

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Springwell Solar Farm
Hearing:	Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) - Part 5
Date:	08 May 2025

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:05:14 - 00:00:15:18

Now 3:20 and time for this issue specific hearing to resume. Um, so we're now turn to item nine on the agenda, which is cultural heritage.

00:00:17:22 - 00:00:42:11

Starting with, uh, the extent of archaeological trial trenching. Uh, Historic England, Lincolnshire County Council and North Kesteven District Council have raised concerns in their relevant reps that the amount of trial trenching undertaken to date is not sufficient. So my first question to the applicant is whether any further trial trenching is planned to take place during the examination period.

00:00:45:04 - 00:01:04:08

For the applicant? Um, no it's not. Um, I've I've got our, um, expert here who can expand upon the approach if that's if that's helpful. But in short, we believe it's, um, appropriate and proportionate and being quite targeted, um, and in line with, Um, the policy and N1 and N3, but I've got my expert here who can expand on that if that's helpful.

00:01:04:10 - 00:01:05:26

Yeah, that would be helpful. Thank you.

00:01:05:28 - 00:01:14:04

I'll introduce Mrs. Jennifer Richards. Um, she's a principle archaeology and built heritage consultant at Headland Archaeology, which is part of the RSA Group.

00:01:17:09 - 00:01:18:16

Good afternoon. Jen Richards.

00:01:18:18 - 00:01:19:03

For.

00:01:19:05 - 00:01:57:13

The applicant. Um, yes. We believe that the approach we've taken to the, um, assessment stage trial trenching is proportionate. Um, it's in line with the emerging best practice, which takes account of the fact that intrusive archaeological work is in itself inherently damaging to archaeological remains. Um, it comes with its own carbon footprint, and, um, it can be disruptive to the operational use of the land. And therefore, um, as I said, the emergency best practice is to minimize the amount of predetermination, intrusive work, um, and to um, uh, carry out further work as a requirement, um, for, uh, for the DCO to inform the detailed design.

00:01:58:25 - 00:02:12:15

Okay. Thank you. And and so could. Could I just turn to the local authorities now then. Um, it's Lancashire County Council that are the the relevant planning authority for heritage, is that correct?

00:02:14:06 - 00:02:20:18

Uh, Justine Foster for Lancashire County Council. Um, yes. In terms of archaeology, yes. The county council is leading on that matter.

00:02:21:25 - 00:02:39:12

Could you just outline why you feel there is a need for more trial trenching, um, including whether that would be a blanket spread or if there's certain particular areas that you, you're wanting to see targeted areas of additional trial trenching.

00:02:40:09 - 00:02:54:01

Certainly. I'd like to pass on to my colleague to the left, Mr. Matt Parker Wooding, who's an infrastructure archaeologist, and Matt is accompanied today by Miss Jane Allen, who's also an infrastructure archaeologist.

00:02:54:06 - 00:02:55:00

Okay. Thank you.

00:02:57:24 - 00:03:30:24

Thank you. Matt Parker for El-Sisi. Um, we agree that, uh, there is a need for further, uh, trial trenching, but we are happy for that to be specific, site specific and targeted trial trenching. We are waiting on, um, further information on on impacts from the client. And once we have those, uh, details, then we can obviously work with the applicant and look at the where the impact will be and work out proportionate level of evaluation based on that information.

00:03:31:09 - 00:04:07:20

Uh, once we have that information on, uh, things like, uh, landscaping, bunds, attenuation tanks, drainage, potential ecological mitigation areas, then we can look at those on the ground impacts and work out from the evaluation, uh, and do a program of evaluation from that that will give us that information so we can work out an appropriate fit for purpose mitigation strategy that will hopefully be agreed prior to the commencement of any groundworks, and that will reduce the impact, um, from, uh, unexpected archaeology.

00:04:07:22 - 00:04:13:26

And it will also reduce any budgetary and scheduling, um, implications for the applicant.

00:04:14:28 - 00:05:02:14

And the to with the additional areas of trial trenching. How how would they relate to the areas that have been identified by the applicant? I don't I don't know if you've seen figure seven in the outline written scheme of estimation, which sets out, um, outline areas for additional investigation. Um, I mean, are you able, with the information within the application documents to give a steer to the examining authority on those particular areas that you would see targeted investigation or, um, is there further design work that you need to see before you can come to a position on that?

00:05:02:28 - 00:05:33:27

Matt Parker Wooding El-Sisi um, there would be more information. There are a number of variables, uh, and flexibility built into the, um, details and data and information that we've been provided. Uh, so we obviously would not be in a position to determine the full extent of any evaluation until we had further information. Um, once we have that, then we can work with the applicant and determine the scope and scale of, um, uh, further archaeological works.

00:05:34:12 - 00:05:48:06

Okay. And could I get, um, Lancashire County Council's view on, uh, the, the applicant's position that the trial trenching they've done to date is in line with emerging best practice.

00:05:49:29 - 00:06:04:19

Matt Parker awarding El-Sisi. We agree that the 12 trenching undertaken to date is suitable for the areas that it has been undertaken in, which are the major fixed infrastructure areas. So yes, we are content with that.

00:06:04:26 - 00:06:16:05

Okay. Thank you. Um, and I believe Historic England also, um, had concerns about this matter. So could I ask if it is Tim, Tim Allen.

00:06:16:26 - 00:06:26:06

Uh, Tim Allen for Historic England development advice, team leader with Historic England and the inspector of monuments for county Lincolnshire. Um,

00:06:27:24 - 00:06:51:01

yeah. So we are not looking for blanket trial trenching in a sort of untargeted manner. Um, in our Reg 56 response, we highlighted that this time during examination is an opportunity for further work. Um, and we've had some positive discussions with the applicant. Um, I think the key thing we need.

00:06:53:12 - 00:07:28:29

For them to be looking at over this period is improvements to the desk based assessment and integrating the analytical work they've done or they've done already with the trial trenching they've done and the magnetometer survey more fully. Um, I think this can draw out further targets for investigation, which will help them to better control risk. There's some limitations in the trenching approach there. They've set out for further work. And I think that could be more could be refined through a better understanding of where more sensitive locations may lie.

