Rebuttal of Belvoir Solar Farm Independent Landscape Review

Belvoir Solar Farm

On behalf of JBM Solar

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Contents.

Appendices.

1. Introduction

1.1. The following provides a rebuttal of the independent landscape review provided by CEC Ltd (1st December 2022) for Melton Borough Council (found at Appendix 1) in relation to Belvoir Solar Farm ("Proposed Development") and the following submitted planning application documents relating to landscape and visual matters:

- Environmental Statement Chapter 2 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Pegasus Group (January 2022) and Appendices.
- Potential Cumulative Effects on Landscape Character and Visual Amenity – Pegasus Group (November 2022) and Appendices.
- Design and Access Statement – Pegasus Group (February 2022).
- Environmental Statement – Non-Technical Summary – Pegasus Group (January 2022).
- Figure_1.4_-_Site_Layout_and_Landscape_Masterplan_01.04.22-1112503.

1.2. The executive summary provides a brief of the issues arising. The points raised are looked at in more detail in the following sections.

1.3. Prior to this rebuttal, a conversation was had between Pegasus and CEC to discuss the issues and potential resolutions. CEC's note of the conversation can be found at Appendix 2.

2. Issues Raised

Paragraph 1.1.2

"It is considered that the Development relies on mitigation measures to reduce the significant visual effects which in themselves do not reflect the landscape character of the Vale of Belvoir. To reduce significant adverse visual effects, the Development proposes to allow all existing hedges within the site and on the site's boundaries, as well as all newly planted hedges, to grow and be maintained at a minimum of 3m in height. This is up to a meter higher than the existing hedges found across the Vale of Belvoir. This will therefore mean that growth each season/ management rotation would exceed 3.0metres until it is cut back" (para 1.1.2)

2.1. The following breaks down the key comments in relation to paragraph 1.1.2.

"Over Reliance on Mitigation Measures to Reduce Significant Visual Effects"

2.2. Only five of the fifteen viewpoints assessed within the ES chapter rely on maintaining hedgerows to a maximum 3m in height, to reduce a major significant effect, to moderate non-significant effects. These represent high sensitivity PRoW users with immediate views of the site.

Viewpoint and distance from site	Description of effect	Proposed mitigation/enhancement measures	Significance of Effect Operation Year 1	Significance of Effect Operation Year 15
Viewpoint 2 (From footpath F82/3, looking northwest) 48.3m from the site	The completed Proposed Development within the north of the Site would be visible. The panels would sit below the skyline.	Allowing the existing hedgerows to grow up (maximum 3m) and enhancing with infill planting would provide some level of screening between the Proposed Development and the footpath.	Major adverse Significant	Moderate adverse not significant
Viewpoint 3 (from byway F85b/4, looking southwest) 72.2m from the site	The completed Proposed Development within the Site would be visible between and above the existing low, gappy hedgerows. The Proposed Development would sit below the skyline which rises around Belvoir.	Allowing the existing hedgerows along the eastern edge to grow up (maximum 3m) and enhancing with infill planting would provide some level of screening.	Major adverse Significant	Moderate adverse not significant
Viewpoint 4 (from byway F85b/2, looking northwest) within the site	The completed Proposed Development within the immediate field would be clearly visible due to the proximity of the view.	Allowing the existing hedgerows to grow up (maximum 3m) and enhancing with infill planting where needed would provide a good level of screening between the Proposed	Major adverse Significant	Moderate adverse not significant

		Development and the byway. Occasional trees would be in-keeping with the existing trees along the southern side of the byway.		
Viewpoint 5 From byway F85b/1, looking north east 67.7m from the site	The completed Proposed Development within the southern fields of the Site would be visible.	An area of ecological enhancement will be located along this section of PRoW offsetting the Proposed Development form the byway. A hedgerow is proposed along the southern edge of the panels along the northern edge of the ecological area.	Major adverse Significant	Moderate adverse not significant
Viewpoint 12 (from footpath F74/1, looking southeast) 201.3m from the site	There would be a partial view of the completed Proposed Development within the western fields of the Site.	Allowing the existing hedgerows to grow up (maximum 3m) would provide some level of screening between the Proposed Development and the edge of Muston.	Major adverse Significant	Moderate adverse not significant

2.3. CEC have incorrectly stated that the hedges are proposed to be *"maintained at a minimum of 3m in height"* (Para 1.1.2), suggesting that hedgerows will be more than this height. Proposals outlined on the Site Layout and Landscape Masterplan (Figure 1.4 of ES Chapter 1), and ES Appendix 2.3 Visual Effects Summary Table specify that hedgerows are to be *"maintained at a maximum of 3m high*" and should therefore not exceed 3m.

2.4. The proposition of maintaining hedgerows at an increased height is a common approach to alleviating potential major effects on visual receptors. The screening of panels utilising existing hedgerows maintained to the height of the proposed solar panels (up to 3m) or above, is an effective way of ensuring the existing field structure is maintained whilst providing a screening function. A maximum of 3m has been specified to ensure the hedgerows match the proposed panel height. The maximum height merely suggests a limit to the hedge height and does not state that they should be maintained at 3m in absolute terms. The ES looked at a worst-case scenario and the need to alleviate potential significant visual effects from the identified receptors, therefore arrived at a maximum height of 3m. This is except for hedgerow trees which would be allowed to mature to mirror the treed hedgerows across the landscape.

2.5. Potential hedge heights and the pros and cons of reducing/increasing these were discussed with CEC (Appendix 2).

2.6. It may be favourable to maintain hedgerows at their existing height to maintain the existing landscape pattern within the site, however significant effects would remain for Viewpoints 2-5 and 12. This would not cause an increase in effects on other viewpoints 1, 6-11, and 13-15 as no major significant effects were assessed at year 1, therefore the view would remain the same at year 15.

"3m Hedgerows do not Reflect the Local Character…This is up to a meter higher than the existing hedges found across the Vale"

2.7. Proposals outlined on the Site Layout and Landscape Masterplan (Figure 1.4 of ES Chapter 1) specify that hedgerows are to be maintained at a maximum of 3m high. CEC are of the opinion that the height, which they misinterpreted as a 3m minimum height, is up to a metre higher than the existing hedgerows across the Vale. There is no basis on which to assume that hedgerows across the Vale are 2m. This is not stated in the Melton Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (2006 and 2011 update) 'Vale of Belvoir' Landscape Character Area description. The LCA report does not specify a local hedge height and refers only to *"manged hedgerows"* and *"…mixed farming bounded by hedges"*. The LCA does not determine the local hedgerow heights it merely reflects what was there at the time of the assessment (2006 with 2011 update).

2.8. As a quick exercise, Google Earth Pro has been used to illustrate the extent of 2m+ high hedgerows within the 'Vale of Belvoir' Landscape Character Area.

