



Hearing Transcript

Project:	Botley West Solar Farm
Hearing:	Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH1) Part 3
Date:	09 October 2025

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00:00:02:14 - 00:00:27:20

Afternoon, everyone take your seats. This issue specific hearing is now resumed. Um, we have the matter of heritage coming up, but before we do go into heritage, I'll just come to the applicant. Um, I know at the start of the day, I mentioned a question about battery storage, and you said you'd sort of try and find an answer for me now. Do you have anything for me on that, please?

00:00:28:12 - 00:00:38:05

Toby, on behalf of the applicant. Yes we do. So I'll pass over to Mr. Owen Lloyd to come back, first of all. And then in terms of how it impacts the assessment, it'd be, Mr. Lapointe, that we'll deal with that.

00:00:38:07 - 00:00:39:10

Okay. Thank you.

00:00:41:03 - 00:01:21:09

Marko and Lloyd for the applicant. I think the confusion arises because there is another connection agreement at the Berkeley West substation. Um, it is for the Botley Green Energy Center, which is an 800 megawatt solar connection agreement with an October 33rd connection date. Now within that 800MW, they included battery storage. Um, they don't have any land. I'm in touch with the developer Ethos Green, so they have dropped the solar element of it, and they're currently undergoing the gate two whole queue application process for a confirmed connection under the gate two.

00:01:21:11 - 00:01:52:19

They've applied for a 250 megawatt battery connection because they have five acres of land, which will enable them to do that. They share a landlord with National Grid at fund, but they're not linked in any way. Their plan is should they get a gate to offer. Then they will proceed with engineering work and then an application. They have made no planning application yet because the project is simply a unconfirmed connection agreement.

00:01:52:21 - 00:02:26:14

So that's where the, um. And the reason the battery storage stories became an issue, as was when they. When National Grid drafted the um screening, um, the landlord at farmer is very keen that there is only one access road for the substation and should it happen, the battery facility. And that's someone who drafted it wrote on the road battery access. But there is no national grid, had no battery plans and there are currently no plans for a battery.

00:02:26:21 - 00:02:32:20

That will depend on the gate to process, which will be resolved by January next year.

00:02:33:03 - 00:02:44:03

Okay, just very quickly, before we come to the cumulative effects, you said that that Botley Green shares a boundary of National Grid. Does it share a boundary with the border limits?

00:02:46:12 - 00:02:52:03

Mark Owen Lloyd for the applicant. Not with our order limits. No, it shows the boundary with the national grid and the landlord.

00:02:52:12 - 00:03:06:21

Okay. Thank you. I'll just come to the Vale of White Horse in terms of that, the whole screening opinion, is it within the screening opinion that there's this mention of battery storage? Stuart Wark of the White Horse.

00:03:06:23 - 00:03:07:08

Um.

00:03:07:10 - 00:03:18:02

Battery energy is mentioned, but it's not part of the National Grid's proposal as I understand it. I think it's one of their customer connections that's listed in that list that's on the screen.

00:03:18:04 - 00:03:23:06

Okay. Thank you very much. And now I'll come to yourself, sir, for the cumulative effects.

00:03:24:10 - 00:04:04:25

Christopher Larkins, on behalf of the applicant. Yes. So from a technical planning and EIA point of view, the battery storage facility that was mentioned this morning doesn't exist in those terms. So as, as Mr. Booker was confirming there it doesn't form part of the screening report. I searched battery throughout that report and found it three times, but not in relation to the site adjacent to ours. So and even from a cumulative point of view, it sort of falls outside the tiers that we would normally include in a cumulative impact assessment.

00:04:04:27 - 00:04:30:27

So it has no status from a planning point of view. It's simply an idea, if you like. Um, from a planning and EIA point of view. So it falls outside even the three tiers that we defined in the cumulative impacts. Chapter chapter 20 in the environmental statement. So it's not part of the National grid proposal. And from a technical EIA and planning point of view, it falls outside of the scope of our assessment.

00:04:36:15 - 00:04:41:19

Okay. Thank you very much. And thank you to the White Horse for confirming that to me.

00:04:45:12 - 00:05:12:00

So thank you. Um, just to add a little bit of, um, local information to the discussion of the fields. Um, while the proposed site for the battery energy storage, as you asked the question isn't coincident with the the applicant's red line. It's about one field over and would also share a boundary that the applicant shares with a number of the public rights of way, including the Oxford Green Belt Way.

00:05:14:26 - 00:05:24:05

Yes. No, I appreciate that. Thank you. Thank you very much. Okay. Um, Miss Metcalf, I hand over to you now to take on heritage.

00:05:26:09 - 00:05:44:14

Thank you. So we're on agenda item 3D, which is heritage. So my first question is regarding the setting of the World Heritage Site. And it would be useful at this stage if we could display figure 1.4 of the updated Heritage Impact Assessment. CR 2036. It's on page 18.

00:05:49:15 - 00:06:20:08

I'll just. I'll make a start anyway. um, so it's clear from the various documents that have been received that there are differences in professional judgment in terms of the extent of the setting and its contribution to the significance of the heritage asset. And we, as the ECA, will draw our conclusions from both these documents and from our own observations. However, I would like to ask a particular question of the applicant and also of Historic England in relation to this matter. I believe Historic England are online, Mr.

00:06:20:10 - 00:06:23:28

Scott. Um, yes, I can see you there. Thank you.

00:06:25:19 - 00:07:03:12

So firstly, to the applicant in the updated hire that we now have the figure up online in paragraph 1.6.6, you state that no visual change will occur within any of the key visual links identified on this plan, which is taken from appendix three of the World Heritage Site Management Plan. However, parts of field numbers 2.6, Six, 2.7 and 2.11. Southeast of Whiskey Clump, fall within these identified with within these defined key visual links, but panels have not been omitted from these areas through the latest change request.

00:07:03:14 - 00:07:05:11

Can you explain why not please?

00:07:08:15 - 00:07:13:04

On behalf of the applicant, I'll introduce my colleague, Mr. Rawlings, who will deal with heritage. Thank you.

00:07:14:10 - 00:07:56:19

Mick Rawlings for the applicant. I think the answer to that is that what we're looking at here are essentially view cones from specific points within the World Heritage site, looking outwards. So there are two defined view cones. What as you can see on the image, one looks to the east, uh, towards the sort of northern edge of Woodstock, and one looks to the southeast, um, towards Bladen. And the one to the southeast is very important because it's the designed sightline that feeds right through the whole of the landscape of Blenheim, so that it follows the line of the the tree lined avenue that comes right through the park and right through the center of the house, and it's aligned on the church at Bladen.

00:07:56:21 - 00:08:32:18

So it's a it's a key, definitive line within that landscape on which the whole design of the house and garden or the palace and garden is based. What we're saying is that there, that none of the development will be visible in those views. So from the from the place at which the views cone commences, those views that look outwards, there will be no, um, development visible in those view cones. So it's not that there won't be any development within the land that's covered by the cone, but it won't be visible in the view from the base of the view cone.

00:08:32:20 - 00:08:34:16

So those are outward views.

00:08:35:24 - 00:09:11:07

Uh, thank you, Mr. Rawlings, but excuse me. The text in the box, which I appreciate, is very small to read. Um, does say the shaded area represents the extent of the landscape that forms the backdrop to the key views from the palace, and is therefore important to the setting. So that woods to me seem to indicate that actually those viewpoints, because you are looking particularly at, um, these specific key visual links, um, that they are important and that they are important to the setting.

00:09:11:09 - 00:09:14:01

So can you, can you respond to that, please?

00:09:14:03 - 00:09:44:20

Yes. Mick Rawlings for the applicant, I would come back to what I've just said, that the scheme has been designed so that no part of it is visible in the views from the palace or from within the World Heritage Site as set out in those view cones. So those view cones cover outward views. And that's what we've sought to avoid any impact within. So although there might be, um, panels and other, other parts of development within the land in those view cones, none of that would be visible from the source of the view cone.

00:09:44:22 - 00:09:47:10

And the view cone is designed for outward views.

00:09:49:10 - 00:10:14:12

I understand that, but that doesn't really respond to my question about the specific right wording in that box that says that it forms the backdrop and is important to the setting. And by saying that you're not putting panels in because they're not seeing, that doesn't appreciate that wider setting, um, element that, that this I think is trying to define.

00:10:14:24 - 00:10:36:17

Nick Rawlings for the applicant, I think, and our understanding of how this is meant to work is that these these areas are important insomuch as the view out from the palace, if they're if there's no inter visibility between the land and the palace itself, then I can't see that it's making any different contribution to the setting than any of the land adjacent to it.

00:10:36:19 - 00:10:44:05

That's not what it says in the box. The book says the extent of landscape that forms the backdrop. So I think we're going to have to agree to disagree on it.

00:10:44:10 - 00:10:44:25

But.

00:10:44:27 - 00:10:49:06

It does say the views from the palace is what it says in the box.

00:10:49:19 - 00:11:06:05

Uh, yes, it does save us from the palace, but it does say the extent of the landscape. That's important to the setting. Though I, I'm not sure that we're going to agree on that one. Um, I'll leave that there. And turning to historic England. Um, Mr. Scott, are you there, please?

00:11:10:18 - 00:11:13:03

Andrew Scott, on behalf of Historic England. Yes. Hello.

00:11:13:25 - 00:11:45:00

Um, so in the change of change request consultation report, which was CR2 zero 72. Um, could we stop sharing the screen so that we can see Mr. Scott? Thank you. Um, your response suggests that the reduction in panels around Blaydon has the potential to remove the adverse effects to the World Heritage site, but you required clarification on certain matters, such as the updated heritage impact assessment and additional Visualizations, and these were submitted at deadline five.

00:11:45:20 - 00:12:18:19

Referring also to the Icomos Technical Review, which was ranked 452. They stated that they did not consider that the removal of panels outlined in CR2 would be sufficient to reduce the substantial harm that the project would have on their oov of the World Heritage Site. So have you had the opportunity to reflect on the applicant's deadline, five submissions and also the Icomos submission? And are you in a position now to comment further on whether you consider the potential harm to the AUV has been removed, or at least substantially reduced?

00:12:20:21 - 00:12:21:12

Andrew Scott, on.