00:07:29:01 - 00:08:12:18

So that's more important archaeological remains, but also ones that would be more sensitive to piling or trenching works, um, if they haven't got capacity to do any more trenching, even in a targeted manner prior to determination, then they can still make good use of this time to refine the work they've done already. Take a more landscape archaeological approach and be in a better place to deploy further archaeological work post determination should they be granted DCO? I think there's there's certainly more they could do to have a more refined approach to that work that they could be developing now so that they were better placed post easier.

00:08:13:12 - 00:08:14:00

Thank you.

00:08:14:27 - 00:08:19:26

Thank you. Would the applicant like to come back on any of those points made by Historic England?

00:08:20:06 - 00:09:01:06

Miss Smith, the applicant. Thank you. And we welcome the comments from both parties, particularly Lincolnshire, in confirming that position. Um, I understand the outline is under discussion, and it sounds like the points from both those parties can be further explored and developed as part of the ongoing discussion around that document. Um, I will hand over to, um, Mrs. Richards, I would just add, we have also, in the meantime, gone back to Lincolnshire with a revised requirement which responds to their comments in the relevant representation to build in the potential for that further, for further trial trenching, to inform mitigation and to make sure that that then informs mitigation and detailed design.

00:09:01:13 - 00:09:08:18

And that's Lincolnshire is considering that at the moment. But, um, did you want to. I'll just ask Mrs. Richards just to expand further.

00:09:09:03 - 00:09:33:13

Yes. Jen Richards for the applicant. Uh, yes. We are in ongoing discussions with the two local authorities and Historic England regarding the scope of work set out in the outline WRC. Um, and as as Miss Coleman has set out, we've we've shared a updated wording to the requirement 11 and requirement five to capture the, um, iterative process of further archaeological work and the detailed design.

00:09:34:08 - 00:09:45:26

And and what about the point made by Historic England that the the desk based assessment could be, um, could be improved upon within the examination period as well.

00:09:46:14 - 00:10:04:14

Yes. Um, with regards to that point, um, the the discussions we've had is it's around sort of synthesizing the data that we have, um, from the desk based and the and the non-intrusive and intrusive evaluations that have been carried out that will then inform the updated um, outline WSI, which we are aiming to have issued by deadline two.

00:10:04:24 - 00:10:05:09

Okay.

00:10:05:11 - 00:10:05:26

Thank you.

00:10:07:27 - 00:10:16:13

Um, can I just check whether the local authorities or North Kesteven wanted to make any representation on this.

00:10:17:05 - 00:10:22:26

Shall we say, for North Kesteven District Council? No. So our position is premised on Lincolnshire county councils.

00:10:22:28 - 00:11:15:21

Yeah. Thank you. Um, so, uh, the wording of the requirement 11 was, um, just brought up so that it was, um, suggested in the relevant rep by North Kesteven and also Historic England, uh, made reference to the equivalent requirements in the Mallard Pass. West Burton and cotton. Solid echoes. So, um, is the will the approach with the updated DCO requirement wording be follow a similar, similar approach to these whereby you have a submission of a scheme for additional trail trenching that trail trenching to be undertaken, and then finally a subsequent submission of an updated written scheme of investigation.

00:11:16:24 - 00:11:47:05

For the applicant. Yes. That's right. Um, it varies slightly in that I think, where I'm hopeful, given the discussions to date, that we'll be able to, um, set out in the outline. So what that further trial trenching will look like. And that's definitely sort of part of those discussions. So, um, whereas I think those requirements don't necessarily have that aspect to them. But yes, the the rest of it is as you said. And so we'll include that, um, at deadline one in the updated echo. And obviously Lincolnshire and others can consider that and see what they think.

00:11:47:27 - 00:11:48:17

Thank you.

00:11:51:14 - 00:11:56:20

Uh, is there any comment that Lancashire County Council wanted to make on the wording of that requirement?

00:11:57:12 - 00:12:18:03

Matt Parker would like. Um, currently we would not, um, agree to the wording as proposed by the applicant. Uh, we would prefer to see, uh, the Mallard Pass condition included. We feel that it's, uh, clear, concise and robust. Uh, and so currently, that is our, uh, position.

00:12:18:24 - 00:12:32:08

So just to clarify, has the the revised wording already been shared with Lancashire County Council? Okay. So so it is you're still not satisfied with the revised wording of the requirement.

00:12:33:17 - 00:12:39:27

Uh, no we're not. And I think my colleague Miss Allen, would like to contribute to the at this stage.

00:12:40:02 - 00:12:41:14

Okay. Yeah, that would be helpful.

00:12:42:16 - 00:12:43:13

Thank you. Sir.

00:12:43:20 - 00:13:18:25

Uh, Jan Allen, uh, El-Sisi, infrastructure archaeologist. Uh, just to clarify why we we are mostly agreed on on it being the Mallard Pass. Uh, West Burton, uh, wording of the the archaeological requirement. What El-Sisi would not agree to is, um, the beginning of it, which says, uh, works 1 to 6, I believe. Actually, the works beyond six actually include things that would have really quite significant ground impacts. So we wouldn't be happy for the requirement to kick in after there was quite a lot of ground disturbance happening.

00:13:18:27 - 00:13:40:21

So what we would want is the, um, no ground work shall commence until that that part of the of the the standard Mallard Pass and West Burton requirement. But in terms of having the evaluation phase and the results to inform the final investigation. We would agree to all of that.

00:13:41:14 - 00:13:55:03

Okay. Thank you for clarifying. Um, and Historic England, is there anything that you would like to say? Have I have Historic England also had the site of the the same requirement wording.

00:13:57:09 - 00:14:09:14

I don't think I've looked at that yet. I might have had it come in. I can get but on the points there that, um, Miss Allen from El-Sisi makes. Um, yeah, it's about capturing that.

00:14:12:00 - 00:15:09:16

It's securing the remains from loss before their recording occurs. But, um, but it's also about that iterative process where the results of the trial trenching are then reflected in the actual approach to mitigation that occurs and that sort of two stage process. So on, you know, on that basis of us getting to that point that should resolve our issues in terms of DCO. Condition. Beyond that, we'll respond to your written questions as um, and I think we can wrap up most of it in securing almost regardless of whether the work occurs before or after DCO, it's ensuring that the flexibility for the design of the scheme to engage with the significance of and sensitivity remains as revealed, is maintained post DCO, so that the scheme can adapt to fit what is discovered.