2.9. The views are from roads only, due to the restrictions of Google Earth Street View. They are recorded from the roads closest to the site, and include:

- Woolsthorpe Lane (Views 1-4)
- Easthorpe Lane (Views 5-7)
- Bottesford By-pass A52 (Views 8-9)
- Castle View (views 10-14)
- Long Lane (Views 15-16)
- Woolsthorpe Road (View 17)

2.10. The views do not record every hedge up to 3m but demonstrate a snapshot of the extent of high hedges (most more than 3m) throughout the 'Vale of Belvoir' landscape. Low managed hedgerows do form some of the boundary treatments throughout this character area, however it is not limited to this type of management. In contrast to the summer Google Earth Street Views, Viewpoints 1-15 (Appendix 2.4) were recorded in March 2020 after the hedgerows would've been trimmed thus illustrating maximum visibility (worst-case scenario). A landowner may, at any time, change the management regime of their hedgerows, whether that be reducing or increasing their height. The baseline height of hedgerows is constantly changing dependent on many contributing factors including time of year. Therefore, the hedgerows within the Viewpoints may appear up to 0.5m higher in summer months.

2.11. The views (Appendix 3) clearly demonstrate that from at least 17 points close to the site and within the Vale of Belvoir landscape, there are hedgerows higher in height than CEC's judgment of 2m.

Paragraph 1.1.3

"There is an extensive network of public rights of way directly linked to the Development and nearby settlements. The planting of new hedges and the increase in the minimum managed height of all new and existing hedgerows to 3m will enclose these routes and will remove the characteristically wide and open views of the 'Vale' landscape experienced by individuals using the routes for recreation." (para 1.1.3)

2.12. The Environmental Enhancement Strategy (Pegasus 2021) was not listed as one of application documents reviewed by CEC. The proposals include increased access and recreation, by creating a green infrastructure corridor with a permissive footpath (illustrated by a section within the EES, page 20) linking to the existing PRoW routes within the site which in the case of byway F85b/1 in the south of the site is 13m wide in places (illustrated by a section within the EES, page 13). The fence line has been offset from PRoW which generally run alongside hedgerows to avoid creating a tunnel effect and to ensure users do not feel crowded or overwhelmed by the proposals and to ensure some degree of rural character is retained. As specified on the Landscape Masterplan (Figure 1.4 of ES Chapter 1) the PRoW corridor for footpath F82/3 is 12m and would arguably not cause significant enclosure of the route and will retain views south towards Belvoir Castle across the open fields immediately south which have been left open without solar development. The existing PRoW and proposed permissive path create a wildlife walk with landscape, heritage and ecological interpretation. Distances of these footpaths are generous and provide opportunities to not only view the proposed ecological features within the site but also heritage in the surrounding Vale landscape.

Paragraph 1.1.4

"The Cumulative Assessment (CA) does not adequately assess the additional effects on the landscape character created by the Development in conjunction with the other 4 consented solar farms with in the 5km study radius. The assessment does not undertake an assessment of the local landscape character baseline with the 4 consented solar farms and does not identify the additional effects associated with the Development. The CA does not assess the distribution of solar farms outside the 5km study area, beyond this cluster of 5 solar farms." (para 1.1.4)

2.13. Supplementary information was provided at the request of CEC prior to their review of the LVIA and other application materials pertaining to landscape and visual matters (set out in the introduction). As a result, a Cumulative Assessment (CA) was provided to CEC by Pegasus 'Potential Cumulative Effects on Character and Visual Amenity' (November 2022). This was in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) and a full methodology appended. The purpose of the report was to provide further information relating to the cumulation of effects of the proposals for Belvoir Solar Farm in combination with the four following schemes.

- 49.9MW Solar Farm, land east of Jericho Covert, Jericho Lane. Validated 15th October 2020, approved (Aug 2022). Approximately 3.8km west of the site.
- 12.4 MW Solar Farm, Lodge Farm, Longhedge Lane. Constructed and operational. Approximately 4.5km north-west from the site.
- 49.9MW Solar Farm, land south of the A1 (Foston- By-Pass). Granted permission subject to conditions 1st March 2021. Approximately 4.9km north-east from the site.
- 10MW Solar Farm, Land South of The Railway Line & East of Station Road, Elton. Constructed and operational. Approximately 4.5km north-west of site.

2.14. The EIA chapter should be focussed on potential significant effects. A 5km study area (from the site) was deemed adequate as landscape and visual effects outside of this would not have been significant.

2.15. Informed by the seven cumulative plans produced, an additional site visit was carried out to record sixteen cumulative Viewpoints. Each Viewpoint was then assessed for the potential cumulation of effects of the Belvoir Solar Farm in combination with the cumulative schemes. No potential significant effects were identified.

2.16. Potential landscape effects on the Vale of Belvoir character area were found to be limited. The landscape assessment of potential cumulative effects within the CA focusses on the Proposed Development with the addition of the other (cumulative) sites being added into the landscape. Existing solar farms (C2 and C4 of the CA) already exist as part of the character and are therefore considered as part of the baseline. The CA does not assess the potential cumulative sites (C1 and C3) and their character areas first and then assess the addition of the Proposed Development. The focus should not be on the cumulative site, rather the focus should be the Proposed Development which is the remit of the assessment. To assess the Proposed Development in this way would require information such as a Landscape Capacity Study for the Landscape Character Areas which is not available. This is a point picked up in the discussion with CEC (Appendix 2).

3. Conclusion

3.1. The proposed mitigation measures for a maximum height of 3m aims to mitigate potential significant effects identified within the ES chapter. This height could be reduced however there would be resulting potential major adverse significant effects on PRoW receptors within or close to the site, represented by Viewpoints 2-5 and 12.

3.2. Surrounding hedgerow heights do vary greatly and are found to be more than 3m as demonstrated by views 1-17 and could therefore be deemed characteristic of the Vale landscape.

3.3. PRoW widths within the site are generous; footpath F82/3 12m PRoW corridor would not cause significant enclosure or loss of open views south.

3.4. The cumulative assessment focusses on the identification of 'significant' effects. Of the 16 cumulative viewpoints, no significant potential cumulative visual effects were assessed. Likewise, in the absence of a landscape capacity study, no significant potential cumulative landscape effects were assessed.

Appendix 1: Belvoir Solar Farm, Independent Landscape Review, On behalf of Melton Borough Council (CEC Dec 2022)

cornwall environmental consultants LTD

Belvoir Solar Farm
Independent Landscape Review
On behalf of Melton Borough Council

CEC4114
1 December 2022

Revision	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
First Issue	Kathryn Statham CMLI Senior Landscape Architect	Louise French CMLI Senior Landscape Architect	Louise French CMLI Senior Landscape Architect

Contents

1. Executive Summary

1.1.1. The proposed 49.9MW solar farm (hereafter referred to as the Development) would cover 15 fields of arable farmland - an area of 103.53 hectares, measuring 2.25km (1.39miles) from north to south, and 1km (0.62miles) at its widest part running east to west.

1.1.2. It is considered that the Development relies on mitigation measures to reduce the significant visual effects which in themselves do not reflect the landscape character of the Vale of Belvoir. To reduce significant adverse visual effects, the Development proposes to allow all existing hedges within the site and on the site's boundaries, as well as all newly planted hedges, to grow and be maintained at a minimum of 3m in height. This is up to a meter higher than the existing hedges found across the Vale of Belvoir. This will therefore mean that growth each season/ management rotation would exceed 3.0metres until it is cut back

1.1.3. There is an extensive network of public rights of way directly linked to the Development and nearby settlements. The planting of new hedges and the increase in the minimum managed height of all new and existing hedgerows to 3m will enclose these routes and will remove the characteristically wide and open views of the 'Vale' landscape experienced by individuals using the routes for recreation.

