)

2.5. The following observations have been made from the comparison of the ‘bare ground’ ZTV map (Figure 2) and the Woodland based ZTV map (Figure 3):

- There is a dramatic reduction in the visibility of the proposed solar array once existing vegetation is accounted for. Whilst residual site visibility remains along the PROW network, this will be of less than 40% of the Appeal Site and, in the majority of cases less than 20% of the Appeal Site. There is a reduction in the extent of visibility also along bridleway 3, where the previous ZTV showed 80% visibility within this area, with the woodland accounted for, this has reduced to no visibility within this area.
- It should be noted that the verified views, as presented in Section 4 of this report, shows the actual visibility of the surrounding PROW network to be extremely limited. Therefore, it is suggested that visibility within the 20% percentile, in reality is much less.

Photomontages from the wider study area were included within the main LVA report, which also confirmed the extent of visibility to be extremely limited.

- As noted during the site visit for this study, the Proposed Development is located in an area bounded by mature woodland. While elevated and gently sloping, the Appeal Site is enclosed by the mature woodland and field boundaries that exist within the Proposed Development's immediate boundaries. This 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.

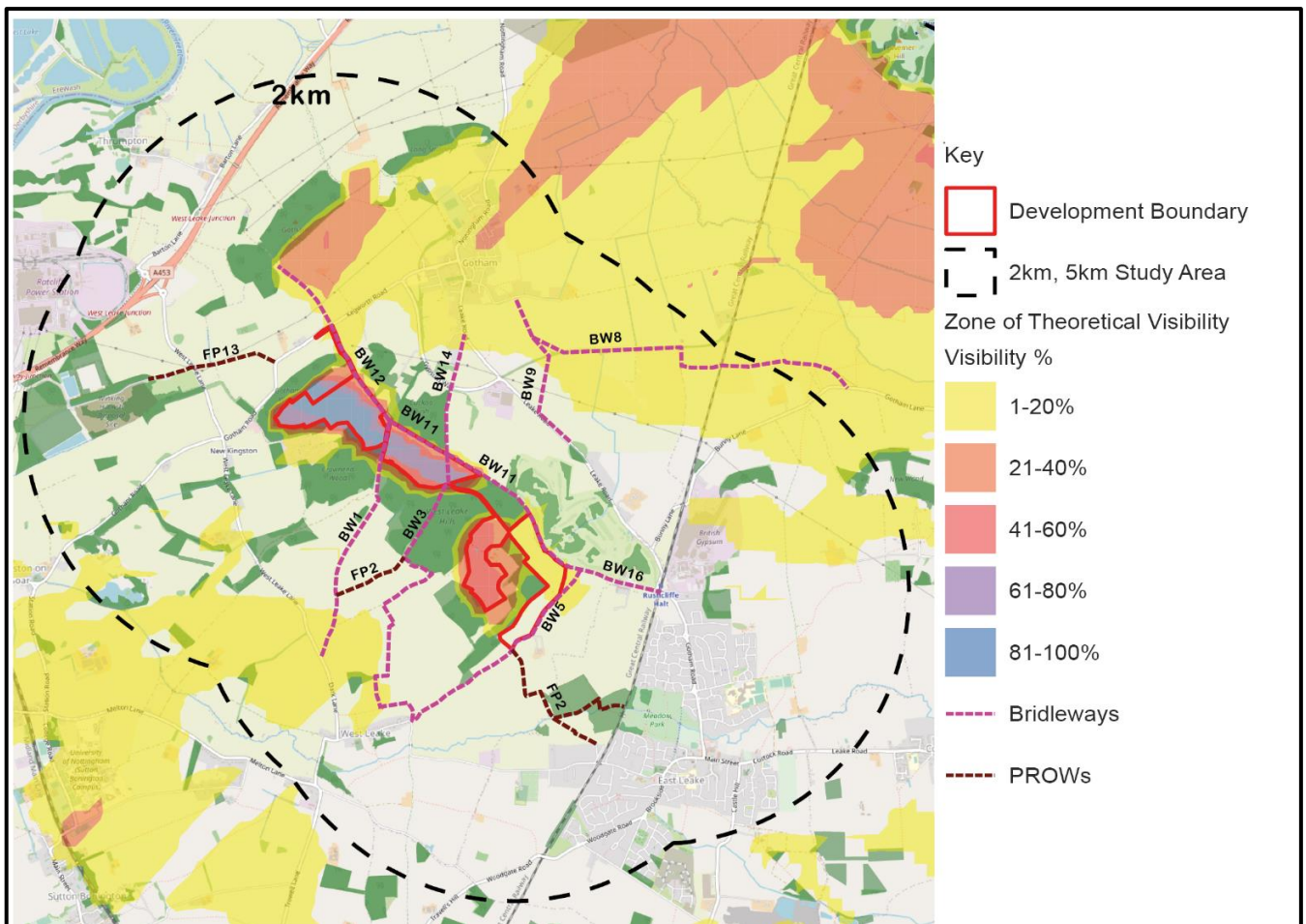


Image 1-4: Mitigation based ZTV map accounting for screening by surface elements such as hedgerows, trees lines and forestry. (Refer to Figure 4 for larger scale version)

2.6. The following observations have been made from the comparison of the 'Woodland' ZTV map (Figure 3) and the Mitigation based ZTV map (Figure 4):

- Another layer of this ZTV analysis is to add the mitigation vegetation to the ZTV model in order to make observations on the additional reduction of visibility of the proposed development.

- While there is no dramatic 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.
- The mitigation interventions are localised reductions in visibility and can be clearly observed within the verified views displayed in Section 4 of this report, 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.

3. PROW NETWORK

PROW and Bridleway Network Context

- 3.1. The Appeal Site and surrounding local landscape accommodate a well-connected network of recreational routes, including several Bridleways, which cross or lie adjacent to the Appeal Site, as seen below in Image 1-1. The routes include Gotham Bridleways No. 10, 11 and 12 and West Leake Bridleways No. 5 and 13.
- 3.2. West Leake Bridleway No. 5, also known as the Midshires Way, is also a Long-Distance Walking Association Route bordering the southern boundary of Fields 15 and 16 (see Field Numbers figure in **Appendix F of the Statement of Case**). Given the relatively large number of people using these routes, recreational users are assessed as having a high sensitivity.



Image 1-1: PROW in relation to the Proposed Development

Design and Mitigation Measures for PRow Network