00:12:21:14 - 00:13:03:04

Behalf of Historic England, um, in relation to the change request to Historic England, welcome and welcomes the changes that have been brought forward, which has removed the solar panels from those fields which in our view, have the strong indivisibility and connection with the World Heritage

Site and from which that Blenheim Ensemble can be appreciated from a countryside setting. So from our my own assessment, it does appear that these changes have minimized the harm to UV and avoided the invisibility. Invisibility with the World Heritage Site, which broadly addresses the harm we have identified with our earlier advice in relation to our Icomos technical review, we are in dialogue with Icomos with regards to to their review and we they are aware of the DCM.

00:13:03:12 - 00:13:10:01

The deadlines for the DCO and we are hoping to provide a further update for deadline six in relation to that.

00:13:12:16 - 00:13:13:08

Thank you.

00:13:14:02 - 00:13:37:26

Thank you. Um, just in terms of, um, substantial areas of wider landscape setting that whilst not necessarily providing a primary contribution to the significance of the World Heritage Site, still support the Ove. Do you feel that these areas have also been considered sufficiently within the application and dealt with in an appropriate manner?

00:13:45:09 - 00:14:15:15

Andrew Scott. On behalf of Historic England, um, based on our, um, assessment, we've undertaken quite a methodical and detailed assessment of the impact of the properties of and including the relation to how each of these fields contribute to the attributes of AUV and how that impacts the viewers or the the appreciation of the World Heritage Site from those fields, um, as well as assessing the integrity and authenticity of the World Heritage Site as part of that. So our assessment was structured to kind of follow that approach that was set up by Unesco.

00:14:15:17 - 00:14:36:15

Um, in their guidance and, and has taken account of, um, the application sites, how those various parcels of, of the site contribute to the significance and experience of the World Heritage site and the registered park and garden, in accordance with our own guidance, which is set out in a our settings of historic, um, assets. GPA, um GPA three got the guidance. Thank you.

00:14:37:06 - 00:14:38:15

Thank you for that.

00:14:40:03 - 00:14:50:29

Um, right. Um, I'll just move on to the host authorities. Um, do you have your heritage expert with you, and do they have any comments to make at this time?

00:14:52:29 - 00:14:53:28

Andrew Thompson.

00:14:54:00 - 00:14:58:24

West Oxfordshire District Council. Our, uh, heritage consultant is available online.

00:14:58:26 - 00:14:59:16

Um, Steve and.

00:14:59:18 - 00:15:02:06

Or, um, so I'd like to invite him to respond.

00:15:02:08 - 00:15:04:12

To questions that you might have. Thank you.

00:15:06:00 - 00:15:09:06

Thanks, Andrew. Um, I think to pick up.

00:15:09:08 - 00:16:03:16

I'm sorry, Steven, for the host authorities. Um, I think to pick up on what? Um, the gentleman from Historic England said. I think we're probably in a position where we have another one of these differences in professional opinion, because I think based on our review of the, uh, change control, um, information submitted by the applicant and looking at that in parallel with, uh, with the Icomos technical review, I think we remain of the view that there are areas of panels that would benefit from from reconsideration because of the way that they interact with, um, attribute seven, which is the, um, the kind of rural setting of, of the World Heritage Site and therefore still has a, um, a level of effect that, um, that would be problematic in the view of the, the host authorities.

00:16:03:18 - 00:16:15:21

So I think we would welcome the opportunity to firstly see the, um, the assessment that Historic England has done and perhaps have a bit of dialogue with them on, on where we we disagree potentially.

00:16:18:09 - 00:16:53:05

Um, yes. Thank you. I've, we've we've received your, um, representation that shows various areas of land, some of which are heritage, some of which are landscape. Um, because most of them are landscape based. I am going to cover that in the landscape section. Um, but I take on board your comments regarding that representation and the, um, and the areas of heritage that, um, in relation to heritage that you feel, um, are problematic. Um, and I have a question, as I say, in landscape that will cover we'll cover that as well.

00:16:53:07 - 00:17:01:26

So I might pull you back in at that point if that's okay. Thank you. Um, are there any questions in the room? Yes. Hello, Mr. Muhammad.

00:17:02:24 - 00:17:04:00

Uh, thank you very much.

00:17:04:02 - 00:17:04:17

I'm going.

00:17:04:19 - 00:17:05:24

To invite stop.

00:17:05:26 - 00:17:06:20

Botley West.

00:17:06:23 - 00:17:07:16

Mr. Mohammed.

00:17:07:18 - 00:17:11:29

I'm going to invite our heritage consultant, um, Miss Hamilton.

00:17:12:01 - 00:17:12:16

Rutter.

00:17:12:18 - 00:17:48:22

In just a moment to comment, but just an observation on the exchange that you had with the applicant on this. Um, it's important to remember what national policy also tells us about heritage assessments and the status of the asset that you're dealing with. We are dealing with a World Heritage site. So insofar as there's a hierarchy of assets in this country. We are literally at the top of the food chain, and so that's a really important consideration. Secondly, um, without going into specifics, which what which is what you'll get from Miss Hamilton Rutter in a moment.

00:17:48:24 - 00:18:19:15

The really critical, uh, point to remember about the the applicant's assessment throughout their assessment has been to effectively say if you can't see it from the from the World Heritage site, it's fine. And so what that tells you, and it's a really fundamental misunderstanding of how you assess heritage assets, is that, first of all, it's much, much more than what you can or cannot see. It's about how the setting is experienced.

00:18:19:17 - 00:18:45:24

It is about the relationship that we have with that setting. It's the relationship that the asset has with that, with that setting as well. So we'll I'll address that in our writing in the, in the deadline six. But I think that is a fundamental misunderstanding of how you assess the impacts on heritage assets that is really contaminates their analysis throughout. But on the specific questions I'll hand over to Miss Hamilton Rutter now. Thank you.

00:18:46:21 - 00:18:50:08

Thank you. Hannah Hamilton Rutter from the Stockport News Group.

00:18:50:12 - 00:19:24:18

And just to follow on the points that um Mr. Mohammed made, I think this reliance on visual qualities of setting has been something that Stockport West have raised right from the outset with our, um, relevant representation. Um, the operational um guidelines that Icomos publishes and reviews each year, um talks about the importance of the wider setting of a World Heritage Site and in particular elements like land use pattern, spatial organisation, visual relationships, cultural practices.

00:19:24:20 - 00:19:59:00

And the other element which we've continually highlighted are other intangible dimensions such as perceptions and associations. So the experience of that landscape, how you move around it, those functional, not necessarily visual links, I think to pick up on the viewpoint that we discuss initially, the, um, there's a sensitivity heatmap in the updated here, um, which categorizes that land as medium sensitivity. So there are areas categorized as lower sensitivity within the surroundings.

00:19:59:04 - 00:20:32:06

Um, but those particular fields that we talked about, um, the in your initial question, um, for within that area of medium, medium sensitivity, I think it's worth highlighting that the updated hire, um, obviously addresses the removal of those single tractor fields from, um, adjacent to Blaydon. Um, the updated assessment of that, um, in the, uh, here, which is the appendix 7.4. For, um, is that that's actually sufficient to cause.

00:20:32:08 - 00:21:06:04

No, that's sufficient mitigation enough to cause no harm to thee. Um, the significance of the World Heritage site. Now, that's not updated in the chapter seven matrix, which still has that at, um, minor adverse, but it is in the appendix that the conclusion is that this is sufficient, um, to remove the harm to the AUV, um, on that point. So I think that really speaks to how focused this has been on visual and proximity terms.

00:21:06:08 - 00:21:07:29

Um, from the applicant side.

00:21:12:29 - 00:21:20:22

Thank you for that. Um, going back to the applicant. Do you have any comments on on what you've heard from any of the other cities here?

00:21:21:02 - 00:21:51:11

Thank you. Mick Rawlings for the applicant. I'll try and cover off those comments. So they're actually quite linked in some ways, so that's useful. Um Mr.. Or raised attribute seven. Um, sort of going back to the basics of how to undertake assessments under policy and guidance in England with terms of settings and significance of heritage assets. What we're looking at is how the setting of any designated heritage asset, in this case the World Heritage Site, contributes to its significance.

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So it's not about harm to a setting. It's about harm to to significance of the asset caused by a change within its setting with the World Heritage Site. Its significance is set out in its Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, which is the statement that's submitted alongside the citation for World Heritage Site status. So we can read through that and we can look at the the criteria under which it's been cited and the description of those things. And we can look at as well at the authenticity and integrity, which are two key parts of the citation.

00:22:27:08 - 00:23:06:00

And then, as Mr. authors attribute seven, which is one of the seven defined attributes which best convey the significance of the World Heritage Site. So you've so there's a there's a series of different

elements that together make up the significance. So if you just go back to the first part of that, the criteria, the significance of the World Heritage Site itself, um, the statement about outstanding universal value sets out, um, what the o u v is the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage site and the for a Cultural Heritage World Heritage site.

00:23:06:02 - 00:23:40:16

There are six potential criteria for citation criteria 1 to 6. If it's a landscape World Heritage Site such as the Lake District, then there are four additional criteria 7 to 10 Blenheim. Uh. The citation and the acceptance of its World Heritage Site status is based on criterion two and criterion four. Criterion two is basically when a site exhibits an important interchange of human value. Developments in architectural technology, monumental art, town planning, etc.

00:23:40:18 - 00:24:13:06

and for Blenheim, that citation basically reads um. By their refusal of French models of classicism, the palace and the park illustrate the beginnings of the English Romantic movement, characterized by eclecticism of inspiration, return to national sources and love of nature. The influence of Blenheim on the architecture and organization of space in the 18th and 19th centuries was greatly felt, both in England and abroad, so under that criterion, the significance is that the palace and the park illustrate the beginnings of the English Romantic movement.

00:24:13:29 - 00:24:49:19

The criterion for which is the second criterion is where a site or a structure is an outstanding example of a type of building or ensemble or landscape which illustrates a significant stage in human history. And that goes on to say that Blenheim is typical of early 18th century European princely residences and the home of the English aristocrat Duke of Marlborough, also Prince of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire. So under that criterion, the significance of the World Heritage Site is that it's typical of early 18th century European princely residences.

