



## **Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park**

Environmental Statement

Volume 4 – Technical Appendices

Technical Appendix A7.3 – Landscape Sensitivity

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### A7.3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1 As noted at section 7.5.2.2 of ES Chapter 7 [EN010162/APP/6.2.7], the Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC) Landscape Character Assessment SPD1 provides judgements of sensitivity and advice in relation to this. However, these relate to general sensitivity, rather than to a specific form of development, and as noted by GLVIA32 “cannot provide a substitute for the individual assessment of the susceptibility of the receptors in relation to change arising from the specific development proposal” (para 5.42). It further states that “*since landscape effects in LVIA are particular to both the specific landscape in question and the specific nature of the proposed development, the assessment of susceptibility must be tailored to the project*” (para. 5.43).

### A7.3.2 APPROACH – LANDSCAPE VALUE

- 2 TA A7.2 sets out the methodology in relation to the assessment of landscape value and sensitivity. This analysis of landscape value considers the criteria identified in LI TGN 02/21 LI TGN 02/21 ‘Assessing landscape value outside national designations’<sup>3</sup> in relation to the landscape within 5 km of the Order Limits.

Value Criteria	Landscape Value within Study Area
Designated scenic quality	Community - There are no national or local landscape designations for scenic quality within the study area.
Natural Heritage	Community (Mid-Nottinghamshire Farmlands), Regional (Trent Washlands) - As shown by Figure 3.6 of the NSDC Green Infrastructure Strategy <sup>4</sup> and described on Page 13 of that document; areas of higher biodiversity value are associated with the wooded landscape at the western edge of the study area (Sherwood RCA) and the Trent river valley. Ancient Woodlands are a key characteristic of one of the landscape types.
Cultural Heritage	Regional/community - As shown by ES Figure 7.3 [EN010162/APP/6.3.7.2] there is an area of locally designated historic landscape around Laxton. Most of the villages, and Newark and Southwell have Conservation Areas. Rufford Abbey, towards the western edge of the study area is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. Listed buildings and scheduled monuments occur across the study area as shown by ES Figures 11.3 and 11.4 [EN010162/APP/6.3.11.3-4] (these figures show

<sup>1</sup> Newark & Sherwood District Council (2013). Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document. Available at: <https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/lcaspd/> [accessed on 04/03/2024].

<sup>2</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition (GLVIA3).

<sup>3</sup> Landscape Institute (2021). ‘Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations’. Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/2021/02/assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/>

<sup>4</sup> Newark & Sherwood District Council (2010). Green Infrastructure Strategy. Available at: <https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/media/newark-and-sherwood/images-and-files/planning-policy/pdfs/open-space-and-green-infrastructure/green-infrastructure-strategy/CSEB18-Green-Infrastructure-Strategy.pdf>

Value Criteria	Landscape Value within Study Area
	those features that are potentially affected by the Development), but are more concentrated within the towns, Conservation Areas and along the Trent valley.
Landscape condition/ quality	Regional - Landscape condition is generally good across the study area, with a relatively intact hedgerow network and former coal workings largely restored. Occasional areas of quarrying remain. Ash die-back is affecting the health and appearance of hedgerow trees.
Cultural associations	Community - No specific cultural associations have been identified within the study area (either documented within the character area descriptions, anecdotal and brought to our attention at consultation events, or noted on site).
Distinctiveness	Community - The study area is a gently undulating area of farmland bounded by the corridors of the A614 and Trent/East Coast mainline/A1. It is not a particularly distinctive landscape.
Amenity and recreation	Regional/community – As shown by ES Figure 17.5 [EN010162/APP/6.3.17.5], and Figure 3.5 of the NSDC Green Infrastructure Strategy three long distance paths pass through the study area, and there is also a good network of public rights of way. Accessible green space is mostly concentrated towards the western edge of the study area where the value in relation to this criterion increases to Regional. Some local businesses in the rural area offer tourist accommodation, but visitors are largely focussed around Newark, Southwell and Sherwood Forest as shown by Figure 4.4 of the NSDC Green Infrastructure Strategy. The Trent corridor and nearby lakes provide opportunities for water-based recreation.
Perceptual (Scenic)	Regional/community – The area is pleasant countryside with occasional long views – particularly towards the Trent. These views typically include pylons, turbines and in the more long range views the power stations along the Trent. More enclosed views around the villages, particularly in the Conservation Areas have more scenic quality.
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquility)	Community – The central part of the study area between the two transport corridors to east and west is a relatively quiet landscape, but the active management of the land for farming, the road network and villages prevent a sense of wildness.
Function	Community - The rural landscape at the south and southeast edges of the 5 km study area provides the setting to the towns of Newark and Southwell. No part of the study area is identified as Green Belt. The NSDC Green Infrastructure Strategy (see Figure 6.1) focusses primarily on the Sherwood Forest area, Newark and Southwell in relation to tourism and the Trent valley in relation to blue infrastructure.

