Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Whitestone Solar Farm
Hearing:	Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) - Part 1
Date:	11 November 2026

Please note: This document is intended to assist Interested Parties.

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File Name: WHITESTONE_11NOV_ISH1_PT1.mp3
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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:05:02 - 00:00:39:23
Good morning. It's now ten o'clock and time for this hearing to begin. I'd like to welcome you all to this issue specific hearing on environmental matters for the Whitestone Solar Farm project. Can I just confirm that everyone can hear me clearly? Yes, I'm getting thumbs up. Thank you very much. Thank you. Bit louder. Thank you. Can I also confirm with the case manager that the live stream and recording of the event has commenced? Yes, nods. Thank you very much. So my name is Rebecca Norman. I'm a chartered town planner and examining inspector, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the lead member of the panel to examine this application.

00:00:40:02 - 00:00:42:24
I'm now going to ask the other panel members to introduce themselves.

00:00:44:23 - 00:00:57:19
Good morning. My name is Helen Van Willigan. I am a solicitor and a chartered town planner and examining inspector. I have been appointed as a panel member of the XA. Thank you.

00:00:59:14 - 00:01:09:11
Good morning. My name is Craig Lachlan. I'm a chartered water and environmental manager and examining inspector. I've been appointed as a panel member of the examining authority.

00:01:10:02 - 00:01:45:26
Thank you. So together, we constitute the examining authority for this application. At this point, I'd also like to introduce the members of the Planning Inspectorate's case team who are supporting us today. You may have already spoken with them. We have Louise Haraway, who's case manager for the project, supported by Cameron Alford and Callan Hewing, case officers and Sasha Coke, operations manager. Two other case officers, Rebecca Quinlan and Rachel Owen, are providing online support. And in addition, technicians from the audiovisual company, CVS International, are in attendance solely for the purpose of managing the recording and live streaming of this event.

00:01:46:13 - 00:02:26:01
So I'll now just deal with a few housekeeping matters for those attending in person. Can everyone please set devices and phones to silent? Those of you who were here yesterday will already know, but toilets are situated on the first and second floors, ladies to the left near the stairs, gents to the right near the lift, and there are disabled toilets at either end of both corridors. In the event of a fire evacuation, there will be a message announced over the PA system. All visitors should proceed through the fire exits clearly marked and make their way down the staircases not using the lifts, and making your way out over the zebra crossing to the north car park to await further instruction.

00:02:26:03 - 00:02:30:10
I'm not aware that there are any proposed fire drills today, so if the alarm goes off,

00:02:31:02 - 00:02:31:28
probably the real

00:02:32:00 - 00:02:38:03
thing. We'll now turn to the agenda and logistics, and I'll hand over to my colleague, Mrs. Van Wideggen. Thank you.

00:02:40:10 - 00:02:45:28
If I can just ask if there is anybody in the room from the media.

00:02:49:11 - 00:03:14:10
I I can't see anybody. Thank you. So this meeting will follow the agenda that was published on the National Infrastructure Planning website on the third of November two... Twenty twenty six. Examination library reference, e v four zero zero one. It would be helpful if you had a copy of this in front of you, and I can see that it's now being displayed on the screen for us.

00:03:16:01 - 00:03:34:21
The agenda is for guidance only, and we may add other considerations or issues as we progress this hearing. We will conclude the hearing as soon as all relevant contributions have been made and all questions that we have asked have been responded to.

00:03:36:07 - 00:03:58:22
But if the discussions continue for a lengthy period and cannot be concluded, it may be necessary for us to pry... Prioritize matters and defer some of the matters to further questions. Likewise, if you cannot answer a question that is being asked or require time to get information,

00:04:00:26 - 00:04:08:26
please can you indicate that this can then be dealt with in writing at the next deadline.

00:04:10:14 - 00:04:53:08
Today's hearing is being undertaken in a hybrid way, meaning some of you present with us at the hearing venue, and some of you will be joining us virtually using Microsoft Teams. We will make sure, however, that if you have decided to attend today, we will give you a fair opportunity to participate in the hearing. The meeting is being both live streamed and recorded. For those people participating or observing via Microsoft Teams, in order to minimize background noise and disturbance, please can you ensure that you stay on mute and turn off your camera unless you are speaking.

00:04:55:21 - 00:05:06:20
A recording of today's hearing will be made available on the Whitestone Solar Farm section of the National Infrastructure Planning website as soon as practicable after the hearing has finished.

00:05:08:08 - 00:05:35:20
With this in mind, please ensure that you speak clearly into a microphone stating your name and who you are representing each time before you speak. If you are at a table, please switch your microphone

on before you speak and switch it back off again once you have finished. If you are not at a table with a microphone, there is a roving microphone, so please wait for one of these to be brought to you so that you can speak.

00:05:38:16 - 00:06:03:27
A link to the planning inspectorate's privacy notice was provided in the notification for this hearing. We assume that everybody here today has familiarized themselves with this document, which establishes how the personal data of our customers is handled in accordance with the principles set out in data protection laws. Please speak to the case manager if you have any questions regarding this.

00:06:05:21 - 00:06:41:19
The examining authority will only ever ask for information to be placed on the public record that is important and relevant to the determination of the application. It will only be in the rarest of circumstances that we might ask you to provide personal information of the type that most of us would prefer to keep private or confidential. Therefore, to avoid the need to edit the digital recordings, we would ask that you try your best not to add information to the public record that you would wish to keep private or that is confidential.

00:06:43:29 - 00:07:05:11
Timing wise, we will have a lunch break and also short breaks at midmorning and midafternoon at convenient points. We aim to close this hearing by no later than five PM. There will be a two minute silence at eleven AM for Armistice Day, which we will be respecting.

00:07:06:29 - 00:07:13:28
Whoever is speaking at that time will be interrupted and allowed to continue following the period of silence.

00:07:16:04 - 00:07:19:24
Thank you. I will now pass to Mr. Lachlan.

00:07:21:02 - 00:08:01:16
Thank you. Let me briefly explain the purpose of this issue specific hearing. The examination of this NSIP application will primarily be conducted in written form as explained in detail at yesterday's preliminary meeting. The purpose of today's hearing is for the examining authority to hear early evidence concerning a range of environmental matters in relation to the Whitestone Solar Farm application. The matters for discussion during the course of the hearing have been identified by the examining authority based on its consideration of the application documentation and the relevant representations made by other interested parties.

00:08:02:20 - 00:08:18:04
When you're answering the examining authority's questions, please ensure that you provide succinct answers. Where question is deserving of a yes or no type answer, please respond accordingly, followed by amplification, if necessary. Thank you.

00:08:20:09 - 00:08:51:01

So turning to introductions, I'm now going to ask those of you participating in today's meeting to introduce yourselves. When I state your organization's name, could you introduce yourself stating your name, who you represent and which agenda item you wish to speak on? If you are not representing an organisation, please confirm your name, summarise your interest in the application and confirm the agenda item which you wish to speak on. Please could you also state how you wish to be addressed? So if we start with the applicants team.

00:08:51:03 - 00:08:59:01
Mr Walker, I'll hand over to you. I understand you've got a lot of people with you today, so it's probably you're going to introduce them at the beginning of the relevant topic.

00:08:59:03 - 00:09:33:11
That's correct, madam. Good morning. My name is Angus Walker from TLT Solicitors representing the applicant. I propose to we do have a number of witnesses to speak to the various items under item three. I propose to introduce them at the start of each of those sub items. Although I will introduce my colleague Jessica Hobbs on my right, who will be collecting the list of actions that we will compare notes at the end of the hearing if that's how you propose to proceed.

00:09:33:13 - 00:09:34:08
Thank you very much.

00:09:34:10 - 00:09:46:15
Thank you very much, Mr Walker. So then turning to the local authorities. So Mr. Gully, you're here on behalf of Doncaster and Rotherham councils. Thank you.

