

Landscape Proof of Evidence

Kelham Solar Farm

On behalf of Assured Asset Solar 2 Ltd

Date: 23rd September 2025 | Pegasus Ref: P25-1615

PINS Ref: APP/B3030/W/25/3364181 | LPA Ref: 23/O1837/FULM

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Document Management.

Version	Date	Author	Checked/ Approved by:	Reason for revision
1	05.09.2025	AC	AC/CR	Draft issue
2	17.09.2025	AC	AC	Edit to proof
3	22.09.2025	AC	AC/CR	Final edits
4	23.09.2025	AC	AC/CR	Final



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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 Assured Asset Solar 2 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 land north of Main Road, Kelham. This evidence should be read in conjunction with the planning proof of evidence prepared by James Cook (CD11.1) and heritage proof of evidence prepared by Charlotte James-Martin (CD11.4), which elaborate upon the Appellant's Statement of Case (CD9.4).
- 2.2. I was not involved with the application stage of the project. The Sirus Group prepared the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (CD1.52–53) and subsequent addendum (CD1.54) for the application. When the application was refused and the Appellant decided to appeal against the Council's decision (CD2.149), I was instructed at that stage. I 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: 23/01837/FULM) was submitted to Newark & Sherwood District Council (the Council). The application was refused at Planning Committee, as confirmed in a Decision Notice dated 31 January 2025 (CD2.149).
- 2.4. The three Reasons for Refusal (RfR) are set out below:

“(a) ...

(b) The proposed development, when taken cumulatively with other renewable energy developments in the locality, will result in unacceptable harm to the landscape appearance, contrary to Spatial Policy 3 (Rural Areas) and Core Policy 9 (Climate Change) of the Amended Core Strategy (2019) and Policies DM4 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation), DM5 (Design) and DM8 (Development in the Open Countryside) of the Allocations and Development Management DPD (July 2013) in addition to the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) and Planning Practice Guidance. There are no other material planning considerations that would outweigh this harm (“Reason 2”).

(c) ...

Scope of Evidence

- 2.5. The second RfR with regard to cumulative effects is concerned with impacts upon the appearance of the landscape, which I seek to address in my proof.
- 2.6. Whilst I understand that the wording in the RfR focuses on the appearance of the landscape, ie a visual amenity point to enable to Inspector to make a judgement on other matters relating to landscape character in the round, 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 James Cook to comment upon.

- 2.7. In line with the Appellant's Statement of Case (CD9.4), I discuss the following in my proof:
- How the character of the site, coupled with the typology, temporary and reversible nature of the scheme, with proposed planting, would mitigate the harm
 - Effects on landscape character, including cumulative effects where relevant
 - Effects on visual amenity, including cumulative effects where relevant
 - Legacy benefits of the proposed planting
- 2.8. In short, my landscape proof explains how the proposal would affect landscape elements, landscape character and visual amenity.
- 2.9. I also rely upon the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (CD9.13) between the Appellant and Council, where they consider landscape, visual and cumulative issues and reflect where the parties have reached an agreement or disagree.
- 2.10. 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 19). I have set out my own analysis with regard to the scheme in my proof of evidence. Whilst I note that an LVIA (CD1.52–53) and subsequent addendum (CD1.54) were prepared for the application, 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 The Sirius Group and the version which I have used, as set out in my Appendix 9.
- 2.11. 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 11 viewpoints that were assessed in the application LVIA. My findings are set out in a schedule which summarises visual impacts in Appendix 10. This schedule also includes the analysis and findings undertaken by The Sirius Group for each of the viewpoints. This summary schedule enables the differences to be identified between the application LVIA (Appendix 10) and my analysis incorporated into my proof of evidence. Review of this table reveals that in terms of year 1, there is a degree of consensus between my findings and those of The Sirius Group in terms of similar rating and half-to-one-step difference in general terms. I conclude that the degree of visual effects for both years 1 and 10 would generally be slightly lower than those identified by The Sirius Group.
- 2.12. In preparing my evidence, I have undertaken an assessment of the operational phase of the scheme, as a worst-case scenario (Appendix 10), as the later stages of the construction phase and the early stages of the decommissioning phase would be comparable to the operational state of the proposals.

Landscape Strategy

- 2.13. The Decision Notice (CD2.149) includes a list of drawings upon which the decision was made, which includes the Landscape Mitigation Plan (drawing ref: HC1002 02 16 R2) (CD1.32) referred to in the Decision Notice as a Landscape Masterplan. This scheme will be hereafter referred to as the 'Refused Scheme'. This identifies, in detail, the retained and proposed landscape features, including enhanced hedgerows and new native hedgerows with trees, together with areas of meadowland.
- 2.14. The Appellant has invited the Inspector to determine the Appeal on the basis of an updated Landscape Masterplan (drawing ref: HC1002 02 16 R3 – Appendix 2) (CD10.31), referred to hereafter as the Amended Scheme.
- 2.15. A Case Management Conference was held with the Inspector. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) has been subject to consultation, which has now ended, and we are proceeding on the basis that the Appeal will be based on the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2).



Amended Scheme Landscape Masterplan (drawing ref: HC1002 02 16 R3, (Appendix 2)) (CD10.31)

Representative Viewpoints and Visualisations

- 2.16. I consider that the LVIA viewpoint photographs (CD1.53–4), 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.

- 2.17. The Verified Visualisations (photomontages) (CD1.53–4) prepared by MSEnvision Limited (MSE) for the Refused Scheme are industry-compliant visualisations.
- 2.18. 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.
- 2.19. The Committee Report (CD3.2) provides a summary with regard to visual assessment ***“Whilst the categorisation of particular views of the development during construction is partially questioned, the overall conclusion of landscape and visual effects are not disputed in that any potential effects would be localised and would be reduced over the lifespan of the development through additional planting, noting that the proposals remain reversible in the longer term. In summary, having regard to the provisions of the submitted LVIA and of the independent assessment, there would not be a significant adverse impact as a result of the proposals, nevertheless the potential harm (particularly to users of the footpath and in part the effected residential receptors along Broadgate Lane) still needs to be considered in the overall planning balance and weighed against the benefits of the proposal.”***
- 2.20. It should be recognised that it is not practical to include viewpoints from every possible location. The viewpoints which have been selected (Appendix 19) and agreed by the Council at the application stage (with the exception of Viewpoint PR 01) 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) (CD7.1) 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.
- 2.21. With this information, the Case Officer was fully informed with regard to the visual implications of the proposal as set out in the Committee Report (CD3.1).

Professional Judgement

- 2.22. Mindful of the GLVIA3 (CD7.1), 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. It is understood that Mr Reynolds, acting as the landscape expert witness on behalf of the Council, has stated that the arrangement of the assessment viewpoints for the appeal site is over a much smaller area than he would expect for a scheme such as proposed. However, I would note that no additional viewpoints were requested by the Council at the application stage. It is also worth noting that the area covered by a site does not automatically translate into the visual envelope or study area being a certain size. This is a point which is emphasised in the policy paper, National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN–3) (CD5.27) at paragraph 2.10.95, which states that, ***“However, whilst it may be the case that the development covers a significant surface area, in the case of ground-mounted solar***

panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography, the area of a zone of visual influence could be appropriately minimised.” During the process of agreeing the Landscape SoCG (CD5.13), it is noted that Mr Reynolds has included an additional viewpoint, PRO1, which is recorded on a PRoW footpath, to the south of the A616 Ollerton Road, Little Carlton.

- 2.24. The degree of a landscape or visual effect is identified by means of a descriptive scale as per the GLVIA3 guidance (CD7.1). 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)

- 2.25. 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)

- 2.26. 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.

- 2.27. I have reviewed the LVIA (CD1.52–3) and subsequent addendum (CD1.54) 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

- 2.28. It is understood that there is no Rule 6 Party involved with the appeal.

3. Description of the Appeal Site and its Context

- 3.1. The appeal site is formed of a collection of agricultural fields, which have been used for arable farming, including growing energy crops and animal foods. The appeal site comprises three fields of varying scale, partitioned by gappy hedgerows, some of which contain scattered hedgerow trees. The field pattern is considered to be medium in scale, situated within an area which contains both smaller-scale fields, typically situated near a settlement and much larger fields adjacent to the River Trent. The perimeter boundaries of the appeal site are, on the whole, well defined by a mix of well-established hedgerows and areas of woodland.



Aerial imagery of the site and its local context (Appendix 5)

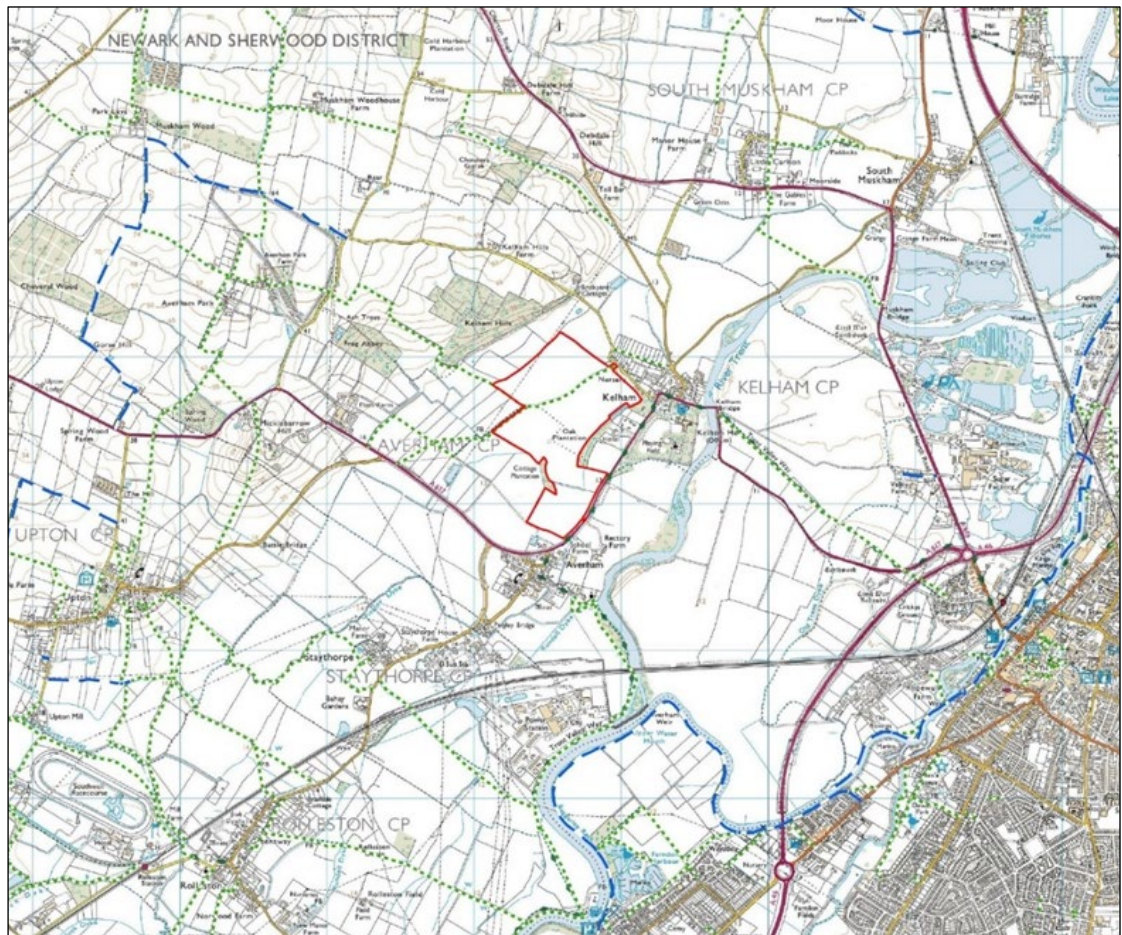
- 3.2. The topography of the appeal site slopes gradually, reflecting its location within the vale (Appendix 7).
- 3.3. A series of large-scale pylons are located within the appeal site, crossing the far western extent and continuing across the adjacent landscape, joining into the extensive networks of electricity infrastructure, which is a notable linear feature in the wide vale landscape associated with the River Trent, frequently punctuating the well wooded skyline in views.
- 3.4. The River Trent vale has long been associated with energy infrastructure, with many of these elements still visible in the landscape beyond the appeal site. As noted above, there is an

extensive network of large-scale pylons crossing the landscape beyond the appeal site, radiating out from the Staythorpe Power Station and adjacent substation, which is located approximately 1km to the south of the site. The various tall metallic and pale coloured elements are visible in the locality. Other notable built elements in the landscape beyond the appeal site include the British Sugar factory complex with its various warehouses and tall cylindrical silos, and chimneys situated on the edge of Newark-on-Trent.