00:24:53:04 - 00:25:29:15

In terms of its integrity. And these are key parts that underpin the citation. The integrity is defined in the SUV is that the property is enclosed by an 18th century dry stone wall which defines its extent, maintains its physical integrity within the wall. The layout of the principal buildings remain unaltered since their construction, and the overall structure of the landscape part remains largely as set out by Vanbrugh and then Brown. buildings and park laid out over an earlier Roman and medieval landscape, remnants of which still visible through the Vanbrugh and Brown landscapes.

00:25:29:17 - 00:26:01:25

Changes to the landscape and the buildings by their owners have continued to the present day, although have not detracted from the outstanding universal value. And then in terms of, um, carrying on with integrity, there's a section about the important veteran trees and the influence of climate change. And then there's a key part of integrity is that the property is well protected by its enclosing walls. But important visual links do exist between the gates, the parkland buildings and buildings in the surrounding landscape.

00:26:02:02 - 00:26:55:08

Care needs to be taken to ensure those key visual links are protected, so the emphasis in that is on the visual links between the gates, the parkland building such as the palace and the buildings in the surrounding landscape. And then, in terms of authenticity, The relationship between the Baroque palace and its park is clearly in place, and the EUV of the property can be readily understood despite early 20th century changes to the landscape. So the questions we're asking when we're looking at change within the setting and how that affects the EUV or the significance of the World Heritage Site is, would a proposed development, such as a solar farm, change the way in which the palace and the park illustrate the beginnings of the English Romantic movement? Or would they change the experience of Blenheim as a typical 18th century European princely residence? Now we came.

00:26:55:10 - 00:27:32:24

We started off with the with the attribute and attribute seven. Um, so it's worth looking at attribute seven because in our opinion, attribute seven is the only one that really touches on the wider setting of Blenheim. The rest of the attributes 1 to 6 are more to do with what's happening within the enclosed wall of the park. Attribute seven says that the park retains a complete 18th century enclosing stone wall, which protects its integrity, but views into and out of the site still provide key linkages between Blenheim and the traditional English countryside and villages surrounding it.

00:27:32:28 - 00:28:03:23

So the attribute doesn't talk about the wider setting extending for miles and miles around Blenheim. The attribute pulls that part of the traditional English countryside and villages into the context of views in and out of the site. So that's why the focus of assessment for World Heritage site as being on on visible links and where you can see Blenheim, or rather, where can you see into the World Heritage site and where you can see out of the World Heritage site.

00:28:03:25 - 00:28:08:00

Those are the key elements of consideration in terms of setting.

00:28:10:10 - 00:28:49:14

When we did the initial assessment for the submission, we undertook that assessment in line with guidance, including the Unesco guidance. And we we looked at the views into, in particular, the World Heritage site, and we looked at the views out of the World Heritage site, not just the view cones that we were looking at previously from the management plan. Appendix three for all views and what we've done in terms of design at the time of submission, we designed the project so that no part of the scheme would be visible in any view out of any place within the World Heritage Site.

00:28:50:05 - 00:29:22:08

That's always been opposition that you can't see any of the development sites from within the World Heritage Site. And we've talked this through with Historic England, agreed some additional viewpoints that cover that, and we've put those viewpoints, the photo montages, into the examination to prove that you can't see the site, the development site that is from within the World Heritage Site. So those that bit of attributes heaven about views out of the site. There are no views out of the site in which the scheme is visible.

00:29:22:25 - 00:30:05:03

In terms of views into the site you can see, um. Bits of the ornamental planting from uh, within the development site. And you can see the top of the Tower of Victory from certain locations within the application site. Um, and we've identified that's the case in our assessment. Um, I think the discussions that we subsequently had with, um, Historic England about how to amend the scheme so that we could completely avoid or minimise further harm, what to do with areas of land within the site from which there are views into the World Heritage Site.

00:30:05:24 - 00:30:55:06

So the the land that we we've now taken out of the site um in change request to Is land that provided views towards the World Heritage Site, and they were basically views in which you could see ornamental planting, particularly some of the planting on the higher ground around Hyde Park, where the oak woodland is. But there's also ornamental planting. And the reason why we've we've changed our assessment on the back of change request too, is we feel that we've taken out of the development the land which provided the clearest views into the World Heritage Site, and hence this is why we've now assessed the harm after after change request to is implemented that there is no harm.

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There is change in the in the wider setting. So that's not just change. Um, within the land sort of east of Blaydon in those areas. But but as we've had previous discussion, the setting doesn't have a boundary. So we accept that the setting can be quite extensive for something like Blenheim. And, um, we certainly wouldn't want to be drawing a line around it, but what that change that's now happening within the setting as a result of the amended scheme would not harm the significance of the heritage asset, and that it would not harm any element of the EUV or any of the attributes that come out.

00:31:31:29 - 00:31:46:29

And Miss Hamilton Rutter did raise the issue of the operational guidelines, which are the Unesco own guidelines on how to site a World Heritage site and how to assess it at the time of its that it's submitted. And um.

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In the operational guidelines and we've been back and looked at it more closely. Um, paragraph 99 of the Operational Guidelines for World Heritage Sites says that the delineation of the boundaries of the World Heritage Site is an essential requirement in the establishment of effective protection of nominated properties. Boundaries should be drawn to incorporate all of the attributes that convey the AUV, and to ensure the integrity and authenticity of the property. And the next paragraph the OG says for properties nominated under criteria 1 to 6, which would include Blenheim, the boundaries should be drawn to include all of the areas and attributes which are a direct, tangible expression of the property, as well as those areas which, in the light of future research possibilities, offer potential to contribute to and enhance such understanding.

00:32:42:05 - 00:33:05:13

So, by Unesco zone guidelines, all of the significance of the World Heritage Site should be contained within the boundary of the World Heritage Site. So where are we doing our assessment? We we we are accepting those that change within the wider setting. But what we're saying is it's not affecting the significance of the World Heritage Site. So therefore there's no harm.

00:33:09:01 - 00:33:39:09

Thank you. Um, I've got several hands up, both online and, um, in the room as well. Thank you. Um, I just wanted to come back on one of those points. Um, historically, Mr. Scott from historic England. Um, in one of your representations, you've, um, stated that you felt that, um, the project had potential to affect more than one attribute. Um, attributes seven. I think it was number five.

00:33:39:11 - 00:33:55:13

And I'm sorry, I can't recall. Um, the other one. I don't have it up in front of me. Um, I know that in their response, the applicant disagreed. Do you do you want to come back on that point while we're talking about attributes, please?

00:33:56:16 - 00:34:23:01

Andrew Scott, on behalf of Historic England. Uh, that is that is correct. There were more than one, actually. Whilst we agree with the applicant, that attribute seven is the the most, um, critical one there. That doesn't mean there isn't other attributes which are important in considering and assessing the impact on. In this case and in our case, we also considered attribute one attribute for an attribute five as part of our assessment. Thank you.

00:34:26:04 - 00:34:43:07

Um, and do you feel that what you've heard today and what you've read from the applicant actually satisfies you, that that they have considered those attributes and that you now feel that you are able to agree with them, that it those attributes aren't affected? Or do you still have concerns?

00:34:48:00 - 00:35:04:01

Andrew Scotland, on behalf of Historic England. Um, we are still reviewing the detail of that of the the here in terms of the details they've set out. So we'll provide a full response as part of deadline six in relation to our position on on the applicant's, um, approach to the assessment.

00:35:05:00 - 00:35:11:03

Thank you. Um, if I can go to Mr. Hamilton Rutter, please. In the room first.

00:35:11:17 - 00:35:45:17

Thank you. Hannah Hamilton from the west. Um, I think the focus on attributes is is interesting because that is what's on the AUV that talks about key visual links. Um, and I think that's an easy steer into what's important here in terms of those visual elements. Um, just returning to the operational guidance. Um, I appreciate the point. Um, Mr. Rawlings makes about, um, that the attribute being completely defined by the boundary.

00:35:45:25 - 00:36:22:24

Um, however, there are other sort of following paragraphs within that, and we can provide the relevant references in our written submission. Um, but it's 118B um, which talks about the importance of the management of the wider setting and its relationship in the role in supporting the AUV. So even if the attributes were to be wholly defined by the designated property boundary, the importance of the wider setting and what that contributes is recognised in the following bits of the operational guidelines.

00:36:23:20 - 00:36:56:07

That also talks about how um projects planned within its setting can have an impact on that. Um recommending mitigation in relation to this wider setting. So there's an agreement in the e-commerce guidelines that the wider setting sits outside of those attributes and should still be considered. Also on that point is other adopted national guidance that applies here. As Historic England mentioned, there's the air guidance GPA three, which talks about the setting of assets.

00:36:56:21 - 00:37:27:00

Um, that needs to be considered. And I think it's probably sort of pertinent to note that World Heritage Sites setting is a sensitive issue, and the World Heritage in Danger list talks about the criteria where threats to World Heritage sites can be relevant enough that they become inscribed on that um, heritage and danger list.

00:37:27:12 - 00:37:59:17

Um, and one of those is threatening effects of regional planning and also the threatening effects of town planning. And that applies, as we've seen, in cases where World Heritage Sites have been removed from the list, have resulted because of changes in their settings as well. So I just want to refer more to the point that the attributes are important, but there is a recognition in both the guidance and the national guidance that wider setting and what those elements contribute beyond visual matters.

00:37:59:26 - 00:38:01:28

Um, is certainly relevant here.

00:38:04:27 - 00:38:11:23

Thank you. Um, I've got three hands up online, which I will take in order. So first I have, uh, Doctor Weir, please.

00:38:15:16 - 00:38:17:28

Remove my hand. Yeah. Thank you. Doctor Weir.

00:38:18:04 - 00:38:18:22

Um, Torin.

00:38:18:24 - 00:38:22:11

Co, on behalf of the, uh, the Blenheim estate. Uh, we've been providing sort.

00:38:22:13 - 00:38:58:24

Of independent, sort of parallel heritage advice, uh, since the, uh, the pre app process. Um, most of what I wanted to say was actually covered by, um, Mr. Rawlings, but I think it's worth just touching on a couple of things that we've seen as we see it from our sort of assessment of things and all the documents and what have you. Um, the first thing is just coming back to what Miss Hamilton Russell was saying on the operational guidelines. Absolutely right. They refer to setting supporting AUV, um, and all the considerations that go with that beyond visual, which I think everybody understands from GPA three and the rest of it.