00:09:47:09 - 00:10:21:18
Morning. Rob Gully on behalf of City of Doncaster Council and Rotherham Metropolitan Barrow Council. For simplicity, we'll refer to them as Doncaster and Rotherham councils going forward. I think much like Mr. Walker, we have a number of specialists. I'll introduce those as we go through each part of Section three. We have seven specialists available to cover all the topics today. Most are online, one is in person, and David will introduce himself later. Please don't place any weight on whether people are here online or in person. It's just practicalities and site visits despite the poor visibility yesterday.

00:10:23:11 - 00:10:24:24
Thank you very much, Mr. Sorry. Sorry.

00:10:24:26 - 00:10:40:29
So I just wanted point I just mentioned yesterday, our water specialist wasn't available beyond four fifteen. We have tried to find a replacement, but there's not someone who's familiar enough with the scheme. So if there's any way that, that could be managed to cover that final agenda item before fourteen, that would be great. Thank you.

00:10:41:01 - 00:10:49:20
Yes. Thank you. We'll sort of review as the day goes on and see what we can do with regards to that. But we have got a note about that. So thank you very much.

00:10:52:03 - 00:11:06:18
I've also got for Northeast Derbyshire District Council, Angelina Lambert. Is that correct?

00:11:09:29 - 00:11:13:17
Oh, is that a hundred at the back? Thank you very much.

00:11:17:14 - 00:11:20:04
And Ryan Mills, is that... Yep. Thank you very much.

00:11:22:01 - 00:11:32:17
Are there any other local authorities at this point to be introduced? Yep. Thank you very much. So turning to statutory parties,

00:11:34:17 - 00:11:38:25
I've got Ross Corsa from National Highways online.

00:11:41:14 - 00:11:51:14
Morning. Yes. My name is Ross Corsa. I'm a solicitor at Vincent Masons on behalf of National Highways Limited. I intend to speak to agenda item three point two. Thank you.

00:11:54:25 - 00:12:04:10
And then I've got a number of people from the environment agency. I've got Candace Alban online.

00:12:04:12 - 00:12:41:01
Candace Yes, good morning. So I'm Candace Alban at the Environment Agency. I have some technical staff with me who will dial in to item three point three, ecology and biodiversity, biodiversity, should there be anything that we need to contribute for that, and item three point five, water, flooding and ground conditions. And I will probably introduce them when they need to come forward and speak. Can I just say I've got one more colleague, Lucy Horton, who was unable to register online because she's currently in a hearing this morning for another project, but she will want to dial in this afternoon?

00:12:41:23 - 00:12:43:18
Thank you very much. Thank you.

00:12:45:17 - 00:12:51:08
Okay. So then turning to the Parish Councils. I've got Mr. Northcote. Good morning.

00:12:52:21 - 00:13:11:11
Morning, madam. Mr. Anthony Northcote, I'm a charter town planner appearing on of behalf three joint parishes, which is a group made up, as you know, of Aniston Parish Council, Hartlewood Woodall Parish Council and Wales Parish Council. I'd like to speak, please, on items three point one, three point two, three point four and three point five. Thank you.

00:13:15:08 - 00:13:17:27
And then I've got Mr. Philip Knight. Good morning.

00:13:17:29 - 00:13:44:21
Good morning, ma'am. I'm Philip Knight from Conyersburg Park, Parish Council, and I would like to speak on three point one landscape and visual and also three point five water flooding and ground conditions. I have a few residents that are registered to speak today on other matters. So I'd like to ensure that they have the opportunity to speak, in particular, in relation to agricultural land and BFB.

00:13:44:23 - 00:13:46:02
Thank you. Thank you.

00:13:47:25 - 00:13:51:22
And then councilor Nicola Henderson. Thank you.

00:13:53:25 - 00:13:56:28
Do you want to wait for a mic to be brought to you for the items?

00:14:06:13 - 00:14:17:13
Hi. I'm Nicola Henderson from Anston Parish Council. I've registered to speak, I'm not sure whether I will or not yet. I wasn't sure how it works. That's fine. Okay. Yep, thank you.

00:14:19:23 - 00:14:23:20
Then turning to interested parties, I've got Ian Park.

00:14:27:04 - 00:14:35:04
Good morning, ma'am. My name is Ian Park. I am a local resident in Faircroft. It is not my intention to speak today.

00:14:35:09 - 00:14:44:23
Okay. Thank you very much. And then I've got Greg Reynolds. Oh, yes. Hand up. We'll just get a microphone brought to you. Thank you.

00:14:55:29 - 00:15:15:02
Hello? Sorry. It does work. Yeah. Greg Reynolds. I'm the councilor for... Ruthenburg councilor for Bramley and Ravenfield. And I... I'd like to I'd like to sort of comment as and when I get the chance. But if it's... If it has if it has to be a statement, I can do that anytime you like.

00:15:15:17 - 00:15:21:09
Thank you very much, mister Reynolds. I've then got Martin Cook. Yep.

00:15:24:00 - 00:15:32:09
Good morning. My name is Martin Cook and I'd like to speak on three point three, Ecology and Biodiversity. Thank you.

00:15:32:11 - 00:16:03:29
Thank you very much. And then next on the list I've got Janet Greenwood. Good morning. Good morning. My name is Janet Greenwood. I'm speaking today as a resident of Micklebreen, but also on behalf of Save Our Greenbelt Cottageman Parks and Braithwell with Micklebreen Parish Council. And I'm looking at agenda three point one. And if I may, to comment if necessary on three point two. Thank you. Thank you very much. And the next on my list, I've got Mark Corrigan online.

00:16:09:13 - 00:16:22:28
Good morning, ma'am. Thank you. I would like to comment on three point one, specifically, rights of way up for zero four six and zero four seven. Thank you.

00:16:23:00 - 00:16:32:08
Thank you very much. Next on my list, I've got Jeanette Graham. Good morning.

00:16:38:29 - 00:16:55:25
Good morning. My name is Jeanette Graham, resident of Clifton and Connorsburgh for thirty eight years. And I'd like to speak today on landscape and visual, agricultural land and BMV and flooding. Thank you.

00:16:56:26 - 00:16:57:27
Thank you very much.

00:17:00:26 - 00:17:03:20
Then turning to Joan Jackson. Good morning.

00:17:05:05 - 00:17:22:01
Good morning. I'm Joan Jackson, a private resident of Carniesborough. I'd like to speak on flooding on three point five, if I may. Yes. Thank you very much. Thank you. And then William Collins. Good

00:17:22:04 - 00:17:31:13
I'm a resident on Cunniesborough Parks. I'd like to speak on three point one, three point four and three point five, please.

00:17:34:17 - 00:17:35:13
Thank you.

00:17:37:04 - 00:17:39:18
And then Nicholas Eastwood. Good morning.

00:17:45:00 - 00:17:55:00
Morning. Thanks for the opportunity. I'm representing Fursby Residence Association today. Agenda items three point one, three point two, three point four and three point five.

00:17:57:12 - 00:17:58:06
Thank you.

00:18:01:24 - 00:18:06:18
And Angela Eastwood? Sorry, it's back and forth through the mic, so I should have been quicker.

00:18:06:20 - 00:18:29:02
Good morning, thank you again for the opportunity. Today I am representing Save Our Bridal Ways and myself. For Save Our Bridal Ways I will be discussing or having the opportunity to comment on three point one, three point two, three point three, three point five and four if appropriate. For myself I'd like to speak about three point one, three point two, three point three, three point four and three point five.

00:18:33:02 - 00:18:33:26
Thank you.

00:18:38:04 - 00:18:41:05
Then next on my list I've got Paul Bookland online.

00:18:46:08 - 00:18:47:06
Yes.

00:18:48:29 - 00:19:03:28
My back... I'm Paul Bookland. I was formerly an archaeologist working for Doncaster MBC, but my interests today are in the ecology and paleoecology of the region. So three point three.