View looking across the vale towards Newark-on-Trent (Viewpoint 11)

- 3.5. There are no roads within the appeal site. Broadgate Lane passes along the northern boundary of the appeal site and continues into the settlement of Kelham. Main Road (A617) passes a long part of the appeal site's eastern boundary. Further afield, the A46 dual carriageway diverts bypass traffic around the eastern side of Newark on Trent, and the A617 Kelham Road connects into this bypass to the east of the appeal site. The settlement of Kelham is located in closest proximity to the appeal site, albeit visually and physically separated from the village by existing vegetation, which includes woodland.
- 3.6. The further you travel from Newark on Trent, 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, frequently accompanied by a collection of large-scale poultry sheds.
- 3.7. Within the appeal site are two Public Rights of Way (PRoW) routes. PRoW FP6 enters the appeal site from the south-west and continues in a northeast orientation until it meets Broadgate Lane. As indicated by the Amended Landscape Masterplan (drawing ref: HC1002 02 16 R3), there is a discrepancy between two data sources as to the alignment of this footpath, with the Nottinghamshire County Council Rights of Way mapping showing on the eastern side of the hedgerows, and the Ordnance Survey mapping showing it on the western side. As shown, both alignments can be accommodated. The second PRoW footpath FP4 enters the appeal site from the west and runs parallel, but within the boundary, until it joins with PRoW footpath FP6.



Site location plan (Appendix 1)

4. Description of the Proposal (Landscape Perspective)

- 4.1. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) comprises several components, which are documented in the appeal submissions. This information was taken into account when preparing this Proof of Evidence.
- 4.2. 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 could include species which are prevalent in the locality.



Amended Scheme Landscape Masterplan (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) illustrating how the proposed permissive routes would connect into the existing PROW network on the appeal site

- 4.3. The proposed hedgerows would include hedgerow trees, which would interrupt views of the solar panels, would strengthen the well-treed character of the local landscape, and create new 'Green Lanes' replicating the treatment of other PRow routes in the locality.
- 4.4. As depicted on the Landscape Masterplan for the Amended Scheme, the proposals bring forward the opportunity to incorporate additional recreational routes within the appeal site, providing opportunities for walkers to access areas of the appeal site which are currently private farmland and allowing users to experience a safe, vehicle-free, circular route. In the Committee Report (CD3.2), the officer confirmed that ***"The permissive route would include extensive planting on either side to create a high quality and pleasant rural path."***
- 4.5. 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.
- 4.6. 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.
- 4.7. 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 sheep grazing beneath the panels.
- 4.8. 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, and an A-shaped profile to maximise ecological benefits. At the same time, some of the appeal site's hedgerows would be allowed to develop into wider and taller landscape features (and maintained at approximately 3m height, if currently lower) to increase their screening potential. Site-specific design solutions have been guided by a detailed analysis of inter-visibility between the appeal site and publicly accessible locations in the locality.
- 4.9. Following the refusal of the application, the proposed increase in hedgerow height and change in the management regime are considered to reflect the character of the local area where tall hedgerows, belts of trees and blocks of woodland are already present. It is important to note that less rigorously managed hedgerows are more beneficial in terms of ecology.
- 4.10. In summary, the overarching strategy for the landscape associated with the appeal site is:
 - To increase the recreational opportunities within the appeal site.
 - 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 grassland suitable for grazing and species-rich meadow grassland and managed to increase biodiversity.

4.11. 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 appeal site.

Landscape Strategy

4.12. As illustrated by the Amended Landscape Masterplan (CD10.31), the following changes have been made:

- Amendment A – Additional hedgerow – The inclusion of additional hedgerow along the existing PRoW running along the western boundary, leaving a minimum 10m corridor for the permissive bridleway and existing footpath. This has resulted in the loss of 80 panels;
- Amendment B – Permissive bridleway proposal – The extension of the dotted yellow line illustrating the proposed permissive bridleway route to Broadgate Lane;
- Amendment C – Hedgerow key amends – The addition of 3m reference in the key to the Existing and Proposed hedgerows;
- Amendment D – General key amendments – including the amendments of typos in the key;
- Amendment E – Alignment of PRoW offsite – Amended alignment of the PRoW off-site where it exits the middle of the western boundary heading west. Please note the 'definitive' map is different to the OS base. The OS base appears to follow a track – both have been shown for the avoidance of doubt;
- Amendment F – Orchid Annotation – Annotation of the 'orchid' area;
- Amendment G – Proposed interpretive boards – Depicting the location of proposed interpretive boards.

4.13. My Proof of Evidence has been prepared on the basis of the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31), which has been subject to consultation.

Landscape Proposals

4.14. At a macro level, the proposed green infrastructure would ensure that the development would:

- 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;
- Protect and create habitats to enable biodiversity habitats and flora and fauna species to thrive; and
- Provide a resilient and adaptive environment in the face of climate change.

4.15. The landscape strategy has been designed in response to the opportunities that the appeal site offers. The green infrastructure would deliver other benefits which include:

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- 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.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

4.16. The Amended Scheme has been measured against the latest 4.0 version of the metric, which has identified that, based on the Amended Scheme, there would be a proposed net gain of 82.04% in habitat units and 41.70% in hedgerow units (CD12.1).

Vegetation Growth Rates

4.17. 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 2) (CD10.31), has been subject to an appropriate management regime which an appropriately worded condition can secure, and that the vegetation has established.

4.18. 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. For the purpose of this proof, the growth of the proposed hedgerows and trees is assumed to be approximately 0.5 m per annum.

Decommissioning

4.19. It is noted that the proposals include a range of built infrastructure. Potential permanent loss of land from agricultural production will be limited to the extent of land for habitat enhancement and the transformers and switchgear compound at the BESS substation, and the associated access track. Furthermore, the access track to Redhouse Field and the flood alleviation area here will also be retained.

4.20. Furthermore, 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.

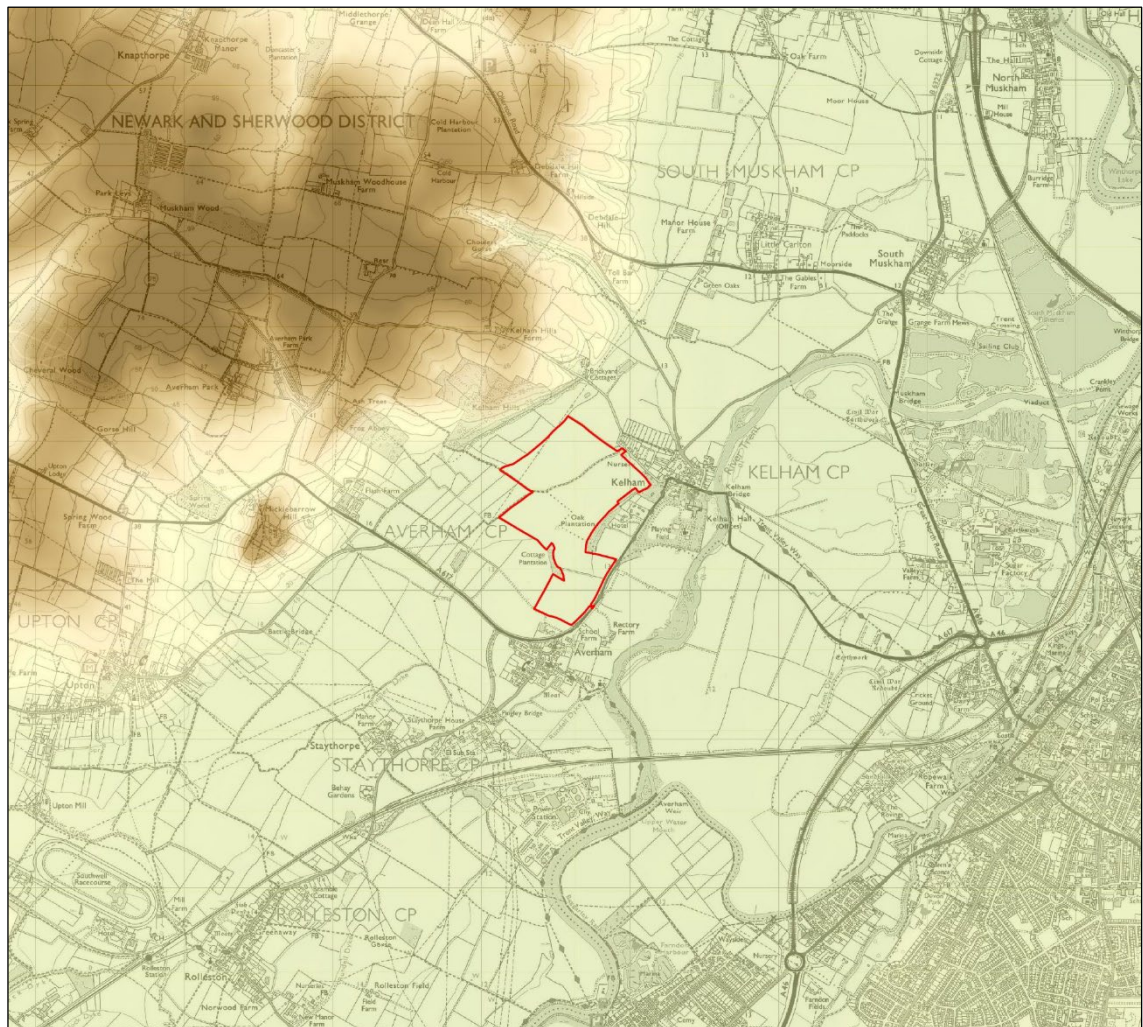
5. Effect on Landscape Elements

Introduction

- 5.1. This section of my proof assesses the effects on those landscape elements (features) that currently characterise the appeal 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 appeal site. It also explains why the scheme would result in some beneficial effects for some landscape elements.

Topography

- 5.2. The appeal site is located in a very gently undulating vale 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.



Topography plan (Appendix 7)

- 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 appeal site. I consider that the overall magnitude of change to the ground profile of the appeal 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 appeal site. Internally, there are some scattered hedgerow trees. 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: HC1002 02 16 R3) (Appendix 2) (CD10.31), there is tree cover around the periphery as well as internally within the appeal site that would be retained as part of the green infrastructure. This would be reinforced with new tree planting. No trees are required to be removed to accommodate the Amended Scheme, meaning there would be a net gain in terms of tree resource. A detailed planting plan can be secured by means of a suitably worded condition.



View from the proposed vehicular access, looking across part of the appeal site, to the woodland near Kelham House Country Manor (Viewpoint 4)

- 5.5. Overall, the magnitude of change is assessed as low, which, when combined with a high sensitivity, results in a moderate (beneficial) effect on the tree resource of the appeal 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

- 5.6. Across the appeal site, there are some hedgerows of varying heights which demarcate the field boundaries. While many of 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.



