



Landscape Architects Review

Main Street, Kelham

Date: 12/08/24

Ref: INF_N1118_R02

INFLUENCE PLANNING AND DESIGN

Table of Contents

1 Introduction.....2
Outline 2

2 Previous Recommendations by Influence3
Amendments to Original Scheme..... 4
Amended Viewpoints**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

3 Comments on the Addendum5
Landscape and Visual Appraisal..... 5

1 Introduction

Outline

- 1.1 Influence Landscape Planning and Design Ltd is appointed by Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC) to provide Landscape Architecture consultation comments on the addendum LVIA for the planning application called *Kelham Solar Farm and BESS, Kelham, Newark on Trent* for proposed solar development, BESS and associated works.
- 1.2 Influence reviewed the Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) by Sirius Planning and Landscape Masterplan. The relevant planning reference is: 23/01837/FULM - Land to the West of Main Street, Kelham, Newark on Trent, HC1002 02 01/LVIA & Landscape Masterplan HC1002 02 5/16. Our review is referenced in the footer.¹
- 1.3 A LVIA addendum ²was received by Newark and Sherwood Council dated June 2024 and this report appraises changes made to the proposed scheme as also outlined on the LVIA Addendum, Landscape Mitigation Masterplan³ the and associated suite of plans as referenced below:
 - HC1002/05/27 Rev 1, Public Access Details
 - HC1002/02/09 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (including Visual Barriers); and
 - Viewpoint 4 Rev 1, Viewpoint 5 Rev 1 & Viewpoint 7 Rev 1.
- 1.4 A site visit was carried out by Influence on 13 February 2024 and for the purposes of this review we did not revisit the site.

¹ Landscape Architects Review, Main Street, Kelham, INF_N1118, March 2024

² Landscape and Visual Impact: Kelham Solar Farm and BESS, Addendum, Sirius Planning, June 2024

³ HC1002/02/05 Rev 1, Landscape Mitigation Masterplan, Sirius Planning

2 Previous Recommendations by Influence

2.1 We appraised the original scheme and LVIA in March 2024⁴. Our overall recommendations⁵ regarding the proposals were to:

- 'Review low value rating for recreational value of the site and its immediate surroundings'.

The report highlighted the 'low' value attached to the site and immediate area for recreational amenity within the LVIA; albeit sitting within an agreed overall assessment of 'medium' for the judged landscape value of the site and immediate surroundings.

- 'Impacts of the BESS should be more fully considered'.

The report set out that the impacts of the development did not include that of the combined solar array and BESS. When the effects of the BESS are included, Influence judged that the combined landscape effects, upon completion, are 'medium to high', rather than the medium rating attributed in the LVIA. The report sets out that, 'Using the methodology of the LVIA and considering the reports' judgements of the solar arrays in terms of scale, geographical extent, and duration & reversibility, this would result in an overall moderate/major adverse level of effects, due the Proposals, when the BESS compound is also included in judgements'.

- 'Include construction effects for visual receptors' (due to a lack of understanding of impacts on sensitive visual receptors).

2.2 Other recommendations were:

- 'Consider AVR4 montages where appropriate';
- 'Photomontage for Viewpoint 7 of the additional viewpoints, with greater description of the change in the nature of the view, as would be experienced, due to the proposals';
- 'Create a structural landscape buffer along the southern edge of the site to the BESS and at the pond edge next to Kelham Conservation Area', (due to possible impacts on residential group R6 The Rutlands);
- 'Ensure that all PRoW, (including Permissive routes) through the site have a minimum 10m buffer either side to the solar panels/hedgerow/BESS'.

2.3 A main strand of mitigation is the screening of views through maturation of retained and planted boundary hedgerow to above 3m in height. We questioned in the report whether this was possible as some hedgerow'd boundaries appear to lie outside of the site red line boundary and also whether this would be characteristic of the local landscape; and *'The layout extends the solar panels to the limits of the red line areas in the main. There appears to be opportunities for a more considered landscape approach to mitigation'*⁶.

⁴ Landscape Review, Main Street, Kelham, Influence Landscape Planning and Design Ltd, March 2024.