00:15:09:24 - 00:15:21:06

As long as that works, it doesn't matter so much when the work is done. The more you know, the more that can be done, sooner the better, but we appreciate the constraints.

00:15:22:27 - 00:15:24:07

Understood. Thank you.

00:15:25:24 - 00:16:03:23

So moving on to above ground heritage assets. Um, both, uh, local authorities raised concern in their relevant reps that there was a lack of detailed analysis in the built heritage, a lack of detailed, detailed analysis of built heritage assets. Um, so question to the local authorities. First is, uh, whether you've had a chance to review the updated information provided, um, by the applicant in the revised documents that were submitted in response to the section 51 advice issued by the Planning Inspectorate.

00:16:04:11 - 00:16:14:08

Um, so that was, uh, or perhaps the the applicant could briefly summarize, um, what those updates were.

00:16:17:06 - 00:16:32:07

So I believe it's the updated archaeological disc based assessment, um, appendix five to the planning statement, which is the heritage harm statement. And, um, The sum changes to chapter nine as well.

00:16:35:12 - 00:16:52:26

It's common for the applicant. Um. Yes, I understand that appendix was, um, more just to give the, um, background to what was already in the planning statement, but I might pass over to Mrs. Richards and she might be able to expand on that further. Um, and if not, we'll we'll obviously expand it even further in writing, but I'll pass over to Mrs. Jones.

00:16:53:18 - 00:17:22:19

Yes. Jane Richards for the applicant. Um, the submission in in January, the additional information, um, was, um, um, an appendix to the planning statement, um, covering the heritage harm, um, that, um, fell outside of the EAF. Uh, that's the non-significant effect on built heritage. Um, uh, there were captured within that, um, appendix. Um, there were also updates to the, um, as and the desk based assessment to correct some errors. Um, those.

00:17:22:24 - 00:17:23:09

Yeah.

00:17:24:01 - 00:17:47:21

Okay. So the question for um, the local authorities is whether and whether any of the additional information provided in those documents addresses your concerns regarding effects on the settings of aboveground heritage, or are you still concerned that there's a lack of detailed analysis in the application documents?

00:17:52:18 - 00:18:00:19

Because even district council. So I'll pass on at this stage to Mr. Matt Bentley, who's not sitting next to me over there. Uh, who's the council's conservation officer?

00:18:00:25 - 00:18:01:14

Thank you.

00:18:02:25 - 00:18:43:13

Um, hello? Yes. Uh, Matthew Bentley, uh, conservation officer, North Kesteven District Council. Um, for the most part, yes. You know, we're broadly supportive of the majority of the work that has been undertaken date. We do, however, still have some current concerns about the level of information that has been provided on particularly sensitive above ground, uh, um, built heritage receptors, and the result of them being scoped into or out of the environmental statement where we have had meetings and subsequent meetings in advance of this examination with the built heritage consultant.

00:18:43:17 - 00:19:11:22

We understand that potentially some of that work has been undertaken and just not been articulated within that information. So we're awaiting updated information on that. Um, whether or not that will result in agreement is still to be seen on some heritage assets, but we are still awaiting that information and we should hopefully certainly be in a position to, um, discuss that at a local impact report stage.

00:19:12:04 - 00:19:24:29

Okay. Thank you. And would you be able to set out in the local impact report, the specific assets that you have concern about that you feel should be scoped in, that haven't been scoped in.

00:19:26:10 - 00:19:30:21

Thank you. Yes. Matthew Bentley, North Kesteven. Um, yes, we will at that point. Yeah.

00:19:30:23 - 00:19:38:03

Okay. Thank you. Um, is there any comment from the applicant on that matter?

00:19:39:10 - 00:19:46:16

The applicant? I think it'd be helpful for us to see the the detail of that that's referred to in the LR, and then we can see what further comfort we can provide in that respect.

00:19:48:02 - 00:20:08:16

Okay. Thank you. Um, that's the or the questions I had is that before I turn, before I open up to comment from my piece. Is there anyone at the table who wants to make further comment on either the, uh, archaeological investigation or above ground heritage assets? Yes.

00:20:09:15 - 00:20:24:28

Thank you. Justine Foster for Lancashire County Council. Um, I would just I do have, um, with us, Mr. Mark Knighton, who is our historic buildings and landscape officer. Um, I'd just like to offer them the opportunity to see if there's anything to add to the comments made by Nottinghamshire Council.

00:20:25:00 - 00:20:25:15

That's

00:20:27:03 - 00:20:57:09

Mike Knight, building landscape officer, Lincolnshire County Council. We we broadly aligned with my colleague Matt Bentley, um, with regard to built heritage. Um, we would echo Historic England's point of view. Regard to the DBA. Um, potential more work to be done. Uh, with regard to, uh, Non-designated heritage assets. Um, and we will set out, uh, in cooperation with Matt Bentley. Um, our view in the local impact report. Yeah.

00:20:58:16 - 00:21:08:02

Thank you. And sorry. Just will it be a joint local impact report between the local authorities or is it separate to. Okay. Thank you. Um,

00:21:09:21 - 00:21:22:00

right. Okay, so if I could now, um, ask if there's any interested parties who wish to comment on, um, either archaeological trenching Or above ground heritage assets.

00:21:25:21 - 00:21:29:20

I'm not seeing any hands and no one on line.

00:21:31:13 - 00:21:33:01

Ah. Yes, sir. Sorry, sorry.

00:21:44:21 - 00:21:45:08

Thank you. Thank you.

00:21:45:10 - 00:22:20:27

Very much. Marianne Overton, councillor, the. I wanted to just raise the significance of what could be found. I know they've done some trial trenches and it hasn't been amazing. I think I understand, but nevertheless, if you look at some of the areas that we've got in our vicinity, we've just unexpectedly found, you know, we had some one area which had something like 100 skeletons there and that was not very far from this site. This part of the, um, heathland has got a very long heritage of Substantial, uh, use um, in the past.

00:22:20:29 - 00:22:40:05

So I think it's very important to have an archaeologist on site throughout the process so that we can be sure that if something is looking like it might be found, that it could be, um, strengthened and make sure that it is taken good care of. Thank you. And I could ask the experts to see what they think about that. Thank you.

