

The Drovers Solar Farm

Appendix 6.3: Supporting Information to the Assessment Methodology

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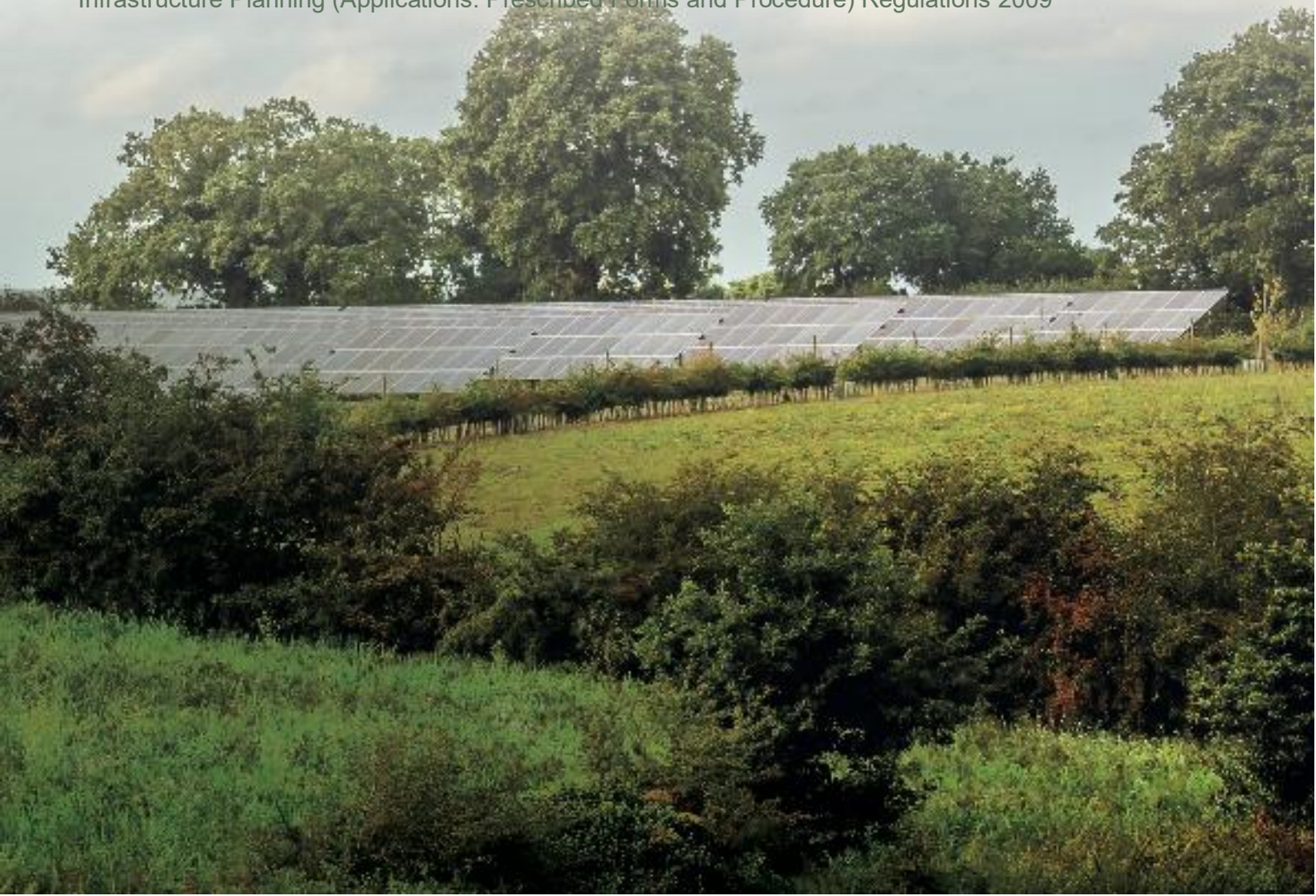
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3.0 Appendix 6.3 Supporting Information to the Assessment Methodology

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. This appendix contains additional detail regarding the assessment methodology, supplementing the information provided within the LVIA ES Chapter 6. This appendix sets out a standard approach – specific matters in terms of the scope of assessment, study area and modifications to the standard approach for this assessment are set out within the LVIA **ES Chapter 6 [APP/6.2]**.