⁵ Paragraph 2.32-2.33, Landscape Review, Main Street, Kelham, Influence Landscape Planning and Design Ltd, March 2024

⁶ Paragraph 2.31, Landscape Review, Main Street, Kelham, Influence Landscape Planning and Design Ltd, March 2024.

Amendments to Original Scheme

- 2.4 The Landscape Mitigation Masterplan has been updated to include the 'blue line' ownership boundary and annotates the boundary hedgerow within this boundary. We understand that as a result of confirmation of this, the applicant can commit to maintaining the hedgerow to a height of 3m and above is achievable.
- 2.5 Two new communication masts have been introduced in close proximity to the BESS however it is understood that these are not a confirmed element of the proposal at the time of this review.⁷
- 2.6 The route of permissive boundary route has been altered to avoid running alongside the proposed BESS, and the route now cuts off the south western corner of the site, travelling along retained hedgerow at the most southern field at the site.
- 2.7 The addendum states that in *'the majority of places'*⁸ a 10m buffer to the permissive route is now included for, *'in many areas the site fence line has been moved tighter to the solar deployment'*.
- 2.8 Additional planting is described on page 6 (paragraph 2.1.9), consisting of:
- Hedgerow and trees along the northern side of PRoW Kelham Footpath 4;
 - 'Additional woodland / scrub planting upon the boundary of Kelham Conservation Area, close to the pond';
 - 'Enhanced screening mitigation planting to be provided upon the boundary of the BESS / Substation';
 - 'The translocation of the existing semi mature hedgerow that fronts the A617 by the new site entrance'; and
 - 'Interplanting of gaps within the existing hedgerow beside the A617 along the whole section that extends north from the site boundary towards Kelham'⁹.
- 2.9 It is confirmed that the management of the *'planting'* is to maintain hedgerow heights at 4m+ and trees and woodland to grow higher, in order to *'to screen the site features'*¹⁰.
- 2.10 Three updated original viewpoints have been updated to support the visual assessment and conclusions relating to the BESS and the inclusion of two potential communication masts. These are Viewpoint 4, Viewpoint 5 and Viewpoint 7.

⁷ Amy Davies has confirmed that the communication masts need approval from the District Network Operator post application approval, email correspondence dated 18.08.24.

⁸ Paragraph 2.1.7, P6, *Kelham Solar Farm and BESS, Kelham, Newark on Trent* for proposed solar development, BESS and associated works, HC1002/02Adden, June 2024, Sirius Planning

⁹ P6, *Kelham Solar Farm and BESS, Kelham, Newark on Trent* for proposed solar development, BESS and associated works, HC1002/02Adden, June 2024, Sirius Planning

¹⁰ Paragraph 2.1.5, P5, *Kelham Solar Farm and BESS, Kelham, Newark on Trent* for proposed solar development, BESS and associated works, HC1002/02Adden, June 2024, Sirius Planning

3 Comments on the Addendum

3.1 Following a review of the information relevant to this application, comments are set out below.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Landscape Baseline

- 3.2 In terms of reviewing the 'low value rating for recreational value of the site and its immediate surroundings', the Addendum states *'Considering the site currently only hosts one PROW (with an adjoining link section) and loop of permissive access, it is considered that overall, the assessment conclusion on the recreational value of the site is fair.'*¹¹ The Addendum describes how the PROW across the site is linked to a second PROW route which, *'appears of very limited use'*, and the permissive route now links to the Trent Valley Way Regional route via the A617 site entrance.
- 3.3 An addition to the previous scheme is the introduction of two communication masts close to the BESS. There is little detail regarding the new masts, apart from inclusion in wireframe views on updated Viewpoints 4, 5 & 7, where the masts appear much taller than other BESS elements.
- 3.4 The impacts of the potential communication masts are described alongside the BESS mainly in terms of visual effects within section 6 of the Addendum. The Addendum states that landscape impacts of the BESS are not singled out as *'the scheme is considered as 'a whole' within the assessment. When effects are stated, these are considering the whole development, even if the BESS element is not specifically stated. The BESS is considered as a portion of the Kelham proposal, should landscape effects as a result of the BESS be different, these would have been stated in the text'*¹².
- 3.5 The original LVIA acknowledges that the change due to the Proposals would be *'diminishing the sense of place locally for users of the PROW crossing the north western areas of the site (and users of the permissive path)'*¹³, and the setting back of fencing to permissive routes and PROW and other mitigation measures such as additional planting do little to change this.
- 3.6 Considering the landscape effects, the original LVIA states that upon completion there would be a *'moderate'* adverse effect on the site and the immediate environs but effects will decrease with increasing distance from the site and having a minor adverse effect over the study area generally. With mitigation proposals in place as described in the LVIA addendum, this is considered to be a fair assessment overall for the purpose of this review.