1.1.4. The Cumulative Assessment (CA) does not adequately assess the additional effects on the landscape character created by the Development in conjunction with the other 4 consented solar farms with in the 5km study radius. The assessment does not undertake an assessment of the local landscape character baseline with the 4 consented solar farms and does not identify the additional effects associated with the Development. The CA does not assess the distribution of solar farms outside the 5km study area, beyond this cluster of 5 solar farms.

1.1.5. It is considered that the Development in conjunction with the other 4 consented solar farms in the 'Vale' landscape has the potential to change the landscape strategy of the character area to a landscape with solar farms, where they become distinctive features of the character of this rural farmland.

1.1.6. The assessment uses out of date character descriptions and does not undertake an assessment of the local landscape character of the 'Vale'.

2. Introduction

2.1. Background

2.1.1. Cornwall Environmental Consultants were instructed on 30th August 2022 by Gareth Elliott, Planning Development Officer, Melton Borough Council to undertake an independent review of the landscape and visual impact of the proposed 49.9MW solar farm to the west of the settlement of Muston and south-east of Bottesford, planning reference 22/00537/FUL. The 103.53 hectare site is currently agricultural land, within Belvoir Estate, Grantham, NG32 1PE, being centred on co-ordinates: X: 482177 and Y: 337450, hereafter referred to as 'the Development'.

2.1.2. The review was undertaken by Kathryn Statham CMLI who has over 15 years' experience in the assessment of the landscape and visual impact of major development whilst in the employment of Cornwall Council.

2.1.3. This initial review of the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared by Pegasus (dated January 2022) highlighted the submitted LVIA did not adequately assess the potential landscape and visual cumulative effects of the Development in addition to the other 4 consented solar arrays in the 5km study area.

2.1.4. Therefore, on the 20th September, Cornwall Environmental Consultants (CEC) sent an initial landscape review to Gareth Elliott (copy included in Appendix A) to suggest that a site visit would be best undertaken once a more detailed Cumulative Impact Assessment had been undertaken by the applicant.

2.1.5. Gareth Elliott agreed that CEC would submit their independent landscape review within 3 weeks of receipt of the additional Cumulative Impact Assessment from the applicant.

2.1.6. The Cumulative Impact Assessment was received on 9th November, and CEC's review was to be submitted to Gareth Elliott by the 2nd December 2022.

2.2. Summary of the review process

2.2.1. In order to inform this response an independent review of the landscape baseline was undertaken through a desk assessment.

2.2.2. The following submitted planning application documents have been reviewed in the preparation of this response:

- Environmental Statement Chapter 2 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Pegasus Group (January 2022) and Appendices.
- Potential Cumulative Effects on Landscape Character and Visual Amenity – Pegasus Group (November 2022) and Appendices.
- Design and Access Statement – Pegasus Group (February 2022).
- Environmental Statement – Non-Technical Summary – Pegasus Group (January 2022).
- Figure_1.4_-_Site_Layout_and_Landscape_Masterplan_01.04.22-1112503.

2.2.3. As CEC have no knowledge of the landscape of the Vale of Belvoir, it was necessary to undertake a site visit to inform this review. The site visit was carried out on the afternoon of Monday 28th November 2022, due to a persistent ground fog during the morning. The site and surrounding landscape were again visited on Tuesday 29th with reduced visibility in long distance views from Belvoir Castle and Beacon Hill. This this has not prevented our analysis of the submitted landscape documents.

2.2.4. The following viewpoints were visited as part of the review:

- Viewpoint 1 - From footpath F80/3, looking south west
- Viewpoint 2 - From footpath F82/3, looking south west
- Viewpoint 3 - From byway F85b/4, looking south west
- Viewpoint 4 - From byway F85b/2, looking north west
- Viewpoint 5 - From byway F85b/1, looking north east
- Viewpoint 6 - From footpath Wool 18/3, Muston Bridge, looking west
- Viewpoint 7 - From Sedgebrook Road, looking north west
- Viewpoint 9 - From the Jubilee Way, looking north
- Viewpoint 10 - From footpath G1/2, looking north east
- Viewpoint 11 - From footpath G2/3, looking north east
- Viewpoint 13 - From Barkestone Lane (off A52), looking east
- Viewpoint 15 - From bridleway F86a/2, Beacon Hill, looking south east
- CA Viewpoint 7: (LVIA Viewpoint 9): Sequential view from the Jubilee Way long distance path
- CA Viewpoint 8 (LVIA Viewpoint 15): From PRoW bridleway F86a/2, Beacon Hill viewing point
- CA Viewpoint 9: From Bottesford Bypass (A52)
- CA Viewpoint 11: Sequential view from PRoW footpath G2/2
- CA Viewpoint 12 (LVIA Viewpoint 11): Sequential view from PRoW footpath G2/3
- CA Viewpoint 13: From PRoW footpath F82/2
- CA Viewpoint 14: Sequential view from Grantham Canal traffic free cycle route
- CA Viewpoint 15: Sequential view from Grantham Canal traffic free cycle route

3. Assessment of effects on landscape character

3.1. Review of assessment methodology

3.1.1. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared in line with best practice Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2013) 3rd Edition, Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (GLVIA3).

3.1.2. A 5km radius study area from the site is considered proportionate to the assessment of potential landscape and visual effects created by the Development.

3.1.3. Section 2 under Legislative and Policy Framework does not reference the emerging Bottesford Neighbourhood Plan which passed examination in the Spring of 2021 and has policy directly relating to the local landscape.

3.1.4. LVIA Methodology Table 12 – Typical descriptors of Landscape Effects, only allows for a High Sensitivity and a High Magnitude of Change to create a Major Adverse Effect. It is possible that the following may also create Major Adverse effects:

- High Sensitivity and a Moderate Magnitude of Change
- Moderate Sensitivity and a High Magnitude of Change

3.2. Review of the assessment of effects on landscape character

The significance of the effect of the Development on landscape character has been downplayed.

3.2.1. A judgement of significance of effect is reached by assessing the magnitude of change the development will have on the landscape baseline, and the sensitivity of the landscape to the proposed change. A judgement on the sensitivity of the landscape is reached by looking at the value of landscape character and the landscape's susceptibility to change, i.e. the ability of that landscape to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences to the maintenance of the baseline situation.

Landscape Value	+	Landscape Susceptibility	=	Landscape Sensitivity
Landscape Sensitivity	+	Magnitude of change	=	Significance of Effect

3.2.2. The LVIA has assessed the Land Use and Land Cover part of the landscape baseline to be of Low sensitivity (para2.4.18) and does not describe the magnitude of change the development will have on the landscape baseline. It concludes that the Development would not cause significant effects on the landscape character:

'it is expected that the operational proposed development would not cause significant effects on the identified landscape character of the Vale of Belvoir LCA which covers the site' para2.5.14.

3.2.3. It is considered that key components of the character of this 'Vale' landscape include the historic and distinctive field pattern which creates a strong landscape structure of low managed hedges with isolated individual trees, small areas of woodland, within a varied patchwork of arable farmland. This is a landscape valued for its recreation with a well-used network of public rights of way, and promoted recreational routes (Grantham Canal, Viking Way and Jubilee Way). The 'Vale' landscape has a harmonious combination of land cover which flows north from the Belvoir scarp to the south. The A52 has a limited influence on this tranquil rural landscape with few distracting features (a single line of pylons). The Grade I Listed Belvoir Castle was constructed on the edge of the scarp to command a view of this 'Vale' landscape. Although this landscape is not covered by designation, these key attributes create a strong sense of identity that indicate a medium/high to high landscape value.

