Hatton Solar Farm (APP/D2510/W/25/3363157)

Proof of Evidence of Mary Fisher

Landscape and Visual Matters
on behalf of Hatton Solar Farm Ltd

August 2025

ABSELINE
LANDSCAPE PLANNING

Contents

Annexes

Role	Who	Date
Author	Mary Fisher	25 July 2025
Reviewer	Mark Evans	25 July 2025
Finalised	Mary Fisher	8 August 2025

1 Introduction

1.1.1 This evidence has been prepared by Mary Fisher, a Partner of Abseline LLP landscape planning consultants. I hold a Bachelor of Science Honours degree in Combined Studies and a Master of Arts degree in Landscape Architecture (2000). I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute and have over 20 years of experience as a landscape architect.

1.1.2 I have had extensive experience of carrying out landscape and visual assessments of a broad range of development proposals including residential and commercial developments, urban projects including tall buildings, major infrastructure projects and renewable energy developments. I am also a key contributor to national guidance on both Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and have co-authored Landscape Institute (LI) guidance on the use of visualisations (Technical Note 02/17 Visual Representation); IEMA guidance on integrating design and EIA ('Shaping Quality Development'). I was also a key contributor to the LI Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) Technical Guidance Note 2/19 and I am currently the acting Chair of the Landscape Institute GLVIA Advisory Panel which is responsible for best practice and guidance in relation to LVIA on behalf of the Landscape Institute

1.1.3 I have experience of assessment for solar farms at scales varying from the 4.5MW operational Marston Solar Farm near Grantham, Lincolnshire to the recently submitted 800MW Great North Road DCO NSIP project in Nottinghamshire.

1.1.4 I have appeared in order to give expert witness evidence on landscape and visual matters at a number of public inquiries, DCO and appeal Hearings, in addition to a hearing before the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) (the Tribunal) in respect of an appeal under section 18 of the Land Compensation Act 1961.

1.2 Appointment

1.2.1 I am instructed to present evidence to this Appeal on behalf of Hatton Solar Farm Ltd (the Appellant) in respect of landscape and visual matters. My first involvement with the Proposed Development was in July 2025, when I was approached to review the case and act as expert witness in relation to landscape and visual matters.

1.2.2 I believe that the facts stated in this evidence and my accompanying Landscape and Visual Appraisal report (see Annex A) are true and that the opinions expressed are correct. This evidence and the accompanying report have been prepared and are given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution, the Landscape Institute.

1.2.3 In preparing my evidence I have had the benefit of seeing draft reports of evidence prepared by the other witnesses acting for the Appellant.

2 Context and Scope of Evidence

2.1 Context of the Appeal

2.1.1 The background and context to this appeal are set out in section 5 of the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with East Lindsey District Council [CD 8.3].

2.2 Reasons for Refusal

2.2.1 The reason stated in the decision to refuse the application is:

"The proposed development would introduce solar panels and associated infrastructure onto a large area of 180 acres of land in a rural, agricultural landscape, adjacent to the Grade II listed Sturton Harden Corner Farm House with associated curtilage listed barns. Sturton Harden Corner Farm House sits atop a raised area of land resulting in there being clear views available of the farmhouse from immediately adjacent to the site and from some longer distance views from surrounding countryside. The sense of openness around the farmhouse and its visual connectivity with the surrounding farmland is an important part of its setting and significantly defines how the farmhouse and its barns are experienced. This openness would be compromised as a result of the proposed development which would also restrict some views of the farmhouse and barns from the public right of way GtSt/789/1. Furthermore, the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the application advises that the proposed landscaping would take 15 years to become effective in screening the development.

The proposed development would therefore detract from the defining rural character of the site and immediate area when viewed in close proximity and in longer distance views for at least a 15 year period. Furthermore, the proposed development would also notably and harmfully detract from views towards the listed building and it's immediate setting resulting in less than substantial harm on the significance of the designated heritage asset.

Notwithstanding the significant benefits of the scheme, namely the provision of renewable energy and a potential increase in biodiversity at the site, these would not outweigh the cumulative harm to the countryside character of the area and the adverse impact on the setting and significance of Sturton Harden Corner Farm House. The proposed solar farm is therefore considered to be contrary to SP11, SP23 and SP27 of the East Lindsey Local Plan and paragraphs 180, 206 and 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework." [my underlining)

2.2.2 Much of the reason for refusal relates to heritage matters, which are addressed in evidence provided by Gail Stoten. The underlining above draws out the landscape and visual aspects of the reason for refusal which relate to:

- The duration of landscape and visual effects prior to mitigation planting maturing to reduce those effects;
- effects on landscape character; and
- effects on views.

2.2.3 The remainder of this proof is structured as follows:

- Section 3 addresses the maturation and effectiveness of mitigation planting;
- Section 4 summarises the landscape and visual effects identified within Annex A;
- Section 5 sets out my conclusions.