- 3.3. The PRow network is a well-used and valued amenity in the local area. Throughout the pre-application, consultation was sought from Nottinghamshire County Council, the LPA and other statutory and non-statutory bodies including the British Horse Society, the Ramblers Association and the local community in order to inform the design and ensure appropriate mitigation measures such as buffers, panel exclusion zones and screen planting. These measures were applied as part of the Proposed Development's final planning application.
- 3.4. At the time of submitting the pre-application advice request (January 2021), two accesses were proposed to be used for the Appeal Site; Wood Lane to the north and Stocking Lane to the south, however following consultation with the RoW Officer, local community and wider stakeholders, access options were refined and Stocking Lane was removed from the design.
- 3.5. Mitigation planting has been proposed to further reduce landscape and visual impacts on the PRow network. A standalone PRow Management Plan was created and submitted as part of the planning application. Details of specific species proposed for woodland, hedgerow and shrub/scrub planting proposed across the Appeal Site was submitted as part of the planning application. Details on the proposals are briefly outlined below.
- 3.6. The proposed mitigation includes a 5-metre grassland buffer and hedgerow planting has been proposed between the existing PRow and the PV panels on the eastern side of **Bridleway 10** which passes in a north-to-south trajectory between Fields 10 and 11 (see Field Numbers figure in **Appendix F of the Statement of Case**). This has been proposed to ensure the route's openness is not compromised, and the potential for adverse visual impacts is reduced. The existing hedgerow on the western side of **Bridleway 10** will be allowed to grow up to a height of 3-4 metres. More detail on this can be seen in Volume 2, **Figure 14** of the submitted planning application.
- 3.7. A significant buffer of approximately 20 metres has been adopted along the northern boundary of Fields 7-10 in the northern section of the Appeal Site, which borders **Gotham Bridleway 11** (Wood Lane) and currently has open views across the fields. This buffer will host 10 metres of improved grassland and 10 metres of woodland. This will remove the risk of a corridor effect and maintain the landscape character of the surrounding area.
- 3.8. Hedgerow planting is also proposed along the north-eastern boundary of Field 15 to reduce views into the field from **Gotham Bridleway 11 and 13** which border this field. This planting should fit congruously with the surrounding area due to the hedgerow planting which already exists further north along this bridleway.
- 3.9. Characteristics of the Green Belt can be experienced in an area south of Field 16. On review of the predicted adverse effects upon the Green Belt, mitigation measures were implemented in the originally submitted design to avoid adverse effects upon the Green Belt designation for example, the proposed infrastructure within Field 16 was buffered from its south-eastern field boundary which borders the Midshires Way (**West Leake Bridleway No. 5**). Mitigation here involved hedgerow planting to screen views of the Proposed Development but continued

