



**The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules
2010 – rule 17**

**Application by FVS Dean Moor Limited for an order granting
development consent for the Dean Moor Solar Farm project**

Request for further information

Response by the Lake District National Park Authority

29 September 2025

Your ref: EN010155

Our ref: 7/2025/E0064

Our Identification number: F68E6D71E

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Lake District National Park Authority are registered as an Interested Party in the consideration of this application.
- 1.2 In the Rule 17 letter dated 19 September it has been requested that we provide further information in respect of issues set out in **annexe a** and **annexe b** of the letter.
- 1.3 The issues that are relevant to the Lake District National Park and on which we are going to comment are:
 - **Landscape and Visual**
Question 5 a) The impact of the proposed development on the Lake District National Park (LDNP) having regard to the national park's statutory purposes– what is the view of the LDNP authority?; and
 - **Cultural Heritage/Historic Environment**
Question 6 b) Matters agreed/disagreed between applicant and Historic England, LDNP and Cumberland Council.

2. Response to Question 5 a) Landscape and Visual

- 2.1 The Purposes of National Parks as set out in Section 61 of the Environment Act 1995 are:
 - (a) of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas specified in the next following subsection; and
 - (b) of promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public
- 2.2 The special qualities of the Lake District National Park that are relevant to or may be affected by the proposed development are:
 - A world class cultural landscape
 - The high fells
 - Opportunities for quiet enjoyment
- 2.3 We use the Lake District Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document to guide decisions relating to the landscape character and visual amenity of the Lake District National Park. [Final-LDNP-LCA-for-Adoption-May-2021-compressed.pdf](#)
- 2.4 In the Lake District National Park Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document, the nearby area of the National Park lies within Area of Distinctive character 8: Loweswater. The distinctive characteristics of the area include.
 - Relatively low, smooth profile open moorland and heather clad fells in the north and south of the area contrasting with the more enclosed, verdant, wooded and intricately-patterned Loweswater valley in the centre;

- The western part of the area has a very different feel with its open views out to the coastal plain and its towns and villages.

The landscape sensitivities of the area include:

- The sense of openness in the north and south of the area, coupled with open, far reaching views towards Grassmoor to the east, which are sensitive to interruption by vertical, large or small-scale developments.
- The western part of the area will be particularly sensitive to developments on the coast;

The Guidelines for Managing Landscape change include:

- Protect open, far-reaching views from interruption from tall vertical or large-scale developments.

Effect on landscape character

- 2.5 As the site is located well outside of the National Park, there would be no direct landscape effects.
- 2.4 Such effect on the landscape character of the land within the National Park as may occur would be as a result of an effect on views into and out of the National Park.
- 2.5 We note that while the term 'setting' is used in paragraph 182 of the NPPF, it does not feature prominently in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition). Views into and out of the National Park may be more properly assessed in landscape terms as part of the effect of the development on visual amenity.

The effect on visual amenity

a) Views into the National Park

- 2.6 We appreciate and welcome the effort made in not proposing panels or other development on the higher land to the west of the site, having regard to the potential for viewers to perceive this as interfering with the transition from the coastal plain to the fells in the east.
- 2.7 The land provides some distant views of the Lake District Fells. However, the network of small lanes is more suited to local traffic. Those approaching the Lake District for recreation or visiting the area with the specific intention of enjoying the National Park landscape are more likely to use other routes. We consider therefore that any effect of the development on views into the Lake District would not be significant.

b) Views out of the National Park

- 2.8 There are only limited views available of the development from locations within the National Park Boundary. The ZTVI mapping that has been

provided appears to show a greater area within the National Park than we have observed from our ground truthing, as being affected.

- 2.9 The availability of views is strongly affected by the local topography. The highest portion of the land lies to the south side, where the ridge of High Park-Branthwaite Edge obscures views from the south. The ridge is less effective in screening views from the fell tops identified below due to the ability of the viewer to see over the ridge. Our assessment however is that views from valley level within the National Park (Mosser, Loweswater, Lamplugh, Cogra Moss) would be unaffected by the development, due to a combination of intervening screening, glimpsed views of parts of the development site and distance.
- 2.10 The particular views we have identified as being affected are:
1. Fellbarrow (represented by viewpoint 14): The fell is included in the Wainwright Western Fells book (included in the 214 'Wainwright' summits). Fellbarrow stands between 8 and 9km west from the site. The view from the summit is described as: '*Fellbarrow stands on the fringe of the high country, and to the north and west there is a wide and uninterrupted view of the coastal plain of Workington and district and across the Solway Firth to the Scottish hills, a scene predominantly rural but with some obvious evidences of urban development and industry*'. Parts of the site are visible from the summit and the upper western flanks. Due to the position of Branthwaite Edge, the main portion of the site (Area C) would be less prominent from this location, the areas A and B would be more visible.
 2. Blake Fell and Burnbank Fell (represented by view points 13, 13a and 13b): Blake Fell and Burnbank Fell are also included in Wainwrights Western Fells book, Blake Fell being '*the highest of the Loweswater uplands*', and as such is a popular climb. Again, views seawards are described as uninterrupted and '*the West Cumberland coastal area is revealed in detail*'. These fells stand 7-8km south west of the site. Parts of the site are visible from the summit and the upper western flanks including the subsidiary summit of Knock Murton. From the summits views are available over the intervening ridge to a substantial portion of the site.
- 2.11 Having regard to the distance of the views available towards the site from the fells, we consider that the detail of the development including individual structures would not be apparent. The principal change would be that of a change of colour: from green fields to blocks of grey panels, and a sense of developed versus undeveloped character to the land. We consider that the assessment of this effect has to have regard to the overall size of the site and development. At 279ha, the site is substantial.
- 2.12 At present, the '*evidences of urban development and industry*' in this part of the West Cumberland plain are mostly focussed to the west, on the coast and around Workington. Lillyhall Industrial Estate extends this sense of developed character south and eastwards and the proposed site would be almost contiguous with Lillyhall. We consider that the effect would be to

stretch the sense of developed land into the rural area and towards the National Park. This sense would be more apparent from Blake and Burnbank Fells (as the view is more in a line: site, Lillyhall, Workington) than from Fellbarrow (where the effect would be seen from the side).

Assessment of visual effect

- 2.13 The GLVIA refers to a four point table as a 'for instance' for assessing the magnitude of an effect and refers to a set of points including negligible as the bottom one of the four. We have reservations about this, as it suggests no effect, rather than a very low effect and therefore we do not tend to use it.
- 2.14 The tables used for EIA purposes use the following terms for a four point scale: high, medium, low, very low. This is more helpful than the 'for instance' scale referred to in the GLVIA and we will be using these terms in our assessment of landscape and visual impact of the proposed development.
- 2.15 We consider that the magnitude of the effect from the identified views from the fells would be 'very low' having regard to the guidelines for managing landscape change and the distance of the site from the viewpoints, notwithstanding the size of the development.
- 2.16 The sensitivity of users of the areas where views are available will be high since these will predominantly be recreational users visiting the high fells for quiet enjoyment, including the appreciation of the available views.
- 2.17 The effect would be negative, but not permanent and reversible (40 year lifespan and with details of decommissioning). A high sensitivity coupled with a very low magnitude would result in a minor effect on visual amenity.
- 2.18 This effect would not materially alter the landscape character of the viewpoints or of Area of Distinctive Character 8 of the National Park.

3. Response to (Question 6 b) Cultural Heritage/Historic Environment

English Lakes World Heritage Site (WHS)

- 3.1 The English Lake District was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2017. The boundary of the WHS is consistent with the 1951 boundary of the National Park. There have been no changes to this boundary in the vicinity of the site, and so the boundary of the National Park and WHS are contiguous in this area.
- 3.2 Since the development is located well outside the WHS, the development would only affect those attributes of Outstanding Universal Value that are capable of crossing the boundaries. Of those, we consider that only the attribute of '*extraordinary beauty and harmony*' would be affected as a result of the effect on views.

- 3.3 As we have found a minor adverse visual effect over a 40 year period, we consider that, having regard to paragraph 215 of the NPPF, this translates into less than substantial harm to the WHS attribute of extraordinary beauty and harmony.
- 3.4 When assessing the impact of development on a World Heritage Site, UNESCO provides guidance on this in the form of “Guidance and toolkit for impact assessment”. That document looks at characteristics of potential impacts and asks about the extent and duration of any impact and whether the impact is reversible. Therefore whilst we recognise minor adverse effect over the lifetime of the development, it is not permanent and can be removed and the land continue in agricultural use and restore the green appearance of this landscape.
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidance-toolkit-impact-assessments>
- 3.5 Less than substantial harm can cover a wide range of changes short of substantial harm to or the total loss of the heritage asset. In this case the effect on the heritage asset as a whole is very low, as a result of the small portion of the Lake District that would be affected and the distance of the development from the boundary.
- 3.6 This matter is agreed between the LDNPA and the applicant (draft Statement of Common Ground item LDNPA. 5).

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Effects from the development on the Lake District National Park and WHS will be substantially the same: an effect on visual amenity from a large development that is a long way from the available viewpoints.
- 4.2 The sensitivity of recreational users of the areas where views are available will be high. The magnitude of the effect would be very low, because although the size of the development is large, it is sited some considerable distance from the National Park boundary, and further still from viewpoints where the application site might be apparent.
- 4.3 We would suggest that a high sensitivity combined with a very low magnitude would give a minor harm, especially as the development would have a limited lifespan and should be reversible.
- 4.4 This effect amounts to ‘less than substantial harm’ to the World Heritage Site. The magnitude of the effect would be very low.
- 4.5 We are aware that the proposed development would bring benefits to be considered and weighed against impacts identified. The importance of the appropriate generation of renewable energy is recognised in national and local plan policy (Lake District National Park Local Plan (2020-2035) Policy 20).
- 4.6 We would expect that we would not wish to object to the submission. Rather we wish to offer our opinion on the nature and extent of the effect

on the National Park and World Heritage Site as advice for the decision maker to weigh when coming to their decision.

- 4.7 Please accept these observations and advice as the response to questions 5a) and 6b) on behalf of the Lake District National Park Authority.