¹¹ Paragraph 3.1.2, *Kelham Solar Farm and BESS, Kelham, Newark on Trent* for proposed solar development, BESS and associated works, HC1002/02Adden, June 2024, Sirius Planning

¹² Paragraph 4.1.5, *Kelham Solar Farm and BESS, Kelham, Newark on Trent* for proposed solar development, BESS and associated works, HC1002/02Adden, June 2024, Sirius Planning

¹³ Para 6.4.1, p47, LVIA, *Proposed Solar Farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)*, HC1002 02 01/LVIA, Sirius Planning

Visual Assessment

- 3.7 The construction effects for different groups of sensitive visual receptors are now included in the addendum as follows:
- 3.8 The overall construction phase visual effects are considered in the Addendum to be '*not substantial*' due to the site entrance being located at the A617 entrance, and set away from sensitive residential receptors.
- 3.9 The high bund along the site boundary to Broadgate Lane is also proposed to be constructed prior to construction commencing to provide screening of construction movements. It appears that for a few properties along Broadgate Lane there will be views, above the bund, of construction vehicle movements and noise impacts during this phase, from facing habitable rooms, as this phase involves solar array mounting steel frames driven into the ground and fencing erected, (as described in section 5.1.14 of original LVIA).
- 3.10 Based upon the methodology of the LVIA, the construction phase effects on local residential receptors directly opposite the site at Broadgate Lane could be judged as '*substantial*'.
- 3.11 The effect on PRoW users moving through the site during this phase is assessed as a '*high magnitude of visual effect*'¹⁴ and presumably substantial?
- 3.12 An overall judgement of '*not substantial*' for all local sensitive visual receptors (excluding users of PRoW Kelham Footpath 4 and permissive footpath users), is perhaps misleading, as footpaths are well used and there are a few properties with open views of the site from habitable rooms. However, the construction phase is a temporary phase.
- 3.13 It is stated in the LVIA addendum that there is '*notable visibility*' of the proposed communication masts for visual receptors at Viewpoints 4 & 5. The impacts of the communication masts and BESS have been more fully considered in the LVIA addendum in terms of inclusion of narrative as described in the below paragraphs, (3.14-3.18).
- 3.14 Viewpoint 7 is recorded from the A617 at the edge of Averham Conservation Area. The composite view shows how the proposals would be largely screened by the existing roadside hedgerow and the original conclusion of '*Negligible-Minor*' visual effects at this location for road users and residents is considered to be fair.
- 3.15 Viewpoint 4 is recorded at the proposed site entrance track next to the A617. The introduction of two communication masts alongside the BESS, are visible in this view and are described in the addendum, '*The masts form additional vertical features but from this separation distance they do not appear overly tall or act as the main visual focus, set within a local context with similar infrastructure features present*'. Additional planting is proposed to the bund, in front of the BESS, in addition to mitigation planting in front of the solar panels in this field, that is confirmed to be maintained at greater than 4m in height, and is assessed as a '*moderate*' adverse level of visual effects at year 10 of operation for road users and medium sensitivity receptors in this addendum. This is considered to be a fair assessment for the purpose of this review.
- 3.16 Viewpoint 5 is recorded next to the A617 within Kelham Conservation Area. The introduction of two communication masts in this view are described in the addendum, '*The masts are perceptible*'

¹⁴ Paragraph 5.1.3, *Kelham Solar Farm and BESS, Kelham, Newark on Trent* for proposed solar development, BESS and associated works, HC1002/02Adden, June 2024, Sirius Planning

but from this separation distance they do not appear out of vertical scale or act as the main visual focus'. The introduction increases the assessment values from 'Neutral' to 'Minor' adverse level of visual effect for road users at this location upon completion (year 10). This is considered to be a fair assessment for the purpose of this review.