to allow views from **West Leake Bridleway No. 16** and **West Leake Bridleway No. 5** looking north towards Crow Wood and beyond. This also ensured open views towards East Leake were maintained when walking towards **Bridleway 5** from **Bridleway 13**. New and infill hedgerow planting was proposed along the south-eastern boundary of Fields 15 and 16, in order to reduce any views of development in these fields from Bridleway 5 (the Midshires Way). However the design was then updated following the feedback from the third party landscape review and the local community, infrastructure from Fields 16 and a southern section of Field 15 were removed from the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development therefore has no influence upon the openness or visual amenity of this location.

- 3.10. There is sufficient screening along **Bridleway 12** and no changes are proposed in relation to the width of or planting along this PRoW (hedgerows will be allowed to grow to height of 3-4 metres).
- 3.11. It should also be noted that the Proposed Development extended southeast at its early stages and incorporated another large field to the south-east of the Midshires Way. This was later removed in order to avoid enclosure of this route and reduce potential adverse visual impacts.
- 3.12. The submission also included a proposal for a number of additional enhancements across the site which aim to improve the enjoyment of those using the PRoW network, which include:
- *Wildflower meadows;*
 - *Biodiversity incentives such as hibernaculum, bug hotels and bird boxes.*
 - *Proposed woodland and grassland planting;*
 - *The introduction of a new permissive path; and*
 - *Interpretation boards detailing educational information on renewable energy including solar farms and the need for such development, as well as information on local points of interest.*
- 3.13. The PRoW network has been thoroughly considered throughout the application process with a standalone PRoW Management Plan submitted as part of the planning application. The LVA assessment noted that in close distance views, i.e., when the Proposed Development meets the PRoW route, a noticeable change in character at the immediate location would occur. However, the proposed mitigation measures have tried to offset this by using screen planting, offset areas, and panel exclusion zones. While there is the inevitable change to character within the Appeal Site's immediate surroundings, it is assessed to not be significant, as the interaction between the recreational users of the PRoW network and the Proposed Development is fleeting and confined to minimal locations along this network.
- 3.14. This report looks to provide evidence of this through a visual amenity analysis of the PRoW network., using visual tools such a ZTV Mapping and verified photomontages to demonstrate

how a user of the PRow network would experience the landscape with the addition of the Proposed Development as the user moves through the site.

4. VISUAL AMENITY AND PROW AMENITY ANALYSIS

Visual Amenity Assessment

- 4.1. 10 viewpoints scoped and agreed with the LPA were included within the LVA to illustrate the Proposed Development from representative vantage points within the 5km study area.
- 4.2. The assessment of these viewpoints concluded that short term significant visual effects are only predicted during year 0 of the Proposed Development at two viewpoints 3 and 5. Both viewpoints are located on recreational routes within or within very close proximity to the site, nearby views of the arrays and associated infrastructure would tend to remain highly visible until mitigation planting matures. In the longer term however, no significant effects are predicted at any of the assessed viewpoints, or on the users of any recreational routes in the locality. The WWA Review agreed with this finding.
- 4.3. Given this finding, visibility and/or influence of the Proposed Development on the receiving landscape and visual receptors beyond the immediate study area can be ruled out. This is also supported by the exploratory ZTVs carried out within this report and the 10 verified viewpoints submitted with the LVA. Visibility beyond 500m is extremely limited and is not of any significance to either the landscape or visual receptor. Therefore, this study of visual amenity will look at the core impact zone of the immediate study area.
- 4.4. As previously discussed, the Proposed Development is located on an elevated and gently sloping agricultural site, bounded by mature woodland, restricting views to the wider landscape when experienced from publicly accessible areas and the PRow network. It has been found that this existing vegetation can quickly provide partial or full screening to receptors when moving away from the Appeal Site due to the undulating topography of the surrounding landscape. Visibility in the general study area was found to be limited due to the presence of hedgerows and tree lines, both immediately adjacent to the Appeal Site and in the intervening landscape.
- 4.5. It has been acknowledged within the LVA assessment carried out for this Proposed Development that the majority of achievable views of the Proposed Development will be experienced within the core study area where open or partial views of the Proposed Development are possible, particularly in views from close proximity and at elevation, up to approximately 200m radius.
- 4.6. To investigate the effects of the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of the visual receptor and the recreational amenity of PRow network, a number of new photomontages have been included within this report 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.