3.1.2. The methodology has the following key stages, which are described in more detail in subsequent sections, as follows:

- **Baseline:** includes the gathering of documented information; agreement of the scope of the assessment with the EIA co-ordinator, Planning Inspectorate and local planning authority; site visits and initial reports to the EIA co-ordinator of issues that may need to be addressed within the design.
- **Design:** input into the design / review of initial design / layout / options and mitigation options.
- **Assessment:** includes an assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the Scheme, requiring Site based work and the completion of a full report and supporting graphics.
- **Cumulative Assessment:** assesses the effects of the proposal in combination with other developments, where required.

3.2. Baseline

3.2.1. The baseline study establishes the planning policy context, the scope of the assessment and the key receptors. It typically includes the following key activities:

- A desk study of relevant current national and local planning policy, in respect of landscape and visual matters, for the Site and surrounding areas
- Agreement of the main study area radius with the local planning authority

- A desk study of nationally and locally designated landscapes for the Site and surrounding areas
- A desk study of existing landscape character assessments and capacity and sensitivity studies for the Site and surrounding areas
- A desk study of historic landscape character assessments (where available) and other information sources required to gain an understanding of the contribution of heritage assets to the present day landscape
- Collation and evaluation of other indicators of local landscape value such as references in landscape character studies or parish plans, tourist information, local walking & cycling guides, references in art and literature
- The identification of valued character types, landscape elements and features which may be affected by the proposal, including rare landscape types
- Exchanging information with other consultants working on other assessment topics for the development as required to inform the assessment
- Draft Zone of Theoretical Visibility ('ZTV') studies to assist in identifying potential viewpoints and indicate the potential visibility of the Scheme, and therefore scope of receptors likely to be affected. The methodology used in the preparation of ZTV studies is described within **ES Appendix 6.4: Methodology for Zone of Theoretical Visibility Studies and Visualisations [APP/6.4]**.
- The identification of, and agreement upon, through consultation, the scope of assessment for cumulative effects
- The identification of, and agreement upon, through consultation, the number and location of representative and specific viewpoints within the study area
- The identification of the range of other visual receptors (e.g. people travelling along routes, or within open access land, settlements and residential properties) within the study area
- Site visits to become familiar with the Site and surrounding landscape; verify documented baseline; and to identify viewpoints and receptors; and

- Input to the design process.

3.2.2. The information gathered during the baseline assessment is drawn together and summarised in the baseline section of **ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual [APP/6.2]**. Reasoned judgements are made as to which receptors are likely to be significantly affected. Only these receptors are then taken forward for the detailed assessment of effects (GLVIA3, Paragraph 3.19).

3.3. **Design**

3.3.1. The design and assessment stages are necessarily iterative, with stages overlapping in parts. Details of any mitigation measures incorporated within the proposals to help reduce identified potential landscape and visual effects are set out within the LVIA.

3.4. Assessment

3.4.1. The assessment of effects includes further desk and Site based work, covering the following key activities:

- The preparation of ZTVs based on the finalised design for the development
- An assessment, based on both desk study and Site visits, of the sensitivity of receptors to the Scheme
- An assessment, based on both desk study and Site visits, of the magnitude and significance of effects upon the landscape character, designated and recreational landscape and the existing visual environment arising from the Scheme
- An informed professional judgement as to whether each identified effect is positive, neutral or adverse
- A clear description of the effects identified, with supporting information setting out the rationale for judgements
- Identification of which effects are judged to be significant based on the significance thresholds set out within the LVIA; and
- The production of photomontages from a selection of the agreed viewpoints showing the anticipated view following construction of the Scheme.