00:19:04:07 - 00:19:04:22
Thank you

00:19:04:24 - 00:19:07:16
very much. Thank you.

00:19:10:15 - 00:19:15:28
And that's all I've got listed registered to speak.

00:19:18:17 - 00:19:23:14
So is there anyone else in the room who wishes to speak who hasn't registered today?

00:19:26:28 - 00:19:29:05
Anyone online?

00:19:33:26 - 00:19:35:14
I'm not seeing any hands.

00:19:37:00 - 00:20:14:05
So we will turn to agenda item three now then. Just as a way of introduction, particularly for people joining online, if your topic of interest is towards the end of the agenda, you may wish to get on with

other work during the morning and keep checking back to monitor progress. So please don't feel obliged to sit here all morning if it's a later item that you wish to speak on. Similarly, if your interest in this application is a particular topic, once that agenda item is completed, then do not feel that you have to stay online or in the room all day for the entirety of the event.

00:20:14:07 - 00:20:32:05
So you're welcome to sort of come and go as you please. You are, of course, welcome to stay for the holiday if you wish. But if you want to exit at an appropriate juncture, then please feel free to do so. So I will now hand over to Mrs Van Willigan, who's leading on agenda item three point one, which is landscape and visual matters. Thank you very much.

00:20:35:26 - 00:21:16:20
Thank you. So moving on to landscape and visual matters, I am going to invite the applicant to provide us with a summary, which should not be more than ten minutes long, to set out the case with regard to landscape and visual matters, including the design principles and evolution, the approach that has been taken for the assessment of the landscape and visual impacts, the proposed mitigation strategy, and the approach that has been used for the assessment of the effects of the proposed development on public rights of way.

00:21:17:26 - 00:21:26:06
I could ask Mr. Walker if you could introduce your speaker, and then we can start your presentation, please.

00:21:26:28 - 00:21:50:07
You very much, Madam. Angus Walker for the applicant. As we go through item three, I will have sometimes have one speaker and sometimes have more than one. And I'll introduce them at each stage. three For point one, I do only have one speaker who is sitting on my left, Mr. Sam Griffiths, who will now address you for ten minutes on the items you have requested.

00:21:52:10 - 00:22:30:18
Morning. Sam Griffiths on behalf of the applicant. And examining authority, I'll start with reference to National Policy Statement EM1 Section four point seven, which covers good design. And start with the point that the applicant appointed a design lead, me in this case, from the outset of the project to look after good design, demonstrating their commitment to delivering a well designed project, proactively embedding good design from the outset. And our design approach is set up primarily within the design approach document, which is Examination Library Reference zero APP040.

00:22:31:09 - 00:23:09:14
And within that document, the project vision is stated. And that includes several attributes relevant to landscape and visual matters, including crafting a development that is socially and environmentally sensitive and also enhancement of biodiversity and recreational landscape or access across the landscape. But that vision, by nature of being a vision, is high level. And therefore, the project defined project specific design principles to guide our design process. And they are also reasonably broad in their scope, in line with the planning spectra's own advice on good design forensics covering climate, people, place and value.

00:23:09:22 - 00:23:44:12
I won't read out those design principles now because of time, but they are recorded on Page seven of the design approach document, once again, APP040. And these design principles can't be done just from the desk. It has to be done by an iterative process of design, engaging with stakeholders, both in terms of local communities, but also statutory bodies, environmental specialists and technical engineering experts as well. And therefore, the applicant adopted an iterative design loop, and this is detailed on Page eight of the design approach document.

00:23:45:04 - 00:24:26:08
And the key stages of the design iteration, I would draw your attention to paragraph two point two point six of the design approach document. And at each stage, the goal was to realize that project vision of a sensitively designed project. Now specifically for landscape and visual matters, that includes two primary considerations from MPS EM1. Firstly, it should be sensitive to place, which is paragraph 4.7.2 of EM1. And also, we are asked to make sure that it is carefully cited or careful citing of components relative to existing landscape character, landform vegetation, in line with paragraph 4.7.6 of EM1.

00:24:26:27 - 00:25:04:00
And so to summarize our response to those two key landscape and visual design requirements. First of all, landscape and visual considerations were an integral part of the site selection process, whereby areas of land where topography was not appropriate for soda were excluded from the outset, again, in line with EM1 4.7.6. And then once that site was defined, the applicant defined specific design parameters separate from our design principles, so more of a spatial element to commit to the retention of existing vegetation in line with EM1.

00:25:04:13 - 00:25:15:12
So for instance, there's a commitment to five meters from hedgerows, fifteen meters from trees, and that is to ensure their protection other than where some limited removal is required for access.

00:25:17:07 - 00:25:47:14
There are minimum offsets. Sometimes they are far exceeded. But at the moment, I'm just flagging that this was to make sure that we are retaining the overall pattern and scale of the landscape. There's permanent attributes, which define a place its key characteristics as recorded in landscape character assessments. A further example of how the project has been designed to be sensitive to place would be the adoption of an initial design parameter of fifteen meters from public rights of way. And that word initial is important.

00:25:47:23 - 00:26:24:23
That means that that is the minimum. But in many instances, it is far exceeded. For instance, where we have public rights of way sometimes traversing a slope, Typically, the land to the lower side of the slope is kept more open, the offset is greater to allow those open views to be retained. People can look above and beyond the solar, therefore, maintaining sense that of place, those key characteristics. And we've also always approached this in lines of the mitigation hierarchy. So in that instance, it is not possible to avoid all visual impacts for traveling on public rights of way, but it is possible through that sensitive design to minimize those impacts.

00:26:25:09 - 00:26:57:09
So that is the lens through which we have approached the iterative design process. I should also make the point that throughout non statutory consultation or rather just after non statutory consultation, the applicant made substantial changes to the extent of the proposed development, particularly the extent of potential solar, removing not parts of fields, but entire fields following discussion with local communities. And I would make well, draw your attention to, once again, the design approach document that summarizes this Table in one.

00:26:57:28 - 00:27:30:29
And then we've shown that spatially on Pages forty three to fifty of the design approach document that shows how the scheme has reduced to minimize and avoid those impacts in proximity to residential areas. Just one example in that respect, examining authority, there's the settlement of Highmore just to the west of Whitestone three, where land rises up. We've got quite a steep slope. Once upon a time, there was solar proposed on that eastern facing slope by responding to the topography, removing the solar from that field that thereby avoided those impacts.

00:27:31:01 - 00:28:06:05
So we're able to meet that first level of the mitigation hierarchy. Mindful of time, I'll move on to the approach taken for the assessment of landscape and visual impacts. I make the point to begin with that the LBIA is set out within Chapter seven of the environmental statement examination library reference APP059 with the full methodology provided in Section seven point four. It follows best practice guidance, which is the guidelines for landscape and visual impact assessment of the third edition and draws upon guidance published by the Landscape Institute in their technical guidance notes.

00:28:07:15 - 00:28:39:19
Regarding the extent of the study area and associated receptors, the project started with a wider area of search, which we're running on Zones of Theoretical Visibility or ZTVs to that extent of five kilometers. Based on the findings of those ZTVs and subsequent fieldwork, it became clear that there was not potential for significant adverse effects beyond three kilometers. And therefore, three kilometers beyond the order limits was the final study area within which landscape and visual receptors were identified.

00:28:40:20 - 00:29:16:00
Landscape receptors are those published in landscape character assessments by Doncaster and Wuthering Councils. Visual receptors have been identified typically as road or recreational or residence. And then the use of rep sensitive viewpoints has been used. It is not that we assess the impact on a viewpoint, we assess the impact on a person, but viewpoints are simply there to illustrate people's views. And I would also make the point that as well as delivering an assessment and a summary of impacts and final effects, the LVIA has been an integral part of that mitigation process.