00:38:58:27 - 00:39:32:13

Uh, again, the point that I think was missed. Again, it's not that those things happen to exist around the World Heritage site. The supporting EUV is surely analogous to our concept of contributing to why that the World Heritage Site is inscribed. And ultimately that comes down to the two criteria that Mr. Rawlings read out, because those criteria are taken forward into the statement of outstanding universal value, which in turn is conveyed by the attributes which refer back to the EUV, the statement of EUV.

00:39:32:15 - 00:40:22:14

So it's not surely not right. Um, to just describe what is around a World Heritage site is uh, and then when change occurs, say that that affects the EUV. That isn't the correct way of assessing it as I see it. And certainly I would argue that isn't the way the English planning system deals with setting. And I think this this sort of leads me on to another issue, which I think is worth noting is that the Unesco documents, particularly the toolkit for assessment, is devised for a global audience, a global audience, which doesn't necessarily have a planning system like ours, and it's not necessarily produced to align with or in consultation with any particular state party's approach to heritage protection.

00:40:22:26 - 00:40:59:18

And so that's an important consideration, because it's the toolkit that introduces a kind of blanket concept of interdependency on setting, which takes it slightly beyond what the OG the operational guidelines are saying in terms that setting has to support EUV. So I think that's a slight tension, um, which is only reaffirmed further by Unesco position that no harm is ever acceptable to a World Heritage site, which again, isn't isn't how we do things in our planning system, and that's established through things like the Stonehenge.

00:40:59:22 - 00:41:32:18

Um, um, Court of Appeal decision. You know, it's quite clear that our system operates slightly differently and that that takes precedence over any suggestion that harm can't be balanced with public benefits or mitigated. So I think that tension just needs to be thought on. And the other thing that I think a lot of this discussion of setting and it's all got rather sort of convoluted, partly because of this rather problematic concept of what the traditional English countryside is meant to be and exactly where it's meant to be.

00:41:32:20 - 00:42:08:08

Where does it start? Where does it stop? Um, and you know, all the picturesque villages in Oxfordshire. Um, I think it needs to have a little bit more of a rational approach and that approach. Well, I mean, our approach to understanding where that countryside is relevant very much accords with the applicants. You know, you know, a reasonable assessment looking at the criteria and how the setting can reasonably contribute to it is surely in those important visual links which are referred to in the statement of integrity and then carried forward into attribute seven.

00:42:08:26 - 00:42:46:01

And I just think that term, when you start thinking of the entire countryside, which existed de facto when Blenheim was built and Blenheim wasn't built into a vacuum. That doesn't necessarily give us that doesn't tell us anything. Arguably, um, apart from those visual links about those two criteria, why is this a World Heritage site? Um, the fact that agricultural fields exist around it. Why does that tell us

about Vanbrugh and Capability Brown's design, landscape and the rest of it and all the meaning that came with Blenheim Palace? I think that's the question to ask.

00:42:46:06 - 00:43:19:15

And then that leads on to an issue we found really with Icomos is position on harm. Um, I mean, the argument that there's substantial harm, and I think we just need to pause on that term for a moment. Um, and again, I'm not sure under which sort of policy context Icomos make that statement. And also, incidentally, I'm not sure in Historic England may be able to confirm. I'm not sure whether Icomos actually undertook any form of site visit, um, to the sort of environs of Blenheim to inform that view.

00:43:19:20 - 00:43:56:10

Um, but obviously the as we will all know that the test of substantial harm is, is rather high, and that's neatly established in, um, in case law, particularly in Bedford, um, I believe, which is the one we tend to refer to if we're thinking of, uh, thinking of substantial harm, where it refers to significance being very much vitiated or very much drained away. Um, and that is the same yardstick for impacts on the actual asset itself directly into its fabric or within it and its setting.

00:43:56:12 - 00:44:31:22

The. I think the case refers to the yardstick being the same, which is perfectly reasonable. So the question then one has to ask is if Botley West were consented, um, would that would that mean that our ability to understand those two criteria and the reasons why Blenheim is a World Heritage site? Does that mean that that ability to understand and appreciate those criteria as set out, as elucidated in the statement of EUV, would be vitiated or very much drained away, very much nearly drained away.

00:44:32:03 - 00:45:03:21

And to me, that doesn't seem doesn't seem like a reasonable, a reasonable concept. So I just think and that probably explains why there's a difference of opinion between, uh, Icomos and Historic England on that point. And he came off of quite forthright in saying they disagree with Historic England's position. Um, but we can say with some confidence that whilst we don't agree with everything Historic England have said, we are aware that they have been to site and have been engaged in an iterative process in forming their views. Um, so I just wanted to raise those things by way of context.

00:45:07:01 - 00:45:22:00

Um, thank you doctor. I, I don't know that I wanted a response to this in, in particular because I think we're we're dwelling quite a lot on this question, and I have several. Um. Thank you. Um, but

00:45:23:23 - 00:46:00:08

you, you I understand your position in terms of the setting, um, which then conveys the, um, the of which then relates to the criteria. But if you then took things to an absolute extreme, you could say that you could develop right up to the walls, avoiding those two cones right up to the walls of Blenheim Palace, avoiding those two combs. And it wouldn't affect the setting because it doesn't, um, then appear within those links that have been established.

00:46:00:10 - 00:46:26:01

So I think that that's just really where we're trying to understand it's not necessarily the setting that conveys the movie. It's that supporting setting and the setting that contributes to the understanding. And I think that that's where we're perhaps straying into different areas. But I don't particularly want to go into that because I know there's another three hands and I have got many more questions. So, um, if we can just sort of. That's where.

00:46:26:03 - 00:46:27:06

Right there. Yeah.

00:46:27:08 - 00:46:32:02

Leave that there. Thank you very much. So I think Doctor Hearn next. Thank you online.

00:46:35:27 - 00:46:37:06

Thank you very much indeed.

00:46:37:08 - 00:46:38:05

Representing.

00:46:38:11 - 00:46:38:26

Big.

00:46:38:28 - 00:46:39:23

Brook and John's and.

00:46:39:27 - 00:46:40:12

Green.

00:46:40:14 - 00:46:42:02

Belt campaign. I hope to be.

00:46:42:04 - 00:46:42:19

A little.

00:46:42:21 - 00:46:44:03

Shorter than that.

00:46:44:07 - 00:46:44:26

Um.

00:46:45:07 - 00:46:51:17

We have we're slightly ahead of the game that we've already made representations. Under deadline.

00:46:51:19 - 00:46:52:04

Six.

00:46:52:06 - 00:46:54:06

I don't know whether you get to see.

00:46:54:08 - 00:46:54:23

Those.

00:46:54:25 - 00:46:55:10

Before.

00:46:55:12 - 00:46:55:27

The.

00:46:55:29 - 00:46:57:09

Formally published.

00:46:57:11 - 00:46:57:28

But a.

00:46:58:00 - 00:46:59:00

Couple of those are relevant.

00:46:59:02 - 00:46:59:20

To this part.

00:46:59:22 - 00:47:00:07

Of.

00:47:00:09 - 00:47:01:00

The discussion.

00:47:01:14 - 00:47:34:09

Uh, and indeed the previous speaker um, Blenheim submitted as read 5063 comments by Tauranga, which I think is the previous speaker's consultancy company, about its views on the impact. And we've heard some of them just now. Um, we've just drawn attention to the fact that torrent Co are involved in the Southcote as well. Housing proposal by Blenheim on the adjacent field, which we've all discussed before.

00:47:34:21 - 00:48:06:24

And Mr. Scott also here has produced an 11 page. Um, perhaps demolition is slightly too strong a word but highly critical review of what? uh, Toronto actually submitted in its, um, explanation of the impact of that housing proposal on the setting of the World Heritage site. Incidentally, I think our view is that Mr. Scott's views on that was slightly different from the way he's approaching the, um, uh, Botley West proposal.

00:48:06:26 - 00:49:12:19

But that's not our field of expertise. I'm sure you will be able to judge that. I think we just want to make it clear that, um, there is a very strong objection from, uh, historic England on that housing estate. But perhaps even more importantly, in view of what we've just heard, is that there is also now representation from Unesco. Uh, it does actually get involved in detailed matters of planning in the UK. And you also now have a deadline for representation from us of a letter from Unesco day to the 17th of September from the director to the ambassador, the UK ambassador of Unesco, saying that they agree with Historic England's analysis that the Taw and co view of the impact on the World Heritage Site of the 500 houses is inadequate and needs to be reviewed and needs to be done again and it should be done in the cumulative impact.

00:49:12:21 - 00:49:46:03

And I think this is the really important point with Botany West Solar Farm. So you have both the Unesco letter Diamond Scotland. I don't know whether you get to see them yet, but Simon's got them the Unesco letter and the World Heritage and the Heritage England Letter, Historic England letter, which effectively say that the impact on the World Heritage Site of the various developments, including Botley West, including the 500 houses, is unheard as well for need to be considered cumulatively, that has not been done.

00:49:46:13 - 00:50:17:15

Um, and needs to be done. And then Historic England and Unesco would like to look at all this again. Um, and the historic England view of it all is that we would also recommend any decision on this application to the houses is deferred until notification response from the World Heritage Centre and or the advice of the World Heritage Committee's advisory bodies has been received. I assume that involves Icomos somewhere in this slightly complicated bureaucratic chain.

00:50:17:19 - 00:50:50:18

Um, but uh, for that I think is, um, stuff that people will see when it's published as deadline six, but they are already public letters. So if you look on the World District Council planning portal, this particular planning application, those two representations of their, uh, along with one from another local group in Woodstock, the campaign protection of Old Woodstock, asking what Chartwell District Council is actually going to do about, um, these requirements for further information.

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So it would appear, taking the top of the pyramid analogy, we heard a little while ago that those who are there to protect the top of the pyramid do take the effect of various developments, including Botley West, um, very, very seriously, uh, in the context of the impact on what is a globally important asset. Thank you very much.

00:51:18:09 - 00:51:23:17

Thank you. Um, yes. So next we're turning to Mister or online. Thank you.

00:51:29:02 - 00:52:01:28

She was get my camera to work there. Um, without going over too much of the old ground. I think I would probably agree with some of what, uh, dots were raised around the you know that that tension between the the international resume under the World Heritage Convention and the very

developed planning system that we have in the UK. Um, that notwithstanding, I think what economists have asked for in their most recent technical review still hasn't been addressed.