Value Criteria	Landscape Value within Study Area
Overall value:	Regional/community increasing to Regional within the Sherwood RCA

### A7.3.3 APPROACH - SUSCEPTIBILITY

- 3 The Landscape and Visual Methodology, ES TA A7.2 [EN010162/APP/6.4.7.2], sets out the methodology in relation to the assessment of landscape susceptibility and sensitivity. This analysis of landscape susceptibility considers the key characteristics of each LCT described within the main chapter and defined within the NSDC Landscape Character Assessment SPD, providing an assessment of susceptibility for each key characteristic. The susceptibility judgements consider the potential consequences arising from a typical solar development if it were built within the described LCT.
- 4 For each LCT an overall judgement of susceptibility based on the individual characteristics is provided.
- 5 The following considerations relating to the typical nature of solar development have been taken into account:
  - Solar development typically retains existing hedgerows, trees and areas of scrubland;
  - Solar development typically retains existing river and watercourse corridors;
  - Solar panel construction typically does not involve excavation, changes of levels or solid foundations (although substations and BESS would); and
  - Land beneath solar developments is typically managed through grazing or as areas of grassland.

## A7.3.4 SUSCEPTIBILITY OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES

### *Mid Nottinghamshire Farmlands – Village Farmlands with Ancient Woodlands*

Key characteristics	Susceptibility
Varied undulating topography	Medium – varied topography can provide containment of visibility; however, it can also provide elevated views into areas of solar panels and views of solar panels on slopes.
Ancient woodlands, often prominently sited on hill tops	Low – areas of woodland provide structure and visual screening. Ancient woodland is protected in policy from development and typically solar development would not alter these woodlands.
Well-defined pattern of hedged fields	Medium – solar development typically retains vegetated field boundaries, which may provide visual screening.
Streams defined by lines of trees and permanent pasture	Medium – solar development typically preserves these features. Tree-lined water courses provide visual screening; however, the rectilinear nature of solar development may appear incongruous with the meandering line of watercourses.
Traditional pattern of farms and small rural villages	High – solar development within the countryside can alter the rural context of villages and farmsteads.
Red brick buildings with pantile roofs	Medium/low – the vernacular of local buildings would not be altered by solar development, although solar panels would be a contrasting new material
Quiet country lanes	Medium – lanes are often bordered by hedgerows. Solar development may give rise to some localised changes to the road network and an increase in traffic during construction, though not during operation.
Small remnant orchards and permanent pastures around villages	Medium – solar development around villages can alter the setting and character of these features.
Overall susceptibility:	Medium