00:29:16:13 - 00:29:25:17
Has been part of that iterative design development. It has been involved in informing the siting of key infrastructure, for example, substation and battery and solar.

00:29:27:05 - 00:30:02:00

Moving on to the proposed mitigation strategy. I've described a few examples under the first point that demonstrate landscape and visual considerations have been embedded as mitigation. We are not looking at additional mitigation. All mitigation for landscape and visual impact has been embedded within the consenting envelope. So that's done via a few key control mechanisms. First of all, the spatial extent of the development informed by the landscape and visual matters is secured within the works plans, which is reference AS-five.

00:30:02:10 - 00:30:38:14
And that secures offsets specifically to avoid and minimize effects on people's visual amenity. So the offsets from residential areas, public rights of way, etcetera, roads are all secured within the works plans. Landscape and visual mitigation is also embedded within the outlined design parameters, which is another key control document for us in this respect, which is APP-one hundred fifty eight, as these control the scale, the location and the design and in some instances, give guidance on color of key infrastructure, again, designed to minimize the impacts on landscape and visual amenity.

00:30:39:11 - 00:31:18:07
And the third document that is particularly important for landscape and visual mitigation is the outlined landscape and ecology management plan, often referred to as the OLEMP, which is APP046, And that details the retention and protection of the existing vegetation as well as the proposed vegetation, which, if I summarize, is over six kilometers of new species rich native hedgerow with trees, approximately thirty four kilometers of species rich native hedgerow, one hectare of native tree belts and approximately ten forty three hectares of new grassland.

00:31:19:22 - 00:31:57:00
Coming on to a final point, mindful once again of the time, the assessment approach to use for public rights of way. It's important to recognize that a lot of landscape and visual receptors are static, as in they don't move when we talk about settlements and indeed residents at home. That's not the case for people traveling along public rights of way, via whatever means, be that those walking or wet mitzvahs on bikes or horseback. They are dynamic. They move. So therefore, we have had to employ a slightly different assessment scenario where we look at the experience of somebody moving along a route rather than an individual location.

00:31:57:22 - 00:32:35:24
The scope and the approach of the visual assessment and those representative viewpoints were agreed with the host authorities as part of the pre application discussions. However, since that time, the host authorities have had some wider advice from landscape and visual specialists, and therefore, we are engaging with them now and have been over the past few weeks. And I suspect we will be providing some more information on public rights of way and wider visual amenity through those discussions simply in an effort to be useful, frankly, and provide meaningful progress towards a combined statement of common ground.

00:32:38:20 - 00:33:08:27
With respect to the question asked, just a couple of specifics. So the susceptibility of people walking on public rights of way or traveling on public rights of way is typically assessed as medium for local public rights of way and then elevated to a higher level of high where they are promoted routes. Of course, then we feed in the value of the view and ultimately look at the magnitude, end up with our

overall level of effect. But I suspect that's going to detail that we may get into later. So I think I have about ten minutes, and therefore, we'll close there for now.

00:33:08:29 - 00:33:09:14
Thank you.

00:33:14:17 - 00:33:30:09
You, Mr. Griffiths. That was very helpful. You mentioned that you are currently engaging with the councils. Is it proposed to submit something further at deadline one in respect of those discussions?

00:33:31:03 - 00:33:52:12
Sam Griffiths on behalf of the applicant. Yes, it is, examining authority, our intention to submit an updated LVIA at deadline one. And just for absolute clarity, that is building on previous discussions and agreement, but we're keen to move the discussion forward. So yes, an updated LVIA for deadline one is our intention.

00:33:54:23 - 00:33:57:15
Thank you very much. That's very helpful.

00:33:59:00 - 00:34:01:22
At this point, is there anything further from you, Mr. Walker?

00:34:02:23 - 00:34:09:08
No, madam. That is our ten minute presentation, and we invite questions from you.

00:34:11:18 - 00:34:31:25
Thank you. At this point, I now propose to move to the councils to invite their response to the presentation made by mister Griffiths and on the issue of landscape and visual. So turning first to mister Gully.

00:34:34:11 - 00:34:58:13
You, madam. Rob Gully for Doncaster Council and Rotherham Council. I'm joined in person by David Stokoe. He'll introduce himself in a second. He's a landscape specialist. And hopefully, if technology is working, we're also joined by Callum Campbell online, who is an arboricultural specialist, obviously, trees from a landscape perspective in this agenda item. Just before I hand over to David,

00:35:01:02 - 00:35:02:15
in terms of Mr.

00:35:05:02 - 00:35:37:22
Griffith's presentation there, I think just about we've got the agenda item tomorrow on-site selection and alternatives. So I guess our view is that some of the broader questions around how the site evolved to where it is probably be will more addressed tomorrow and today. I think our perception was more focused on the LVIA. And perhaps just to bring the examining authority up to date in terms

of progress between the applicant and the councils, We received draft SOCG overall towards the end of October, and we did get an LVIA version slightly in advance of that.

00:35:37:24 - 00:36:14:15
That then led to a meeting on the twenty seventh of October, which was the first post submission meeting. So that did make a lot of progress. And as Mr. Griffith has quoted, I'm just referring to the minutes here that the applicant accepted the majority of the comments made by the councils and the relevant representation, which is then leading to the updated submissions. Obviously, from the council's perspective, we can speak today, but we really need to see that submission, which we understand is coming in at deadline one, and then we'll obviously respond accordingly. I think one final point to make is we don't intend to restate every point we've made in our relevant representation.

00:36:14:17 - 00:36:23:22
We'll rely on that, and we'll just pick up any key points that David and Callum wish to make to this hearing. So I will hand over to David to introduce himself.

00:36:26:14 - 00:36:34:09
David Stilke on behalf of City of Doncaster Council and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

00:36:37:21 - 00:36:48:27
Yeah. Initially, to respond directly to some of the the points made in the presentation. An area where we do agree, think, is in relation to

00:36:51:18 - 00:36:52:07
the

00:36:53:01 - 00:37:12:26
design of the proposed development and how it relates to the underlying field patterns. So it's evident that an attempt has been made to design the development around the retention of those field patterns and to some extent, the retention of existing vegetation.

00:37:14:19 - 00:37:38:05
So we we agree in that respect. I think where we have concerns are in relation to the the iterative iterative design loop and how the early stage assessment has informed the the site layout and and other matters of design.

00:37:40:07 - 00:38:05:21
So for example, large parts of the site are... Have quite a strong prominent land form. And it... It's quite clear that parts of the proposed development are are situated in elevated situations with implications for visual impact and wider landscape impacts.

00:38:08:00 - 00:38:11:28
So from the application documents, it's it's not clear

00:38:13:17 - 00:38:21:07
how the current site layout has been informed by those underlying landscape characteristics.

00:38:24:27 - 00:38:49:01
So, for example, in relation to w one, the substation is located in a prominent area of landform on the local ridge line which is gonna increase prominence. So the application documents don't provide the explanation of that sighting decision in relation to substation.

00:38:51:03 - 00:39:02:29
And then again, relation... More widely in relation to solar, areas of solar rays that frequently located in prominent locations, elevated locations,

00:39:06:17 - 00:39:21:27
which from analysis of the the viewpoint visualizations you know, that becomes evident. So again, it's not understood how this iterative processes influenced design in that respect.

00:39:23:15 - 00:39:25:12
And then there's a matter of

00:39:28:23 - 00:39:35:09
visual separation between settlements and road corridors. It's it's quite evident that

00:39:37:05 - 00:39:48:28
the proposed development is going to influence that wider pattern of development. And again, the design rationale for that isn't clearly set out in the application documents.

00:39:51:17 - 00:40:03:03
I mean, that has a crossover with some green belt issues, which I appreciate we're not here today to address that, worth mentioning.

00:40:10:28 - 00:40:41:05
And then in relation to the to the approach taken, we have had a recent meeting with the applicant where we have agreed a way forward in relation to quite a lot of the issues we've raised regarding methodologies. I'll just mention a few now. So the applicant has agreed to look at the ZTV methodology cause we had some concerns around that and and the coverage.