3.5. Site

3.5.1. The effect of physical changes to the Site are assessed in terms of the effects on the landscape fabric.

3.6. Landscape Character Considerations

3.6.1. The European Landscape Convention (2000) provides the following definition: "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose

character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.”

- 3.6.2. And notes also in Article 2 that landscape includes “natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It includes land, inland water and marine areas”.
- 3.6.3. An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014) defines landscape character as: “a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.”
- 3.6.4. The susceptibility of landscape character areas is judged based on both the attributes of the receiving environment and the characteristics of the Scheme as discussed under ‘susceptibility’ within the methodology section of the LVIA. Thus, the key characteristics of the landscape character types/areas are considered, along with scale, openness, topography; the absence of, or presence, nature and patterns of development, settlement, landcover, the contribution of heritage assets and historic landscape elements and patterns, and land uses in forming the character. The condition of the receiving landscape, i.e. the intactness of the existing character will also be relevant in determining susceptibility. The likelihood of material effects on the landscape character areas can be judged based on the scale and layout of the proposal and how this relates to the characteristics of the receiving landscape.
- 3.6.5. The introduction of any development into a landscape adds a new feature which can affect the ‘sense of place’ in its near vicinity, but with distance, the existing characteristics reassert themselves.
- 3.6.6. The baseline is informed by desk study of published landscape character assessments and field survey. It is specifically noted within An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014) that:

“Our landscapes have evolved over time and they will continue to evolve – change is a constant but outcomes vary. The management of change is essential to ensure that we achieve sustainable outcomes – social, environmental and economic. Decision makers need to understand the baseline and the implications of their decisions for that baseline.”

- 3.6.7. At page 51, it describes the function of 'Key Characteristics in landscape assessment', as follows:

“Key characteristics are those combinations of elements which help to give an area its distinctive sense of place. If these characteristics change, or are lost, there would be significant consequences for the current character of the landscape. Key characteristics are particularly important in the development of planning and management policies. They are important for monitoring change and can provide a useful reference point against which landscape change can be assessed. They can be used as indicators to inform thinking about whether and how the landscape is changing and whether, or not, particular policies – for example - are effective and having the desired effect on landscape character.”

- 3.6.8. It follows from the above that in order to assess whether landscape character is significantly affected by a development, it should be determined how each of the key characteristics would be affected.
- 3.6.9. The judgement of magnitude therefore reflects the degree to which the key characteristics and elements which form those characteristics will be altered by the proposals.

3.7. Landscape Value Considerations

- 3.7.1. Paragraph 5.19 of GLVIA3 states that:

“A review of existing landscape designations is usually the starting point in understanding landscape value, but the value attached to undesignated landscapes also needs to be carefully considered and individual elements of the landscape- such as trees, buildings or hedgerows -may also have value. All need to be considered where relevant.”

- 3.7.2. Paragraph 5.20 of GLVIA3 indicates information which might indicate landscape value, including:

- Information about areas recognised by statute such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- Information about Heritage Coasts, where relevant
- Local planning documents for local landscape designations
- Information on features such as Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, historic or cultural Sites
- Art and literature, identifying value attached to particular areas or views; and
- Material on landscapes of local or community interest, such as local green spaces, village greens or allotments.

3.7.3. An assessment of landscape value is made based on the following factors outlined in Table 1 of the Landscape Institute's 'Technical Guidance Notes 02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations': natural heritage; cultural heritage; landscape condition; associations; distinctiveness; recreational; perceptual (scenic); perceptual (wildness and tranquillity); and functional.

3.7.4. In addition to the above list, consideration is given to any evidence that indicates whether the landscape has particular value to people that would suggest that it is of greater than 'Community' value.

3.8. Viewpoints and Visual Receptors Considerations

3.8.1. A wide variety of visual receptors can reasonably be anticipated to be affected by the Scheme. Within the baseline assessment, the ZTV study and Site visits are used to determine which visual receptors are likely to be significantly affected and therefore merit detailed assessment.