***Mid Nottinghamshire Farmlands – Meadowlands***

<b>Key characteristics</b>	<b>Susceptibility</b>
Flat, alluvial flood plains	Low – flat landform provides opportunities to screen and mitigate potential solar development.
Sparsely settled with few buildings	High – due to the undeveloped nature of this LCT.
Permanent pasture and areas of mixed agriculture	Medium – mixed agriculture provides variation in the landscape and contributes to the perceived rural nature which can be adversely affected by solar development.
Small-scale, semi-irregular pattern of hedged fields	High – whilst hedged fields provide an element of screening, the rectilinear nature of solar development appears incongruous within smaller, more-irregular patterned fields.
Riparian trees and shrubs	Low – areas of trees and scrubland create structure and visual screening and are not likely to be affected by solar development.
Tradition of willow pollarding	Medium/low – solar development is unlikely to alter cultural traditions such as willow pollarding. However, development may affect the management of willows within the development area.
Clumps of deciduous trees and small woods	Medium/low – areas of woodland provide structure and visual screening and are typically not affected by solar development. The rectilinear nature of solar development would contrast with irregularly spaced and shaped areas of vegetation.
Ridge and furrow grassland	High – solar development may conceal this landscape feature from view and affect its physical structure.
Overall susceptibility:	High/medium

### ***Trent Washlands – Village Farmlands***

<b>Key characteristics</b>	<b>Susceptibility</b>
Broad flat river terraces	Low – flat landform provides opportunities to screen and mitigate potential solar development.
Regular pattern of medium-to large-sized fields, breaking down and becoming open in many areas	Medium – solar development typically retains field boundaries and the rectilinear nature of solar development fits well with a pattern of larger more rectilinear fields.
Hedgerow trees main component of tree cover with Ash being the principal species	Medium/low – solar development typically retains existing hedgerows and trees which may also provide visual screening. Ash dieback is likely to mean that existing ash trees may die or be removed within the lifespan of a solar development, contributing to a potential reduction in visual screening.
Willow pollards	Low – solar development is unlikely to alter cultural traditions such as willow pollarding. However, development may affect the management of willows within the development area.
Predominantly arable with permanent pasture around settlements and roads	Medium – Solar development within arable fields would disrupt this pattern as solar fields are typically permanently grassed and may be grazed.
Nucleated villages with traditional red brick and pantile roofed buildings	High – solar development within the countryside can alter the rural context of villages. The vernacular of local buildings would not be altered by solar development, although solar panels would be a contrasting new material
Sand and gravel quarries	Low – solar development is typically not undertaken in active quarries and would not affect these areas. Stockpiles of sand and gravel may provide localised, transient screening and the industrial nature of these facilities contributes to the developed nature of this character area.
Overall susceptibility:	Medium



### ***Trent Washlands – River Meadowlands***

<b>Key characteristics</b>	<b>Susceptibility</b>
Meandering river channels, often defined by flood banks	Medium – solar development typically preserves these features. The rectilinear nature of solar development may appear incongruous with the meandering lines of watercourses.
Sparsely populated with few buildings	Medium/low – Although this LCT has limited residential settlement, it plays host to large scale infrastructure including main road and rail corridors, river embankments, Staythorpe Power Station and the sugar factory.
Permanent pasture and flood meadow	Medium – pasture and flood meadow contributes to the perceived rural nature of the landscape which can be adversely affected by solar development.
Steep wooded bluffs	Medium – areas of woodland provide structure and visual screening and are typically not affected by solar development which is also unlikely to occur on steep bluffs. Wooded bluffs provide structure and visual containment in the landscape and the character would be susceptible to alteration where solar development alters the skyline or perception of the scale of the bluffs.
Willow holts	Low – areas of woodland provide structure and visual screening and are typically not affected by solar development.
Long sinuous hedges	Medium/low – solar development typically retains existing hedgerows which may also provide visual screening. However, the rectilinear nature of solar development within this character area may appear visually incongruous with sinuous hedges.
Pollarded willows	Low – solar development is unlikely to alter cultural traditions such as willow pollarding. However, development may affect the management of willows within the development area.
Regular pattern of medium to large size arable fields, breaking down and becoming open in many areas	Medium – solar development typically retains field boundaries, and the rectilinear nature of solar development fits well with a pattern of larger more rectilinear fields.
Hedgerow trees main component of tree cover	Low – solar development typically retains existing hedgerows and the inclusion of trees within existing hedges would increase the visual screening.
Overall susceptibility:	Medium/low