00:40:49:18 - 00:41:04:02
There was the matter relating to moderate effects and whether they were considered significant or not. And the applicant has agreed to look at that again. And he's agreed that a moderate effect would constitute a significant effect.

00:41:06:04 - 00:41:30:03
We discussed the visual assessment and our concerns that it was primarily a viewpoint based assessment rather than a wider receptor based assessment. And again, the applicant has agreed to look at that, but currently that is one of our key concerns.

00:41:32:12 - 00:41:39:06

And we'll talk a bit more about that when we look at the assessment of public rights of way and long distance routes.

00:41:49:11 - 00:41:55:01
There's been a request for additional viewpoints and again, the applicant has agreed to look at that.

00:41:57:15 - 00:42:08:12
Some additional where points we don't agree is in relation to the scope and out of national character areas. So primarily,

00:42:10:29 - 00:42:37:14
site is covered by two NCAs. So that's NCA thirty, Southern Magnesium Limestone and NCA thirty eight Nottingham, Derbyshire, New Yorkshire coal field. And because of the scale of the proposed development, think there is potential for those national current areas to be notably affected. So I think I don't agree that they should be scoped out.

00:42:39:24 - 00:42:48:18
Sensitivity of the A1 Connersboro and Danube Coalfields LCA, the applicant has assessed that as medium.

00:42:51:12 - 00:42:53:12
Where you think it should be higher? Probably

00:42:55:01 - 00:42:56:07
high medium

00:42:58:11 - 00:43:02:14
because of the distinctive characteristics of of that area.

00:43:05:22 - 00:43:18:24
The land form, the general absence of detracting features. So, yeah, we think it should be higher. The year fifteen photo montages are currently summer views.

00:43:20:14 - 00:43:28:23
We think there should be wind of use to represent a worst case scenario. And in relation to cumulative effects,

00:43:32:28 - 00:43:45:17
I think the approach and the assessment doesn't fully address the extent of cumulative effects in relation to particularly common farm solar

00:43:47:17 - 00:43:49:22
development, which is currently under construction.

00:43:55:08 - 00:43:58:22

And in relation to the proposed mitigation strategy,

00:44:02:19 - 00:44:29:28
our position is that the strategy relies quite heavily on the definition of offsets from defined constraints such as a residential property or a public right of way. It doesn't provide the holistic understanding of how the proposed development is actually going to relate to the underlying landscape characteristics.

00:44:32:29 - 00:44:47:20
And I've I've touched on that in relation to design evolution on how and how the the design doesn't really demonstrate how it relates to the underlying strong land form for example.

00:44:52:07 - 00:45:09:25
But then I think you can also, in terms of mitigation strategy, you can look at the soft landscape proposals. And I think we're more in accordance with some of those proposals. So for example, strengthening existing field boundaries,

00:45:13:26 - 00:45:19:14
providing connections in the public right of way network, that type of thing

00:45:21:09 - 00:45:23:21
seems reasonable in in some respects.

00:45:33:24 - 00:45:46:13
We we have Callum Campbell on the line as well who I'd like to bring in if possible just to explain some specifics in relation to

00:45:49:12 - 00:45:55:20
the protection of like, ancient woodland and certain other areas of vegetation.

00:45:57:20 - 00:45:58:26
Yeah. Good morning. My name

00:45:58:28 - 00:46:01:29
is Callum Campbell representing the local authorities.

00:46:04:02 - 00:46:46:14
We've reviewed some of the information available. The current tree data needs to be bolstered to provide full impacts of the trees so we can assess cable route corridors, tree shading, unit placement, and gen... The general impact to the tree populations. At a current check from the local authorities' perspective, there are no veteran trees or ancient trees listed. But, obviously, national planning policy framework requires a minimum distance of fifteen meters from trees that are classified as ancient or veteran.

00:46:50:05 - 00:46:50:29
Thank you.

00:46:57:25 - 00:47:12:02
Thanks, Colm. David Stoko for Doncaster and Rotherham Councils. So, finally, I'll address the public rights of way approach to the assessment.

00:47:14:09 - 00:47:49:14
As I mentioned, generally in relation the approach to the assessment more widely, the visual assessment is heavily focused on being the viewpoint assessment and that doesn't aid understanding in relation to understanding effects on receptors more generally. And that's particularly relevant to users of the public right of way network who experience the landscape in a sequential manner.

00:47:54:15 - 00:48:15:07
So, yeah, I think the assessment is as as it stands, the viewpoint assessment doesn't give that sequential experience understanding about the sequential experience of users of the public right of way network will be affected. Nothing. That's a key weakness of the assessment as it stands.

00:48:20:28 - 00:48:23:07
Yeah, sorry. That's my summary.

00:48:27:21 - 00:48:37:23
Thank you, Mr. Soko and Mr. Campbell. At this point, does the applicant want to come in with any responses to the council's submission?

00:48:38:22 - 00:48:52:11
You, examining authority. Sorry, was jumping the gun, but Sam Griffiths on behalf of the applicant. And yes, we'll take the opportunity to do so on just a few of those matters there, which hopefully we can clear up a couple of items.

00:48:53:29 - 00:49:25:19
On the design evolution and the demonstration of how the design responds in particular to the underlying landform and ultimately key characteristics of the area, substations were mentioned within the LVIA and within that design approach document, both describe how mitigation in that respect has been embedded. And the council have write that, for instance, across Whitestone one, it is on a higher part of land.

00:49:25:23 - 00:50:04:27
The key landscape input there was this is a flatter part of the site. There are less earthworks required. And actually, protection of the underlying topography of the order limits and therefore the surrounding landscape character is an integral part of embedded mitigation. It is not the applicant's intention to edit or change landform, which does have a notable landscape and visual impacts beyond simply the introduction of a substation, which ultimately can be reversible. So by trying to retain that underlying topography in the sighting of these key components, that is part of the design approach to embed that landscape mitigation.

00:50:06:23 - 00:50:10:21
Elsewhere, substations have been

00:50:12:21 - 00:50:43:09
designed or cited in less tranquil parts of the ore limit. So for instance, you may be familiar across Whitestone two of the location adjacent to the M1 motorway, very much driven by, again, access. So there's not further landscape vegetation removal required, which, again, would be an adverse impact, but also selecting part of the ordinance that already has a reduced degree of tranquility and therefore more appropriate from landscape and visual considerations for the siting of a substation.

00:50:43:11 - 00:51:16:28
Again, would draw the examining authority's attention to both the LVIA and the design approach document that speak to those matters. With reference then to how topography beyond substations has informed the design, it may be useful, if we can, to pull up on screen the design approach document, again, reference APP040. And I won't take too much time on this, but hopefully, just looking at some plans is useful in this regard. And so we've got just probably two or three to pages flick through as an example.

00:51:17:00 - 00:51:52:02
So here you can see land around Woodall. And you can see just about on screen there, you've got the white contour lines. And therefore, you were to look at the field in the north what's that, the northwestern part where solar was removed between the first and second master plan. That is a field that was prominent after visiting residents there. That field was prominent to properties on the eastern side of Woodall. Then coming up to the hedgerow, which kind of bisects the site from north to south there, you can see the landform starts to dip down towards a reservoir on the other side.

00:51:52:05 - 00:52:10:22
So by removing solar from that first field, utilizing that underlying topography, responding to that existing topography, we were able to avoid or at the very least minimize the associated visual impact. I won't take too much time on this point, but if we just go down to the next page,

00:52:12:21 - 00:52:50:24
which will this will catch up, am confident. It will show us another example. It could be yes, so Ali is another example here where you can see at the launch master plan, master plan one, you can see the development was around approximately half of Ali. Then there is a notable landform across this area, particularly which comes into play for key landscape character and also people's visual immunity in the approach to the village. And therefore, you can see that by the time the project reached statutory consultation, all of the land to the north was removed from potential solar.