00:52:02:00 - 00:52:35:24

And I think this this speaks to part of Historic England's point, and also part of what I adopted were raised there around the concept of setting. And I think that comes back to what Mr. Rawlings was saying as well, is that I think it's quite clear that the hire that's been developed has taken a very narrow view of the World Heritage Site and of the the way that setting contributes to its outstanding universal value. And also the, you know, the what we would, you know, term heritage significance in um, in England.

00:52:36:00 - 00:53:33:14

Um, and also, you know, the cultural heritage significance of the grade one register, park and garden, and the list of buildings and all the constituent parts, so that there's quite a yeah, quite a limited view, we would say. And and it can also agree quite, quite a limited view of setting has been applied. Um, and there is that need to consider, you know how the um I think, I think Mr. Hamilton Rutter raised this as well. But the, the relationship of, of the estate centre as, as the design landscape, how it relates to the, the working part of the estate, the um, the villages, the surrounding farms that contribute to the the wealth and the function of that estate through, through time are part of its significance and therefore part of its setting and haven't really been given the credence that's necessary to, um, with the best one in the world, either identify important relationships or rule them out.

00:53:33:16 - 00:54:05:06

So I think that that's the kind of overarching point that I think I'm also trying to make, that we need a fuller understanding of how the setting of the World Heritage Site operates, and how that contributes to the outstanding universal value beyond what is a set of tools for thinking. You know, the attributes are not the sum and total of the the significance of of the World Heritage Site, because they are just a structure for thinking about what is a very large, very complex asset with a long developmental history.

00:54:05:08 - 00:54:21:03

They just help you think about it. They're not the the be all and end all and the sum total of its significance. And that's why they're asking for that additional information. And I think that's where the the host authorities would like to see some additional thought and consideration applied. Thank you.

00:54:23:15 - 00:54:58:13

Thank you. I can see there's hands up in the room. We've also got hands up online. I think I am going to have to push on with my questions. Otherwise we're going to be here for a long time. We've got a lot to get through today. So if you have got questions, Please do put them into for deadline six. I'm sorry. Um. Thank you. So I'm moving on to question two. Um, so going back to Mr. Wallace's earlier question on mitigation hierarchy and how it's been applied to this question to this project, I want to now ask about mitigation in relation to the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site.

00:54:59:01 - 00:55:37:18

The Secretary of State, as representative of the state party, has an obligation under article four of the World Heritage Convention 1972 to do all it can to ensure the protection, conservation, preservation

and transmission to future generations of World Heritage Sites. As you know, we have to make our recommendation to the Secretary of State, and therefore we need to be convinced that you have done all you can to avoid harm to the World Heritage Site, including to its setting. My question is, protection of the World Heritage Site should have been a paramount consideration at the outset of this project and not a result of continuing dialogue.

00:55:37:21 - 00:56:03:26

As Mr. Lapointe said earlier. So how can you assure us that you have done all you can to avoid harm to the World Heritage Site, when you clearly didn't apply the mitigation hierarchy correctly in the early stages of the project, resulting in change request too. When it was suggested by Historic England at the first deadline. And how can we persuade be persuaded that are no further additional changes that could be undertaken to further avoid any harm?

00:56:11:20 - 00:56:49:02

For the applicant? In terms of the point on the mitigation hierarchy. We have applied the mitigation hierarchy. We we've we amended the scheme design in several ways in the years leading up to the application, and we carried out an assessment in accordance with Unesco guidance that The that found that there would not be a significant effect on the World Heritage site, but then in subsequent discussions with Historic England and in line of their written submissions to the examination, it was considered that it would be better to try and avoid all harm.

00:56:49:04 - 00:57:20:01

So rather than just coming up with not an effect that's not significant in EIA terms, that we would try to come out with a design that would basically end up with no harm, which is what we've sought to reach now and what we think we've reached and what we're hoping Historic England will agree we've reached. So we've been working our way through the mitigation hierarchy as part of that dialogue. Um, in an ideal world, it would be nice to to reach an application point with no harm to any heritage asset of any sort whatsoever.

00:57:20:03 - 00:57:52:00

But we don't live in that ideal world. We have a lot of heritage assets, and we have to design the scheme according to the requirements of the the output that we need. I'd love to come back to your point about the Secretary of State's responsibilities. Um, in terms of World Heritage site, this is something that's been explored, um, in the High Court and in the Appeal Court, um, in particular, and recently in particular with the um A303 Stonehenge tunnel decision and the second judicial review into that.

00:57:52:02 - 00:58:23:15

And the courts have found that, uh, if, if a, if an application that affects a World Heritage site is taken through the planning process, uh, in accordance with all relevant, uh, legislation, policy and guidance that exists within the UK, then the Minister will have exercised their responsibilities under the convention. So this is because all of the policy and the guidance that we use when we're doing this was produced after the signing of the World Heritage Site Convention.

00:58:23:20 - 00:58:56:11

So the courts have ruled that the system that's now in place through the planning system and legislation, policy and guidance because it post dates. The signing of the convention must have had the convention in mind at the time of signing. So that's a position where if if you run or if we run this, this application through the planning system for nationally significant infrastructure projects, the outcome of that is that whatever the decision is, the Secretary of State will have exercised their responsibilities under the convention.

00:59:00:14 - 00:59:41:22

Um, I yes, thank you for that. I, I think that the point is that we have to be assured that you have done all you can. The Secretary of State has to be has to ensure the protection and conservation preservation. So we have to be assured that you have done all of your all that you can and that you have followed all of the procedures. And as we've heard already, there's differences of professional opinion in how you've carried out some of the assessments. So this is and you have um, reduced the area of the panels, um, following Historic England's advice or suggestion.

00:59:41:24 - 00:59:58:03

So can you do more to protect the, the, the heritage asset. Is is the question. Um, but thank you for for clarifying that. Um, can I go to the host authorities? Um, Mr.. Or do you have any points to raise on this? First, thank you.

01:00:02:00 - 01:00:12:08

Thank you, Steve, for the host authorities. Um, I don't have any points to raise on that at present, but I'm sure we'll find something to come up with in our submission deadline. Six.

01:00:12:26 - 01:00:15:15

Okay. Thank you. Um, anyone in the room? Mr. Mohammed?

01:00:17:25 - 01:00:28:11

Thank you. Um. I will resist the temptation to respond to a number of cases that have been recited and all sorts of other aspects. But to answer your question,

01:00:30:02 - 01:01:06:06

we say stop. Botley West would say that you can't you cannot have any confidence that all the right decisions were made leading up to this, to follow the mitigation hierarchy in a way that then gives you confidence that that piece of legislation is complied with. And I'll just make three observations in relation to this. The first is that the significant amount of panels that have been removed since this process are started is probably the greatest indication that they did not think this through when they started.

01:01:06:08 - 01:01:39:09

Number one. Number two, the fact that a decision is made at a point in time in reference to the Stonehenge and in reference to the Secretary of State's obligation, does not mean that you have complied with that convention. Just because you've done it at a point in time, does it mean you've you actually complied with it? And third thing is, you have to be able to demonstrate you've complied with it, right? You guys, as the examining authority, have to be able to see the workings out. Show me a plus B equals C, and that is not there.

01:01:39:17 - 01:02:13:22

Fourthly, when you look at the way that the initial environmental statement came about, when you look at the changes they've made, when you look at all of that, it's remarkable how their overall judgment and their overall assessment hasn't shifted at all. And that gives you another indication that they've decided what they thought and they're trying to make this fit. And the final observation is the mitigation hierarchy is if you think about when your starting point is, well, they won't be able to see this,

01:02:15:07 - 01:02:54:12

then how much confidence can you have with the mitigation that you're offering afterwards? If your starting point is they won't be able to see this as far as we're concerned. Then how do you then approach whatever mitigation has been provided for you? And then as a final note for you in the given that the planning system, um, which keeps me certainly gainfully employed, uh, the NPF paragraphs, that is worth keeping in mind. For example, NPF 202 historic heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites.

01:02:54:17 - 01:03:26:07

These assets are irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life, existing and future generations. And 2212 which again is quite important. And just to bring home that point finally about where we are in this pyramid when considering two and two tells you when considering the impact on a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset.

01:03:26:16 - 01:04:00:10

Great weight should be given to the assets conservation and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. This is irrespective of whether the potential harm amounts, the substantial harm total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. So, in other words, the principle of conserving an asset requires you to attach great weight to that, regardless of what harm will come to it. And then, of course, you're told the higher the significance of the asset, the greater the weight.

01:04:00:12 - 01:04:19:24

We're literally at the top of the food chain. Whatever analogy, I'm going to run out by the end of the day. But the greatest weight that you could possibly have is the starting point of conservation. And I don't think you can be confident in the material that you've been provided, that that's been done. So then you approach the mitigation hierarchy. Then I think the conclusions are quite clear. Thank you.

01:04:24:12 - 01:04:38:14

Thank you. Um, we've got a couple of hands up in the room. If I can go to Mr. Wynn. Would you like to come forward? Um. Oh. Have we got a mic?

01:04:40:24 - 01:04:44:17

Sorry. Somebody just bringing a mic, I think. Oh.

01:04:53:17 - 01:04:59:09

My name is John Wynn. I'm a director of a company called Bright Stream. Um.

01:05:00:06 - 01:05:00:29

I'm following on.

01:05:01:01 - 01:05:16:06

From this point about mitigation hierarchy. Um, the importance of identifying that the visual only focus of PvP is problematic and should indeed have been taken at the beginning of the process.

01:05:16:09 - 01:05:17:23

The setting also.

01:05:18:08 - 01:05:21:07

Is also profoundly problematic.

01:05:21:09 - 01:05:21:27

And it also.

01:05:21:29 - 01:06:09:05

Should have been taken at the very beginning. We've been we've had a meeting with Historic England about precisely these points. Um, and we have no clarity yet. They're due to get back to us in the next couple of weeks, and we will submit the information once we get it. Now, the the PBP have offered the the opinion that the World Heritage site stops at their at the walls. However, a point we've raised to Historic England is whether this is actually correct, because the lake that's defined at Blenheim Palace is actually the reconfigured Glynde River that comes ten miles from ten miles north.