3.2.4. The susceptibility of this 'Vale' landscape to the change proposed is considered to be medium (and not low), where 103 Ha of arable farmland will be covered with a single land use for 40 years, removing the seasonally changing patchwork of fallow ground and arable crops, and increasing hedge heights across the site and on all boundaries.

3.2.5. Referring to Table 4 – 'Criteria for assessing landscape sensitivity'[1] a landscape of Medium/High value, and a medium susceptibility to the proposed change will give a Medium to Medium/High sensitivity.

3.2.6. The resultant magnitude of change on landscape character of a solar farm of this scale (i.e. over three times the size of the two existing solar farms at Orston and Elton on the Hill) is considered to be High. This judgement reflects the description for a High magnitude of change described in LVIA Table 6[2] which states:

'*Introduction of major new elements into the landscape or some major change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of the landscape'*

3.2.7. It is understood that field boundaries will be retained, new hedge boundaries created, and the panels pile driven into the ground and not concreted in. However the replacement of 103ha of arable farmland with a single land use with no seasonal variation is considered to result in a High magnitude of change.

3.2.8. A high magnitude of landscape change to a landscape of Medium to Medium/High sensitivity will create a significant effect on landscape character.

3.2.9. In LVIA Appendix 2.2 – Landscape Effects Summary Table, the magnitude of change on the landscape character during construction is said to be Medium or Low, during operation to be Low or Negligible, and at decommissioning Low. The LVIA explains how judgments have been reached for landscape sensitivity and the level of significance in Section 2 but does not explain judgements for the magnitude of change.

The landscape mitigation for the solar farm is at odds with the assessed baseline character.

3.2.10. The Site Layout and Landscape Strategy[3] indicates that all external boundary hedges and all hedges within the site will be maintained at a minimum of 3m. Considering seasonal growth this would mean that hedges would exceed 3m in height between rotational cuts. This would be contrary to the baseline landscape character where hedges across the Vale of Belvoir are maintained at 2m by tractor mounted flail. The nature of the hedges is described in the LVIA as follows:

- '*Field boundaries are generally delineated by well-managed low hedgerows'* para 2.3.8

[1] LVIA Methodology page 5
[2] Table 6 – Criteria for assessing magnitude of change on landscape character
[3] Drawing P19-2022_10 Rev L 04.02.22

- '*The Application Site sits within the expansive gentle vale landscape and possesses a strong pattern, defined by low, managed hedgerows'* para 2.4.10
- '*The hedgerows are managed in a manner compatible with arable uses and are well-trimmed and low growing'* para 2.4.19
- *'low gappy hedgerows'* para 2.4.33

3.2.11. Trees within this landscape are found as isolated individual specimens within hedges, small copses at field junctions, or small woodlands which are contained by field boundaries. However, to screen the development from Muston on the north eastern edge a 280m long and 10m wide tree belt is proposed. This is considered contrary to the character of the Vale of Belvoir Landscape Character Area.

3.2.12. Paragraph 2.5.2 of the LVIA acknowledges that increasing the height of the boundary hedges will affect the character of the landscape when it states:

- '*Screen planting around solar PV development, or management changes such as allowing hedges to grow higher, can change the sense of enclosure of a landscape'*

4. Assessment of visual effects

4.1. Review of assessment methodology

4.1.1. The 15 public viewpoints selected are considered to represent an even spread of vantage points for varied viewers, at close, medium and distant ranges.

4.1.2. Paragraph 2.2.24 of the LVIA states that viewpoints for the assessment were agreed. However, it is understood that the applicant did not submit a Scoping Opinion, and there is no record on the planning portal under 21/00080/EIA or 22/00537/FUL of which viewpoints were agreed to have an accompanying visual representation of the Development at Year 1 and Year 5.

4.1.3. Visual representations have been prepared for:

- Viewpoint 6 - From footpath Wool 18/3, Muston Bridge, looking west.
- Viewpoint 9 - From the Jubilee Way, looking north.

It is considered that it would have been beneficial to have visual representations prepared for VP5-From byway F85b/1 looking north east, which also represents the view which would be experienced by the users of the Grantham Canal footpath which is also publicised as a traffic free cycle route connecting onto Grantham to the east.

4.1.4. Section 2 under Legislative and Policy Framework there is no mention of the emerging Bottesford Neighbourhood Plan which passed examination in the Spring of 2021. In this document key views are referenced in policy, one of which will over look the northern area of the site.

4.1.5. LVIA Methodology Table 8 – Criteria for assessing visual susceptibility (page 9) determines that users of major roads would have a low susceptibility to visual change. Susceptibility is dependent on both who experiences the view and how the view is experienced. It can not be assumed that all those travelling on major roads in the study area are of low visual susceptibility. The study area contains a number of historic buildings and tourist attractions which mean that those travelling on major roads may be doing so for recreation, having an appreciation of the landscape.

4.1.6. LVIA Methodology Table 13 – Typical descriptors of Visual Effects, only allows for a High Sensitivity and a High Magnitude of Change to create a Major Adverse effect. It is possible that the following may also create Major Adverse effects:

- High Sensitivity and a Moderate Magnitude of Change
- Moderate Sensitivity and a High Magnitude of Change

4.1.7. The LVIA methodology does not explain the differences between the visualisation types, and how each is to be viewed, where panoramic views and single frame images are supplied. This is an important distinction when LVIA states that '*on balance the site would represent only a small part of the wider view from this distance*' para 2.8.15. A 50mm single frame image more accurately represents the actual view. Panoramic images illustrate a wider angle of view than would be seen in focus at the viewpoint, and can foreshorten overall, making elements and features seem further away.

4.2. Review of the assessment of visual effects

Mitigation measures and new hedge planting will adversely affect visual appreciation of the wider 'Vale' landscape character, and do not reflect the wider landscape character.

4.2.1. The Visual Effects Summary Table[4] states that where significant visual effects will be experienced from a number of PROW around the site, visual effects will not be significant after 15 years due to the growth of the boundary hedges to 3m.

4.2.2. As has been stated in this response under 3.2.4, hedges of 3m and above would be contrary to the baseline landscape character where hedges across the Vale of Belvoir are maintained at 2m by tractor mounted flail.

4.2.3. Were the hedges to be retained at 2m to reflect the key characteristics of this landscape, then significant adverse visual effects would be experienced. This is substantiated by the Visual Effects Summary Table (EA Appendix 2.3) which indicates that at year 1, when the boundary hedges are still at 2m in height, that there will be significant adverse visual effects experienced at all of the viewpoints surrounding the site (VP1,2,3,4,5,12).

4.2.4. The view of the wider rural 'Vale' landscape will be removed from over 2km of public rights of way (PROW) which link directly to the village of Muston, by both 3m high solar panels or newly planted hedges to be maintained at 3m. These PROW will become passageways, altering the recreational experience on these routes for the most sensitive of viewers.