00:22:40:07 - 00:22:40:22

Thank you.

00:22:41:05 - 00:22:44:03

Sir. Any other interested parties at the back?

00:22:45:23 - 00:22:57:01

In which case, uh, would the applicant like to respond on that? And, uh, in particular the the process on site in terms of, um, discovering archaeological remains.

00:22:57:12 - 00:22:59:24

Thank you. Sir. Um, I'll pass you to Mrs. Richards.

00:23:00:18 - 00:23:33:09

Yes. Jane Richards for the applicant. Um, we acknowledge that there is potential for, um, undiscovered remains, um, on, on almost any archaeological and any development site. Um, the the risk of that would be reduced through the programme of further evaluation work and discussion with El-Sisi to ensure we have a robust mitigation strategy in place. Um, the point about having somebody on site for the duration of the construction, and that is something that we're in discussion with El-Sisi about whether or not that is appropriate and how that might be managed.

00:23:33:15 - 00:23:40:02

Again, that would come out through the the updated outline, WSI and any subsequent mitigation strategies that are brought forward.

00:23:40:22 - 00:23:41:07

Okay.

00:23:41:09 - 00:23:41:24

Thank you.

00:23:43:28 - 00:24:00:26

Um, if there's no other comments on cultural heritage, then that concludes this item nine of the agenda, and we'll move to item ten of the agenda landscape and visual impacts. So just allow everyone to shuffle around if they need to.

00:24:13:28 - 00:24:37:20

Okay. So starting with the assessment methodology, um, can I ask, um, North Kesteven District Council and Lancashire County Council whether you are content with the applicant's assessment methodology for landscape and visual effects and the general assumptions made by the applicant, particularly in relation to the growth rate of proposed planting.

00:24:39:09 - 00:24:56:01

Justin Foster for Lincolnshire County Council. Um, I'd like to, um, pass this one on to Mr. Oliver Brown, who is a landscape consultant for RH, um consultants, and he is representing both Lincolnshire County Council and North Kesteven District Council on Landscape and Visual Matters.

00:24:56:03 - 00:24:56:18

Okay.

00:24:56:20 - 00:24:57:05

Thank you.

00:24:58:20 - 00:24:59:12

Thank you.

00:24:59:15 - 00:25:24:01

Oliver Brown, Lancashire county council, North Devon county Council uh, yes. We've worked with the applicant through the pre-op stage and we've had a lot of consultation in regards to the to the methodology and structure of the Landscaping Visual Impact Assessment chapter. Um, and we're happy with the methodology that they have used. Uh, and feel that it's been, um, taken through and used correctly within the chapter.

00:25:24:15 - 00:25:28:21

Okay. Thank you. And the assumptions on planting growth rate.

00:25:29:11 - 00:26:02:20

Yeah. So, um, the plant growth rates, um, the they're based on a ten year period. Um, I think they, they appear generally acceptable. They're probably, um, on the more generous level of the scale. Um, the very with plant growth rates, it's very much dependent on successful establishment of those plants. And it can be very much dependent upon the successful implementation of the landscape and ecological management plan.

00:26:03:12 - 00:26:25:09

Um, the the slight concern would be that over the ten years, if we have an instance where we have plant failures. Typically within the first 5 to 10 years we would request with the DCO, they would be replaced as a minimum. Um, it maybe doesn't account for that. So maybe looking at 15 years to achieve those in all cases of all planting.

00:26:25:24 - 00:26:34:19

Okay. Thank you. Can I ask the applicant to comment on that point addressing, um, potential plant growth failure.

00:26:36:05 - 00:26:42:23

Is common to the applicant. Thank you sir. I'm going to introduce, um, Mr. John Ingham, who's a landscape planning director at risk.

00:26:43:01 - 00:26:43:21

Thank you.

00:26:46:10 - 00:26:56:13

Thank you. John Ingham speaking for the applicant. Um, with apologies, I think I'm actually going to pass this question on to my colleague, Mr. Van der Nelson, who's going to respond on that point specifically?

00:26:57:21 - 00:27:41:12

Thank you. Um, Alex van der Nelson for the applicant. Um, so, yes, we've set out, um, assumptions on successful establishment and growth rates in the s in the landscape chapter. App 050. Um. And at year ten, it assumes the hedgerows will be at a height of 3.5m, so fully mature with woodland and scrub at a height of four metres. Um section seven of the olim provides information on um, how we're intending to monitor, um, those habitats, um, and states that we'll be monitoring um in years one, two, three, five, ten and 15.

00:27:42:00 - 00:28:22:07

Um, the MPs, um, uh, the detailed MPs will undergo, uh, a full review and update every five years by suitably qualified ecologists and landscape architects. And that's set out in the OMP as well. And we, uh, the also states that where the delivery of the detailed limps is not being met for whatever reason, um, appropriate action will be identified and taken to rectify those failings. So that that. That includes making changes to specifications of plants and species and um, where they are failing to establish successfully um and including additional planting and or replacement um as needed.

00:28:22:26 - 00:28:46:24

Um, and um, we do envisaged uh, including a five year defects, uh replacement planting period, which is common practice for um, landscape maintenance contracts. So I think it would ensure it would be captured, um, within the detailed lengths, which is, uh, need to be in, uh, substantial accordance with the AU, which is secured via the draft DCO.

00:28:47:14 - 00:28:47:29

Okay.

00:28:48:01 - 00:28:48:16

Thank you.

00:28:49:03 - 00:29:16:20

Um, and then next question is regarding the study area. Um, I note that, um, a clear statement had been requested by RH on behalf of the local authorities on the justification for the extent of the final study area used. Um. So just if you could confirm whether or not you're satisfied with the application at the applicant's justification, that's included in the as

00:29:18:06 - 00:29:18:21

well.

00:29:18:23 - 00:29:30:02

Oliver Brown. Lancashire county council. Stephen. Uh, yes. No. Again, we've worked with the applicants on on defining that study area, and we feel that the justification for that has been provided with the assessment.

00:29:30:06 - 00:29:36:08

And, yes, you're satisfied that there would wouldn't be any effects beyond that, any significant effects beyond that study.

00:29:36:10 - 00:29:37:27

In terms of significant effects? No.

00:29:37:29 - 00:29:40:07

Yes. Okay. Thank you.