2.2.4 Annex A to my evidence provides a landscape and visual appraisal (LVA) of the Development, with supporting figures and appendices. I also make reference to the Application LVIA [CD 2.13] and the February 2025 LVIA [CD 8.11].

2.3 Committee Report

2.3.1 There are two committee reports in relation to the Proposed Development, both of which recommend approval. I focus on the second of these dated September 2024 [CD 4.4], given the previous decision was

quashed. Much of the text is baseline description or reporting of the LVIA findings. Key points pertinent to this case noted in relation to landscape and visual matters are considered below.

2.3.2 At paragraph 7.35 the Committee Report states that:

"The LVIA acknowledges that landscaping will take until year 15 to be effective but goes on to confirm that once it is grown the landscaping will be effective at screening the solar farm."

2.3.3 This is an assumption made within the Committee Report rather than a point stated in the LVIA [CD 8.11 and CD 2.13]. The LVIA simply provides an assessment of effects at two points in time – Year 1 (Completion) and Year 15 after planting will have matured, as indicated at 2.6.2 and 2.6.3 of the December 2021 LVIA. At no point does the December 2021 LVIA explicitly state that a 15 year time period would be needed for effective mitigation to be achieved. I consider this matter further in Section 3 below.

2.3.4 At paragraph 7.36 the Committee Report states that "*it is proposed to allow the hedgerows to grow to a minimum height of 1.5m-1.8m.*" This reflects the proposals as set out at 3.5.1 of the LVIA, but not the Landscape Ecology Mitigation Plan (Feb 2022) [CD 1.14] and its equivalent for the reduced layout [CD 8.12] which indicates heights of 3m. This is an error in the LVIA, and the proposed heights are 3m as set out in the Landscape Ecology Mitigation Plan (Feb 2022).

2.3.5 In relation to landscape and visual effects, the Committee Report repeats the findings of the LVIA and does not indicate disagreement with its findings.

2.3.6 In relation to cumulative effects the Committee Report at 7.45 concludes that: "*Many of the third party objections received refer to the industrialisation of Hatton due to the presence of the existing Gas Compressor Station to the west of the village, an existing substation and now the proposed solar farm. The compressor station is sited to the east of the village in a landscaped area although it is acknowledged there are views of it, particularly during the winter months. The solar farm involves the provision of development at a much lower scale in the landscape to the east of the village. Although the proposal would result in two energy developments on two sides of the village, they are different in character and not readily visible within the same context.*" It also notes at 7.33 that "*the proposed substation is on a smaller scale and would have less of a visual impact than the previously approved scheme.*"

2.3.7 In relation to residential visual amenity, at 7.53 and 7.56 the Committee Report sets out the conclusion that *"The panels will be seen in the distance against the backdrop of Sotby Woods, with the nearest panels being approximately 200m away at the nearest point. It is considered that the proposed landscaping, along with the distance will help to suitably diminish the prominence of the panels from the properties themselves… In terms of residential amenity, the documents submitted with the application show that with landscaping, in time, there will be minimal visual impact at residential properties.*"

2.4 Statements of Case (SoC)

East Lindsey District Council [CD 8.2]

2.4.1 This Statement of Case largely focusses on heritage matters, but also notes at section 6.1.13-6.1.14 that:

"it is the contention of the Council as confirmed in the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment that there will be… Major and moderate adverse effects on near distance views, particularly from the public right of way GtSt/789/1 … The development is noted as being visually intrusive and would result in a substantial deterioration to visual amenity.

As also acknowledged by the LVIA … that the mitigation will take time to mature – the proposed landscaping would take 15 years to become fully effective in screening the development. The proposed development would therefore detract from the defining rural character of the site and immediate area when viewed in close proximity and in longer distance views for at least a significant period of time."

2.4.2 Section 2.3.3 above and section 3 consider the effectiveness of mitigation planting, which would not require 15 years to become effective. The LVA provided in Annex A identifies Major/moderate and Adverse effects on

users of the bridleways to the east of the Site, which include route GtSt/789/1 arising before planting matures.

2.4.3 The LVA provided in Annex A also identifies Moderate/minor and Adverse effects on the host landscape character area, E1 Wragby to Horsington Vale Woodland and Farmland.

2.4.4 There is broad agreement between the Appellant and the Council regarding the level of visual effects expected to arise before mitigation planting matures, but not about the duration of time those effects would last for.

2.4.5 I note that effects on other visual receptors (including road users, people living in and visiting Hatton, users of other public rights of way), and effects on residential visual amenity are not mentioned in the Council's Statement of Case.

The Hatton Action Group (THAG) [CD 8.7]

2.4.6 Paragraph 3.2.2 of this SoC states that "*Sotby and Great Sturton are hamlets, with sections of each village being in an Area of Great Landscape Value*" and this point is repeated at 5.2.2. This is not the case as there is no longer an Area of Great Landscape Value designation as part of the current East Lindsey Core Strategy (2018) [CD 5.7]. The reference to this designation, which can still be found in the East Lindsey District Character Assessment (2009) [CD 6.2], reflects previous local planning policy.