The assessment of significance of visual effects is downplayed

4.2.5. The Development cannot be described as having a compact layout, instead it extends for approximately 2.25km (1.39miles) in a north south direction, and stretches 1km (0.62 miles) at its widest point in an east west direction.

4.2.6. Public rights of way (PROW) run along the western and south eastern boundaries as well as through the site and connect directly to the village of Muston and Bottesford. These PROW are used for recreation from the settlements, and also to connect to the wider rural rights of way network.

4.2.7. It is considered that routes in close proximity to the Development will experience significant adverse effects, where views of the open rural landscape will be obstructed/ foreshortened and replaced by high hedges, belts of trees fencing and solar panels.

4.2.8. The applicants opinion that the proposed mitigation measures of tree planting and hedge management will reduce the visual impact to 'not significant' does not recognise that the fundamental nature and character of existing open landscape views will be lost, and the experience of walking along these public rights of way bounded on both sides by high hedges, has changed to one of a corridor. Para 2.5.16 LVIA concludes that '*the Proposed Development would not cause likely significant effects on most Viewpoints*'

Visual impact of the Development from key viewpoints with high numbers of viewers

4.2.9. Both Jubilee Way (VP9) looking north and the Grantham Canal and off road cycle route (VP5) are used by large numbers of individuals for recreational purposes where appreciation of the landscape is likely to be central to their enjoyment. They will experience direct views of the Development.

[4] LVIA Appendix 2.3

4.2.10. The LVIA acknowledges that

'*Given the high sensitivity of PRoW and Jubilee Way users and receptors close to the Castle and across the elevated ridge, the extent of the long-distance view and the complex landscape character, solar panels within the site have the potential to appear as a noticeable feature … '*

'Potential mitigation of views from elevated areas north of this may be less effective during winter months when vegetation is out of leaf increasing visibility due to the topography of the site and elevation of views ' para 2.8.15

4.2.11. The LVIA states that mitigation will be less effective when the trees lose their leaves. Deciduous trees in general have reduced or no foliage (limited screening qualities) for 6 months of the year.

4.2.12. The Jubilee Way meets the Belvoir scarp edge at viewpoint VP9 /CA7. At this point the viewer moves from a very different landscape character south of the scarp, and is presented with an elevated uninterrupted broad sweeping view of the Vale of Belvoir stretching out below. The Development will be clearly visible, from this elevated position despite some seasonal screening from trees and hedges. The side view of rows of panels stretching away to the north will occupy the width of a focussed view. It is considered that the High sensitivity viewer will experience a Medium to High magnitude of change from this viewpoint, which is judged as a significant visual effect. The LVIA determines a Moderate to Negligible/Neutral visual effect which is not significant.

4.2.13. LVIA Viewpoint 5, CA14B, and CA14C represents the views experienced by users of the Grantham Canal which connects Grantham with the River Trent to the west. This is a very popular route for walkers and is also designated as a traffic free cycle route. The existing hedges along the route are very gappy and thin in places and direct focussed views will be possible throughout the year of the Development, and its wider extent to the north. It is considered here that the High sensitivity viewer will experience a High magnitude of change, which is judged as a significant visual effect. There are gaps in the hedge along the Grantham Canal which are not within the site, and therefore boundary planting within the Development will not mitigate the visual effects from this route. The LVIA determines a Major Adverse significant effect will be experienced during construction and Year 1, but by Year 15 the visual effects will reduce to Moderate adverse visual effect which are not considered significant.

5. Assessment of the potential cumulative effects on landscape character

5.1. Review of assessment methodology

5.1.1. Section 2.7 of the LVIA assessed 'Cumulative and In-Combination Effects'. It was considered as a part of the initial review that this section of the LVIA contained insufficient detail to conclude '*that no significant cumulative landscape and visual effects would arise*' para 2.7.6. The assessment referred to the Jericho solar farm but did not consider the other 3 consented solar farms in the 'Vale' landscape, as they fell '*outside of the LCA assessed within this chapter'* para 2.7.3. Therefore a more detailed cumulative landscape and visual assessment was requested.

5.1.2. Pegasus then prepared 'Potential Cumulative Effects on Landscape Character and Visual Amenity' Nov 2022 which hereafter will be referred to as the 'Cumulative Assessment (CA)'.

5.1.3. The CA lists the 4 consented solar farms within the 5km study area:

- **C1** - 49.9MW Solar Farm, land east of Jericho Covert, Jericho Lane. Approved Aug 2022 not constructed. Approximately 3.8km west of the Development.
- **C2** - 12.4 MW Solar Farm, Lodge Farm, Longhedge Lane. Operational. Approximately 4.5km north-west from the Development.
- **C3** - 49.9MW Solar Farm, land south of the A1 (Foston- By-Pass). Consented March 2021 but not constructed. Approximately 4.9km north-east from the Development.
- **C4** - 10MW Solar Farm, Land South of The Railway Line & East of Station Road, Elton. Operational. Approximately 4.5km north-west of the Development.

5.1.4. The study area of a 5km radius from the site is not considered proportionate to the assessment cumulative of landscape and visual effects. It is considered that a study area of 10km should have been assessed to determine the distribution of solar farms in the wider 'Vale' landscape.

5.1.5. The CA does not provide a methodology to explain the criteria used to determine significance of cumulative landscape effects

5.1.6. The baseline character assessment has been carried out using the following landscape character assessments shown in Table 1. Also refer to Figure 1 – Cumulative Local Landscape Character Plan[5]:

[5] Drawing P19_2022_05 28.09.2022
Belvoir Solar Farm -Independent Landscape Review - On behalf of Melton Borough Council

Table 1 – Landscape Character Areas and solar farms in the 5km study area	
Landscape Character Area	Solar Farm(s)
Vale of Belvoir Landscape Character Area – Melton Borough Landscape and Historic Urban Character Assessment Report (2006, updated 2011) *Melton Borough Council*	• The Development • East of Jericho Covert (referred to as C1)
Aslockton Village Farmlands Character Area – Greater Nottingham Landscape Character Assessment (2009) *Rushcliffe Borough Council*	• Lodge Farm NE of Orston (referred to as C2) • Land South of the Railway Line – Elton on the Hill (referred to as C4)
Trent and Belvoir Vale – South Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment (2007) *South Kesteven District Council*	• Land South of the A1 at Foston (referred to as C3)

5.1.7. Referring to Table 1 the Development and C1 lie within the same Landscape Character Area (Vale of Belvoir LCA). However following a site visit it is considered that all 4 consented solar farms lie within a local landscape which is considered to share the same elements and distinctive features, with the same character (hereafter referred to as the 'Vale' landscape) which is divided by District Council boundaries, rather than differences in landscape character:

- C3 (not yet constructed) is part of the 'Trent and Belvoir Vale'
- C2 and C4 (both operational) lie within 1.3km of western boundary of the Vale of Belvoir Character Area, within the Aslockton Village Farmlands Character Area, but display the same landscape characteristics as the Vale of Belvoir Character Area.

5.1.8. The three character assessments which cover the 5km study area are now all between 11 and 15 years old, and have not been updated to reflect landscape change over this period. The CA has not carried out its own local landscape character assessment to update these old assessments, and more accurately describe the cumulative local landscape character baseline within the study area.