00:29:40:23 - 00:29:41:11

Um,

00:29:43:05 - 00:29:57:08

moving on to, uh, photo montage locations. Uh, do the local authorities agree with the visual receptor groups? Um, and the viewpoint and photo montage locations identified by the applicant.

00:29:59:20 - 00:30:33:11

Oliver Brown, Elk and North Kesteven. Um. yes. Again, just to again, we worked with the applicants on on those viewpoint locations. Uh, we spent time we actually did a joint site visit as well. Uh, to

make sure that we ground truth those those locations. So I think we've got 40 viewpoints that are included within the assessment. 12 of those, um, we requested, uh, be taken forward to be developed as visualizations showing the schema existing year one with the planting, uh, not established and then the residual.

00:30:33:13 - 00:31:03:21

So I think it's year ten. They're showing up. Um, the, the 12 viewpoints that were selected for, um, for the visualizations. What we wanted to do was to ensure that the they supported a variety of receptors, a variety of, uh, views, and also the, a variety of the magnitude of change, uh, of those views, often we'll want to avoid was a series of very close up views of solar panels because it tends not to tell the whole whole story.

00:31:03:28 - 00:31:36:20

Um, so we did, um, request some, some, some from. Um, sort of medium range views as well. Um, and then I did want to sort of stress as well that the viewpoints, while very important to to illustrate the point, the, the assessment, um, the visual assessment part of the, the, the, the Elvia needs to focus on visual receptors. The viewpoints are just there to to illustrate that point essentially. Uh, and again, we feel that the report does focus on receptors and the viewpoints used to illustrate those points.

00:31:37:18 - 00:31:38:03

Okay.

00:31:38:05 - 00:31:38:20

Thank you.

00:31:40:15 - 00:31:56:06

Um, for I move on to residential visual amenity. Um, is there anything that the applicant wanted to add on in regard to, um, the landscape and visual assessment methodology?

00:31:56:08 - 00:32:00:02

No comments. The applicant? No, I don't think we need anything.

00:32:00:04 - 00:32:00:21

Thank you.

00:32:00:27 - 00:32:42:14

So moving on to residential visual amenity. The residential visual amenity assessment. Um, that's app 111 concludes that the residential amenity threshold would not be exceeded for any residential property, despite some properties being assessed in the ES to experience significant adverse visual effects. Um, so first question to the applicant is, can you explain how the professional judgment is reached on whether or not the residential visual amenity threshold is exceeded? And how this differs from the criteria, uh, for assessing visual effects in the ES.

00:32:43:25 - 00:32:48:00

Thank you sir. Miss Coleman, for the applicant. Um, I'll pass over to Mr. Ingham to answer that question.

00:32:48:02 - 00:32:48:26

Thank you. Thank you.

00:32:50:07 - 00:33:22:01

Thank you, John Ingham. I'm speaking for the applicant. Um, I just to introduce myself properly because it may become apparent why it's relevant. Um, so I am a chartered landscape architect. Um, and, uh, I've been undertaking landscaping visual impact assessment for about 25 years. Um, and in that time undertaken numerous residential visual amenity assessments. Um, the reason why I just set that out, uh, it will become apparent when I explain the process of undertaking residential visual amenity assessment.

00:33:22:12 - 00:33:48:05

So, um, the assessment, uh, which is presented, uh, in s volume three, appendix 10.5. Um, that's application document 111. Um, it's been undertaken in accordance with published guidance by the Landscape Institute. So that's technical guidance notes to 19 um entitled uh, Residential Visual Amenity Assessment. Um, and

00:33:49:21 - 00:34:52:26

that document, um, sets out and explains that residential visual amenity assessment is a step beyond the requirements within EIA to identify significant effects. Um. And principally, that's because, um, as we're aware in planning, um, planning is principally concerned with the public interest and residential visual amenity assessment is principally concerned with, um, private visual amenity. Um, so the process of undertaking residential visual amenity assessment is sort of following the guidance has about four steps, and it's the first three of which broadly follow, um, the same steps as we would undertake in landscape and visual impact assessment, whereby we identify, um, the baseline views from residential properties, and we assess the effects at those properties using the same terminology and methodology that we use, um, for, uh, for landscape and visual impact assessment.

00:34:52:28 - 00:35:29:19

So that identifies where there would be significant effects. But um, essentially, um, in residential visual amenity assessment, we go one step further. Um, and the reason for that is, uh, we need to identify whether there is any circumstances, uh, individually where, um, the effects on visual residential amenity are so overbearing or oppressive that, um, it becomes more than a matter of just private visual amenity. Um, it whether it's, uh, the property will become widely regarded to become an unattractive place to live.

00:35:29:27 - 00:36:05:03

So that's it's a higher threshold. It's a higher test. And that test is referred to in the technical guidance note as the, um, residential visual amenity threshold. So, um, that's the purpose of the residential visual amenity assessment. It takes you one step beyond, um, the requirement to just identify significant effects, um, into doing that, that further assessment. The step four. Um, now, the guidance doesn't actually, um, set out, uh, or there isn't any guidance on what constitutes an oppressive or an overbearing effect.

00:36:05:17 - 00:36:28:13

Um, ultimately, um, that's a professional judgment. Um, and, uh, it's fully understood that there's a degree of subjectivity involved in that, that judgment. But that's why the judgment always needs to be undertaken by a professional, um, professionally qualified person with experience and with reference to, um, precedent. Um, and um,

00:36:30:03 - 00:37:19:01

uh, undertake having undertaken a thorough assessment of the properties involved. So, um, uh, prior to the pier, um, I undertook all of the assessment myself. Um, I visited, um, the vast majority of properties within the study area, um, that we identified. So, um, I undertook assessments um, and that fed into, um, the design of the, of the design of the um proposals. Um, and then following uh, once we had a final scheme, uh, I did a final assessment, um, and undertook that judgment that, uh, that final step, um, to identify whether in professional opinion, I thought it tipped the balance, um, or not in terms of, uh, the residential amenity threshold.

00:37:19:21 - 00:37:50:20

Um, I, I based that it's a judgment in the round, um, based on, uh, views from the property and the curtilage of the property, um, approaches to and exiting the property, um, views from different parts of the property, whether there are views from the primary living areas of the property, for example, um, and the angles in which the site would be visible, the extent to which, um, it would be visible, and the escape to which, Um, there are alternative views as well.

00:37:51:00 - 00:38:18:16

And, um, taking all of that into account. Um, and as I say, based on my professional judgment, um, I came to the conclusion that no residential property would exceed that threshold. So in effect, my judgement was that, um, in no instance would any property experienced a visual effect that was so overbearing that it would, um, make the property, uh, an unpleasant or unattractive place to live?

00:38:18:28 - 00:38:32:12

Okay. Thank you. And the the residential visual amenity assessment does doesn't provide an assessment for year one and year ten in the same way that the s does. Is that is that correct?

00:38:34:05 - 00:38:47:25

Collingham speaking for the applicant. Um, the assessment does take account of mitigation as well. So there is a judgement where um, where mitigation has um reduced the effect, fact by year ten as well.

00:38:48:02 - 00:38:49:01

Okay, so.

00:38:49:12 - 00:38:49:27

But.

00:38:50:18 - 00:38:59:20

Okay I just want to clarify that. So the the judgments made in the assessment don't only apply to the year ten situation. They also

00:39:01:16 - 00:39:10:09

it also applies to the year one situation that you've concluded that there would be no, um that the threshold wouldn't be breached.

00:39:11:00 - 00:39:13:27

Uh John Ingham for the applicant. That's correct. Yes.

00:39:13:29 - 00:39:15:06

Okay. Thank you.

00:39:19:08 - 00:39:22:09

Um, and does.

00:39:22:11 - 00:39:22:26

The.

00:39:23:08 - 00:39:35:08

Residential visual amenity assessment take into account impact of Glint and Glare when it's considering effect on views and because

00:39:37:02 - 00:39:46:02

that that that could make something that's not overbearing feel more overbearing. So Is there. Is that fair?

00:39:46:29 - 00:40:19:01

John Ingham for the applicant. Um, so it's it's important to understand that residential visual amenity assessment is one part of, um, a wider judgment about residential amenity. Um, so residential amenity can incorporate, um, considerations beyond the visual, um, to include. I mean, it could, for example, include noise or air quality, etc. and glint and glare would also fall within that broader assessment of um, residential amenity as well.

00:40:19:03 - 00:40:35:03

So in visual terms, um, the assessment that I'm have undertaken doesn't specifically, um, take account of any glinting glare, but that would be brought into the broader consideration of effects on residential amenity.

00:40:35:07 - 00:40:53:01

Okay. So where where in the is is that accounted for then. So for example does does the glint and glare study then take into account view visibility of the panels from the upper floor of the properties? Oh,

00:40:54:23 - 00:41:09:28

my point is, it's just whether whether this is this aspect of residential visual amenity is covered. And where is it covered to check it hasn't fallen between gaps.

00:41:10:24 - 00:41:22:17

John Ingham for the applicant. Um, just to explain, I haven't undertaken the, um, glint and glare study myself. Um, but I think the thing best thing for us to do would be to respond to that question in writing.

00:41:22:23 - 00:41:24:21

Okay. Thank you. Thank you.

00:41:28:12 - 00:41:41:02

For I turn to comments from IPS. Is there any comments from anyone at the table on, um, landscaping, visual matters or, um, residential visual amenity.

00:41:51:24 - 00:41:52:09

Huh?

00:41:53:21 - 00:41:54:08

Okay.

00:41:54:10 - 00:41:54:25

Uh.

00:41:55:02 - 00:42:10:11

Could I just. Could I ask if there's any interested parties who wish to comment on this matter? Uh, if we go from left to left to right. So start with this gentleman at the front here, and then, um, I think it was Mr. Williams and then Mr. Elvin as well.

00:42:13:26 - 00:42:14:16

Oh, sorry.

00:42:14:18 - 00:42:15:03

I'm

00:42:16:14 - 00:42:17:12

Stuart Jackson.

00:42:17:14 - 00:42:47:28

Uh, resident from Scotland Village. Uh, from a farming family being agriculture all my life, 36 years of it. Um, I have some reservations about your growth rates for screening. I think the word you were looking for was optimistic. Um. And I would back that up 100% to have native species growing by two 3.5m and full screen in ten years is very optimistic. So I'm very suspicious about what species they're going to put in.

00:42:48:00 - 00:43:30:19

They're clearly not native species. Um, okay. You talked about you're going to come back in a few years and monitor. But uh, in particular, I would like to know who's going to police that and would like to see that written into any planning, uh, approval. Heaven forbid that it gets that far, but it's certainly something that needs to be done, because clearly the solar industry themselves cannot police

themselves. In fact, in one of their own reports onto surveying 11 sites that were commissioned, fully commissioned and operational um six sites, the management plan that they put in place in the application had not been adhered to.

00:43:31:10 - 00:44:05:01

A further three sites had no management plan at all, and two had a plan and followed it. So going on that that's not particularly good. Um, uh, statistics in terms of adhering to the plan. So I'd like to see that this is policed after the development is in place, if it ever gets that far, hopefully it doesn't. Uh, the other areas of concern I have around some of the wildlife and uh, um, in particular bats and birds that are in that area, as well as rare arable weeds.

00:44:05:06 - 00:44:39:00

And they have all been identified by species in your individual, um, in terms of your application. I would like to ensure that there is due care in terms of managing those species, uh, providing habitat both before, during construction and for the life of the plant if it ever gets that far again. And also due to during decommissioning. Another area of concern is post. When you are decommissioning, you are supposed to return that land back to its current use.

00:44:39:10 - 00:44:53:25

I have grave reservations about that when clearly in your documentation and application, you state that anything that's in the ground is staying in the ground. That includes cabling, hardcore concrete, steelwork.

00:44:53:27 - 00:44:59:18

Mr. Jackson, sorry, could you keep it to landscape and visual impact matters?

00:45:00:01 - 00:45:15:05

It does relate to the landscape because the landscape upon return cannot go back to what it currently is. Can I go back to cultivations? Because there's no way that land could be cultivated with cables, steelwork and all the infrastructure in terms of tracks.

00:45:17:18 - 00:45:18:09

Thank you.

00:45:19:01 - 00:45:22:06

Could you pass the. Yes. Mr. Williams?