00:52:50:26 - 00:53:39:11
It was still within the old limits. So the complete clarity, if that's plan were to extend further north, there is a southern facing slope where there is solar. So I'm not there's saying none there at all, but that was a key avoidance of that topography in proximity to Ali. And then you can see finally, by the time we reached the submission master plan here called Master Plan four, that land was wholly removed from the order limits, therefore, giving absolute clarity that no proposed is sorry, no change is proposed in that respect. So I suppose the point to summarize that I'm making there is partly solar has been removed, but also land has been removed from the order limits and the underlying character,

topography, the sense of place has been a key driver to those changes, which you'll be able to see on the screen are notable in the reduction of the extent of the proposed development in that respect.

00:53:40:13 - 00:54:23:20
Then just picking up on the point around trees and hearing the need for more data. But whilst as was explained, no veteran trees have been identified. It was also explained just a moment ago that if a veteran tree was identified, we would need a fifteen meter offset. All trees have got a fifteen meter offset within the proposed development, irrespective of if they are veteran or not. And that is an acknowledgment that whilst a veteran tree has its own important status, actually every tree contributes to landscape character and therefore is important and is in line with our design principles to protect other than where identified in a few scenarios if it's part of a hedge that needs to be edited for.

00:54:24:18 - 00:54:38:15
Your attention, please. Your attention, please. This is a announcement to let you know that eleven o'clock, the stadium will be observing a two minute silence. I will inform people eleven o'clock. Thank you.

00:54:42:06 - 00:54:51:17
Apologies for that. We we weren't aware that the stadium were going to make that announcement, but we'll we'll follow their announcement when they make it later. Thank you.

00:54:52:10 - 00:55:23:09
Thank you, Anoni, for the recording, Sam Griffiths, continuing on behalf of the applicant. And then just a final point then, perhaps worth picking up, is around the public rights of way. And we've mentioned the ongoing engagement post submission. I am confident to say that I think we can refine the approach to public rights of way and their assessment as part of the updated LVIA, which is coming at deadline one.

00:55:23:23 - 00:55:34:12
I fully share the view that a visual assessment cannot be limited to a viewpoint, and therefore, I'd hope that the updated assessment makes that very, very clear.

00:55:39:24 - 00:55:44:18
Thank you, Mr. Griffiths. I'm conscious of the time.

00:55:48:06 - 00:55:57:03
If we want to pass on to the next council, I've got Northeast Derbyshire and whether they want to speak on landscape and visual.

00:56:01:07 - 00:56:04:29
But just be aware that you will be interrupted in a few minutes.

00:56:08:15 - 00:56:35:17
Thank you, madam. Angelina Lambert representing Northeast Derbyshire District Council. And with me, I have Brian Mills, director and landscape architect. Just to say, the intention is to observe today,

but to speak if required. However, given the presentation by the applicant team, we do welcome the updated LVIA that's to be submitted for deadline one.

00:56:39:18 - 00:56:53:17
We have also received a draft statement of common ground from the applicant team, so we will engage with the applicant team in coming to an agreement during the examination process. Thank you.

00:57:02:06 - 00:57:07:02
Thank you. I think that's all of the councils now at this stage.

00:57:09:23 - 00:57:13:18
Moving on, the next response

00:57:15:11 - 00:57:16:27
would be from mister Northcott.

00:57:20:27 - 00:57:52:26
You, madam. Anthony Northcott on behalf of the three joint parishes. Obviously, I'm going be interrupted in a couple of minutes. Just to start, in response really to what the applicant has said this morning, we would contend that actually the way the project has evolved and the changes made, which are fairly substantial in some areas, actually casts very significant doubts on whether good design and being sensitive to place actually did start in the process in the first place.

00:57:53:00 - 00:58:26:15
Because if that's the case, then why would you need to change it partway through? Ultimately, in our view, actually, the applicant has no understanding of the nature of the landscape in which they are trying to put this proposal. You will have heard yesterday many impassioned explanations from residents about how they value where they live and the nature of the way the landscape has evolved over time.

00:58:27:24 - 00:58:37:05
And that evolution is critical to understanding the landscape in which we're trying to now put a very large proposal.

00:58:38:28 - 00:59:19:21
As a reminder, the scale of the scheme that's being put forward is eighteen point five kilometers north to south, which is eight kilometers east to west. It's just under fifteen hundred hectares, and the cable corridors are twenty kilometers long. That is not a small project. That's a very large land take across a very large part of South Yorkshire. And in particular, the landscape character as you explained yesterday by many residents, over the years, it's done more than its fair share of like industrialization.

00:59:21:07 - 00:59:22:25
Do you want me to just pause? Because it is ten

00:59:22:27 - 00:59:23:12

fifty.

00:59:23:14 - 00:59:32:11
I think it might be a good moment to pause. And if people do wish to stand during the two minutes, please feel free to do so if you wish to.

01:02:20:05 - 01:02:22:17
Thank you, That is appreciated.

01:02:24:07 - 01:02:27:20
Mr. Northcott, if you would like to continue. Thank you.

01:02:29:18 - 01:02:56:12
You, Adam. Ansi Northcote on behalf of three joint parishes. I was talking about the existing landscape character. Now part of the area is very historical agriculture, but an awful lot of the area is from past industrialization. And as it was explained by many residents yesterday afternoon, that past industrialization very much relates to coal mining and associated activities.

01:02:58:06 - 01:03:10:13
So we've got lots of man made features in the area. The reservoirs at Harthill are man made. They're there to feed the canal that was from industrialization. We've got the railways. We've got the motorways.

01:03:12:22 - 01:03:46:18
The communities have spent decades repairing that legacy and creating a new landscape. And with respect, they feel that they've done their their share. They feel they've been dumped on for hundreds of years, and they don't want to be dumped on for another sixty years moving forward. In terms of the applicant has talked about, we've taken away areas where elevated views of the scheme can be seen.

01:03:46:23 - 01:04:20:09
That isn't the case. There are still views. For example, if you go from Kiverton Park to Harthill, the solar panels are going to appear on a hillside above you as you go along. So there's not been a consistent approach to doing that. And the landscape around here is not a flat landscape. It's not Lincolnshire, where lots of schemes have been proposed, where the argument has been a three meter hedge can hide solar panels behind it. We're in quite a rolling landscape here, and there are lots of areas where we get lots of elevated views.

01:04:21:20 - 01:04:32:16
So in quite large parts of of the scheme, it can actually be seen in a plan view. It's either seen in a plan view or it's rising up above view.

01:04:34:09 - 01:04:46:14
And again, with respect to what the the applicant said, there are still parts of proposal that do subdivide existing field patterns, doesn't respect existing field patterns in all areas.

01:04:48:09 - 01:05:19:10

Now we've set out, which I'm not going to go through, but we set out in our relevant representation quite a detailed critique of various of the viewpoints in the area which I represent. And we identified a number of missing viewpoints as we consider them. And we're aware you've been on your on a company site visit to a couple of those areas already. And obviously, as the examining authority, you'll be looking at things and forming your own view.

01:05:20:09 - 01:05:53:00
But we would make the point that, in our view, the viewpoints are not focused on the receptor, they're focused on finding a point which doesn't make the scheme look as harmful as it is. If I was on their side, I would be doing the same. But the the landscape and visual impact assessment is very inconsistent with how it deals with things. On some of the viewpoints, we just have wireframes. On others, we have wireframes and photo montages.

01:05:54:07 - 01:06:16:02
We've talked we've heard about summer and winter. Well, there are a few winter photo montages, but they're very scarce, they're not consistent. We would ask that any updated landscape and visual impact assessment treats all viewpoints consistently. So that's with wireframes, photomont charges, summer and winter views.

01:06:23:02 - 01:06:23:23
We've talked...

01:06:25:14 - 01:07:00:07
Others have talked about the need for the assessment of sequential effects, sequential views. Now, it's accepted that GLYVIA three gives very limited information or suggestion as to how you look at sequential views. It sets out two approaches, either a sequential combination methodology or it talks about an overall profile methodology. In our view, there has been no proper assessment of sequential views.

01:07:00:23 - 01:07:27:18
These are landscapes in which visitors come, they move through, they're particularly attracted. The councils this morning have talked about the users, rights of way that you move through. Because those sequential views apply to people living in various villages. Every time they come to leave, go anywhere, go to the nearest town, they're going through parts of the scheme.

01:07:29:07 - 01:07:33:04
Now I do accept it is quite difficult to assess that,

01:07:34:20 - 01:08:06:18
but I would urge the examining authority to not forget that landscape and visual impact assessment is not just sort of point specific, it's not even necessarily settlement specific. It relates to how you lead your daily life, where you go, and how the impact of the scheme adds up on all of those daily journeys. I would call that the sequential you know, effect, that might not be technically correct, but that's how the average resident will experience it.

01:08:09:03 - 01:08:13:20

The landscape and visual impact is not minimized in our view.

01:08:15:06 - 01:08:40:19
We do accept that to some extent, the topography makes that impossible. But of course, the applicant has chosen to go to topography that makes minimizing the landscape and visual impact difficult. That's their site selection in the first place. Well, in respect, it's the wrong site because you can't minimize the landscape and visual impact assessment.

01:08:42:14 - 01:09:15:07
I know it's very common, and it's standard practice in landscape and visual impact assessments, to assess the impact early on, for example, year one and then year fifteen. We would make the point, however, year fifteen is a quarter of the way through this lifetime of the scheme. So in the big scheme of things, if it's going to take fifteen years, as it suggested in some of the viewpoints, for the effects to be mitigated, that's a long time for people to wait.

01:09:17:23 - 01:09:34:05
I raised yesterday afternoon, madam, the issue about not forgetting macro and micro level impacts in terms of sort of landscape and visual effects. The applicant's presentation this morning

01:09:36:00 - 01:09:36:26
did acknowledge

01:09:38:17 - 01:09:48:22
that some of the highway works are going to require removal of hedgerows. In effect, the applicant appeared to be saying that, that was very minimal.

01:09:50:08 - 01:10:22:13
We would actually urge you to look at the documents in detail and see that that's not minimal. In some areas, literally, you are removing several hundred meters of hedgerow in its entirety. You're taking away the entire rural character of rural aid. Having seen such work done elsewhere on a battery storage scheme at Stathorpe, which is next to the Great North Road Solar proposal, to recreate their access.

01:10:22:15 - 01:10:44:20
They've translocated the hedgerow, but given the current weather, it's completely died and will have no effect going forward. So proposals at the micro level can have a particular landscape impact to users at that that sort of local level. I wouldn't want you to forget that element.

01:10:48:25 - 01:11:19:05
The need to consider cumulative impact is also important in terms of landscape effects. And that cumulative impact arises not just from existing energy infrastructure. For example, parts of the project next to existing substations already or near to wind turbines. But also, very importantly, the cumulative impact from other proposed schemes.

01:11:20:04 - 01:11:29:19
In particular, in the area I represent, we've got the common farm solar proposal being built at present.

01:11:31:14 - 01:11:58:19
And putting it in very simple layman terms, Whitestone effectively completely encircles that common farm proposal. So from a landscape and visual impact assessment perspective, that's not two separate schemes. A user, a receptor, if you want to call it that, living in Northampton or traveling out of Northampton, is going to just read those two schemes as one single entity. There's no break.

01:12:00:26 - 01:12:04:21
And and finally, madam, the issue about public rights of way.

01:12:06:11 - 01:12:39:12
We heard from people, again, quite passionately yesterday afternoon, using a public right of way, having a standoff from it, doesn't mean that there's not an effect. For a public right of way, it's the user experience. If if you use and walk a public right of way or if you cycle or if you ride a horse, then you're going down there for the pleasure that the countryside and getting away from urban areas, whether that's a village, whether that's a town, that that gives you.

01:12:40:03 - 01:12:45:00
And that whole user experience will be very different. So

01:12:46:22 - 01:13:04:24
that doesn't need... And that that shouldn't be forgotten. Instead, you're going to have fences, solar panels, even if you put heteros, you know, it's it's changing the user experience from a wide expansive area to something that's quite enclosed.

01:13:06:10 - 01:13:10:02
And that's that's all the points I've got. Thank you, madam.

01:13:16:14 - 01:13:22:07
Thank you, mister Northcott. At this point, does the applicant and team wish to respond on that?

01:13:22:15 - 01:13:25:29
Yes, Madam. Mr. Griffiths has a response for you.

01:13:26:20 - 01:13:58:21
You. Examining authority, Sam Griffiths on behalf of the applicant. And just a few points there in response. Firstly, it not would useful to give the impression that we are suggesting there are no landscape and visual impacts. Indeed, they are detailed within the landscape and visual impact assessment. And indeed, MPS EM1 recognizes at paragraph five point one zero point one three that all proposed energy infrastructure is likely to have visual effects for many receptors around proposed sites. So that is, if you like, agreed.

01:13:59:05 - 01:14:21:19
The important thing is how then that has been sought to be minimized and avoided. And probably shouldn't take up more time referring to design approach document, but I would encourage you to

look at that document as that is the design story that speaks to that mitigation hierarchy of avoidance and then minimization of all sorts of effects, including those relevant to landscape and visual matters.

01:14:23:23 - 01:14:55:08
Just a few other points to pick up. Viewpoints, I think, have been covered, and we are reengaging with the host authorities to make sure that we've an got agreed position on the scope of the viewpoints. As I mentioned earlier, that will be updated and provided for deadline one. Vegetation removal may just be useful. Examination library reference AS-eight is the vegetation removal plan. And on that plan, there are two primary categories of vegetation management.

01:14:55:10 - 01:15:29:11
The first is vegetation removal because there is some required along permanent accesses, which is predominantly to facilitate safe entry and exit to the site in the form of visibility displays. But wherever possible, again, in line with that avoidance and minimization, we have actually proposed to coppice vegetation. I quite agree with the point that was made earlier, translocating hedgerows is rarely successful. So we haven't proposed that. We proposed to coppice them in situ to maintain them low enough to facilitate safe entry and exit from the site.

01:15:29:27 - 01:16:02:28
And then once those construction access only points have been used, that base station will be managed and therefore be retained once again in line with that mitigation hierarchy. The point around year fifteen, again, don't think there's a discrepancy there. We acknowledge fifteen years is fifteen years. It's an industry standard window of assessment. That is because in all likelihood, hedgerow would be effective before that time, but it is a safe number of years to assume not only would it be tall enough, but deep enough and well established enough to provide meaningful mitigation.

01:16:03:13 - 01:16:38:21
So there are some projects that then define, say, a year ten assessment window. I think actually it's useful to keep it at year fifteen to make sure we are saying it could be up to fifteen years that this is at this extent of visibility, and that is what the LVIA reports. Photo montages and wireframes. Again, the description was right. There is a variety used across, as the guidance refers to, type one, two, three and four. But it is also worth noting that it is not proportionate nor typical to have photo montages for every viewpoint.

01:16:38:23 - 01:17:10:10
They are simply used to illustrate the kind of visual change. I mean it's the role of the author of the LBIA to look at those impacts and to write them and record them and to describe them. But to help in that process and to help the wider reader providing some photo montage is useful. And that is what has been done in this instance by the applicant. And then the final point there on sequential views. I think we touched on it earlier. I would say that there is consideration of sequential views within the LVAA.

01:17:10:12 - 01:17:19:21
But rather than drawing attention to specific paragraphs, I think that will be much clearer in the submission deadline one, and therefore, we may pick that up in the future. Thank you.

01:17:25:07 - 01:17:26:25
Thank you, Mr. Griffiths.

01:17:29:07 - 01:17:34:22
Moving forward with the parish councils, Mr. Knight?

01:17:35:28 - 01:17:39:14
Yes. Philip Knight for Conyersburg Parks Parish Council.

01:17:41:04 - 01:18:19:07
Just to repeat a couple of things that I mentioned yesterday, but obviously not everybody will have been necessarily party to that. Whitestone one predominantly lays within our parish. It's in a landscape forming a natural bowl overlooking Baihai village as its fields, old routes and farm tracks connect communities with their historic surroundings, to people appreciate connections between settlements and the countryside around them. This landscape has been shaped over centuries and untouched over centuries, with evidence of much longer human history untouched for centuries.

01:18:19:09 - 01:18:31:10
Many elevated viewpoints, as I've mentioned, and we would question how anyone can mitigate any of the impacts of the solar farm given that position.

01:18:32:29 - 01:18:54:24
I've not seen anything to date that's been submitted by the applicant that would seek to mitigate the visual impacts of this vast solar farm across Conyersville Parks. And I would also acknowledge some of the points that Mr. Northcoast just mentioned about those aspects in the wider sense across the entire development.

01:18:56:09 - 01:19:11:21
Our concern is whether the assessment adequately affects the scale of change that we would experience both from the communities whilst using the public footpaths, the bridal ways. And something Carl mentioned yesterday, public rights of way may remain,

01:19:13:14 - 01:19:32:02
but the user experience is massively impacted. Their enjoyment of that, their mental health and well-being, walking across a footpath that's surrounded by high fencing, CCTV and vast solar arrays is very different to the open space that we experience today.

01:19:33:23 - 01:19:42:00
And again, something I think which has been drawn out by other representatives that we shouldn't proceed in my discussion here.

01:19:43:15 - 01:20:01:03
We ask that why StelOne particularly on the landscape is recognized that the landscape and historic characteristics are considered distinctively rather than just in isolation. The historic characteristics of the landscape are very important as well as the visual impacts of that landscape.

01:20:02:29 - 01:20:07:28
It's more of a holistic view, in my viewpoint.

01:20:10:08 - 01:20:41:03
We'd like the applicant to explain how the assessment captures views and the experience along the whole walking and riding routes rather than any selected viewpoints. Now it's interesting to hear that Sam Griffiths today has mentioned some of those things have been looked at through following discussions with some of the local authorities. My concern, having heard that, is that it's talking about, obviously, refining their previous methodology and updates to the LVI by the twenty fourth of November, deadline one.

01:20:41:20 - 01:21:11:20
So how are we to respond to any changes that may have been made by deadline one when we've not actually got access to what those changes will be before deadline one? So I don't know whether there's gonna be opportunity for us to comment further after deadline one if we're not if we're not got access to the LVII and those points. I've got some more points, but that's if all...

01:21:11:22 - 01:21:27:25
Yes. If I just comment on that point, just to clarify, each of the deadlines within the timetable allows for responses to things that have been submitted on the previous deadline. So anything that comes in on deadline one, you then have time to respond to Okay. Subsequent deadlines, just to clarify. So Yeah.

01:21:27:27 - 01:21:33:15
I was just concerned that, obviously, our representation that we might be making by the twenty fourth won't take account of what No.

01:21:33:17 - 01:21:34:19
That's fine. What White Stone

01:21:34:21 - 01:21:48:21
are submitted. I don't know if there's an opportunity to try and get that in sooner than twenty fourth of November. I don't know whether the applicant respond to that once I've finished. But again, any earlier would be appreciated as well.

01:21:50:12 - 01:22:24:00
So the other aspects is how significant visual impacts will remain. As I've said, I don't think there's anything that the applicant can do to mitigate the visual impacts given the fact of the topography of the area. So I'd like to understand that. We've obviously identified within our submission some additional viewpoints that need to be considered. We think and I think others have mentioned this as well that some of the viewpoints have been very selective. I also think there are and again, this came out yesterday.

01:22:24:15 - 01:22:56:20
I also think that some of those selective viewpoints, there's issues with data accuracy in terms of dates, seasons. And I also think we need to look more widely at some of the representations around

looking at all of the seasons rather than your selective. But I think deliberately, I think and as I think Mr. Northcote said, I think if I was in the applicant's position, we would have selected viewpoints that perhaps aren't as we would like as residents impacted by the solar farm.

01:23:15:05 - 01:23:32:27
Yes. I think that's all I was going to say now other than that, as I've said, we've submitted in PD-one zero four six our additional view points, which includes view points from Clifton, which is the village within our parish, looking across from

01:23:34:13 - 01:23:48:23
the viewpoint that I've identified towards Gunnersbrook Castle, and its church and across Gunnersbrook Parks, which is an additional to the viewpoint that's in the existing, documentation. Thank

01:23:52:01 - 01:23:58:20
you. you, Mr. Knight. That's very helpful. Mr. Griffiths, do you want to come back on any of Mr. Knight's points at this point?

01:23:58:29 - 01:24:40:20
Any very briefly. Sam Griffiths on behalf of the applicant. I might just pop onto the screen. Just one more plan specifically with reference to Whitestone One and those villages. I won't respond on viewpoints of other matters. I think that may have been covered. And it may be we can just zoom in on this a little bit. And what we're showing here is how this plan is well, it's on Page fifty seven of the design approach document, which is reference APP040. And this plan shows it may just be frozen, so we can't zoom in too much, but how the project has removed the extent of the proposed development from the start to then the submission master plan.

01:24:41:00 - 01:25:13:11
So if you were to look at all of those colors, doesn't matter what color it is, that was the original scope of the land within which there was potential for the project to be cited at the launch of the project. So if you look at the broadest area, that was land that was being considered for the potential solar farm and associated infrastructure. Earlier on, I alluded to the changes made between non statutory and statutory consultation. And all of the bright green areas were then removed from the proposed development between non statutory and statutory consultation.

01:25:14:00 - 01:25:53:18
And I speak to that because that is how we have been embedded mitigation. We have been removing areas which were most impactful. This is not all from a visual immunity perspective. It's from other considerations as well, and it's part ongoing of design development for any project. But all of the bright areas came out at that point. And then the darker green areas were removed from the scope of aboveground works between statutory consultation and submission. And you'll see that they are in proximity typically to some of the villages mentioned or the hamlets or the settlements Fursby, Clifton, some of the others that have been mentioned.

01:25:54:03 - 01:26:05:21

So I just draw the examining authority's attention to this plan as this is a plan that I think best articulates that iterative design development of how mitigation has been embedded throughout the pre application phase. Thank you.

01:26:15:23 - 01:26:18:07
Yes, back to you, Mr. Knight. Yes.

01:26:18:09 - 01:26:22:05
I appreciate what Sam has just said there. However,

01:26:23:20 - 01:27:14:13
what is left and not still we're mitigating it is vast. From all of the points that I've referenced, all of the viewpoints, this sits in a bowl. So the topography of this land is, it doesn't matter where you are, you will see this vast solar development across Conyersville Parks. And I'm talking when I made my representations today, I'm talking about what's left in the development in the red line as it exists today, not what happened previously. So those observations that I were making weren't on about what happened previously and the plans that I'm talking about, the plans that now exist today in terms of wherever we sit and look across stand and look across this site, it will have a massive impact on the visual impact because they are elevated views and the topography is the reason why I'm drawing that to everybody's attention.

01:27:20:08 - 01:27:29:14
Do you want to make any further comment? Okay. I suggest as we're now approaching half past eleven that we do take a break.

01:27:31:26 - 01:27:35:01
If we could return

01:27:37:08 - 01:27:45:18
the hearing at eleven forty seven. So we're we're now adjourned until eleven forty seven. Thank you.