5.2. Review of the assessment of cumulative effects on landscape character

5.2.1. The CA does not assess the 'Vale' landscape character with four consented solar farms as its baseline.

5.2.2. It does not then assess the additional effects which will be created by the Development in conjunction with the 4 solar arrays as part of the baseline assessment. The CA repeats the assessment of the baseline landscape value and susceptibility from the LVIA:

'The quality and condition of the landscape is good and considered to be of medium value. The 'Vale of Belvoir' is of medium susceptibility to the Proposed Development and C1. This results in a medium sensitivity overall.' para 2.6

5.2.3. Although the Cumulative Report concludes there are no significant cumulative effects on landscape character in conjunction with the other 4 solar farms, it does so by assessing the three character areas listed in Table 2 which are much greater in scale than the 5km study area. This has the effect of downplaying the potential cumulative effects which could be experienced in the local landscape and

5km study area.

5.2.4. It is considered that were the 4 solar farms included in the baseline assessment of the 'Vale' character area, that the local landscape character would have a greater sensitivity to further large scale solar farms. The magnitude of change to landscape character created by the introduction of this 103Ha solar farm within the 5km study area is considered to be High. It is therefore considered that there is the potential for the Development to create significant cumulative effects on the landscape character.

5.2.5. The CA concludes the following in regard to cumulative landscape effects:

- The Development and C1 *'would not increase the moderate adverse outcome assessed … and therefore would not cause significant effects on the landscape character. This is due predominantly to the small area that these two schemes would occupy'* para 2.10
- C2, C3 and C4 '*the proposed development would have no direct or indirect impact on these character areas and therefore cause no cumulative effect'* para 2.11
- Conclusion *'In conclusion there would be a land use change caused by the cumulative schemes, however this would not alter the assessed effects of the Proposed Development within the 'Vale of Belvoir'. Due to the limited potential effects upon landscape character off the Proposed Development, and the relationship of the Application Site to the potential cumulative developments, it is concluded that no significant cumulative effects on the assessed landscape areas would arise'* para 2.13

5.2.6. It is considered that were the Cumulative Report to have assessed the potential cumulative landscape effects of the Development with the other 4 solar farms within the 5km study area, it would have concluded that solar farms were now a key characteristic of this landscape, and this landscape could be described as a landscape with solar farms where:

- Solar farms now influence the character of the local landscape
- The 5 separate developments now form a high density cluster of solar farms in the 5km study area which is the greatest density of solar farms in the wider landscape.

6. Assessment of the potential cumulative visual effects

6.1. A Review of assessment methodology

6.1.1. The CA does not provide a methodology to explain the different types of cumulative visual effect or include the criteria used to determine significance of cumulative visual effects.

6.2. Review of the assessment of visual effects

6.2.1. It is accepted that the nature of the topography and the existing vegetation of hedges, trees and small woodlands would prevent adverse combined and successive cumulative visual effects from many of the viewpoints within the lower areas of the 'Vale' landscape. These however would not prevent potential sequential effects where the viewer is aware of more than one solar farm as they move through the local landscape. Sequential cumulative effects in this instance are more likely for users of vehicles and bikes, rather than walkers.

6.2.2. Combined successive views of the Development and Lodge Farm (C2) are possible from CA 8/VP15 Beacon Hill. This cumulative visual effect is not acknowledged in the CA.

6.2.3. Belvoir Castle is Grade I Listed Building surrounded by Registered Park & Gardens with commanding elevated views the Vale of Belvoir to the north east round, to the north west. The CA does not assess the cumulative visual effects of moving from the car parks through the Belvoir Castle estate where there is potential to view the Development and the solar farm at Jericho (C2) not yet constructed, in sequential views. It was not possible to verify this on the site visit due to poor visibility due to fog and low lying cloud.

7. Inconsistencies

7.1. Visualisations

7.1.1. Cumulative Assessment viewpoint CA 8D has not labelled Lodge Solar Farm (C2) which is present in the view. Clarification is requested as to whether the extent of the solar farm east of the railway line at Elton on the Hill (C4) has been marked correctly?

7.1.2. 50mm Single frame images (which best reproduce how the view would appear were you to stand at the viewpoint) have not been provided for the Year 1 and Year 15 visualisations prepared for VP6 and VP9. Refer to the Landscape Institute guidance on the Visual Representation of Development Proposals TGN06/19

7.2. Cumulative Visual Assessment

7.2.1. CA Viewpoint 9 says the Proposed Development is 36m from the viewpoint, when the visualisation states distance from the site as 860m.

A. Appendix

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Our Ref: CEC4114 Melton Solar Array **01 December 2022**

Your Ref: 22/00537/FUL

Gareth Elliott – Planning Development Officer,
Melton Borough Council
Parkside, Station Approach,
Burton Street, Melton Mowbray,
Leics, LE13 1GH

Dear Gareth

RE: Independent landscape review of an application for a solar array at Muston Lane, Easthorpe, Leistershire

I am writing to you to provide an initial review of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the above development, further to my email of 14th September 2022.

I have reviewed all material relating to landscape and visual matters which is available on the Melton Idox system, and it is my opinion that there are omissions within the submitted LVIA which need to be addressed before I submit my detailed final review. I consider that the current LVIA has not undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the cumulative landscape and visual effects of the 49.9MW solar array in conjunction with the 4 other consented solar arrays which lie within application's 5km study area.

To enable me to provide you with an independent detailed review of the submitted LVIA and its findings, I feel it is important my final assessment includes any additional documents which may be submitted by the applicant relating to cumulative landscape and visual impact. For this reason, I have therefore prepared this initial review which highlights where I consider there to be omissions within the current LVIA (details are appended to this letter).

I will undertake a site visit and prepare the detailed review of the submitted landscape and visual assessment documents after the applicant has submitted an addendum to the LVIA relating to a Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CLVIA).

As per my email of 14th September I would be grateful if you would also confirm that you are happy that to review additional cumulative assessment material submitted by the applicant will be additional to my accepted quote, and will be charged at an hourly rate, and will be in the region of £480+VAT.

As I will also now need to wait for the additional information to be submitted by the applicant, I will not able to meet the agreed completion date of 7th October. Completion of my final landscape review would be within 3 weeks of receiving the additional information from the applicant.

I hope this is acceptable

Yours sincerely

K. Statham

Kathryn Statham BA(Hons), DipLA, CMLI
Senior Landscape Architect

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e: Kathryn.Statham@cecenvironment.co.uk
w: www.cecenvironment.co.uk

Further Information Requested

1. Introduction

1.1 It is considered that the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment does not comprehensively assess the cumulative impact of the proposed development in conjunction with the other 4 consented solar arrays within the 5km study area.

1.2 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) defines cumulative landscape and visual effects as those which:

> *'result from the additional changes to the landscape or visual amenity caused by the proposed development in conjunction with other developments (associated with or separate to it) or actions that occurred in the past, present or are likely to occur in the foreseeable future.'*

1.3 There are 4 further consented solar arrays within the 5km study area:

- Jericho Lane , Barkestone Le Vale - 49.9MW Solar Farm, approx 3.8km west of the site, Melton Borough Council (ref 20/01182/FUL)
- Land south of the A1 Foston By-Pass, Foston - 49.9MW Solar Farm, approx 4.9km north-east of the site, South Kesteven Council (ref S20/1433)
- Lodge Farm, Longhedge Lane, Orston - 12.4 MW Solar Farm, approx 4.5km north-west of the site, Rushcliffe Borough Council (ref 13/01609/FUL)
- Land South Of The Railway Line & East Of Station Road, Elton - 10MW Solar Farm, approx 4.5km north-west of site Rushcliffe Borough Council (ref 14/01739/FUL)

1.4 The LVIA under para 2.7.1 states that the cumulative sites considered are shown on Figure 1.2 – Cumulative Site Plan. However this Figure is not available to download from the Melton Borough Council's Idox system.

1.5 It is not clear from the submitted LVIA whether there are further solar arrays beyond the 5km study area which should be considered as part of a Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CLVIA). Clarification is requested as to whether the area of scope for the CLVIA was discussed with Melton Brough Council before the application was submitted?

2. Further consideration of cumulative landscape effects

2.1 The other 4 solar arrays are not mentioned in Section 2.3 – Landscape Baseline Assessment under 'Built Infrastructure' where it describes the existing residential and agricultural built form, the A52 and the railway line. The 4 consented solar arrays are also not mentioned in the 'Summary of Baseline Conditions' under para 2.8.3 to 2.8.5 of the LVIA.

2.2 Cumulative landscape effects are considered in the LVIA but only in the context of each landscape character area, and not holistically in the context of the 5km study area, which is covered by a number of character areas both within the Melton Borough Council area and adjacent administrative Council areas.

2.3 The LVIA under para 2.5.22 acknowledges that this development would create '*localised changes'* to the Vale of Belvoir landscape character, it does not describe the cumulative significance of this change in combination with those created by the other 4 solar arrays within the 5km study area.

3. Further consideration of cumulative visual effects

3.1 The other 4 solar arrays are not mentioned in LVIA's *'2.3 – Visual Baseline Assessment'* para 2.4.20 to 2.4.30, nor are potential cumulative visual effects.

3.2 The landscape baseline under '*Section 2.7 – Cumulative and In Combination Effects'* does not mention the other 4 soar arrays.

3.3 Paragraph 2.4.28 describes the criteria used to select the viewpoints for the LVIA but no criteria are provided to determine the viewpoints for the cumulative visual assessment under '*Section 2.7 – Cumulative and In Combination Effects.'*

3.4 Cumulative visual effects are considered in the LVIA under Section 2.7, but only as potential 'combined views' (where this development and one or more other solar arrays would be present in the same view). The LVIA does not assess other types of cumulative visual effect:

- Combined view (in succession) - where the viewer has to turn their head to see other developments from a single viewpoint
- Sequential visual effects – where the viewer has to move to another viewpoint to see the same or different developments, this can be along a road, railway line or public right of way.

3.5 A number of the 15 selected viewpoints have the potential to assess successive cumulative visual effects, where the viewer has the potential to view multiple solar arrays if they turn their head whilst remaining in the same position. However the LVIA under 2.7.4 states that each viewpoint only looks in one direction.

3.6 The LVIA does not show a map of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) of this development, overlain by the ZTVs of the other 4 solar arrays to determine additional combined and sequential viewpoints to be assessed as part of the CLVIA. These cumulative viewpoints could include views on key long distance routes such as the Viking Trail, public rights of way, highways and the railway.

4. Significance of Cumulative Effects

4.1 The LVIA acknowledges that significant landscape and visual effects are not the same as cumulative significant effects and states under para 2.2.21 that, *'this means that the magnitude of change is also assessed in a different way as described in Appendix 2.1*.' However Appendix 2.1 – Landscape and Visual Assessment Methodology, does not contain any reference to cumulative impact assessment or to the different criteria used to determine significance.

4.2 An addendum to the current LVIA looking at Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should include the following:

1. **Cumulative Landscape Effects** - A description of the potential cumulative landscape effects of the 4 consented arrays, set aside the predicted landscape effects of this development to identify potential cumulative landscape effects which are likely to include effects on the:
    a. fabric of the landscape as a result of removal of or changes in individual elements or features of the landscape and all the introduction of new elements or features
    b. aesthetic aspects of the landscape for example its scale, sense of enclosure, diversity, pattern and colour common and all on its perceptual or experiential attributes such as a sense of naturalness remoteness or tranquilly
    c. overall character of the landscape as a result of changes in the landscape fabric and all in aesthetic or perceptual aspects leading to modifications of key characteristics and possible creation of new landscape character if the changes are substantial enough[1]. Consideration as to whether this application has the potential to tip the balance through its additional landscape effects.
2. Assessment criteria for determining the significance of cumulative landscape effects looking at the
    a. susceptibility of the landscape to the proposed change,
    b. value attached to the landscape
    c. the size and scale of cumulative landscape effects identified
    d. the extent of the geographical area covered by the cumulative landscape effects
    e. the duration of cumulative landscape effects in terms of the approval periods for each of the other solar arrays, and the extent to which cumulative effects may be reversed.
3. **Cumulative Visual Effects** - A description of the added visual effects of this development with the visual effects of the other 4 solar arrays, or from their combined effect looking at the
    a. susceptibility of the viewer to changes in their view or visual amenity
    b. value attached to the views they experience
    c. the size and scale of cumulative visual effects they may experience
    d. the geographical extent of the cumulative visual effects
    e. the duration of cumulative visual effects in terms of the approval periods for each of the other solar arrays, and the extent to which cumulative visual effects may be reversed.
4. **Mitigation of cumulative effects** - actions which could be taken to mitigate effects significant cumulative adverse effects which arise from the development in conjunction with the other four solar arrays.

[1] GLVIA - Identifying the landscape effects and assessing their significance – para 7.25

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Appendix 2: CEC email

From:	Kathryn Statham
To:	Kathryn Ball
Cc:	Gareth Elliott
Subject:	RE: 22/00537/FUL: Fields OS 6700 6722 And 5200 Muston Lane Easthorpe - Update
Date:	17 February 2023 08:54:54
Attachments:	image004.png

Good morning Kathryn

To follow on from our telephone call of the 15th February regarding your Landscape Rebuttal of my Landscape Review (1st December) please find below a brief summary of our discussion.

In my Landscape Review of the Belvoir Solar Farm I had commented that the proposed mitigation measures relating to the screening of the development did not in themselves reflect the landscape character of the Vale of Belvoir. On the call you put forward a new proposal to cut hedges (in close proximity to the Belvoir site) at 2-2.5m allowing for further seasonal growth (before cutting) up to 2.5-3m. Although this would be more in keeping with the character of the Vale (where hedges appear to be maintained at 2m by tractor mounted flail) reducing the overall hedge height from 3m to 2m height will in turn affect the effectiveness of the hedges to screen the solar panels (at 2.5m in height) from visual receptors. Consideration needs to be given to the impact on landscape character and views of 3m high hedges which do not reflect the character of the Vale, versus hedges maintained at 2m where the rows of solar panels will become visible above the hedges.

We also discussed the cumulative landscape and visual effects of the Belvoir scheme in addition to, and in conjunction with the other 4 consented solar farms within 5km of the proposed development. As the solar farms at Foston and Jericho (both 49MW developments) are not yet constructed it is more difficult to fully appreciate the potential cumulative landscape and visual effects. It will be for Melton BC to make a judgement as to whether the consented solar farms in conjunction with the Belvior development create a landscape where solar farms become one of the defining characteristics of the Vale landscape, and whether this is acceptable. This judgement may also be informed by a landscape capacity appraisal of the impact of multiple developments of this nature both in the 5km study area and the wider landscape.

I hope you feel that these notes represent our brief telephone conversation.

Kind regards

Kathryn Statham CMLI

Senior Landscape Architect

(Please note my normal working days are Monday to Thursday)

Mobile: 07825 070611

Email: kathryn.statham@cecenvironment.co.uk

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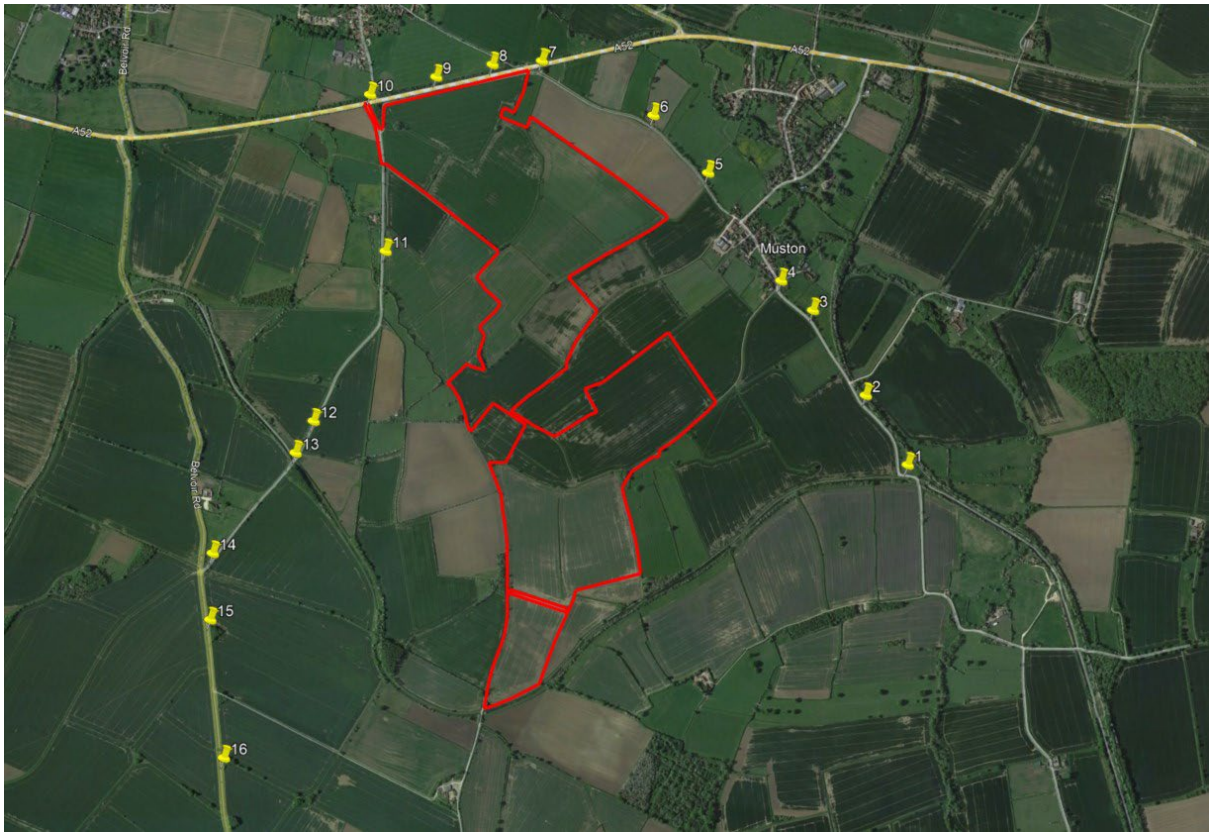
Appendix 3: Google Earth Street Views 1-17



View Location Map

View 1: Woolsthorpe Lane

View 2: Woolsthorpe Lane

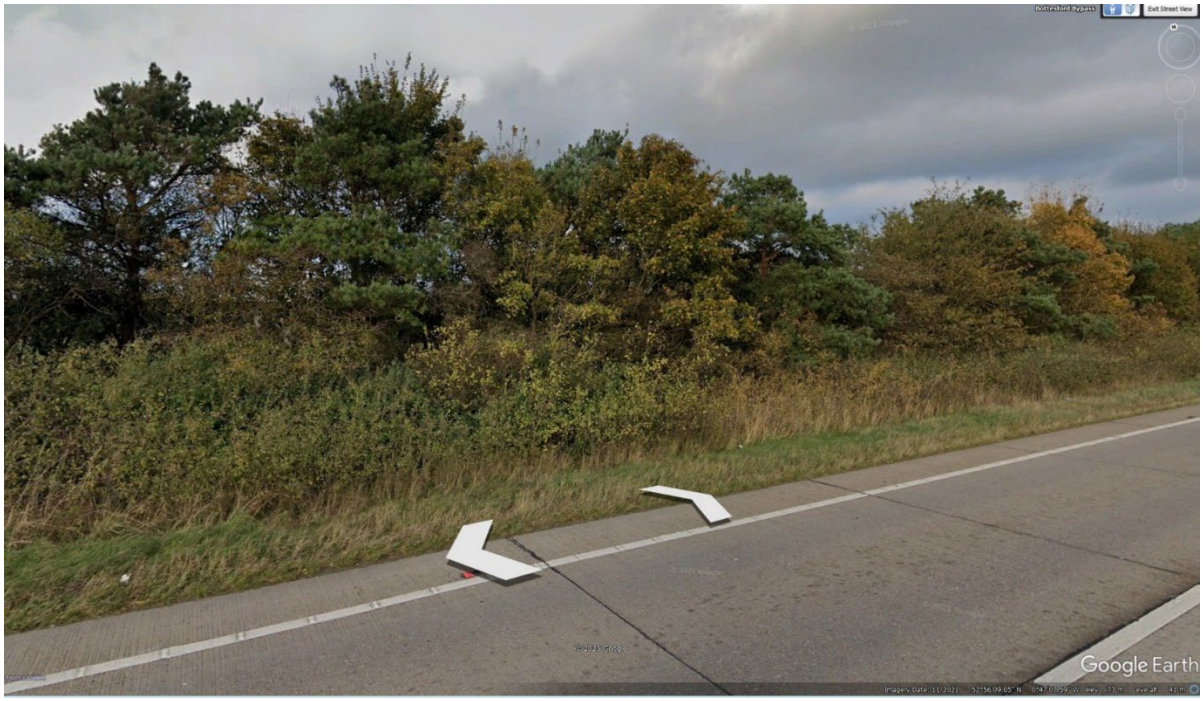
View 3: Woolsthorpe Lane

View 4: Woolsthorpe Lane

View 5: Easthorpe Lane

View 6: Easthorpe Lane

View 7: Easthorpe Lane



View 8: Bottesford By-pass A52

View 9: Bottesford By-pass A52

View 10: Castle View

View 11: Castle View

View 12: Castle View

View 13: Castle View

View 14: Castle View

View 15: Long Lane

View 15: Long Lane

View 17: Woolsthorpe Road

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

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