Photo depicting some of the current field boundaries on the appeal site (Viewpoint 3)

- 5.7. At a number of locations across the appeal site, there are some short sections of existing hedgerows that are proposed to be removed to accommodate access tracks and security fencing. However, the scheme would include additional new hedgerow planting, resulting in an overall net gain.
- 5.8. As a result, the magnitude of change is assessed as medium. 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 medium magnitude of change would result in a moderate 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

- 5.9. There would be an inevitable change in the existing land cover of the appeal 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.
- 5.10. I understand that the grazing density for sheep within a solar farm is not materially different to general grazing densities. By conversion to pasture, the land would not only have the opportunity to rest, but there would be an improvement in agronomy terms through sheep being kept on the land with associated increased nutrient levels. 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 appeal site.

- 5.11. My analysis, which I have set out above is based on a number of considerations relating to this aspect of the scheme and is noted in the following paragraphs.
- 5.12. 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.
- 5.13. With the scheme as proposed (Appendix 2) (CD10.31), the land would be managed as pasture where the solar panels are located within the existing fields.
- 5.14. This land cover would be retained across the entire appeal site, with the solar panels superimposed over this managed grassland, in contrast to development that sits in the land and is permanent.
- 5.15. This land would be managed with sheep grazing to ensure that the grassland is appropriately managed and maintained for the lifetime of the project. Sheep are able to effectively graze across any of the grassland whether it is under the panels or between the panels themselves.
- 5.16. Throughout the life of the project the land would be farmed based on sheep grazing and therefore would remove any intensive arable farming practice.
- 5.17. The amount of actual loss of agricultural land as a result of the scheme would be minimal, given the overall size of the appeal 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.
- 5.18. 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. With the land managed for grazing the sheep droppings as humus, this would allow the soil to become more enriched in soil habitat terms. 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. Furthermore, with the land managed for pasture with sheep grazing present, the proposal would allow carbon sequestration with regard to the soil resource within the appeal site.
- 5.19. The physical form of the grassland would remain with the solar panels in place.
- 5.20. The fields are currently free of built development and therefore have 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 2m 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, as the actual physical impact but would be limited in scale across the appeal site.
- 5.21. The installation of the solar arrays would not seal the land, nor would it cause any downgrading of quality. Potential permanent loss of land from agricultural production will be limited to the extent of land for habitat enhancement and the transformers and switchgear compound at the BESS substation, and the associated access track. Furthermore, the access track to Redhouse Field and the flood alleviation area here will also be retained. I understand

that the installation and decommissioning process would not have any significant or long-term adverse effects on soils subject to the proposal, following good practice in terms of pasture management and maintenance.

- 5.22. The term ‘openness’ with regard to countryside is not specifically identified in the NPPF, though I note that the Officer’s Report refers to impact on openness. The introduction of the solar farm across the appeal site would inevitably have a bearing upon the openness on the appeal site itself. The sense of openness associated with the appeal site is most readily appreciated from the PRoW that crosses the northern part of the appeal site which currently has open views, the route currently affords open views where it passes across the fields. The introduction of the solar farm would result in the creation of a green lane, such that views from the PRoW would be focused along the green lane framed by hedgerows flanking the route.
- 5.23. The introduction of the proposed solar farm would inevitably introduce various elements of built form and reduce the spatial aspect associated with the appeal site to some degree, though this would be limited given the low-profile nature of the development combined with its light footprint. Given the hedgerows around the perimeter of the appeal site are of a comparable height, 3–4m, the perceived loss of any spatial aspect associated with the fields would be modest resulting in a limited and moderate degree of harm in this regard. The solar farm with its various elements would inevitably reduce the sense of openness from a spatial point of view.

Public Rights of Way

- 5.24. There are a number of public rights of way in the locality of the appeal site (Appendix 1). All those beyond the appeal site would be physically unaffected with the scheme in place. There are two PRoWs located within the appeal site. Users of these routes would be affected in visual amenity terms which is addressed in section 8 of my proof.



View from Broadgate Lane at the point where the existing on-site PRoW footpath meets the road (Viewpoint 1)

- 5.25. With regards to the on-site PRoWs, no diversions of any routes 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 physical degree of effect on the public right of way as a

resource and facility. Visual effects upon users of the PRowWs are considered in Section 6 of this proof of evidence which deals with visual amenity.

- 5.26. New permissive paths are proposed as part of the scheme to connect to existing PRowWs and in order to extend the PRow network. With a high susceptibility, value, and sensitivity which when combined with a medium magnitude of change, would result in a major beneficial effect to this resource.

Water Features

- 5.27. The Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy (CD1.51) submitted with the application confirms that there are a number of drainage ditches within the appeal site. Due to the characteristic nature of these features within the appeal site, which are frequent in surrounding area, they are considered to have a high susceptibility, value, and sensitivity to the type of development proposed. The proposals have been designed to allow a separation buffer between these features and the proposed infrastructure. In short, the existing water features would be retained and not physically affected which would result in a negligible magnitude of change. As a result, the effects would be negligible with regard to water features within the appeal site.

Summary of Effects upon Landscape Elements

The scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) would result in some beneficial effects upon the landscape elements within the appeal site when considered in the round, as summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Effects on Landscape Elements	
Element	Landscape Effect
Topography	Negligible
Trees	Moderate (beneficial)
Hedgerows	Moderate (beneficial)
Land Use/Land Cover/Openness	Moderate (adverse)
Public Rights of Way	Major (beneficial)
Water Features	Negligible

- 5.28. In overall terms, the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) would result in some beneficial effects with regard to the landscape elements that currently define the landscape character of the appeal 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 appeal site, namely trees and hedgerows would be retained and enhanced, albeit set within the context of a solar farm with the land managed for sheep 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 appeal site.

- 5.29. 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 reversible nature. The timescale of 40 years is similar for some other elements in the landscape such as timber crop production.
- 5.30. During the decommissioning stage most 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 section 7 of my proof.
- 5.31. I recognise that the scheme would bring about a change to the character of the appeal site itself, introducing solar panels and associated infrastructure superimposed over grassland, which can be managed for pasture and grazing. However, such a change would in physical terms be confined to within the boundaries of the appeal site.

6. Valued Landscape

- 6.1. As agreed in the Landscape SoCG (CD9.13), the appeal site is not considered to be a valued landscape as per paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (CD5.2). However, this analysis has been carried out in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations (TGN 02/21) which supersedes Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 to establish the value, susceptibility and sensitivity of the appeal site.

Landscape Designations

- 6.1. The appeal site does not fall within any areas afforded a level of protection and value as a result of regional or national landscape designation. The appeal site represents a typical 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) (CD5.2).

Natural Heritage

- 6.2. The appeal 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 appeal 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, tree lines, and drainage features. There are also no clearly identified, distinctive landscape-related geological, geomorphological or pedological features, noting the appeal site is within the wide low low-lying vale of the River Trent, but this is not particularly distinctive.

Cultural Heritage

- 6.3. A full assessment relating to Cultural Heritage is part of the application material. There are no historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. follies, monuments, avenues, tree roundels) located within the appeal site. Nor the presence of historic parks and gardens and designed landscapes.
- 6.4. The condition of the appeal site is variable, and this is confirmed in the published landscape character assessment. Over time, field boundaries across the appeal site have been removed, creating the larger-scale field pattern which is visible today. Vegetation across the appeal site is of varying quality and condition, leading to field boundaries being fragmented, lacking structure and being gappy in sections.

Associations

- 6.5. 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 appeal 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

- 6.6. The appeal site and the local landscape do not lie within a rare landscape character area at either a national or local level. The landscape character is judged to be fairly typical of that found in the locality and as set out in the published landscape character assessments. The few landscape features present within the appeal 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 appeal site include mature trees both within field boundaries and within woodland, such as the Kelham Hills woodland to the west. However, as identified during the appeal 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 appeal site.

Recreational

- 6.7. The appeal site contains two PRoW footpaths, which, in turn, connect to the wider PRoW network across the surrounding landscape beyond the appeal site. Example indicators in the TGN are listed as ***“open access land, common land and public rights of way (particularly National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths and Core Paths)”*** or the ***“Presence of town and village greens”***. As noted previously, whilst the appeal site contains two PRoWs, there are no other features listed above which are present within the appeal site, noting the Trent Valley Way long distance trail passes along the A617 Main Road adjacent to part of the appeal site’s boundary.

Perceptual – Scenic

- 6.8. In terms of its scenic qualities, the appeal site and adjacent landscape 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 appeal site is located offers medium-range views, and these are characterised by a combination of wooded horizons punctuated by large-scale pylons and industrial chimneys, with frequent tree cover foreshortening the views and restricting the appreciation of the local field pattern.



View looking across the landscape to the southwest of the appeal site

- 6.9. In terms of distinctive features, the appeal site is comprised of very gently sloping topography, which cannot be described as dramatic; equally, it contains no distinctive or

notable ridgelines. The appeal site is set within a wooded landscape, with woodland in various forms being a key defining characteristic of the locality.

- 6.10. The land cover is predominantly arable, so whilst at certain times of the year the crop can appear as contracting 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

- 6.11. Human presence is evident with noise audible from the nearby busy highways. It is neither wild nor particularly tranquil due to its proximity to the residential properties within the nearby settlement and views towards built infrastructure on the periphery of Newark-on-Trent and its managed agricultural character.
- 6.12. 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 appeal site.

Functional

- 6.13. The appeal site is a simple arable landscape comprising open fields with some associated boundary vegetation, including hedgerows and trees. Public access is limited to designated PRow routes within the appeal site. Apart from its agricultural use, the appeal 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.***” Nor does it have a physical or functional link with an adjacent national landscape designation, nor is it important to the appreciation of a designated landscape and its special qualities. The Amended Scheme, however, does propose areas of wildflower meadow planting.