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


Viewpoint A – PRow Network/Bridleway 12



Baseline View



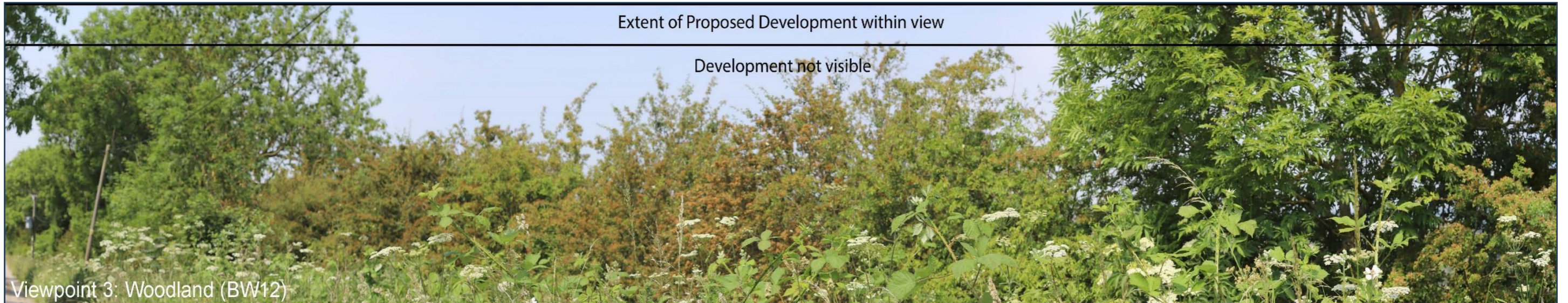
Operation Year 1

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Assessment Scenario	Commentary	Magnitude of Visual Effects	Significance / Quality of Visual Effects
<p>Viewpoint A View north from along Bridleway 12 looking South West</p> 	<p>Receptors: PRow users</p> <p>Sensitivity: High</p>	0m	Operation (Year 1)	<p>The Proposed Development will result in slight changes to the existing view with the introduction of mitigation planting as seen in the Year 1 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 completely screened by the sloping landform. The Proposed Development will be screened in its entirety by intervening landform and therefore will not alter this view. The Proposed Development will result in Low visual change with the addition of the mitigation planting, resulting in minor significant visual effects.</p>	Low	Minor

Viewpoint B– PRow Network/Bridleway 12




Baseline View



Viewpoint 3: Woodland (BW12)

Operation Year 1

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Assessment Scenario	Commentary	Magnitude of Visual Effects	Significance / Quality of Visual Effects
Viewpoint B View north from along Bridleway 12 looking South West 	Receptors: PRow users Sensitivity: High	0m	Operation (Year 1)	This viewpoint is representative of views for users of the Bridleway 12 moving north or south along the boundary of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development will be screened in its entirety by existing field boundary vegetation and therefore will not alter this view. The Proposed Development will result in no visual change and no significant visual effects . It is a 'no change' scenario.	No Change	No Change


Viewpoint C - PRow Network/Bridleway 11



Baseline View



Operation Year 1

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Assessment Scenario	Commentary	Magnitude of Visual Effects	Significance / Quality of Visual Effects
<p>Viewpoint C View northeast from Bridleway 11 looking south towards the Proposed Development</p> 	<p>Receptors: PRow users</p> <p>Sensitivity: High</p>	0m	Operation (Year 1)	<p>A portion of the Proposed Development will be seen from this viewpoint during operation Year 1 before the establishment of the mitigation vegetation proposed in this area. The panels will be seen against a backdrop of existing vegetation and just below the current skyline. While it will be discernible, the Proposed Development will not become a new focus in this view. It continues the visibility of existing infrastructure seen across this landscape and therefore is not out of character. The Proposed Development will integrate into this view's existing prevailing landscape character. The magnitude of visual change is therefore considered Low-Medium and the resulting significance of visual effects is considered to be Slight Adverse. The panels will be screened from view with the establishment of the proposed mitigation planting as seen in figure 8 of this report; therefore, this effect is temporary. Figure 8 within appendix B of this submission shows an additional view at Year 10</p>	Low-Medium	Slight Adverse