00:45:22:17 - 00:45:56:11

Mark Williams, Springwell solar action group. So my my biggest concern, um, from various other things we've discussed today, is very much on the visual and the landscaping. Um, let's look at the A15. The A15 is above the fields. As you drive along the A15. Um, I have no idea how you are going to hide solar panels that are going to be on either side of that road. Um, that is a unique landscape along the A15.

00:45:56:23 - 00:45:57:08

So

00:45:58:21 - 00:46:36:10

again, you know, how are you going to hide those panels? Conifers. Yeah. What a what a mess that would look. You know, there's just absolutely no way you're going to hide them. So essentially for a couple of kilometers, um, in either direction at all, people will see our solar panels. So your approach into one of the most beautiful cities in the UK heading towards a cathedral of solar panels. Not a great look again will impact tourism and various other aspects of the economy in Lincolnshire, and then you bring it down to a bit more to the local level.

00:46:36:19 - 00:47:15:26

Scope work itself. I live in what's known as a it's a listed in. Yeah a listed in curtilage property. I can't do anything to my property to the detriment of a listed property next to it. It's amazing how you can smother the area in solar panels. Um, and that's glass is okay, but it doesn't, you know, but I can't do anything to my house that could impact somebody's listed property next to me. It's a really interesting concept. Um, we then look at things like the substation, the inverters and the Bess you're talking about, um, structures between 4 and 6m high.

00:47:17:03 - 00:47:18:24

How are you going to hide those?

00:47:22:06 - 00:47:48:02

At the moment. Moment of pause. How are you going to hide them? Everyone is going to see them. No matter how hard you try. They will be visible. Um, you know, I think I said at one one of the open events. Um, why can't they be put in a disused quarries or anything? Or something similar so they can't be seen. But again, that comes with cost and that's why the applicant doesn't want to look at things like that because it's cost.

00:47:50:00 - 00:48:24:19

The planting that as as Stuart Jackson just said, the planting is going to take years to get anywhere near hiding those panels. Um, if you drive past the development in, in um Branston at, during the late summer when the um when the hedges have been allowed to get really untidy, etc., you might just about miss those solar panels inside that hedge, you can see where the applicant, whether the applicant was there, has actually planted, um, some, some new trees.

00:48:24:21 - 00:49:04:28

They're little whippets of a thing and they've been there for about five years. They. They would not. They're not screening anything. They're there as a as a token. Um, so we all know it's going to be 10 to 15 years as a minimum before you can actually say you can't see any, any panels. Um, but again, with that screening you're creating alleyways through beautiful countryside. So those people who walk, cycle, ride, use that area for their own mental wellbeing will essentially be corralled through a prison camp.

00:49:06:01 - 00:49:15:29

There'll be fencing, there'll be CCTV cameras, there'll be lighting, there'll be humming, buzzing from inverters. Everywhere you go.

00:49:17:17 - 00:49:33:00

Can't hide that. And that's what the people in our community will have to suffer. People. The applicant Clint won't be anywhere near that. Once it's up and running, we will have to live with it. We have to live with it for 40 years, minimum.

00:49:35:14 - 00:50:11:10

I mentioned yesterday my, my my children are in their early 20s now. They'll be nearly 70 when this application comes to its conclusion. 70. That's what they will have to suffer until their old age. Yeah. You know, and again, I call upon the people, the applicant, and they really look themselves in the eye and say what they're doing to our community is justifiable. They're doing more damage to the climate than anything has gone before.

00:50:14:17 - 00:50:16:00

Thank you, Mrs. Overton.

00:50:16:20 - 00:50:50:27

Very much. Um, it is the visual amenity that worries me a lot. Apart from all the other things we mentioned, the I don't think that you can have thousands of acres of industrial solar glass, steel, concrete and plastic covering vast areas of our countryside without changing the very nature of that countryside. So I think it cannot be anything but a very significant impact on the landscape.

00:50:51:24 - 00:51:23:11

It has to be. And I think the point about trying to hide things with hedges, we've said this many times, it's with industrial development in open countryside. We have very long views where we are from. My house, actually, I can see 35 miles from the house. It's that kind of countryside. So ten kilometres is nothing. The point about our countryside is that we have very long open views, and that is the beauty of it.

00:51:23:17 - 00:51:27:03

Along with the the green, the rich environment,

00:51:28:23 - 00:52:03:29

to hide that with another alien feature like a row of trees or even a row of hedges where you're hemmed in on both sides. That also is an alien feature on what would should be a very wide open landscape with some hedges dotted, but not great ones that have to be so high that they're hiding these significant structures. So I cannot see how you can hide those alien features without creating another one, which is inevitably alien.

00:52:04:02 - 00:52:23:00

And the point that I made before is just that these glass, steel, concrete being such an unfamiliar, stark, different object in the environment means that your eye is automatically drawn to it. So it has a far greater impact than Then the footprint that it covers. Thank you.

00:52:23:06 - 00:52:24:28

Thank you, Mr. Elfin.

00:52:27:15 - 00:52:33:04

So it's difficult to know where to start. To be honest. I mean,

00:52:34:19 - 00:53:05:01

to be honest with you, we've listened to a lot of stuff this, this last two days. But this is whitewash, absolute whitewash, these ideas about what it's going to look like. Um, and when you, when you come to the, the, the whole point about this, that the idea of, for instance, that one of the applicant's clients has put forward about, um, professional assessment as to, uh, residential visual amenity.

00:53:05:25 - 00:53:16:06

It's not a professional thing. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. And beauty is not what the applicants

00:53:17:22 - 00:53:51:10

The advisors to the applicants. And to be honest with you. Some of the other officials here. They haven't got any feeling for the place they're talking about. There's no sentiment there. It's all about the money. And I just want to give an example. I know that the inspectors are going to come and have a look around the area. Take the drive across between Scott Wick and Ashby de la Land and then across to

00:53:53:06 - 00:54:25:06

the, uh, landscape. The area is an essential part of the character. It's the atmosphere. Drive across there at about 5:00, 6:00 on a summer's evening and feel the atmosphere smelling. You've got those stone walls that you can see for a long way. If you're driving west, you're driving towards the sunset. You've got animals that can get across there.

00:54:25:15 - 00:54:56:28

You'll see hares. You'll see pheasants. You'll see all manner of birds. You might even see 1 or 2 hours out early. This is what we're talking about, about the landscape. That is a landscape that is evolved, that heathland is landscape. It's not just the heathland, it's the other areas around that to the further west as you begin to go down towards the Fens, which you do when you go around the back of Kirkby Green, you're beginning to stray onto the edge of Finland. They're not quite, but nearly.

00:54:57:13 - 00:55:29:08

Those are the things you can't manufacture that just like that. And these panels will destroy that. They'll destroy that atmosphere. They'll destroy that landscape. They'll destroy the fact that it's a landscape. It's a productive one even. We won't be producing much electricity out there, don't kid yourself. But we produce a lot of food. Valuable crops on that, on that ground. It's hard if you don't get it. It's very difficult to get it.

00:55:29:10 - 00:56:00:25

Unless it's sunny. You can feel it, you can feel it, you can smell it. You can hear it in the natural world. And that this won't do that. This will actually it. It's not all also talking about whether it's an overbearing view. It's not just about what you can see from your back bedroom window or your front window, what you can see when you walk out, when you go a mile or two, maybe walk your dog for a mile or two, just walk on your own or cycle or whatever you want to do.

00:56:01:08 - 00:56:32:29

The driving about. That's important, and that's what I'm hoping that the inspectors will begin to understand when they go across there. We behave as though we've got a country the size of Canada, the population of New Zealand, and we haven't even got either of those things. We've got a much smaller country with a much bigger population. We need to look after that. One of our most valuable resources, one you can't put a price on. And that's got to be borne in mind. We've got to start looking after that.

00:56:33:05 - 00:56:41:18

That's what the environment is about, looking after that resource that we've got. I ask you to consider that. Thank you.

00:56:42:04 - 00:56:42:24

Thank you.

00:56:46:07 - 00:57:11:28

And just to reassure you, as well as the accompanying site inspection, where we will be going around the site, we have conducted an unaccompanied site inspection already where we've driven around the site and walked around the site as well. Um, so we will we will get we will have a, a good impression of, of the landscape. Um, so was there any other interested parties who wanted to comment.

00:57:14:10 - 00:57:20:27

In that case, I will ask the applicant to respond. If they would like to respond to the matters raised.

00:57:21:14 - 00:57:53:08

Comment for the applicant. Um. Thank you. Um, I suppose just on the first points, we can set out in a bit more detail what the actual measures in the Landscape and Ecology Management Plan and the Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan are in terms of the comments around monitoring and decommissioning. I suppose it's maybe just helpful to also just note that if the scheme is granted consent, it is by the development consent order that is a piece of legislation and the breach of the conditions or the requirements in there, in terms of compliance with those management plans is a criminal offence.

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We can expand upon that in our in writing just to make that clear so that um.

00:57:57:29 - 00:57:58:17

On that, can.

00:57:58:19 - 00:57:59:04

I.

00:57:59:06 - 00:58:12:19

Just ask that it's set out how through the requirements in the DCO and the control documents, how that whole process works to secure, Um, that its the monitoring and maintenance of the growth.

00:58:12:26 - 00:58:30:13

Yes, yes, we can definitely make make that clear. Um, I wondered if it might just be helpful if I just pass over to, um, Mr. Alexander Nelson, who's a director at LDA design, just to talk briefly on our approach to, um, the design of the scheme, because it might just sort of pick up more generally on some of the points made if, if we could do that.

00:58:31:14 - 00:58:32:00

Okay.

00:58:33:09 - 00:59:03:22

So, uh, Alexander Nelson, uh, for the applicant, um, I was leading the master planning for, uh, springwell. Um, I think I mean, there were a lot of comments raised there, but I think a lot of them come to, um, ultimately to how the how the scheme has been designed and how that has developed. And I thought it would be helpful just to kind of, um, guide you towards the design approach document, which sets out our approach to design that is, um, A0137.

00:59:04:00 - 00:59:37:26

And it sets out how the design has been developed in accordance with the criteria for good design set out in one. And I think in particular, it talks about how the applicant has followed an iterative iterative design process, which has gone through multiple stages and considered at each stage um consultation feedback, environmental surveys, EIA assessment and technical studies. Um, but also principally that it's been guided by design principles of which we, um refer to them as project principles in springwell.

00:59:38:03 - 01:00:15:10

And that does kind of start to get to the heart of a lot of the comments that have have been raised. So for example, um, principle 1.3, um, is specifically about how we respond to, um, local roads. Uh, 2.2 is about how we respond to local character, 2.3 about how we maintain separation between villages. And these um, project principles have um, been thought about and considered by the applicant at every stage and have really guided that design evolution, which is documented in the design approach document.

01:00:16:04 - 01:00:16:19

Um,

01:00:18:07 - 01:00:55:17

I think I would also kind of just there was a lot of discussion about, um, hiding the solar scheme. I don't think we are proposing to hide it in every location. That's not, um, necessarily the correct design response. There are some areas where, um, it is beneficial to do that, but it's it's all about, um, responding to the specific site and location. So for example, in Springwell East, where there is a context of um, uh, hedgerows and, and kind of taller vegetation, there is more context to do that, I think, along the A15.

01:00:55:29 - 01:01:31:24

We are not proposing we're not suggesting that it's going to be hidden all the way along the A15. And there are other kind of design Mechanisms that we're using to try and demonstrate that we have responded to that. Uh. Um, landscape character, which involves emitting solar development from

certain fields, breaking up the view on particular, um, landscape features where you have kind of
witches and things crossing the road, um, offsetting the substation and Bess by a, um, a greater
distance, um, incorporating an earthbound, uh, and vegetation to help screen it.

01:01:31:26 - 01:01:41:10

So there are different mechanisms which I won't go through all of them now. Um, but I'll point you to
the design approach document to, um, explore that.

01:01:42:08 - 01:01:42:27

Thank you.

01:01:45:17 - 01:01:55:17

Um, so that concludes item ten of the agenda. Thank you. Our hands, uh, over to Mr. Manning for
agenda item 11. Okay.

01:01:55:19 - 01:02:12:14

Before we run through that, um, we will adjourn for 15 minutes just so that we can compile the final
list of actions that have come out of the hearing, and we'll read those out when we resume. So we'll
adjourn now until, uh, we'll adjourn until 20 to 5. Thank you.