3.8.2. In line with GLVIA3 guidance, both representative and specific viewpoints may be identified to inform the assessment. In general, the majority of viewpoints will be representative – representing the visual receptors at the distance and direction in which they are located and of the type(s) that would be present at that location.

3.8.3. The representative viewpoints have generally been selected in locations where significant effects would be anticipated; though some may be selected outside of that zone – either to demonstrate the reduction of effects with

distance; or to specifically ensure the representation of a particularly sensitive receptor.

3.8.4. The types of visual receptors likely to be included with the assessment are:

- Users of walking routes or accessible landscapes including Public Rights of Way (PRoW), National and Regional Trails and other long distance routes, Common Land, Open Access Land, permissive paths, land held in trust (e.g. Woodland Trust, National Trust) offering free public access, and other regularly used, permitted walking routes
- Visitors to and residents of settlements
- Visitors to specific valued viewpoints
- Visitors to attractions or heritage assets for which landscape and views contribute to the experience; and
- Users of roads or identified scenic routes.

3.8.5. Visual receptors are grouped for assessment into areas which include all of the routes, public spaces and homes within that area. Groups are selected as follows:

- Based around settlements in order to describe effects on that that community – e.g. a settlement and routes radiating from that settlement
- An area of open countryside encompassing a number of routes, accessible spaces and individual dwellings
- An area of accessible landscape and the routes within and around it e.g. a country park; and
- Such that effects within a single visual receptor group are similar enough to be readily described and assessed.

3.8.6. With the exception of specific viewpoints, each route, settlement or location will encompass a range of possible views, which might vary from no view of the Scheme to very clear, close views. Therefore, effects are described in such a way as to identify where views towards the Scheme are likely to arise and what the scale, duration and extent of those views are likely to be. In some cases, this will be further informed by a nearby viewpoint and in others it will be informed with reference to the ZTV, aerial photography and Site visits. Each of these individual effects are then considered together in order

to reach a judgement of the effects on the visual receptors along that route, or in that place.

- 3.8.7. The representative viewpoints are used as ‘samples’ on which to base judgements of the scale of effects on visual receptors. The viewpoints represent multiple visual receptors, and duration and extent are judged when assessing impacts on the visual receptors.
- 3.8.8. For specific viewpoints (key and sometimes promoted viewpoints within the landscape), duration and extent are assessed, with extent reflecting the extent to which the development affects the valued qualities of the view from the specific viewpoint.

Preparation and use of Visuals

- 3.8.9. The ZTVs are used to inform the field study assessment work, providing additional detail and accuracy to observations made on Site. Photomontages may also be produced in order to assist readers of the assessment in visualising the proposals but are not used in reaching judgements of effect. The preparation of the ZTVs (and photomontages where applicable) is informed by the Landscape Institute’s Technical Guidance Note 06/19 ‘Visual Representation of development proposals’ and SNH ‘Visual Representation of Wind Farms Best Practice Guidance’ (both the 2007 and 2017 editions).
- 3.8.10. The following points should be borne in mind in respect of the ZTV study:
- Areas shown as having potential visibility may have visibility of the development obscured by local features such as trees, hedgerows, embankments or buildings; and
 - A detailed description of the methods by which ZTVs and visualisations are prepared is included in **ES Appendix 6.4: Methodology for Zone of Theoretical Visibility Studies and Visualisations [APP/6.4]**.
- 3.8.11. In addition to the main visualisations, illustrative views are used as appropriate to illustrate particular points made within the assessment. These are not prepared to the same standard as they simply depict existing views, character or features rather than forming the basis for visualisations.

3.9. Cumulative Assessment

- 3.9.1. Cumulative assessment relates to the assessment of the effects of more than one development. A search area from the Site (typically of a similar scale to the study area) is agreed with the Planning Authority. For each of the

identified cumulative schemes, agreement is reached with the Planning Authority as to whether and how they should be included in the assessment.