Viewpoint D – PRow Network/Bridleway 10



Baseline View




Operation Year 1

Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Assessment Scenario	Commentary	Magnitude of Visual Effects	Significance / Quality of Visual Effects
<p>Viewpoint D View northeast from Bridleway 10 looking south towards the Proposed Development</p> 	<p>Receptors: PRow users</p> <p>Sensitivity: High</p>	0m	Operation (Year 1)	<p>This viewpoint is representative of the views of users of the PRow Bridleway10 approaching the site from the north. The Proposed Development will be screened in its entirety by existing field boundary vegetation and therefore will not alter this view. The Proposed Development will result in no visual change and no significant visual effects. It is a 'no change' scenario.</p>	No Change	No Change

Viewpoint E - PRow Network/Bridleway 14



Viewpoint and Location	Visual Receptor / Sensitivity	Approximate distance to nearest part of the Scheme boundary (km)	Assessment Scenario	Commentary	Magnitude of Visual Effects	Significance / Quality of Visual Effects
<p>Viewpoint E View south from BW14 looking north towards the Proposed Development</p> 	<p>Receptors: PRow users</p> <p>Sensitivity: High</p>	0m	Operation (Year 1)	<p>A portion of the Proposed Development will be seen from this viewpoint during operation year 1 before the establishment of the mitigation vegetation proposed in this area. Figure 10 within appendix B1 of this submission shows an additional view at Year 10, showing full maturity of the proposed mitigation measures. The panels will be seen against the ridgeline of the hillside. While it will be discernible, the Proposed Development will not become a new focus in this view. The Proposed Development will integrate into this view's existing prevailing landscape pattern by blending in with the field patterns. The magnitude of visual change is therefore considered Low, and the resulting significance of visual effects is considered to be Slight Adverse. The panels will be screened from view with the establishment of the proposed mitigation planting; therefore, this effect is temporary.</p>	Low	Slight Adverse

5. OPENNESS OF THE RECEIVING LANDSCAPE

- 5.1 Throughout the landscape and visual assessment of the LVA and within this report, there is a common narrative that the visibility achieved towards the surrounding landscape is extremely limited due to the nature of the Appeal Site. The Appeal Site sits within an area which is bounded by a large coniferous forest which limits and encloses views and therefore acts as a screen for the wider study area views towards the Proposed Development. As previously stated, the LVA assessment concluded that the majority of achievable views of the Proposed Development will be experienced within the core study area where open or partial views of the Proposed Development are possible, particularly in views from close proximity and at elevation, up to approximately 200m radius.
- 5.2 Views of open countryside can be achieved from areas within the study area; however these areas are limited due to the nature of the vegetation which exists within the intervening landscape. This has also been shown within the ZTV results, showing only glimpsed views or partial views of the Proposed Development within close distance, signifying the level of vegetative screening.
- 5.3 One example of the openness achieved has been captured along Bridleway 10, at Viewpoint D’s location, as shown below. When the viewer looks to the east, the sense of openness as described within the Green Belt descriptions is achievable. However, the Appeal Site sits to the south, is screened from view by existing vegetation and has no influence upon the openness or visual amenity of this viewpoint. The views orientations are shown to the right and described.



Viewpoint D – Orientation Map



Viewpoint D (Indicated in green on orientation map) – View looking south towards the Proposed Development



Viewpoint D (Indicated in green on orientation map) – View looking east towards open landscape

6. SUMMARY

Openness and Green Belt

- 6.1. A concern within the Refusal is in relation to the Openness associated with the Green Belt designation.
- 6.2. While Green Belt is not fundamentally a landscape designation, the NPPF states: *“The government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”* It is against this policy that the LVA was undertaken.
- 6.3. Evidence provided within the main LVA and further investigations on the core study area within this report, conclude a common narrative that the visibility of the surrounding landscape is extremely limited due to the nature of the Appeal Site, which sits within an area bounded by a large coniferous forest that limits and encloses views acting as a screen for wider study area views towards the Proposed Development. As previously stated, the LVA concluded that the majority of achievable views of the Proposed Development will be experienced within the core study area where open or partial views of the Proposed Development are possible, particularly in views from close proximity and at elevation.
- 6.4. Viewpoint D shows an example of the setting of the Proposed Development in relation to a view where a sense of ‘openness’ is achieved. This viewpoint is captured along Bridleway 10, at this location, as shown in Section 5 of this report. When the viewer looks to the east, the sense of openness as described within the Green Belt descriptions is achievable. However, the Appeal Site sits to the south and cannot be experienced within this view as it is screened from view by existing vegetation.
- 6.5. Another location in which the characteristics of the Green Belt landscape is experienced is in an area south of Field 16. Viewpoints have been included within the main LVA for this location and on review of the predicted adverse effects upon the Green Belt, infrastructure from Fields 16 and a southern section of Field 15 were removed from the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development therefore has no influence upon the openness or visual amenity of this viewpoint. This is the case across the study area and can be closely examined through the 10 viewpoints submitted with the LVA along with 5 additional viewpoints undertaken for this specific report.

Visual Amenity and PRow Amenity

- 6.6. While elevated and gently sloping, the Appeal Site is enclosed by the mature woodland and field boundaries that exist within the Proposed Development’s immediate boundaries. As

- noted within the ZTV analysis and within the verified views, the existing vegetation quickly provides partial or full screening to surrounding landscape and visual receptors.
- 6.7. As noted previously, 10 viewpoints were included within the LVA to illustrate the Proposed Development from representative vantage points within the 5km study area, which were scoped and agreed with the LPA. The assessment of these viewpoints concluded that short term significant visual effects are only predicted during year 0 for two viewpoints, viewpoint 3 and 5. Both viewpoints are located on recreational routes within or within very close proximity to the site, where nearby views of the arrays and associated infrastructure would tend to remain highly visible until mitigation planting matures. In the longer term however, no significant effects are predicted at any of the assessment viewpoints, or on the users of any recreational routes in the locality. The WWA Review agreed with this finding. Mitigation and design changes have been implemented since the initial design to further offset impacts upon these two viewpoints.
- 6.8. Given this finding, visibility or/and influence of the Proposed Development on the receiving landscape and visual receptors beyond the immediate study area can be ruled out. This is also supported by the exploratory ZTVs carried out within this report and the 10 verified viewpoints submitted with the LVA. Visibility beyond 500m is extremely limited and is not of any significance to either the landscape or visual receptor.
- 6.9. Glimpses of the Proposed Development are achieved when experienced from around 50m away, moving towards the Appeal Site, as seen in Viewpoint C and Viewpoint E. Mitigation measures proposed, such as panel offsets and proposed vegetation quickly avoids effects from this area by screening potential visibility. It can be concluded that the impacts upon the visual amenity of the visual receptors, even within close proximity to the site, **are not significant**.
- 6.10. Users of sections of Bridleway 11 will experience high visual effects for a short time, as they have a glimpsed view of the Proposed Development in Field 11. The magnitude of visual effects therefore ranges from **low-medium** before the establishment of the mitigation vegetation. The views of the panels in this area are also fleeting as the Proposed Development and the PRow user only interact for approximately 100m. These viewpoints are located approximately 200m apart along the PRow network and through the verified views, views of the Proposed Development from the PRow are limited to a section of the Bridleway 11. Therefore, the effects are considered **Low** upon the amenity user.
- 6.11. Viewpoints C and D also display how quickly views are screened from view within this landscape. At the intersection of Bridleways 10 and 11, there is an open view from the northeast of the landscape below, with the Proposed Development screened from view by existing vegetation as shown in Viewpoints D. A couple of metres away to Viewpoint C, there is a direct view towards the Proposed Development, adjacent to the Proposed Development. Mitigation measures have been thoroughly explored here, with offsets, panel reduction and screen planting introduced to screen views towards the Proposed Development for the

fleeting view of the Proposed Development by a PRoW user. Visual effects upon the PRoW user for this section is **Low**.

6.12. Visibility of the Proposed Development from the remainder of the PRoW network will be mainly screened by the thick vegetation in the Appeal Site's immediate surroundings. Due to this feature within the landscape, the existing views are enclosed and short in distance. Views beyond the field boundaries are not achieved, as seen throughout the verified views in this report and within the main LVA. Visual effects are considered to be **Very Low**, with only a chance of a glimpse through winter vegetation throughout the remainder of the PRoW network.

6.13. In conclusion:

- **No significant** effects are predicted on any landscape character types/areas or landscape designations within the study area;
- Effects upon the visual amenity of a visual receptors within the core study area would be **not significant**;
- Effects from the PRoW towards the southern section of the BW11 are anticipated, but the effects would be **not significant**; and
- Once planting matures, effects on the remainder of the PRoW network are predicted to be **not significant**.

APPENDICES

Appendix B1

- Figure 1 - ZTV with Woodland
- 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
- Figure 6 – Viewpoint A (Viewpoint 2 from original application)
- Figure 7 – Viewpoint B (New, for the purpose of this study)
- Figure 8 – Viewpoint C (New for the purpose of this study)
- Figure 9 – Viewpoint D (New, for the purpose of this study)
- Figure 10 – Viewpoint E (Viewpoint 8 from the original application)