- 3.17 Viewpoints 4 & 5 also describe views for recreational users of the Trent Valley Way along this footpath route next to the site and is described in the original report as reducing to '*moderate*' adverse effects at year 10 once proposed boundary hedgerow to this southern deployment area has established itself. The introduction of two communication masts at the BESS would not in our professional judgement, change this assessment of effects substantially.
- 3.18 Overall, the only change in the LVIA addendum for landscape and visual receptors is a change for sensitive visual receptors (road users) from Viewpoint 5 and changed accordingly from 'neutral' to 'minor' upon completion, as discussed in para 3.16 above.
- 3.19 With regards to previous comments regarding verifiable views and their clarity, the photomontages provided are 'Type 4 accuracy/AVR type 3', and no further comment is made in this review.
- 3.20 The LVIA addendum points out that the Heritage Assessment concluded that there are no substantial effects upon Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas due to the proposals.

Cumulative Effects

- 3.21 Since this application for a proposed solar farm and BESS at Kelham, a new NSIP project for an extensive ring of solar farms was made in November 2023¹⁵. This application joins the Kelham application along its boundaries to the north part of the site. The cumulative effects for landscape and visual receptors, if both applications are granted are difficult to assess, as the Great North Solar Park is at such an early stage of planning with statutory consultation yet to take place.

Landscape Mitigation Masterplan

- 3.22 The Landscape Mitigation Masterplan demonstrates the proposals have, in the main, incorporated our former recommendations and provided for a '*more considered landscape approach to mitigation*'. The original LVIA describes how all boundary hedgerows are to be maintained at 3m+ '*where appropriate*' and at over 4m for roadside vegetation and internal hedgerow to help screen views to the BESS. However, this increase in hedgerow height across the site is considered to deviate from characteristic low hedges within the local landscape.

Summary

- 3.23 Amendments to the original scheme have been made by the applicant and consist of rerouting of the permissive routes across the site to bypass the BESS, moving the fence line to permissive routes closer to solar panels and additional planting. Any confusion about the inclusion of boundary hedgerow, (for mitigation purposes), is removed with the inclusion of the blue line ownership boundary on the Landscape Mitigation Masterplan. Additional planting will be

¹⁵ 23/01990/CONSUL, Great North Road Solar Park.

maintained at heights 3m and above. In addition to this, two new communication masts have been added in close proximity to the BESS, and assessed in updated viewpoints provided.

3.24 The above changes broadly follow recommendations given by Influence in the initial review of the original scheme with the following caveats:

- It was recommended that a minimum of 10m is maintained between the centre of the PRoW or permissive route and the edges of the solar array and/or hedgerow. It is our understanding that, in the majority of locations the fence line has been pushed closer to the solar array, rather than the physical distance increased and along the PRoW there is proposed hedgerow and tree planting which reduces the PRoW corridor further to approximately 10m wide along this route. It is less than 10m wide for permissive routes in the majority of cases. This has not resulted in a 20m wide buffer for the above routes.
- Additional planting will be maintained at heights of 3m and above, however this is not characteristic of the local landscape where hedgerow are generally maintained at a lower level than this. It is understood that this proposed height is to help screen views of the proposals and in particular views towards the BESS.

3.25 With regards to the LVIA addendum report, construction phase effects have been more greatly considered, concentrating mainly on magnitude of visual effects. The LVIA addendum report considers that overall construction phase visual effects are '*not substantial*', but there is a '*high magnitude of visual effect*' for a small number of residential receptors directly adjacent to the site and for PRoW and permissive routes users travelling through the site during this temporary phase. We consider that this would result in a substantial magnitude of effects for these sensitive visual receptors during this phase, using the LVIA methodology referenced in the original report.

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