01:06:09:21 - 01:06:38:10

And what we've suggested is that that needs to be constituted as part of the designation of the World Heritage Site because it's a part of the cultural designation of the World Heritage Site for Blenheim. In that case, World Heritage Site does not stop at the falls because the lake itself is dependent upon a source ten miles away. That's that's the first point. And the second point.

01:06:40:21 - 01:07:18:27

Is that the issue to do with the designation itself and the early romanticist designation with Vanbrugh and Capability Brown, we've also raised the issue that that's problematic itself. So the designation is dependent upon it being a finished entity on the back of Vanbrugh and Capability Brown's input. However, Vanbrugh was fired from the heritage site in 1717 and replaced by Nicholas Hawksmoor, and he was banned from sight beyond that point never permitted back.

01:07:19:15 - 01:07:52:29

In addition to which, there was a 500 year old castle on Giovanni Castle built across the river that the new owner are required to be taken down in its every by every stone. So that was not vandals interest or agenda. So how can the designation be based upon what vulnerable wanted and built? We also have a third point with them about the buffer zone. When we get the information from them on those three points, we'll provide it to you.

01:07:55:22 - 01:07:56:16

Thank you.

01:07:57:03 - 01:07:57:18

Thank you.

01:07:57:20 - 01:08:02:05

Um, just coming back to the applicants. Do you have any points to raise on that?

01:08:02:07 - 01:08:02:22

Thank you.

01:08:02:24 - 01:08:03:09

Thank you.

01:08:03:11 - 01:08:35:00

Gareth Phillips for the applicant. Quick point. Really. As ever. Um, this topic does elicit subjective views, um, that range from the no change ever through to the change if it's okay. The good news is that the examining authority and the Secretary of State are not on their own in this regard in assessing all these views. They can rely on English Heritage. English Heritage is the statutory adviser on this. And it is the opinion of English Heritage, not Unesco or anyone else that the Secretary of State will rely on when making their decision.

01:08:35:13 - 01:09:13:19

English Heritage have been involved in this throughout. They are here today listening to all of these points, and they can no doubt respond to them, either of their own volition, or if the examining authority would like to put any of the points raised today to English Heritage for further consideration. But what I'd like to emphasise is this that the applicant, quite apart from just doing an assessment that looks inside and outside of the World Heritage site, has worked with English Heritage and has discussion throughout in leading to this point, and it did not fail to mitigate the project at the start.

01:09:13:23 - 01:09:47:04

It did mitigate the project. Having considered this, then through further dialogue with English Heritage, it was decided that further mitigation could be undertaken. That's the normal course of events and it's also very normal for projects of this scale. What is abnormal in this process and in these hearings, is that every time it is pointed out that the development has changed in response to consultation and points raised by people in this room that is deemed to be a negative, which is a first for me.

01:09:47:08 - 01:10:14:02

Having advised on over ten of these large scale solar projects, it is normally the case that where a developer demonstrates an iterative design that has responded to consultation and the advice of statutory consultees. That is something to be welcomed. And I think it's something that should count here. But the last thing point is English Heritage is a statutory advisor and it can be asked to opine on all the points that have been raised here. Thank you.

01:10:15:26 - 01:10:48:18

So sorry if I may just come back on that. Let me first of all say that I'm sure the examining authority, and indeed every IPA in here welcomes the changes that the applicant has done. We are grateful that you've taken on board comments, and that you've amended the reason why we're questioning the mitigation hierarchy and to take words from you viewing these changes negatively. It's because there's around 100 hectares of land. It's the scale of the changes that have come at this stage, and it leads us to raise questions about it.

01:10:48:20 - 01:11:09:11

So it's not that we're not grateful. We appreciate the efforts to reduce the impact or as you say, no harm. However, this hands out adventure with the consultees. It's purely the scale and at this stage that makes one scratch their heads. And that's the only reason why we're asking these questions. That's all I'd like to say on that. So, Miss Metcalfe, Continue.

01:11:09:13 - 01:11:43:07

Thank you sir. What I just wanted to get across, if I may, Gareth, is that this is not abnormal. Packington Fen reduced by 50% in examination. An application for a cellular exit was recently um submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, then withdrawn and resubmitted 11 days later without the entirety of its transaction. Transmission assets. So it is just an array area. Um, the schemes in Lincolnshire, if you look at West Burton. 25% was taken out of the project as it went through the examination.

01:11:43:09 - 01:12:16:26

So I don't disagree. You know, the large change is being made, but this is not out of the ordinary. This is very common for these large schemes, which necessarily have to start somewhere. You have to draw a line on a map at some point. And then as you work through the process and people engage and sometimes people engage more after the point, the applicant application is submitted because they don't have the resource to do it beforehand. So the point I want to get across is this is all very normal. And it's the it's the natural evolution of this, of this process for those who aren't always familiar with it.

01:12:16:28 - 01:12:17:21

Thank you.

01:12:22:21 - 01:12:26:21

Sorry, Mr. Wen. I'll take one more brief point from Mr. Mohan.

01:12:26:25 - 01:13:03:05

A very brief point, which is, um, I'm really sorry, but I fundamentally disagree that with this idea that what's happening here is very normal. It is not normal. And whatever examples that the applicant wants to give you, I can give you another half a dozen that go the other way and explain why those are different, that you're not here to assess another scheme, you're here to assess this one. But more importantly, this is the scheme that has a World Heritage site right in the middle of it. So I'm sorry, whatever you've assessed in Lincolnshire or anywhere else will not be comparable in any way, shape or form to what we are dealing with here.

01:13:03:07 - 01:13:33:26

I'm sure you met. You meant Historic England, not English Heritage, which is the charity, but whatever Historic England has said. The question also for you is you as the examining authority that has the power and the authority of the Secretary of State, could reject what they have to say or say. It's insufficient. Not enough. The idea that historic England, who couldn't even be bothered to turn up and talk to you in person, is something that you should be holding to hand and say, that's the answer, full stop. It's just not fair.

01:13:33:28 - 01:13:57:01

The examining authority has the judgment, the experience, the knowledge and the opportunity to decide what they want to do. And the question comes back. Finally, the scale of change here speaks to the lack of preparation, the lack of understanding, and the lack of respect for the World Heritage site. That's what you're dealing with here, not normal.

01:14:01:04 - 01:14:02:10

Do you want to push forward?

01:14:02:13 - 01:14:57:26

Yes. Thank you. I will just move on to the next question. Um, so my next question is regarding Samson's flat. Um, you've said on several occasions that trial trenching results would be submitted at deadline five, but they weren't. Um, this is disappointing, especially considering that both Historic England and Oxford County Archaeology Services have been waiting for these in order to update their assessment of the archaeological buffer areas. In their deadline five representation, Historic England indicated that due to the uncertainty caused by the lack of trial trenching results and as a precautionary measure, development in fields 1.2 and 1.3 should be removed entirely, and also additional parts of fields 1.11 and 1.41 should be removed in order to extend the buffer and keep any potential harm from the nationally important area to a minimum.

01:14:58:12 - 01:15:10:05

Given the late stage of this examination, this seems like a very reasonable and practical proposition. Please could you comment on this and let us know that we can expect confirmation of these changes?

01:15:13:00 - 01:15:55:28

Mick Rawlings for the applicant. Um, the contractual position with the production of the trial trench reports has been resolved. Uh, the contractors are producing the draft reports with and have been instructed to get a draft report ready for submission at deadline six. We've been in discussion with Historic England, uh, as recently as the beginning of this week, in which we've promised that we will send those reports to Historic England the moment we get them. And they will review them as quickly as possible, with a view to them being able to come back with an indication as to whether they accept the proposed buffer zone around Samson's Platters as appropriate or require changes.

01:15:56:01 - 01:16:26:08

And that's something that we'll be able to come back to you on a deadline seven 11 with a view as to where we are with that. If that requires a change to the to the illustrative master plans, which is what it would come down to, and the plans that are shown in the outline written scheme investigation, that's what we would do by deadline seven. Um, so that's a position we've reached with Historic England.

The same would apply to Oxfordshire County Council. As soon as we get the draft reports from the contractors, we will send those across for review.

01:16:26:26 - 01:17:04:09

The point about the archaeological buffer zones is that the the results of the trial trenching may lead us, or certainly will lead us to look at the buffer zones to make sure that they're appropriate and if any of them need to be adjusted in consultation with Oxfordshire county councils, archaeologists, that can be done because it would be a matter of extending by a few meters in any direction. So it's not major. The fallback position that we've got is that requirement five in the draft DCO covers detailed design And that detailed design has to be agreed with the relevant local planning authority.

01:17:04:11 - 01:17:19:14

And we've got an amended version of that which now includes Historic England as a council T, and any buffer zone that needs to be amended that we haven't captured by deadline. Seven can be dealt with at detailed design stage.

01:17:25:20 - 01:17:34:10

Thank you for that. Um, Mr. Scott. Um, if you're still online, have you got any comments to make? Um, on on the trial trenching?

01:17:34:28 - 01:17:35:29

Uh, it's actually.

01:17:36:01 - 01:17:37:04

He's moved over to me.

01:17:37:09 - 01:17:37:27

Chris Welch.

01:17:37:29 - 01:17:38:14

For.

01:17:38:16 - 01:17:39:10

Historic England.

01:17:39:23 - 01:17:41:14

Um, yeah, that's that's.

01:17:41:16 - 01:17:42:04

Very welcome.

01:17:42:06 - 01:17:44:10

News that actually the, um, the.

01:17:44:12 - 01:17:45:05

Trench results will.

01:17:45:07 - 01:17:45:29

Be coming forward, and.

01:17:46:01 - 01:17:46:17

Obviously we.

01:17:46:19 - 01:17:47:05

Will.

01:17:47:29 - 01:17:48:14

We.

01:17:48:16 - 01:17:49:04

Will review.

01:17:49:06 - 01:17:50:18

Them as fast as we can.

01:17:50:21 - 01:17:51:06

Um, as.

01:17:51:08 - 01:17:59:19

Long as we get them in a reasonable length of time and give you a advice on whether the relevant area around the archaeological protection zone around sandstorm.

01:17:59:21 - 01:18:00:06

Splat.

01:18:00:08 - 01:18:01:04

Should remain the same.

01:18:01:06 - 01:18:01:21

Or.

01:18:01:23 - 01:18:02:29

Should be changed.

01:18:06:00 - 01:18:11:00

Thank you for that. And Oxfordshire host authorities. Is it Mr. Orwell?

01:18:12:00 - 01:18:12:15

Yeah.

01:18:12:17 - 01:18:15:22

Hi, I'm Richard Oram, Oxfordshire county Council. Um.

01:18:16:06 - 01:18:47:22

It is welcome to hear that the evaluation reports will be submitted. Although, as you have noted, we have been told this before. Um, for previous gates. Um, it does give a very short amount of time to review the report. Um, the provision within the report was for us to see a draft version to, to agree it before it was made public, which presumably will not be possible now. Um, whilst it's been mentioned that there may need to be a few areas, um, adjusted to the buffers.

01:18:47:24 - 01:19:26:02

It should be noted that we've always pointed out that whilst we can provisionally agree the buffers, we couldn't confirm their extent until we've actually seen the, um, the extent of the evaluation report. Looking at the geophysics alone, there are a number of areas where, um, depending on what the evaluation report found, we may need to actually have much larger, um, additions to the buffers. Um, although we monitored the evaluation, it was always in the intention that we would see a report before making comment. And so, um, we didn't monitor them with an air to record and everything in such detail that I could confirm whether or not we'd need to extend them at this stage.

01:19:26:24 - 01:19:57:02

So, um. Yes, whilst it is welcome, um, the time frame is going to be very, very tight. Um, it's also worth noting that we're not the only people who would be interested in these reports, and a great number of the consultees and respondents are also concerned about the heritage, and this is also going to give them a very, very short deadline to be able to look and assess these very complex reports, to be able to make any comments. So whilst we're grateful that they will be coming at gate six.

01:19:57:12 - 01:20:04:12

Um, it is disappointing it's taken this long to get them. When this was set out in the original WSI at the very start of this process.

01:20:06:27 - 01:20:37:04

Thank you. Um, just before I come back to you on that point, also, um, yesterday in the compulsory acquisition hearing, um, we heard from Mr. Sumner, who mentioned Blenheim Palace, his own leader. Survey data. Um, I'm not aware that that has been submitted into the application. Um, if not, um, firstly, why not? And secondly, can it be, please. Thank you. And and is it relevant to Samson's part?

01:20:38:08 - 01:21:23:28

Uh, Mick Rawlings for the applicant. Firstly, um, welcome. The response from Oxfordshire County Council on the trenching and, uh, would ask them to, to make sure they're aware of that fallback position on requirement five and agreement of the detailed design Process. With regard to your question, ma'am, I'm not aware of any lead or survey that's ever been undertaken on behalf of Blenheim Estates in the vicinity of Samson's plot. What? What was undertaken? Um, to the east of the scheduled monument and to the north east was a geophysical survey that was undertaken on behalf of Blenheim Estates as part of their preparatory work for a tree planting scheme.

01:21:24:14 - 01:21:56:24

And that's something that we have the results of that we'll have to check with Blenheim Estate if they are happy for it to be submitted into the examination. But we we have that because we've used it as part of our baseline review of what we think is going on around the scheduled monument. But it covers the fields to the east and north east of the scheduled monument, and on the back of what was discovered in that geophysical survey, the tree planting was pushed back so it would not impact on any buried archaeological remains that were hinted at by that survey.

01:21:56:26 - 01:22:24:06

The survey was never ground truth by means of trial trenching. It remains purely as a geophysical survey. So I think if that's what Mr. Sumner was referring to, then we would need to to check with any mistakes to make sure that they're happy for that information to be released, because it's basically it's information that belongs to them. It was work commissioned by them, and there was nothing to do with PVP or the Botley West Solar Farm project.

01:22:27:07 - 01:22:39:15

Okay. Thank you. I appreciate Mr. Sumner had a hand up. I'll come back to you momentarily. I just want to ask one quick question about the the fallback position, as you say, the requirement five the detailed design.

01:22:41:21 - 01:23:20:20

Appreciate that. This, as one would say, might be part of the norm. This is what happens that details have produced further down the line. Everything is flushed out Out loud. Today it's part of the norm with these insects. The issue that we have is that before that detailed design, we need to make a recommendation report, and we need to get the Secretary of State know what our position is. So in terms of your opinion, if you like, how could we best advise the Secretary of State on the issue regarding Sampson's Platt, when at the moment the buffer zones to protect it are unknown?

01:23:23:02 - 01:23:53:12

Mick Rawlings for the applicant, we've proposed a buffer zone, which is the one shown in the illustrative master plan. And we are we think that's an appropriate buffer zone based on the information we have. And we appreciate that Historic England, because of the scheduled monument status of that archaeological site, that Historic England and also the county council archaeology team want to see the trial changing results because they want to to carry out their own review of the results and to see if that buffer zone needs to be amended.

01:23:53:15 - 01:24:19:16

As I said, if our hope is that we'd be able to amend it quite quickly and include that by deadline seven if it needs to be amended. Uh, if not, the fallback position is in requirement five. So there's still a, a, a sort of stock position, as it were, through which a consultation process would be engaged and detailed design would be agreed on the basis of a buffer zone that's agreed by all parties.

01:24:19:18 - 01:24:38:24

Okay. And I'm jumping the gun, if you like, because they've yet to be submitted and everything else you've obviously probably had privy to them. You've spoke to the consultants. You know what they've found if you like, as of today, without anyone else seeing them. Is it your position? You do not need to change your buffer zone.

01:24:40:10 - 01:24:46:00

McWilliams for the applicant. We we would not wish to change the buffer zone. We think what we've put in is appropriate.

01:24:47:28 - 01:24:52:24

Okay. Okay. Understood. Um, Mr. Sam, I appreciate.

01:24:55:10 - 01:25:26:10

It on behalf of the applicant. I just started from a legal mechanism and the comfort that the WSA can take based on the existing drafting. So the way the czar can take comfort is that it's a pre commencement requirement. So even if that detail isn't available now before the recommendation is made and even post decision from the Secretary of State, the works themselves won't actually be able to be carried out until that requirements being discharged. And as Mr. Rawlings explained, that will be a decision that has to be approved by the relevant planning authority.

01:25:26:12 - 01:25:47:26

And in addition to that, we are supplementing that control. That deadline seeks to make sure that Historic England, as the relevant statutory body, will also be consulted. So in terms of what you're recommending to be put forward to the Secretary of State, if you recommend the consent to include that requirement, even though there's some subjectivity that will become objective and clear before the consent is then actually implemented.

01:25:48:15 - 01:25:59:01

Okay. Thank you very much. And thank you for pointing that out to me over there. Uh, Mr. Sumner, I raise your hand. Thank you. Uh, Tim Sumner.

01:25:59:06 - 01:25:59:21

Um.

01:25:59:23 - 01:26:02:07

Resident affected by this proposed development.

01:26:02:13 - 01:26:03:02

Um.

01:26:03:17 - 01:26:04:17

So what.

01:26:04:19 - 01:26:05:08

I would like.

01:26:05:10 - 01:26:39:01

To ask the, um, applicants is they refer to the northern sector and Sansome plat. Um, as key features for the Roman period include the important military road known as Aikman Street, which crosses the northern site area and adjacent to which is a villa or possibly a small settlement containing several

buildings, including a potential temple. I would ask that they stop referring to this area as a small settlement.

01:26:39:08 - 01:27:13:28

Um, the reason being that I have the Blenheim Zone Geophysical survey report. And the map here, showing more of the protected Roman town, lies unprotected outside of Sampson's plat and goes half way upfield 111. Past going to the West Hoadly house in that area, it's a massive extension of the town. Um, and then, of course, we come across field 111, where the trial trenching was taking place.

01:27:14:00 - 01:27:46:11

And I did mention yesterday, and I won't go through it again, but trial trenching, with all due respect, is akin to standing at nighttime with a candle at the entrance to an unlit aircraft hangar and determining its size. You need to do more than that. Um, I have, um, satellite imagery here as well, which has been described by, um, geologists as showing clear indications of below ground Activity, for want of a better phrase, but below ground.

01:27:46:20 - 01:28:16:22

Um, uh, buildings. And they extend right the way up to the Danford farm area. So I'm really disappointed that the I'm listening to the fact that, oh, the buffer zones are adequate. They are nowhere near adequate. Blenheim should be so proud of having this, um, this archaeological treasure on, on its doorstep, effectively. It's a wonderful area. It's in pristine condition. It's how the Romans would have viewed it.

01:28:16:24 - 01:28:47:22

And it extends way beyond anything that's being, I've heard, acknowledged in this room today. And I ask that, um, indeed, that whole section, the whole of the northern section is taken out on this basis because when you draw, for example, a circle including all the known from satellite imagery and from ground radar and from the trenching taking place so far when you put all that together. The massive area. There's no way they built a town in an L shape or a Z shape.

01:28:47:24 - 01:29:15:18

It was a circular development, and it takes in the whole whole of this northern sector. Um, so I will finish by just saying, could I remind the developers to stop calling this a possible small settlement? Everybody who's been there from Assisi, archaeologists and folk digging from historians, from books written about this area, all of them conclude it needs more investigation. Thank you.

01:29:16:00 - 01:29:22:24

Thank you. And can I just confirm you mentioned maps and documents? There are the ones you've already submitted. They are. They are already in.

01:29:23:27 - 01:29:24:12

Sorry to.

01:29:24:14 - 01:29:24:29

Interrupt.

01:29:25:01 - 01:29:29:11

September I think. Yeah. And previous I have submitted these.

01:29:29:13 - 01:29:33:00

Thank you very much. Not sure you might have much comment, but do you want to.

01:29:33:23 - 01:30:20:22

Make rulings for the applicant just to respond on a couple of points? Um, Mr. Sumner refers to how we see this in terms of a town or a settlement or a villa. It is a little bit complex. Um, it's scheduled as a Roman villa. So the scheduling description refers to Samson's Roman villa. I think everyone who's dealt with it over the last 20 years, since then is aware of the fact that it's not a villa that came about as a result of the limited evidence available at the time that the designation was made as a scheduled monument, because the most of what was known about it at that time came from observations undertaken when a gas pipe went through the middle of it, and bits of painted plaster and other aspects were found, so it was classed as a villa.

01:30:20:24 - 01:30:56:27

We know it's not a villa. We've been referring to it as a as a settlement, which it is, and it's got potentially a temple and it's got quite a few other bits and pieces and it's got cemeteries, it's got all sorts of accoutrements. The reason we don't refer to it as a small town On is because the Roman small town is a very specific class of monument, and under the classifications that are used for for site types in archaeology, Roman small town denotes a settlement that has administrative functions outside a civitas capital.

01:30:57:15 - 01:31:32:15

Uh, and so we we are wary of using the phrase small town because it brings with it connotations of something that it might not be in terms of how we use the word small town within Roman archaeology. So we refer to it more regularly as a settlement. Um, I disagree with Mr. Sumner about the extent of it. It doesn't extend beyond Hawley house. No one's got any evidence for it extending beyond Hawley House. Um, there are remains. Uh, certainly there are remains of the settlement and associated activity.

01:31:32:17 - 01:32:06:07

Outside the scheduled area, we we knew that before we started. And we've checked that out with our own geophysical survey and our own trial trenching. I don't I don't agree that trial trenching is not a good way of finding out about these things. We're using it to ground truth, the geophysical survey. Um, interestingly, the the survey that Blenheim undertook does show that the the settlement or similar activity are probably of Roman date but not certainly extends along the east side of Dunsford Lane, north of the monument.

01:32:06:09 - 01:32:38:11

But the work that we've done in field 111 shows that it doesn't continue in the west side of Dunsford Lane, which from an archaeological point of view itself is interesting, but our buffer zone has been established such that it takes account of all the significant archaeology associated with the scheduled monument and its extent beyond its scheduled area. So I don't say anything more about that. We we

will engage with Historic England and Oxfordshire County Council about the extent of the buffer zone some once they've had a chance to see the results of the trial trenching.

01:32:41:02 - 01:33:06:08

Okay. Thank you very much. I think I'll take more submissions on that point at deadline six, because I'm conscious of the time and we still there's still some fundamental questions we want to ask in this forum. Um, if you don't mind. So I appreciate people want to speak. I don't like to cut people off, but I want to move forward to make sure the critical questions are asked here. Um, so, Metcalf, if I hand back to you.

01:33:07:27 - 01:33:51:09

Thank you. Yes. Um, my next question probably can actually be responded to in writing more effectively, so I'll slightly rephrase it. Um, so that you can do that, but we can just run through it quickly. It's, um, regarding the heritage financial benefits to be gained through the project. Um, Blenheim Palace provided a useful statement at deadline five, which was right 5062 62 that clarified the land interests and leases relating to the 1984 Maintenance Fund and the Vanbrugh Unit Trust, and how money for the maintenance of the estate would flow from from these entities, between these entities and to the Blenheim Palace Foundation for the maintenance of the estate.

01:33:51:15 - 01:34:27:14

Um. However, there was no mention of the 2006 maintenance fund, which was outlined at deadline. Three. In rep 3068. Um, so I don't have an understanding of any land that may be within the order limits owned by the 2006 maintenance Fund, and whether any of this land is then leased to the Vanbrugh Unit Trust. Um, I wonder if you could quickly outline whether there is any such land, and if so, whether you can provide a note deadline six that that properly details that, such as the note that was provided at deadline five.

01:34:27:16 - 01:34:28:08

Thank you.

01:34:30:26 - 01:34:37:06

Toby. On behalf of the applicant, that's one that we'll take away. We've made a detailed note of the ask there, and we'll liaise with them as needed to provide that deadline.

01:34:37:08 - 01:34:43:11

Six okay. Thank you for that. Um, could we mark the selection point? Thank you.

01:34:45:15 - 01:35:16:18

Um, my final question in on heritage is, um, regarding Hoadly House, um, grade two star. Um, in your response, that's Q2. Rep four oh 37 you stated that the revised heritage statement, sorry, the revised assessment would be prepared following the change request, and that consideration would be given for potential reductions or omissions of solar panels in the area to protect the setting of Hawley House.

01:35:17:06 - 01:35:45:11

The revised setting assessment was received at um with the change request, and that was CR two oh 38, but no amendments have been made to the text for Hoadly House, um, which was paragraphs 1.9.4 to 1.9.54. So it doesn't appear that you've, um, reconsidered your assessment, um, or given any consideration to the omission of further panels. Can you explain why that is, please?

01:35:47:21 - 01:36:17:24

Rawlings for the applicant. We haven't made any changes in that part of the scheme. As part of change request two or any other change request that's been put in. So the assessment remains in terms of assessment of impacts and effects remains as set out in um in the settings assessment. So the the Rev three version of the setting assessment presented at under change request two remains the most up to date. One. So the assessment that's set out in there is the current assessment.

01:36:17:26 - 01:36:49:22

We're not proposing any changes in that area to the scheme subject to the review of the buffer zone around Samson's plot. Um, so it may well be as a result of that review that we undertake with Historic England and Oxfordshire County Council that if that buffer has to be amended there, then that might affect the assessment that we undertake around Hoadly House. But otherwise we have no intention of amending the scheme in that area. Therefore the assessment remains unchanged.

01:36:51:12 - 01:37:24:01

Thank you. I understand that, um, but you did say that you would be revising the assessment, and there isn't a note to say that you've even considered it in, in your most up to in row three. Um, so it's really just the fact that it looks like it's been ignored rather than the fact that you have looked at it and you've assessed that no changes are necessary. So I would just point that out. Um, I can see a gentleman standing, um, if you could. Ah, there's a microphone coming for you. Now, if you could just, um, make your representations.

01:37:26:26 - 01:37:28:00

Thank you very much.

01:37:30:15 - 01:38:04:02

Thank you. Um, as the owner of Woodley House, I'm very grateful to be able to make a statement on behalf of the owners, my wife and myself. Um, because I also noted that, um, Blenheim had had the applicant rather had promised to, um, make some mitigations. And, um, and I have to say that I do find it quite difficult to navigate through the library of plans to discover whether any mitigation has actually been made or not.

01:38:04:06 - 01:38:21:00

Um, last night I had another go at it and together with, um, Mr. Sinjin, who knows his way around these things rather better than me, we both came up with a different interpretation of the area of plans of of.

01:38:23:05 - 01:38:25:03

Of the the, um.

01:38:26:22 - 01:38:57:07

What am I trying to say? The panels rather within the one stop 12 um enclosure. Um, than than the one as shown to me this morning by Mr. Sumner. Um, where the, um, the the boundaries were slightly different, so I'm very grateful to find out where I can find what the latest version of plans in relation, particularly to enclosure one stop.

01:38:57:09 - 01:39:34:19

12 um, the, um, I think a slight reduction has been made, but but the area one, slot 12, is probably the smallest individual enclosure throughout the whole of the northern area and possibly even the whole of the, of the application site. Um, and it is already, as I pointed out, to the examining authority, it was already crisscrossed by two electricity lines and a footpath, and it has a significant heritage oak tree in it.

01:39:34:21 - 01:40:07:08

So as a contributor to the 850MW, it's relatively minor and I was very interested to hear the the applicant's view this morning of of the effect of the reduction of of 200 hectares of land from the site, which shows that actually no and no effect on the um, on the, on the output of, of electricity at all.

01:40:07:10 - 01:40:40:01

So a small reduction in the area of one stop 12 enclosure would probably make even less a reduction in the output of electricity. So we are requesting the whole of enclosure one. Stock 12 should be taken out of the scheme because of the effect on the grade two star Hoadly house, and also the very small effect it would make on the output of the scheme as a whole.

01:40:40:06 - 01:40:41:01

Thank you.

01:40:42:16 - 01:40:45:14

Thank you. Um, yes, Miss Hamilton Rutter. Thank you.

01:40:45:26 - 01:41:20:25

Yeah. Hannah Hamilton Rutter, from Stott publishers. Um, yeah. I just wanted to follow on. From what? Um, the gentleman's just said there was a submission. Um, deadline five. Um, by the applicant, which is 507. Um, which is confusingly titled response to um examiner's question two point 16.2 and this is a standalone document of the setting of Hoadly House, which considers the potential for a designed landscape, um, which I think your question, um, sort of sought to get to the bottom of.

01:41:21:00 - 01:42:02:12

Um, there's various points in there. Um, that we'll come back in, in writing on. Um, but it concludes that there's no strong evidence, um, that there's a planned, um, uh, or design landscape at that location, which, like I said, we'll come back on writing on because I think we have a few points to make on that. Um, but effectively, um, as the gentleman said, the exclusion of the area around Sampson's plot that's currently proposed leaves a very small, narrow parcel of um, panels in some of the fields, which we consider do positively contribute to that grid two star asset.

01:42:02:23 - 01:42:34:13

It's also in the field 1.12 that Historic England recommend is removed. Um, in the when the trial trenching evidence wasn't available as a sort of um just in case the archaeology extended that far. So I would just like to note that there's an opportunity there to sort of meaningfully reduce the impact on a grade two star listed building from the removal of those panels in 1.12, and which also has the potential additional benefit of addressing the scheduled monument as well.

01:42:35:08 - 01:42:43:18

Thank you for that comment. Um, if I could just go back to the applicant for a brief, um, final, um, round up on this question.

01:42:44:18 - 01:43:30:14

Thank you. Mick Rawlings for the applicant. Yes. We appreciate Miss Hamilton Rutter's comments. And again, we will be looking at that area in terms of the buffer around the, um, scheduled monument at Samson's plat. Our assessment of the impact in relation to Hoadly House remains as as it initially was at the time of submission, that there will be a minor adverse effect in relation to the change within the setting of Hoadly House, so that there's no change to opposition, so that would then fall into, um, the A discussion that stems out of the the, the NPS and the NPF in terms of less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets needing to be considered against the public benefits of the scheme.

01:43:30:27 - 01:43:54:21

Uh, and in terms of of this particular project, we will cover this off in writing, but we'd refer to the, the section, uh, in section three of SN three, which sets out that the Secretary of State should be in no doubt of the extensive public benefits that accrue from large scale, large scale renewable projects in terms of the fight against climate change.

01:43:58:04 - 01:44:10:07

Um, that brings me to the end of this agenda item. Um, the time is just about 3:00, so I suggest that we take a break now until 3:15, and we'll see you then. Thank you.