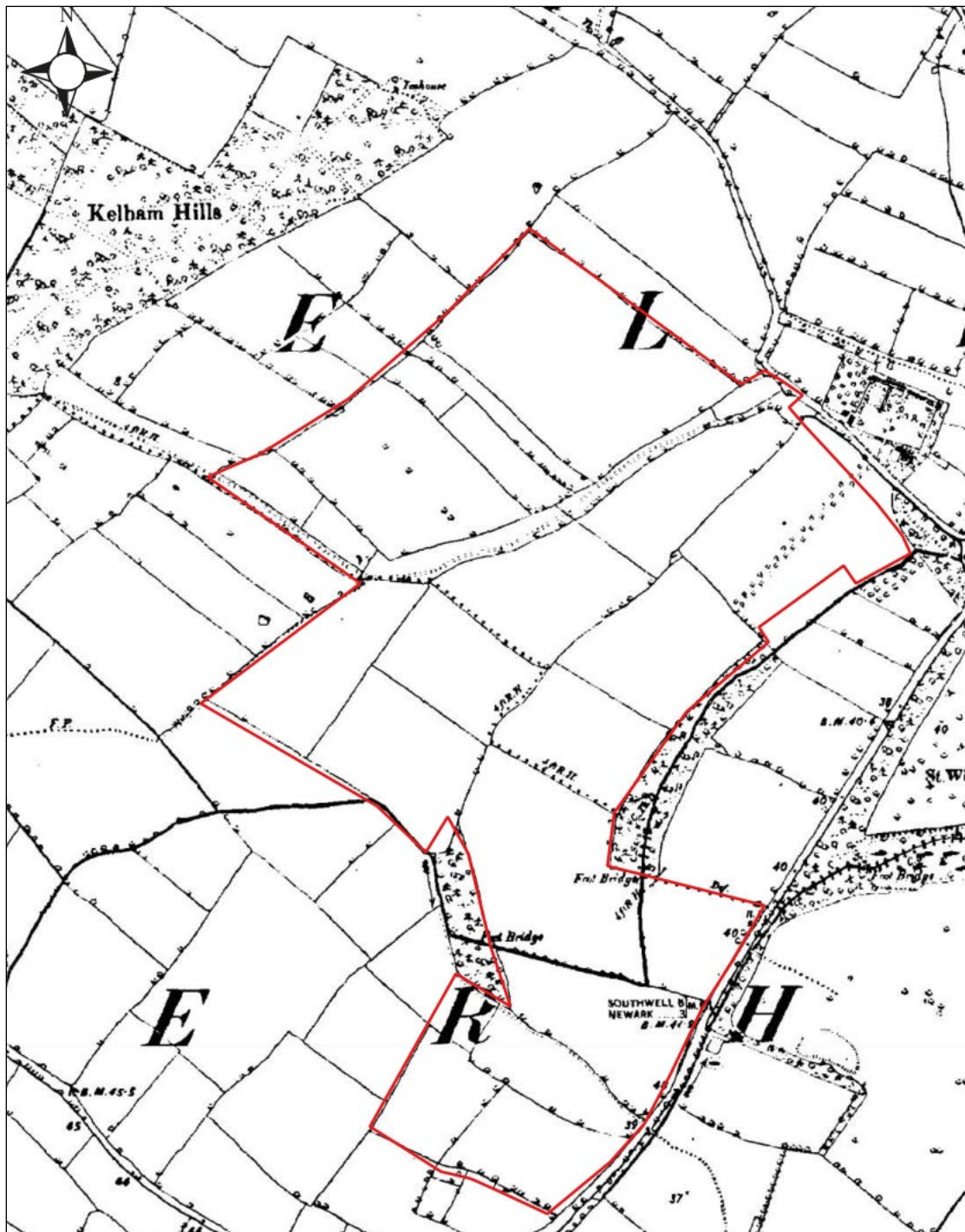
Value

- 6.14. Based on the above analysis, the value of the appeal site is assessed as being medium.

Susceptibility

- 6.15. The appeal 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 appeal site sits within the countryside, where many established trees, hedgerows and woodland extend through the landscape.
- 6.16. The historic mapping published in 1886, included in the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (CD1.66) provided for the application, illustrates that many of the internal field boundaries across the appeal 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 appeal site are frequently interrupted by intervening field boundary vegetation.



1886 Historic Mapping (extracted from the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, (CD1.66))

- 6.17. Solar farms and their associated infrastructure and cables are characterised by their light footprint and low profile, with the panels following and reflecting the underlying topography, and limited earthworks.

- 6.18. On that basis, the susceptibility of the local landscape to this type of development is assessed as medium.

Landscape sensitivity

- 6.19. Based on the above analysis, I consider that that the appeal site and immediate landscape 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 2) (CD10.31) would have a bearing on the landscape character of the appeal site and the surrounding area. As defined in the GLVIA3 glossary (CD7.1) 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 (CD7.1) 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 11 and 12) 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.

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 appeal site. With regard to the appeal site itself as set out in the previous paragraph, I consider this to be quite unremarkable in landscape character terms and in this regard consider the appeal site to be of medium value and of medium susceptibility and sensitivity with regard to this proposal. This combined with a medium magnitude of change (given the retention and enhancement of green infrastructure, combined with the limited built form) would result in an overall moderate adverse effect upon the character of the appeal site itself. I proceed to consider the landscape character of the ‘wider’ landscape beyond the appeal site itself.

National Level

National Character Area 48: Trent and Belvoir Vales

- 7.5. The appeal site and the surrounding area are located within the National Character Area (NCA) 48: Trent and Belvoir Vales (Appendix 11) (CD7.3). 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 7 of the document as follows:

- ***“A gently undulating and low-lying landform in the main, with low ridges dividing shallow, broad river valleys, vales and flood plains. The mature, powerful River Trent flows north through the full length of the area, meandering across its broad flood plain and continuing to***

influence the physical and human geography of the area as it has done for thousands of years

- *The bedrock geology of Triassic and Jurassic mudstones has given rise to fertile clayey soils across much of the area, while extensive deposits of alluvium and sand and gravel have given rise to a wider variety of soils, especially in the flood plains and over much of the eastern part of the NCA*
- *Agriculture is the dominant land use, with most farmland being used for growing cereals, oilseeds and other arable crops. While much pasture has been converted to arable use over the years, grazing is still significant in places, such as along the Trent and around settlements*
- *A regular pattern of medium to large fields enclosed by hawthorn hedgerows, and ditches in low-lying areas, dominates the landscape*
- *Very little semi-natural habitat remains across the area; however, areas of flood plain grazing marsh are still found in places along the Trent*
- *Extraction of sand and gravel deposits continues within the Trent flood plain and the area to the west of Lincoln. Many former sites of extraction have been flooded, introducing new waterbodies and new wetland habitats to the landscape*
- *Extensive use of red bricks and pantiles in the 19th century has contributed to the consistent character of traditional architecture within villages and farmsteads across the area. Stone hewn from harder courses within the mudstones, along with stone from neighbouring areas, also feature as building materials, especially in the churches*
- *A predominantly rural and sparsely settled area with small villages and dispersed farms linked by quiet lanes, contrasting with the busy market towns of Newark and Grantham, the cities of Nottingham and Lincoln, the major roads connecting them and the cross-country dual carriageways of the A1 and A46*
- *Immense coal-fired power stations in the north exert a visual influence over a wide area, not just because of their structures but also the plumes that rise from them and the pylons and power lines that are linked to them. The same applies to the gas-fired power station and sugar beet factory near Newark, albeit on a slightly smaller scale.” (my emphasis)*

7.6. All of these key characteristics identified above would remain and prevail beyond the appeal site and immediate visual environs with the scheme in place. Any landscape character effects would be negligible the immediate environs of the site.

- 7.7. On page 4 of the document (Appendix 11) (CD7.3), it sets out statements of environmental opportunities. SEO2 notes that:

“Enhance the woodland and hedgerow network through the planting of small woodlands, tree belts, hedgerow trees and new hedgerows to benefit landscape character, habitat connectivity and a range of eco-system services, including the regulation of soil erosion, water quality and flow.” (my emphasis)

- 7.8. The proposal would accord with this objective in general terms.
- 7.9. The document (Appendix 11) (CD7.3) notes that the Trent and Belvoir Vales offer a gently undulating and low-lying landform with low ridges dividing shallow, broad river valleys and floodplains. That is the case with the landscape that surrounds the appeal site here.
- 7.10. The document (Appendix 11) (CD7.3) goes on to note on page 9 that major industrial developments are mainly focused along the Trent floodplain corridor, including power stations and associated overhead power lines, a sugar beet factory, industrial estates, sewage treatment works and active sand and gravel extraction sites. I note that within the same local Landscape Character Area, there are a whole series of overhead electricity lines and pylons, together with a commercial-scale solar farm to the south-east at Lodge Farm. The Report goes on to note that two power stations have a very dramatic visual impact in the north of the area, their prominence undiminished in the low-lying open landscape.



View from the north of the appeal site (Viewpoint 6) looking south/southeast to the edge of Newark-on-Trent

- 7.11. The impermeable Mercia Mudstone has trapped reservoirs of oil, and several wells are in operation over the Gainsborough Beckingham oil field. It goes on to note that brick clay is also dug and processed into bricks, while gypsum is mined south of Newark and processed at the plaster works at Balderton. Major infrastructure routes traverse the area, notably the A1, the A46 and the East Coast mainline railway. Road infrastructure is visually prominent around the towns and cities, and in some other places such as the A46 around Bingham and along part of the A1. Traffic noise and light pollution from the major roads have a significant impact on the tranquillity of what is otherwise a relatively quiet rural area.

- 7.12. Page 18 of the document (Appendix 11) (CD7.3) provides further information with regard to objective SEO2. This seeks to enhance the woodland and hedgerow network through the planting of small woodlands, tree belts, hedgerow trees, and new hedgerows to benefit landscape character, habitat connectivity and a range of ecosystem services, including the regulation of soil erosion, water quality, and flow. It proceeds to identify some examples, one of which notes that:

“Considerably increasing the number of hedgerow trees even though these are not a significant feature at present to enhance landscape diversity and eco system services including carbon storage and to counteract the threat to landscape character and biodiversity from tree diseases such as ash die back.”

- 7.13. The proposal would include enhancing the green infrastructure, which would include an increase in the number of hedgerow trees.

- 7.14. It goes on to cite another example stating that:

“Expanding existing woodlands and planting new woodlands to increase carbon sequestration and storage, the provision of biomass following the guidance produced for the area...”

- 7.15. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) would introduce new hedgerow planting within the appeal site. It also recommends using native, preferably of local provenance, and species characteristic of the National Character Area. The Amended Scheme presents the opportunity to accord with these recommendations.

- 7.16. Objective SEO4 is set out on page 20 (Appendix 11) (CD7.3), which is concerned with maintaining and enhancing the character of this gently undulating rural landscape by promoting and carefully managing the many distinctive elements that contribute to the overarching sense of place. It cites two examples: ensuring that new development incorporates well-designed green infrastructure providing enhanced access and recreational opportunities for local communities and secondly, supporting the rural economy to ensure that the prevailing character of the area is able to remain predominantly rural and tranquil.

- 7.17. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) includes the provision for permissive routes. Currently, the only authorised public access to the appeal site is along the two PRoW footpaths. The introduction of permissive bridleway routes would increase the recreational opportunities across the appeal site (Appendix 2), which would also be in accordance with the NPPF (CD5.2) and, paragraph 2.10.44 of the policy paper, National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3) (CD5.27) which states that, ***“Applicants should consider and maximise opportunities to facilitate enhancements to the public rights of way and the inclusion, through site layout and design of access, of new opportunities for the public to access and cross proposed solar development sites (whether via the adoption of new public rights of way or the creation of permissive paths), taking into account, where appropriate, the views of landowners.”***

- 7.18. The Landscape Masterplan (Appendix 2) accommodates a perimeter permissive bridleway with access onto Main Street which would provide greater recreational opportunity for equestrian, pedestrian and cycle users. It also has the additional benefit of providing an alternative route for pedestrians walking the long-distance Trent Valley Way, which runs along Main Street, linking the village of Kelham with Averham. Users of this section of the route

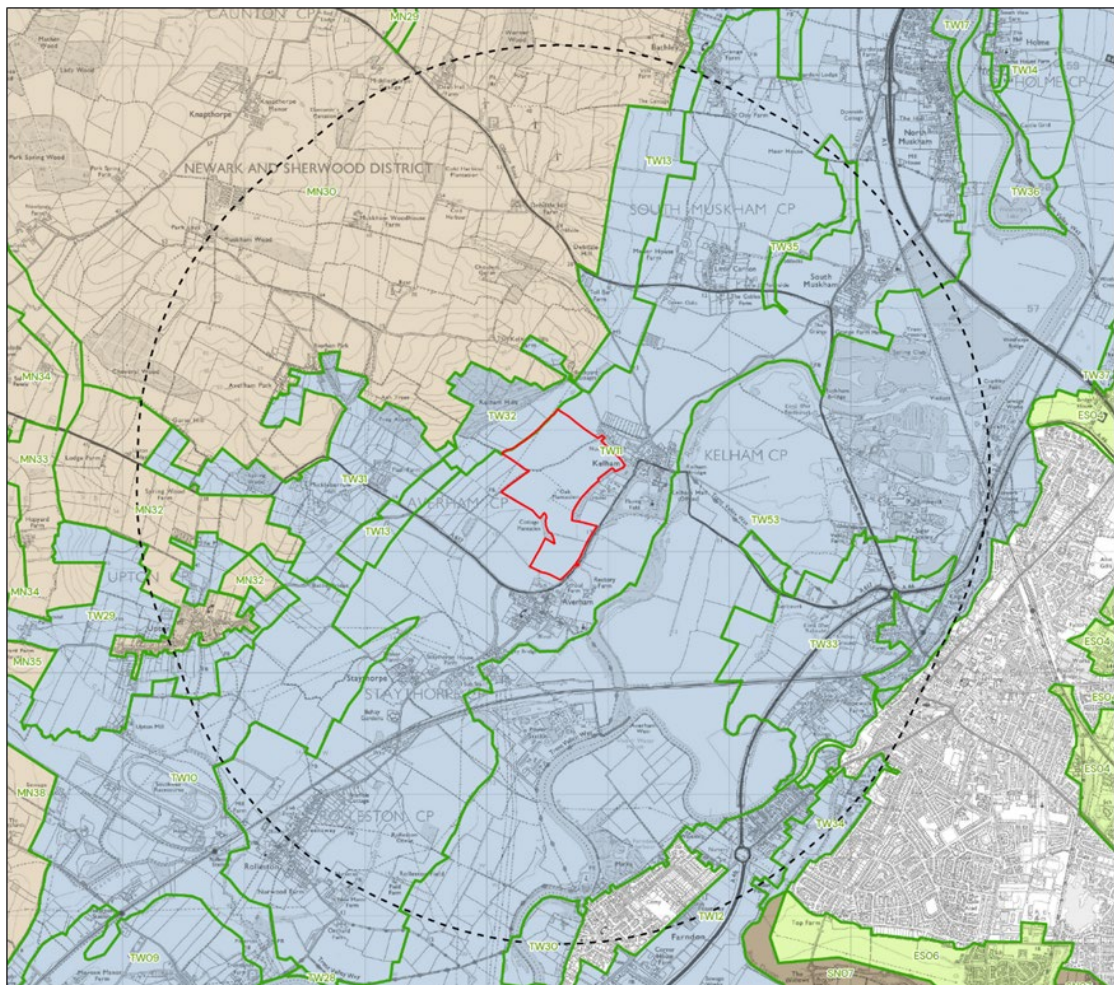
currently have to use the roadside pavement associated with Main Street, which is a heavily trafficked road and as such, presents a challenging environment for users of this pavement. The permissive bridleway provides the opportunity for members of the public to avoid this section of path along the main road by using the permissive route through the appeal site and its vehicular access point, which connects with Main Street, close to Averham village, substantially reducing the length along which members of the public have to walk along Main Street.

- 7.19. On internal page 25, the NCA profile (Appendix 11) (CD7.3) addresses the subject of boundary features and patterns and in paragraph 5.1, notes that hedgerows which were previously often gappy or excessively trimmed are now slowly becoming taller and wider, benefiting wildlife and landscape character in response to a different management approach through agricultural stewardship schemes. With regard to boundary features, it notes on page 32 that the assessment of hedgerows between 1999 and 2003 concluded that poor hedgerow condition had been commonplace across the area, with hedgerows often being excessively trimmed and gappy and that the few surviving trees were often in poor condition. The proposals would seek to enhance and maintain the hedgerows within the appeal site.
- 7.20. Page 33 of the NCA profile (Appendix 11) (CD7.3) is concerned with the settlement development in the area, noting that power station cooling towers are not as prominent in the landscape as they used to be, with Staythorpe and High Marnham having now been demolished in 1995 and 2012, respectively. Page 35 is concerned with drivers for change, the first of which is climate change. It notes under this heading that there are a range of potential threats from climate change. Collectively, these changes are likely to have a significant effect on the character of the local landscape. Finally, on page 36 of the document, it notes under the heading “Drivers for Change and other Drivers”, that there is pressure to accommodate wind energy schemes across the NCA; however, I would note that there is no reference to solar farms requiring guidance or raising concern in the same way.
- 7.21. 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 for sheep grazing 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 appeal site and its boundaries, there would be no material change to the physical and experiential (such as tranquillity and remoteness) characteristics of the landscape.
- 7.22. The appeal 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 appeal site and its immediate boundaries, there would be no material change to the physical elements and characteristics of the landscape.
- 7.23. 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.

- 7.24. Beyond the boundaries of the appeal site, this character area has a medium susceptibility and value, resulting in a medium sensitivity.

Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment (2013)

- 7.25. The Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment (Appendix 12) (CD4.4) is a district level assessment of landscape character which forms part of the wider assessment for the County. This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) forms part of the Newark and Sherwood Local Development Framework.



Plan extract, showing the appeal site within the Regional Character Area Trent Washlands (Village Farmlands), and Trent Washlands (TW) Policy Zone (PZ) 11: Cromwell, North and South Muskham, Kelham, Averham, Staythorpe and Rolleston Village Farmlands

- 7.26. The Regional Character Areas (RCA) defined in the Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment (Appendix 12) (CD4.4) broadly relate to the wider NCA's but do not share the same boundaries. The assessment locates the appeal site and its locality within the Trent Washlands (Village Farmlands) RCA.
- 7.27. Key characteristics of the Trent Washlands (Village Farmlands) RCA include:

- **"Broad flat river terraces"**

- **Regular pattern of medium-to large-sized fields, breaking down and becoming open in many areas**
- **Hedgerow trees main component of tree with cover with Ash being the principal species**
- **Willow pollards**
- **Predominantly arable with permanent pasture around settlements and roads**
- **Nucleated villages with traditional red brick and pantile roofed buildings**
- **Sand and gravel quarries**” (underlining is my emphasis)

7.28. All of these key characteristics identified would remain and prevail beyond the appeal site and its immediate visual environs with the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) in place. Any landscape character effects would be negligible beyond the environs of the appeal site.

7.29. At the finest level of the study (CD4.4), the appeal site is located within Trent Washlands (TW) Policy Zone (PZ) 11: Cromwell, North and South Muskham, Kelham, Averham, Staythorpe and Rolleston Village Farmlands (Appendices 12 and 17a). Characteristic visual features of PZ TW11 include:

- **“A flat, large scale intensive arable landscape.**
- **Medium to large-sized semi-irregular fields with hedgerows intact but fragmented in places.**
- **Smaller field sizes adjacent to villages with pasture.**
- **Former mineral extraction areas restored to open water, often with tree planting to periphery.**
- **Landscape fragmented by busy roads and railway.**
- **Winding roads between the villages with strong hedgerows.**
- **Nucleated villages with red brick and pantile roofed buildings to the historic core.**” (underlining is my emphasis)

7.30. All of these key characteristics identified would remain and prevail beyond the appeal site and its immediate visual environs. Any landscape character effects would be negligible beyond the boundaries of the appeal site.

7.31. With regards to the condition of TW PZ11, the assessment assigns it a valuation of moderate, with the explanatory text noting that the area has been fragmented and degraded by intensive arable farming, transport routes, and mineral extraction. The landscape is also noted as having detracting features, including pylons, a railway line, and busy roads. Some commercial development is noted as not always in keeping with a rural landscape; however, it concludes that overall, the area is visually coherent.

- 7.32. Continuing under the heading of condition, the historic field pattern is noted as having largely disappeared, but where hedgerows have been allowed to grow tall and bushy, they provide a moderate network for wildlife. There are a few small, isolated woodland blocks, but tree cover is largely along transport routes, to the periphery of restored gravel workings and with occasional hedgerow trees.
- 7.33. Under the heading of landscape sensitivity, views are described as often open due to a lack of tree cover and the flat valley landform. Within villages, and along winding often narrow country roads with hedgerows, views are more enclosed.
- 7.34. The assessment (Appendix 12) (CD4.4) assigns TW PZ11 an overall landscape strategy of 'conserve and create' with the explanatory methodology policy text for 'conserve and create' is defined as, actions that conserve distinctive features and features in good condition, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.
- 7.35. Landscape actions for TW PZ11 are listed as:

"Landscape features

- ***Conserve and restore the traditional pattern of hedged fields – seek opportunities to restore the historic field pattern.***
- ***Conserve the historic woodland and parkland landscape around Kelham Hall.***
- ***Seek opportunities to restore arable land to permanent pasture/wet alluvial grassland close to the River Trent.***
- ***Promote measures for strengthening the existing level of tree cover.***
- ***Strengthen the continuity and ecological diversity of stream corridors.***

Built form

- ***Restoration of mineral workings should provide varied habitats rather than large expanses of open water.***
- ***Conserve the character and setting of village settlements of Cromwell, North and South Muskham, Averham, Staythorpe and Rolleston.***
- ***Conserve the rural character of the landscape by concentrating new development around above existing settlements. Conserve historic field pattern by containing new development within enclosed boundaries, restoring hedgerow boundaries where necessary.***
- ***Conserve historic sites within the landscape including Scheduled Ancient monuments and associated earthworks***
- ***Promote sensitive design and siting of new agricultural buildings.***
- ***Promote measures for reinforcing the traditional character of farm buildings using vernacular styles.***

- ***Create small scale woodlands/tree planting to soften new development, preferably in advance of development.*** (underlining is my emphasis)

- 7.36. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) would accord with the recommended landscape objectives, accepting that the site would accommodate the proposed scheme.
- 7.37. The landscape proposals (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) for the scheme would reflect the landscape actions for the TW PZ11. The proposal would introduce hedgerows to reintroduce the smaller-scale historic field pattern, which used to be present on the appeal site as well as conserve the existing field patterns. The existing arable fields would be converted to pasture.

Solar Energy Supplementary Planning Document (2025)

- 7.38. This Solar Energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (CD4.6) provides further guidance on policies within the Council's Amended Core Strategy DPD and Allocations and Development Management DPD but does not develop new ones. This SPD is part of the Council's Local Development Framework and is a material consideration in the determination of Planning applications.
- 7.39. The document sets out a series of material considerations in relation to proposed solar schemes, with include landscape, visual and residential amenity as topics. With paragraph 2.10.131 stating that, ***"Applicants should consider the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges, trees and woodlands."***

Analysis Concerning Effect on Landscape Character

- 7.40. 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 would be imperceptible at this scale.
- 7.41. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) 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.
- 7.42. I assess that the landscape has a medium susceptibility to change. I assess that the landscape has a medium value. This is in part due to it exhibiting some scenic value with medium recreational value.
- 7.43. The Amended Scheme would bring about a medium magnitude of change to the appeal site itself. The appeal site would continue to have an agricultural function with the sheep grazing under and around the introduced solar panels, resulting in a moderate adverse effect. However, as the proposed planting across the appeal site matures, this adverse effect would reduce.
- 7.44. The proposed development would introduce some built form but is not considered to be a substantial feature in the landscape like housing. This would have a negligible degree of effect upon the wider landscape beyond the appeal site and its immediate visual environs.

- 7.45. Potential permanent loss of land from agricultural production will be limited to the extent of land for habitat enhancement and the transformers and switchgear compound at the BESS substation, and associated access track. The access track to Redhouse Field and the flood alleviation area here will also be retained. 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 2) (CD10.31), which include enhancements to the characteristic landscape elements and biodiversity within the appeal site.
- 7.46. Whilst any construction or decommissioning works would involve machinery operating within the appeal site boundary, which would disturb the tranquillity of the area to some degree, this would be temporary and not notably different to other existing farming practices in the locality.

Effect on the Landscape Character of the Appeal Site's Immediate Context

- 7.47. Within the vicinity of the appeal site, in the locations across the landscape from where the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) is visible the effects upon the character would be largely indirect and change the perception and visual characteristics of the landscape, along with the experiential qualities of the landscape, rather than the component elements such as hedgerows and trees. Within this visual zone, or visual envelope, the magnitude of change would be low, which, when combined with a medium sensitivity, results in minor adverse effects.
- 7.48. Visibility of the proposal would be essentially restricted to glimpsed views from a small section of Broadgate Lane. The general physical character of Broadgate Lane would not change except that the hedge on the south side of the road, which falls within the appeal site boundary, would be maintained at 3 – 4m in height, whereas it is currently at a lower height.
- 7.49. The immediate landscape character associated with the village of Averham would remain materially unchanged with the proposed scheme in place.
- 7.50. The eastern boundary is defined by the grounds of Kelham House Country Manor and the A617 (Main Road). The character of the landscape to the east of this road will not physically change with the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) in place. The character of the road itself, framed by hedgerows, would not change with the Amended Scheme in place. The well-treed boundary of Kelham House would not be physically changed. The only change to landscape character would relate to the A617 (Main Road), with the hedgerow on the western side of the highway maintained at approximately 3m in height.
- 7.51. The western boundary of the appeal site is defined by existing hedgerows. Smaller fields and woodland at Kelham Hills lie to the west of the appeal site. The overall character of the farmed landscape and woodland would not change with the proposed solar farm in place. The adjacent fields would be unchanged in terms of their physical character.
- 7.52. To the east/north-east of the appeal site lies the small village of Kelham. This village has a rural context, characterised and framed by tree cover adjacent to the settlement and its residential curtilages. The existing field pattern around the perimeter of the village would remain unchanged with the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) in place. The Amended Scheme would be set back from the village by the A617 (Main Road) and Kelham House

Country Manor and grounds. The closest point of the village to the proposed solar farm is Broadgate Lane. From this highway location, the opportunity to observe the Amended Scheme would be very limited (see viewpoint 1), and once the perimeter hedgerow and proposed woodland planting is above 3m in height, around the perimeter of the appeal site there would be a negligible effect upon views from this location. The Trent Valley Way runs along part of the eastern boundary in the south of the appeal site which runs between Kelham and Averham to the south. There would be a limited opportunity to observe the proposed solar farm from a small section of this route which runs along the A617 (Main Road). The landscape character that forms the immediate environs of the settlement would not change with the proposed scheme in place.

- 7.53. In summary, changes to the character of the landscape forming the immediate environs of the appeal site would be very limited and relate to the visual component of landscape character.

Effect on the Landscape Character Beyond the Appeal Site's Immediate Context.

- 7.54. Beyond the area from where the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) is visible, the effects upon the wider landscape character would result in a negligible magnitude of change and subsequent negligible effects.

Summary

- 7.55. In overall terms, I consider that there would be a moderate adverse effect upon the landscape character of the appeal site itself. No off-site works are required to enable this scheme to be implemented. Beyond the boundaries of the appeal site, the physical character of the surrounding landscape would remain and prevail unchanged with the proposed solar farm in place, resulting in a negligible effect beyond the appeal site and its environs.
- 7.56. In terms of landscape character associated with the appeal 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 which would require the loss of some agricultural land, all of these landscape elements would be retained and remain as part of the landscape whilst the scheme is in place. It is accepted that where the panels would be located the continued agricultural use could be in the form of grazing rather than arable use, although it is acknowledged that there would be some moderate adverse impact on openness.
- 7.57. The hedgerows would be reinforced with further hedgerow planting and the tree cover resource associated with the appeal 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.
- 7.58. 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 appeal site, with regard to these features. Furthermore, the increased vegetation growth would create a stronger sense of physical and visual

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

- 7.59. Upon completion of the decommissioning phase, the built infrastructure would be removed with the exception of the substation and access tracks. The management and growth of the hedgerows and trees across the appeal 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.
- 7.60. Beyond the boundaries of the appeal site, the landscape character of the area would remain materially unchanged. With the proposed scheme in place, the character of the fields within the appeal 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 could remain after 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.
- 7.61. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) 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, grazed 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 and accommodate grazing stock, sheep, for the whole duration of the lifetime of the project. The appeal site would therefore continue to have an agricultural use.
- 7.62. 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 and beyond the confines of the red line appeal site boundary, again there would be no material change to the physical fabric of the landscape character of the area beyond the appeal site. The appeal 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, nor would the general character of the landscape beyond the appeal site. The existing field pattern with its hedgerows and tree cover enables the appeal 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 10 and 19).
- 8.4. Visual amenity is defined on page 158 in the Glossary of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (April 2013) (CD7.1) 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 LVIA (CD1.53–4) 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 appeal 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 eleven LVIA viewpoints and set out my findings, see Appendix 10.
- 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 PRoWs that pass through the landscape.
- 8.7. Within the local area, the network of public highways is limited. 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. Thus, the opportunity to gain a panoramic appreciation of the landscape and of the proposed solar farm within the appeal site would be very restricted.
- 8.8. I comment here to provide a further narrative to my visual analysis. There are a number of public highways and PRoW in the vicinity of the appeal 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 a number of highways to the north of the appeal site, the nearest one being Broadgate Lane, and indeed this forms the northern boundary of the appeal site itself. The southern side of this highway is framed by a mature hedge which limits southward views from this road into the appeal site, in that this hedgerow is managed and maintained at around 3m in height. There would be little opportunity to observe the proposed scheme from this adjacent highway. This existing roadside hedgerow would be reinforced with further proposed shrub and tree planting along the north-eastern boundary of the site which would provide a further degree of physical and visual containment, as it relates to this highway.

8.13. Broadgate Lane continues broadly in a north-westward direction. This country lane is framed by mature hedgerows for the majority of its length and in places, is reinforced with mature tree cover, and as such, views tend to be channelled along the alignment of this road in the direction of travel for users of this highway, further restricting the opportunity to observe the proposed solar farm.



View from Broadgate Lane (Viewpoint 6)

- 8.14. In the vicinity of Brickyard Cottages, the road ascends from the level vale north-westwards extending onto local high ground. However, views are heavily restricted towards the proposed solar farm due to mature hedgerows and trees on the southern boundary of this road. Further north, there is a further unclassified lane which links Kelham to the south with the A616 to the north and is known as Ollerton Road. This highway is framed on either side by mature hedgerows together with some tree cover such that there would be little opportunity to observe the proposed solar from this highway. A similar unclassified lane to the north of Kelham, known as Kelham Lane, would be similarly visually unaffected. Approximately 1km north of the appeal site is a main highway known as Ollerton Road (A616) which connects Cauntton to the north with South Muskham to the east. Again, given the roadside vegetation of hedgerows and trees combined with topography, users of this route would be visually unaffected by the proposed scheme.
- 8.15. There are a number of PRowS to the north of the appeal site. There is a public footpath on the north side of Kelham village which links Broadgate Lane to the west with Kelham to the east and Ollerton Road. This public footpath has a generally open aspect, however, views southward towards the proposed solar scheme would be interrupted by the presence of mature hedges and tree cover, together with residential properties, such that this route would be visually unaffected. North of this PRow, whilst there is extensive countryside, there is a general absence of PRowS in the locality. The public footpath extends along a narrow valley close to Toll Bar Farm, though given that the route is set within a pronounced valley, users of this route would be visually unaffected by the proposal. Similarly, there are a number of public footpaths in the vicinity of a hamlet known as Little Carlton. Again, being located in the vale, these routes would also be visually unaffected, which lie approximately 1km north of Kelham village.

Views of the Solar Farm from the Countryside to the East

- 8.16. Immediately to the east of the appeal site lies a main road, the A617, known as Main Street and it is from this road that there would be vehicular access for construction and maintenance of the solar farm. This highway in the vicinity of the appeal site is generally framed by mature hedgerows and tree cover which within the vale landscape tends to channel road users' views along the direction of travel, as a result of which there would be little opportunity to observe the proposed solar farm. The proposed scheme includes planting a hedgerow in the vicinity of the vehicular access point onto this highway which will

restrict views of the scheme from the adjacent road once the hedgerow is established and mature. East of this road, the land extends across a flat, low-level vale where the A617 Kelham Road connects into Newark and the town's ring road, the A46. Both these highways are on the low-lying level plain, and as such there would be no opportunity to observe the proposed solar farm from these highways.



View from A617 and the Trent Valley Way (Viewpoint 9)

- 8.17. The A617, known as Main Street, whilst a busy road, forms part of a long distance, way-marked trail known as the Trent Valley Way and passes through Kelham village and extends along this highway southward as far as the village of Averham. This main road has a pedestrian pavement on its north side running adjacent and alongside the appeal site. Pedestrians on this route would have the opportunity to observe the solar farm from a short section of this highway, where it is close to the appeal site and where gaps exist in the existing hedgerow. However, the eastern boundary of this appeal site is proposed to be reinforced with an additional internal hedgerow parallel to main street. Given that this is managed and maintained at around 3 metres in height, users of this route would be visually unaffected by the proposal.
- 8.18. East of this PRoW and roadside pavement is an extensive area of vale farmland which is generally devoid of PRoWs. At approximately 1km east of the appeal site the Trent Valley Way continues across farmland north-east of the A617. Views from this route will be visually unaffected by the proposed scheme. The Trent Valley Way extends southward from Averham to run alongside the west bank of the River Trent and passes alongside Staythorpe Power Station. All of this route south of Averham would be visually unaffected by the proposal due to topography, vegetation and built form.

Views of the Solar Farm from the Countryside to the South

- 8.19. There are a number of highways to the south of the appeal site, the main one being the A617, known as Main Street. Much of this road is framed by a mature hedgerow together with some trees on the northern side of this highway, such that the opportunity to observe the proposed solar farm would be quite limited. Much of this section does not have a roadside pavement and as such, pedestrian use of this highway would be limited. There are a number of unclassified lanes south of this road and the appeal site itself associated with the hamlet of Averham, Staythorpe and Rolleston. The principal road connecting these villages is Staythorpe Road. This country lane is generally flanked by mature hedgerows which limit

viewing opportunities of the adjacent countryside with views generally channelled along the direction of travel and as such, there would be limited opportunity to observe the proposed solar farm from these highways.



View from A617 to the south of the appeal site

- 8.20. In terms of PROWs, there are a number forming a network in the vicinity of the villages of Upton, Rolleston, and Staythorpe to the south of the appeal site. These are public footpaths and provide connections between these villages. Due to topography, vegetation, hedgerows and tree cover, and built form, there would be little opportunity to observe the proposed scheme from these public footpaths looking northwards towards the appeal site.

Views of the Solar Farm from the Countryside to the West

- 8.21. There are a few public highways to the west of the appeal site, the main one being the A617 known as Newark Road, which runs into Main Street. West of the appeal site, this road descends from high ground in the vicinity of Micklebarrow Hill in a south-eastward direction and provides the opportunity to gain local elevated views in an eastward direction over the low-lying vale landscape within which the appeal site and proposed scheme would be located. Some elements of the scheme would be visible for road users travelling south-eastwards along this highway. The totality of the scheme would not be capable of being appreciated with only some parts of the scheme and observed in a wider panoramic view of the locality forming a small element in the composition of such views.
- 8.22. There are a couple of country lanes leading off the A617 with one heading south-westward to the village of Upton. This lane is framed by mature hedgerows which would limit eastward views towards the proposed scheme. There is also an unclassified lane leading from Micklebarrow Hill which extends northwards running past Averham Park and is known as Cold Harbour Lane. This highway is located on local high ground set back and within the area of undulating landscape, such that there would be no line of sight towards the proposed solar farm and would be visually unaffected by the proposed scheme.
- 8.23. In terms of public rights of way, there are a number to the west of the appeal site. Which extend over local undulating topography. One of these footpaths passes between two blocks of woodland known as Frog Abbey and Kelham Hills and extends across the sloping ground

for users of this route walking south-eastwards and descending from the high ground towards the appeal site and the vale. There would be the opportunity to observe parts of the solar farm, though this would be observed within a wide panoramic view of the vale landscape such that the proposal would form a small element in such views. The footpath extends further westward to connect to other public footpaths and bridleways in the vicinity of Averham Park. All of these routes would be visually unaffected given the distance in the intervening landscape combined with topography, tree cover and built form which would prevent any lines of sight and as such these routes would be visually unaffected by the proposed scheme.



View from PRow to the west of the appeal site

PRowS Across the Site

- 8.24. There are a number of PRowS that extend across the appeal site. There is an existing footpath which extends westward from Broadgate Lane and outlying properties of Kelham village. This route along with other PRowS within the appeal site would be retained with regard to their current alignment. This route would be accommodated within a proposed green lane which would be framed by existing and proposed new hedgerows. This route bifurcates into two further public footpaths with one heading westward and runs along the western boundary of the appeal site, with another public footpath heading south-westward to connect with the A617 close to Flash Farm and runs along the western boundary of the appeal site. All of these routes would be set within green lanes flanked by hedgerows on either side of these routes. These hedgerows would be managed and maintained at approximately 3m in height together with standard trees introduced along the length of these hedgerows to further punctuate this vegetation. These hedges would effectively screen the proposed solar farm from most lengths of these routes with the exception of a few locations where the paths would be in close proximity to vehicular access points into adjacent fields or initial construction and maintenance vehicles thereafter where there would be the opportunity to gain fleeting framed views of the solar farm.

Kelham Village

- 8.25. Kelham village lies to the north-east of the appeal site and is heavily framed by tree cover in the form of woodland and tree belts. The vast majority of the village, in terms of residential properties, would be visually unaffected due to the screening effect of tree cover in the intervening landscape. There are a few properties on the north side of Broadgate Lane which face onto this country lane with their front elevations facing towards the proposed solar farm. A number of these elevations are screened and framed by either adjacent built form or vegetation, though some of these would have restricted views of parts of the proposed solar farm.
- 8.26. Due to existing and proposed hedgerows along the north-eastern side of the solar farm, there would be little viewing opportunity to observe the scheme from the ground floor of these properties. The first floor of these properties would afford some views of the solar farm located on the opposite side of the road, and whilst the proposal would be visible it would be set back from these residential properties such that the proposed scheme would not have an overbearing effect on these properties from a visual amenity perspective and would therefore not breach the public interest test. Separately there is a cluster of residential properties to the east of the site and west of Main Street, however this small group of properties is heavily framed by mature tree cover and garden vegetation such that these properties would be affected visually to a very limited extent given their arrangement, disposition and distance from the proposed solar farm, and again, would not be materially harmed in residential visual amenity terms.

Summary of Visual Effects

- 8.27. It is evident from both the LVIA (CD1.53-4) 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 2) (CD10.31) 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.
- 8.28. 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.
- 8.29. Having reviewed this information and assessed the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31), 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 appeal 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 appeal site and the scheme's visual envelope. The existing topography, hedges, and woodlands would enable



the appeal site and the proposals to benefit from a high degree of physical and visual containment from the rest of the surrounding countryside.

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/0921030260) 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.”¹

- 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/0921030260)

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 appeal site and noted that there are some residential properties relatively close to the appeal site, 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 (CD3.2) covers the impact on residential amenity in paragraphs 7.165 to 7.174.
- 9.8. Paragraph 7.166 sets out the nearest properties to the appeal site which included Kelham House, those forming 'The Rutlands' to the east, dwellings along Main Road and those located along Broadgate Lane to the northeast.
- 9.9. The following paragraphs clarify that, "The dwellings to the east are mostly screened from the application site by existing woodland and a pond. Development would also be set back from the boundary of the application site nearest to these dwellings. A fence would be formed, and a permissive path established between them. The nearest dwelling would be some 100m from the nearest panels." and, "Along Broadgate Lane to the north of the site, dwellings mainly face towards the application site, which is mainly on the opposite side of the public road. It is proposed that a screening bund be formed to limit views and any disturbance from activities on the application site. The bund would be located within the application site and be parallel to Broadgate Lane. Behind the bunding would be a deer fence and the panels beyond. The nearest panels would be some 75m from residential dwellings along Broadgate Lane."
- 9.10. Other matters covered in the section covering residential amenity refer to noise, transport and air quality, which are beyond the scope of this proof.
- 9.11. Given this situation, the proposal would not render any properties unattractive places in which to live, mindful of the public interest 'Lavender' test.

10. Cumulative Landscape & Visual Effects

Introduction

- 10.1. The Reason for Refusal makes reference to cumulative effects. This section of my proof addresses this particular aspect. The Landscape Statement of Common Ground refers to a number of consented energy projects in the locality which include the following: to the south-west of the site, south of Staythorpe village, is a consented BESS project and is referred to as Staythorpe BESS. There is another consented BESS project located to the south-west of the site which is referred to as BESS off Staythorpe Road and lies to the west of Averham village. Approximately 2km to the north of the site lies a consented solar farm known as Knapthorpe and adjacent to that, a further consented solar farm known as Muskham Wood. All four of these projects, two solar and two BESS projects, having been consented, form part of the baseline relating to the landscape and its character.
- 10.2. Separately to these four consented projects is a DCO known as the Great North Road which is an extensive and disaggregated solar scheme which includes a BESS facility and a sub-station. It extends 15km north-south and 12km east-west. A short distance to the north-east of the appeal site lies three solar fields associated with the Great North Road project and these parcels are referenced as DBOO1, DBOO2, and DBOO3. Additionally, to the west of the site and contiguous with the appeal site boundary, lies a BESS facility beyond which further west lies a sub-station (The Council's reference number for this project is 25/01086/CONSUL). The Great North Road solar project was accepted for examination on 22nd July 2025 and is currently in the pre-application stage. This information is also set out in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground.
- 10.3. In this section of my proof, I consider how the proposed solar scheme would have a bearing upon firstly, the landscape character of the area and secondly, the general visual amenity of the locality in cumulative terms taking the DCO into account.

Landscape Character

- 10.4. The site itself is located in a vale landscape and at the national level, falls within National Character Area 48, known as the Trent and Belvoir Vales. Analysis of this NCA reveals that the landscape is heavily characterised by built infrastructure and energy infrastructure in particular. It is an extensive landscape character area which extends approximately 20km in width in an east-west orientation, and 40-50km in a north-south orientation. Within this area, are both Knapthorpe and Muskham Wood solar farms, along with the two BESS projects close to Staythorpe and Averham. Also in the locality is Staythorpe Power Station and an associated sub-station, together with numerous overhead electricity lines radiating from the sub-station.
- 10.5. Beyond the appeal site and its immediate environs which relate to its visual envelope, the wider landscape and its key defining characteristics would remain and prevail with the proposed scheme in place. If the Great North Road solar project were to be allowed, this is a very extensive development over a wide area, and given its scale, the solar arrays would have a bearing upon the general character of the NCA introducing a greater degree of solar development over and above what currently characterises the landscape. To describe this change, currently solar development characterises pockets of the area at a local level and is incidental in terms of the general character of the area – the same would be true with the appeal scheme in place. However, if the Great North Road scheme were developed, solar

development would feature regularly across the area and would be more of a defining feature commonly observed through the NCA. The introduction of the appeal scheme alone would not change this perception as it has a bearing upon the character of this wider landscape area and would amount to being insignificant given the scale of the proposed DCO.

- 10.6. In 2009, the Greater Nottingham Landscape Character Assessment was published which identified regional landscape character areas. The site and the surrounding vale landscape within which it sits falls within the Trent Washlands. This area is extensive in scale, extending northwards to North Muskham and southwards to Rolleston, and extends eastward as far as Newark-on-Trent, and essentially relates to the river Trent watercourse and its alluvial plain.
- 10.7. A short distance north-west of the site lies a local high ground which is gently undulating and is identified as the Mid-Nottinghamshire Farmlands. The site falls entirely within the Trent Washlands and lies outside the Mid-Nottinghamshire Farmlands. The Mid-Nottinghamshire Farmlands accommodate existing energy infrastructure including wind turbines close to Ollerton Road, whilst consented solar farms Knapthorpe and Muskham Wood lie within this area as well, so energy infrastructure is a feature and characteristic that contributes and defines this character area. The proposed solar farm would not physically change any of the attributes of this character area if it were in place.
- 10.8. Within the Trent Washlands, this landscape is punctuated with a number of villages together with rail and road transport infrastructure including the A1 highway. Significant areas of land have been subject to historic gravel extraction leaving a legacy of lakes and water bodies. There is a range of built infrastructure including a sugar factory close to Newark-on-Trent, the Southwell Racecourse and hotel complex, and marina, along with Staythorpe Power Station and electricity sub-station. The area is also characterised by two recently consented BESS projects. The proposed solar farm would affect the site itself and its immediate environs within which the scheme could be observed associated with its visual envelope, beyond which the physical and experiential characteristics of the Trent Washlands character area would remain unchanged, and as such the effect upon landscape character would be limited and highly localised.
- 10.9. If the Great North Road project were allowed, there would be three parcels of land accommodating solar arrays to the north of Kelham village. However, this area of solar development would be limited in extent and form a discreet parcel of development, separated from the solar farm. The Great North Road would include further parcels of solar arrays within the vale landscape, such as parcel DBO62 located to the north of Little Carlton village, and parcels DBO59, DBO60, DBO61, DBO58 and DBO56, all of which would lie in the Trent Washlands between Bathley village to the west and North Muskham to the east. In the context of these solar arrays being in place, the proposed appeal scheme would have a negligible bearing upon the general key characteristics of the Trent Washlands. Contiguous with the site's western boundary, the Great North Road project includes a BESS scheme, adjacent to which would be a sub-station, both of which would also fall within the Trent Washlands. Whilst the appeal scheme would not be visually associated with the three solar parcels to the north of Kelham, the appeal scheme would be visually associated with the BESS and sub-station given they would be contiguous.
- 10.10. The Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment was published in 2013. This is a more granular analysis than the preceding published character assessment of 2009. The site and most of its immediate environs fall within a landscape character area reference TW11 and is a broad swathe of land that forms a corridor with a north-south orientation and includes a number of villages. This Character Area is called Cromwell, North and South

Muskham, Kelham, Averham, Staythorpe and Rolleston Village Farmlands which reflects these villages within this area. The TW11 Character Area accommodates a wide range of built infrastructure in addition to the villages including rail and road transport infrastructure, the Staythorpe electricity sub-station, and the two consented BESS projects to the south of the site.

- 10.11. The character of the site would change from farmland to one which would accommodate the proposed solar farm and also the experiential characteristics of the landscape in visual terms within the limited visual envelope of the project, beyond which the defining characteristics of TW11 area would remain unchanged with the proposed scheme in place. Thus, its effect upon the TW11 area as a whole would be limited and localised with the majority of the TW11 area unchanged with the proposed scheme in place. If the Great North Road scheme were allowed, this would introduce parcels of land accommodating solar arrays north of Kelham and also in the vicinity of Little Carlton village, as well as in the vicinity of North Muskham, in addition to which there would be the battery storage adjacent to the site. As a result of this, the general defining characteristics of the TW11 area would be more influenced by the presence of energy infrastructure and the addition of the appeal scheme in that context would be very limited and would be not significant or substantive enough to materially change the key characteristics of the TW11 Character Area with the DCO in place.
- 10.12. Within the 2013 study, the higher undulating landscape to the north-west of the site generally forms Character Area reference MN30 which is called Knapthorpe Village Farmlands with Ancient Woodland. This is the area which accommodates both the Knapthorpe and Muskham solar farms and is an area that extends south-eastwards towards the edge of the Trent Vale. The proposed solar farm would have a negligible level of effect upon this particular character area, limited to the experiential viewing experience appreciated from one public right of way close to Kelham Hills woodland.

General Visual Amenity

Introduction

- 10.13. The appeal solar farm has a very limited visual envelope affecting the locality. It extends a short distance to the north, primarily associated with Broadgate Lane. To the east views are limited and restricted to the highway known as Main Street. In a southward direction, views are limited to the village of Averham. To the south-west, views are limited to Main Street (A617), whilst to the west there is one public footpath which descends the local high ground which affords south-eastward views towards the site where it would be seen forming a small element in the panoramic view of the Trent Vale. This is reflected in the viewpoint analysis. Given that the Great North Road solar project is proposed, I have reviewed each of the LVIA viewpoint 1-11 in addition to the other viewpoint identified by the Council, reference no: PRO1, and set out my analysis and findings in a summary schedule which takes into account the DCO, together with the appeal scheme and forms Appendix 18 to my proof. I proceed to comment upon the degree to which there would cumulative visual effects with regard to these viewpoints below.

Viewpoint 1

- 10.14. Viewpoint 1 is taken from Broadgate Lane on the north-eastern boundary of the site and is located at the pedestrian access point and it is also the location where the public footpath leaves the public highway to enter the site, in a south-west direction. From this location, only

the appeal solar scheme would be visible. There would be no opportunity to observe the DCO solar scheme.

Viewpoint 2

- 10.15. Viewpoint 2 is also taken from Broadgate Lane close to a residential property looking westward. There would be no opportunity to observe the proposed DCO project from this location, and as such, there would be no simultaneous viewing experience appreciated from this location.

Viewpoint 3

- 10.16. Viewpoint 3 is taken from the public footpath within the appeal site itself from where there would be the opportunity to observe the proposed solar arrays. From this location, there would be the opportunity to observe parts of the BESS scheme associated with the DCO project. However, the western boundaries of the appeal site are currently defined by mature hedgerows which would be managed at 3m in height, such that there would be very limited visibility of the battery storage scheme and the sub-station further to the west would not be visible. The simultaneous viewing experience from this location of the proposed solar scheme seen in conjunction with the BESS scheme would not materially change the degree of visual effect for users of this route.

Viewpoint 4

- 10.17. Viewpoint 4 is taken from Main Street at a location where there would be a vehicular access point into the proposed solar scheme. It is proposed that a further internal hedge would be located alongside the access track which once established at 3m in height, would restrict views of the proposed solar farm in the adjacent field reducing the degree of effect to a negligible level. This established new hedge would also screen views in a north-westward direction towards the DCO BESS scheme, such that there would no material change to the degree of effect experienced for the proposed solar scheme. The solar arrays associated with the DCO would not be visually apparent. There would be no simultaneous viewing experience from Viewpoint 4 of the proposed solar scheme in conjunction with the DCO.

Viewpoint 5

- 10.18. Viewpoint 5 is taken from Main Street relating to views appreciated by road users. Given the vegetation in the intervening landscape, there would be a negligible degree of effect upon views from this location. There would be no simultaneous viewing experience associated with the DCO project from this location.

Viewpoint 6

- 10.19. Viewpoint 6 is taken from Broadgate Lane close to Kelham Hills wood. From this location, the opportunity to observe the proposed solar farm would be negligible given the vegetation in the intervening landscape, both existing and proposed, once matured. From this location, views south-westward would be towards the DCO BESS and sub-station, however, given the extent of vegetation in the intervening landscape, the degree to which this would be observed would be very limited and would not change the degree of effect identified for the proposed solar scheme taking into account the DCO project. Whilst there is a small area of solar proposed associated with the DCO scheme in the vicinity of Viewpoint 6 close to Brickyard Cottages there would be no opportunity to observe this solar array given built form

and vegetation in the intervening landscape, and as such, there would be no simultaneous viewing experience of the DCO scheme with the appeal scheme at this location.

Viewpoint 7

- 10.20. Viewpoint 7 is located on Main Street (A617) on the northern boundary of Averham village. From this location, the vegetation, existing and proposed, would mean that there would be a negligible degree of effect upon views as a result of the proposed solar farm and this would remain the same and unchanged given the DCO battery and sub-station were in place. The opportunity for simultaneous viewing experience from this location would be negligible.

Viewpoint 8

- 10.21. Viewpoint 8 is taken from Ollerton Road from which there would be no opportunity to observe the proposed solar scheme. However, from this location it is situated between solar array parcels DB001 and DB002 of the DCO scheme, and as such, there would be a minor degree of visual effect from this location solely due to the DCO project. There would be no simultaneous viewing experience from this location as the proposed solar scheme would be located some distance to the south on the other side of Kelham village.

Viewpoint 9

- 10.22. Viewpoint 9 is taken from the A617 on the Kelham Bridge over the river Trent. From Viewpoint 9 there would be no opportunity to observe the proposed solar scheme. the proposed solar scheme would be visible to a very limited degree and have a negligible degree of effect.

Viewpoint 10

- 10.23. Viewpoint 10 is taken from Main Street (A617). The view is eastwards towards the appeal scheme and given the degree of vegetation in the intervening landscape, there would be a negligible degree of effect. With the DCO BESS and sub-station in place, this degree of effect would rise to a minor degree of effect due to some visibility of the sub-station and BESS scheme. As such, there would be very limited simultaneous viewing experienced from this location.

Viewpoint 11

Viewpoint 11 is taken from the public footpath on the south side of Micklebarrow Hill looking eastward from which the proposed solar farm would form a very small element in the view and have a negligible degree of effect. This would not materially change with the proposed DCO sub-station and BESS in place. There would be a negligible degree of effect with regard to simultaneous viewing experience from this location.

Viewpoint PRO1

- 10.24. Viewpoint PRO1 is located on the south side of Little Carlton village on a public footpath and was identified by the Council. From this location, there would be no visual effect from the appeal solar scheme. Parcel DB001 solar array of the DCO project would be visible to a very limited degree and have a negligible degree of effect upon views from this location. There would be no simultaneous viewing experience from this location.

Summary

- 10.25. In overall terms, the opportunity to appreciate the appeal scheme in conjunction with the DCO project would be very limited in the immediate surrounding landscape around the site, resulting in very limited simultaneous viewing experience locations. In terms of sequential viewing experience, the configuration of the highways, particularly in terms of the main roads, would severely restrict the opportunity for sequential viewing opportunities given the degree of built form and vegetation in the intervening landscape. This would similarly be the case with the minor unclassified lanes in the locality. There is a network of PROWs in the locality, however those north of Kelham tend to be broadly orientated east-west which would limit the opportunity for sequential views. South-east of Kelham village and the site lies the promoted Trent Valley Way. Due to topography, built form and vegetation in the intervening landscape the opportunity to gain sequential views of the DCO in conjunction with the proposed solar scheme along this route would be very limited.
- 10.26. There are several PROWs to the west of the appeal site where there would be some locations with the opportunity to gain sequential views of the appeal scheme and DCO BESS and sub-station, but such view locations would be limited and highly localised.

Summary of Cumulative Effects

- 10.27. In terms of the appeal scheme, the effect on landscape character would be highly localised, restricted to the site and immediate environs within the visual envelope. As a result, beyond the site and immediate environs the character of the surrounding landscape would remain and prevail with the scheme in place. If the DCO were in place, its extensive scale would materially increase the presence of energy infrastructure in the locality, reinforcing this element as one of the defining characteristics of the local landscape. With the proposed scheme introduced into this scenario, it would make no material difference in affecting the level of change to the local landscape character that would come about with the DCO project given its extensive scale.
- 10.28. In terms of general visual amenity, the appeal scheme benefits from a high degree of visual containment and as a result, the locations to observe the appeal scheme in conjunction with the DCO project would be very limited. The opportunity to gain either simultaneous or sequential views with both schemes in place would be limited and highly localised within the wider landscape. In summary, cumulative landscape and visual effects would be minor adverse, limited and highly localised.

11. Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

- 11.1. I am instructed on behalf of Assured Asset Solar 2 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 land north of Main Road, Kelham. This evidence should be read in conjunction with the planning proof of evidence prepared by James Cook (CD11.1) and heritage proof of evidence prepared by Charlotte James-Martin (CD11.4), which elaborate upon the Appellant's Statement of Case (CD9.4).
- 11.2. 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

- 11.3. 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 vale 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

- 11.4. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) would have a negligible adverse effect on topography. In terms of trees, with the additional planting, there would be a moderate beneficial effect and with regard to hedges a moderate beneficial effect. There would be a moderate (adverse) effect with regard to land cover, with the introduction of the solar farm superimposed over grazed pasture. 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

- 11.5. Land cover is a specific term which refers to the way in which the land is managed. The appeal 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 but would be grazed and would benefit the fields from a soil/agronomy perspective.
- 11.6. Furthermore, the introduction of meadows would bring about material ecological enhancements. The local published Landscape Character Assessment advocates 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

immediate boundaries of the site and immediate environs would remain unchanged with the scheme in place and that would apply to the vast majority of the Landscape Character Area. Only a fraction of the local character area would physically change in terms of its defining character. This is an inevitable consequence of delivering renewable energy infrastructure.

Effect on the Visual Amenity of the Area

- 11.7. 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 vale topography, combined with the field and hedgerow network and scattered woodlands, the actual visual envelope and the degree to which this scheme would be seen from the surrounding area would be very limited.
- 11.8. 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 the scheme. Energy infrastructure is an integral part of the 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.
- 11.9. 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.
- 11.10. In overall terms, the visual effects of the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) 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

- 11.11. 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. It is accepted that where the panels would be located the continued agricultural use would be in the form of grazing rather than arable use.
- 11.12. 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.
- 11.13. 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.

- 11.14. Upon completion of the decommissioning phase, much of the built infrastructure would be removed both above and below ground across the entirety of the site. 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.

- 11.15. Beyond the site and immediate environs, the landscape character of the area would remain unchanged. With the Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) 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.

- 11.16. The Amended Scheme (Appendix 2) (CD10.31) 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, grazed as pasture, again without any recourse to planning, such is the minor consequence of such a change of use in farming circumstances terms. It is intended that whilst the solar arrays would be installed and operational, the fields would continue to function as fields and accommodate sheep for farming for the duration of the lifetime of the project. The site would continue to have an agricultural use.

- 11.17. 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 and immediate environs, there would be no change to the physical fabric of the landscape character of the area.

- 11.18. In overall terms, I consider that there would be a moderate (adverse) effect upon the landscape character of the site. In its immediate locality, within the area of visual influence, effects would be minor (adverse) and beyond this, effects would be negligible. Beyond the site and immediate environs, the character of the surrounding landscape would remain and prevail unchanged with the proposed solar farm in place.

Cumulative Effects

- 11.19. In terms of the appeal scheme, the effect on landscape character would be highly localised, restricted to the site and immediate environs within the visual envelope. As a result, beyond the site and immediate environs the character of the surrounding landscape would remain and prevail with the scheme in place. Given the DCO were in place, its extensive scale would

materially increase the presence of energy infrastructure in the locality, reinforcing this element as one of the defining characteristics of the local landscape. With the proposed scheme introduced into this scenario, it would make no material difference in affecting the level of change to the local landscape character that would come about with the DCO project given its extensive scale.

- 11.20. In terms of general visual amenity, the appeal scheme benefits from a high degree of visual containment and as a result, the locations to observe the appeal scheme in conjunction with the DCO project would be very limited. The opportunity to gain either simultaneous or sequential views with both schemes in place would be limited and highly localised within the wider landscape. In summary, cumulative landscape and visual effects would be minor adverse, limited and highly localised.

Conclusions

- 11.21. For the reasons stated above in this section of my proof, it is my professional opinion that on landscape and visual grounds, there are no substantive reasons for refusing planning permission for the proposed solar farm located on land to the west of Main Street, Kelham.



Appendices

(see separate document)

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

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