- 3.9.2. Developments that are subject to a valid planning application are included where specific circumstances indicate there is potential for cumulative effects to occur, with progressively decreasing emphasis placed on those which are less certain to proceed. Projects without consent but that are listed on the Planning Inspectorate's website have also been considered for inclusion in the cumulative assessment, as appropriate. Typically, operational and consented developments are treated as being part of the landscape and visual baseline. i.e. it is assumed that consented schemes will be built except for occasional exceptions where there is good reason to assume that they will not be constructed.
- 3.9.3. The cumulative assessment examines the same groups of landscape and visual receptors as the assessment for the main Scheme, though different viewpoints may be used in order to better represent the likely range of effects arising from the combination of schemes. The assessment is informed by cumulative ZTVs as necessary, showing the extent of visual effects of the schemes in different colours to illustrate where visibility of more than one development is likely to arise. Cumulative wirelines or photomontages may also be prepared.
- 3.9.4. In addition, the effects on users of routes through the area, from which developments may be sequentially visible as one passes through the landscape are also considered, if appropriate. This assessment is based on the desk study of ZTVs and aerial photography, and Site visits to travel along the routes being assessed.
- 3.9.5. In relation to landscape and visual cumulative assessment, it is important to note the following:
- For each assessed receptor, combined cumulative effects may be the same as for the application Scheme, or greater (where the influence of multiple schemes would increase effects, or where schemes in planning other than the Scheme would have the predominant effects)
 - For each assessed receptor, incremental cumulative effects may be the same as for the Scheme or reduced (where the influence of other schemes in planning would be such that were they consented and considered to be part of the baseline, the incremental change arising from the addition of the Scheme would be less); and

- Subject to the distance and degree of intervening landform, vegetation and structures there may be no cumulative effects.

3.9.6. The way in which the assessment is described and presented is varied depending on the number and nature of scenarios which may arise. This variation is needed in order to convey to the reader the key points of each assessment. For example, the three different cumulative combinations that may arise for an assessment in which there are two existing undetermined applications each can be assessed individually. A situation in which there are 10 applications cannot reasonably be assessed in this way and the developments may need to be grouped for analysis.

3.10. Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

3.10.1. Paragraph 6.17 of GLVIA3 notes that:

“In some instances it may also be appropriate to consider private viewpoints, mainly from residential properties.... Effects of development in private property are frequently dealt with mainly through ‘residential amenity assessments’. These are separate from LVIA although visual effects assessment may sometimes be carried out as part of a residential amenity assessment, in which case this will supplement and form part of the LVIA for a project. Some of the principles set out here for dealing with visual effects may help in such assessments but there are specific requirements in residential amenity assessment.”

3.10.2. The guidance also notes that:

“In respect of private views and visual amenity, it is widely known that, no one has ‘a right to a view.’ This includes situations where a residential property’s outlook / visual amenity is judged to be ‘significantly’ affected by a Scheme, a matter which has been confirmed in a number of appeal / public inquiry decisions.”

3.10.3. It is important to note:

“Judgements formed in respect of Residential Visual Amenity should not be confused with the judgement regarding Residential Amenity because the latter is a planning matter. Nor should the judgment therefore be seen as a ‘test’ with a simple ‘pass’ or ‘fail’. ... The final judgement regarding effect on Residential Amenity ... requires weighing all factors and likely effects (positive as well as negative) in the ‘planning balance’.”

3.10.4. The guidance notes that many appeal decisions in which residential visual amenity is considered relate to wind farms. Wind farms are unusually tall developments with a greater chance that they could have such an effect.

3.10.5. Most forms of development are unlikely to cause effects of such a high magnitude to render a property an unattractive place in which to live, unless

the development is in very close to the property and occupying a large proportion of views.

- 3.10.6. Residential properties closest to the Site are viewed on Site and from aerial photography to consider whether a residential amenity assessment is required. Where such an assessment is required, it is provided as an appendix to the LVIA **ES Chapter 6 [APP/6.2]** and in accordance with the guidance provided in Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 02/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment.