

Deadline 5: Comments on responses by the Applicant (REP4 - 037) to the Examining Authority's Second Written Questions

Q2.5.5 Compulsory Acquisition - Land retention at Church Hanborough

The Applicant has failed to answer each of the four questions put to it by the ExA, but responded with unsubstantiated generalisations. It has also failed to respond at all to the questions in relation to northern section of Field 2.115. I addressed the matter of the northern section of fields 2.115 and 2.116 at D4. (REP4 – 071) They are clearly not reasonably required for the development and should therefore be removed from the Order Limits. Indeed, the section of field 2.115 is not even proposed for anything more than 'grassland'. I have not been able to identify field 2.117 referred to by the Applicant.

Q2.6.9 Cultural Heritage – Church of St Peter and St Paul, Church Hanborough

The Applicant concedes that assessment of impact 'largely subjective', and that 'it is not unusual for specialist to have different conclusions'. Whatever adjectives are used by specialists to describe the degree of impact, I would argue that it is the impact as felt by residents, visitors, road-users and walkers along PRow, most of whom will not be specialists, that should carry the most weight. These groups of people, numbering in their thousands, enjoy the un-impacted views and landscape and naturally and properly would be adversely affected by the imposition of an industrial landscape on the foreground of a longer view towards the conservation village of Church Hanborough and its church steeple.

As I said in my response to this question at D4(REP4 – 071) there is an irony here because the Applicant has proposed a new PRow between Cassington and Church Hanborough which at viewpoint 38 will provide walkers with a direct view of the St Peter and St Paul church steeple. This view would be destroyed by both the tunnel effects of the proposed hedging and the fields of solar panels and power converter stations in the foreground. I note that the ExA intends to include Purwell Farm and I hope viewpoint 38 in its ASIs. I trust also in this vein that the unaccompanied site visit walking south from the centre of Church Hanborough earlier this year included at least as far south as viewpoint 24.

Q2.13.8 Landscape and Visual Amenity – Landscape mitigation and decommissioning

- 1) The example of viewpoint 38 selected by the Applicant in its response to this question is a good example of the wholly misleading assertions by the Applicant throughout this long process. In relation to viewpoint 38 the Applicant refers to the illustration in the photomontage APP – 072. (*Note: this reference is incorrect and should I think be to APP-078, Fig. 8.338*) The photomontage of viewpoint 38

shows a comparatively narrow tunnel (perhaps about 5 degrees arc of vision) between high hedges. It is disingenuous to postulate, as the Applicant does in its answer to this question, that 'the hedgerows would not prevent the long sweeping views characteristic of the local area'. I have stood at viewpoint 38 looking at the wide panorama of the Evenlode valley. Virtually all of this would be lost once such a hedge matures.

- 3) The ExA raises the issue here of future hedgerow management. The Applicant's answer is merely to say that it will be 'added to the decommissioning plan as appropriate, and at the relevant time'. This is not a satisfactory answer. If the ExA have asked a question, that makes it the relevant time now unless properly explained to the contrary. This is yet another example of a lack of genuine co-operation and involvement by the Applicant which appears determined on a policy of trying to ride roughshod over a host of issues.

Q2.13.9 Environmental Statement and landscape effects

This question and the Applicants response seem to me to go to the heart of the landscape and visual effects issues, which are so central to this whole matter. The Applicant seeks to define the two effects, Landscape and Visual:

Landscape – relates to the physical and perceptual characteristics of the land and resulting character and quality, and

Visual – relates to the effects on views experienced by visual receptors and on the change in views experienced by people.

Regarding Landscape, the Applicant first asserts that 'the proposed mitigation serves its purpose and works as a positive enhancement measure'. The relevant mitigation, as I understand it, is many miles of new dense hedging as well as infilling of gaps in present hedging. To assert, as the Applicant does, that it serves its purpose can only mean that it goes some way to camouflaging the new industrial landscape. But how can it possibly be a 'positive enhancement measure' either during the next 40 years or after decommissioning. The physical and perceptual characteristics will be irredeemably changed for the worse. The historic landscape so valued by residents and visitors will be completely altered by miles and miles of extra straight and solid green lines designed to fit around maximum blocks of panels rather than the current somewhat haphazard field boundaries which provide endless variety.

Regarding Visual, the ExA's references to photomontages in this question have been ignored by the Applicant. This question also asks if the Applicant can demonstrate how the change in nature of the impact has been taken into account in line with methodology with appropriate consideration of, and reference to, the correlating photomontages. Again this is ignored by the Applicant. The conclusion must be that the Applicant has either no satisfactory answer despite having been given a number of opportunities or is not able or willing to engage with the ExA in the proper way.

Q2.13.14 Viewpoints

The Applicant's answer to this question is evasive.

From the time of the Scoping Opinion and up to the present, the issue of a lack of photomontages has been made repeatedly and is still ignored by the Applicant. My point has always focussed first on the Applicant's limited selection of viewpoints for photomontages. My understanding from emails to me from the three local planning authorities is that there was no communication with them about the Applicant's selection of proposed or actual limited viewpoints for photomontages. At Table 7.2 of the Scoping Opinion it specifically required the Applicant to provide evidence of this but it has not yet done so despite the robustness and clarity of the ExA's request for evidence. I went into some detail about the lack of photomontages and evidence in my Relevant Representation RR – 0998, paras. 2 – 18.

Although my focus in this context has been on the dearth of photomontages, I have also joined others in the request for more and better sited viewpoints. My previous request, particularly in the context of the cumulative negative impacts on the pleasure of landscape and visual amenity along PRow and roadways (especially Lower Road along the Evenlode valley) have not been addressed in any substantive way by the Applicant.

Q2.13.15 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

Again more evasion by the Applicant. The Order Limits of the Project, as at present proposed come right up to our garden wall, but our own property is not included in the list 1 – 18 unless New Barn Cottage is just another mistake. In 'Nominations for locations for ASI' (REP2-121) I included some photographs taken from our property. In my view the Applicant should be required to produce a full RVAA. At best all the Applicant has done in its reply to this question is to list what it has done, whilst ignoring the questioned 'methodology that lead to the assumption that the RVAA was not required.

Q2.14.1 Noise and Vibration – cumulative noise in Public Rights of Way

Important as this is, could this question be extended to residential buildings. Currently many buffers are still proposed at 25 metres, whilst the answer to this question informs us that at upwards of 100 metres away a PCS will be slightly audible. PCS's may well not be at the perimeter of the block of panels but nevertheless this suggests that there needs to be a minimum distance imposed for any one, let alone more than one PCS from every residential property. From other answers to Q2.14 there is the strong impression that there is much work still to be done here including consideration of noise from inverters.