2.4.7 Paragraph 3.2.3 notes that the nearest property in Hatton would be 49m from the Site entrance. The Site entrance would be a ground level track and would not have a visual impact on residential amenity. The nearest taller elements of the Proposed Development (fences and solar arrays) would be more than 200m from homes and gardens in Hatton.

2.4.8 Paragraph 3.2.4 notes that Corner Farm is "*less than 35 meters from*" the Proposed Development. The nearest part of this property to the Site is the curtilage and large barns, which screen views from the house and garden further south. The barns are consented to be converted to holiday accommodation. Changes to views from these would not be a matter of residential visual amenity as they would not be used as homes.

2.4.9 Paragraph 3.2.5 states that "*Moor Farm and Greenacres are only 120m from the proposed development, with clear views right across Parcel 5 (as defined in the Site Location Plan)".* These properties are bounded by mature hedges and trees, and 'clear views' are only likely to arise from upstairs windows, or by standing at the edge of the property boundaries looking through gaps in the hedges, rather than being widely available from the homes and gardens.

2.4.10 Paragraph 5.2.5 indicates that THAG will provide evidence in relation to "*other important public vantage points not assessed by the Appellant*". The LVA provided in Annex A to my evidence has considered all landscape and visual receptors within 1km of the Proposed Development, and effects on receptors beyond that distance are considered to be Negligible. It is important to note that the LVA provided in Annex A considers visual receptors and the viewpoints are not the only locations considered. This is in line with advice provided in Landscape Institute Guidance LITGN-2024-01 Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3) [CD 7.43] which advises on Page 16 that "*The focus of the visual assessment should be the visual receptors (i.e. the people as set out within paragraph 6.31. of GLVIA3). The purpose of viewpoints is covered at paragraph 6.19 (i.e. for illustration of the visual effects).*"

2.4.11 Paragraph 5.2.5 of the SoC also states that "*The proposed mitigation to plant hedging (which will only mature by year 15 and will remain deciduous for the 42-year development, thus giving clear sight to the industrial set up for over 6 months in a year) will be shown to be inadequate and, in itself, not in accordance with the landscape character of open fields and low, maintained hedgerows*". The time required for hedges to matures is addressed at section 3 of my evidence. Hedges are the recommended approach to mitigation of views of solar farms in national planning policy (NPS EN-3, para. 3.10.122 [CD 7.4]) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) [CD 7.2]. Hedges will comprise locally native and characteristic species, and would be predominantly (if not entirely) deciduous. As they mature and are regularly cut, deciduous hedges

develop a dense branch structure. This can still be seen through by people standing adjacent to the hedge and looking directly through it but provides effective visual screening for receptors at a slightly greater distance, and people travelling alongside the hedge who tend to naturally look along the line of the hedge rather than directly through. Some of the hedges in the area are cut low others are taller, and whilst cutting hedges lower may be common practice locally, the East Lindsey District Landscape Character Assessment [CD 6.2] makes no reference to it, or to it being important to the character, instead describing field boundaries in the area as typically consisting of "*mature hedgerows with hedgerow trees*".

2.4.12 5.2.6-5.2.7 of the THAG SOC comment on the Site Search Document [CD 2.27], suggesting that the landscape and visual analysis provided in relation to the Site is 'misleading'. I was not involved in the identification of the Site, or in the preparation of the Site Search Document, but have reviewed its findings in relation to the Site (Land Parcel E in the Site Search Document). Key points made are:

"a location that could be accommodated without any significant adverse impacts on either landscape character or residential amenity – sufficient distance from residential buildings. Ability to utilise the natural screening of the Sotby Woods along the northern boundary hides the proposed development area from the north. The majority of the houses which would overlook the scheme would only see the panels from the rear or from a distance."

2.4.13 I consider that this reflects the findings of the LVA I have undertaken (as well as those of the previous LVIAs) that effects on landscape character would be contained to areas within the Site once mitigation is mature (as described at section 4.2 below. The relationship of the Site to nearby residential properties and potential effects on residential visual amenity are discussed at section 5 below and are also broadly consistent with the findings of the Site Search Document. The presence of Sotby Woods does provide a good degree of screening from the north, though the northeast part of the Site does give rise to some visibility to the north and northeast as it lies beyond the woodland.

2.4.14 At various points within their Statement of Case THAG refer to effects on residential visual amenity, specifically in relation to properties at The Old Barn, Corner Farm, Greenacres, Moor Farm, Owl Cottage and Swallow Barn. The LVA provided as Annex A to my evidence considers potential effects on residential visual amenity at 1.3.4-1.3.5, and I consider this in my evidence at section 5 below.

2.5 Other Parties

2.5.1 Having undertaken a brief review of 3rd Party correspondence in relation to the application and appeal, I note the following:

- Some correspondents have generated high numbers of separate letters of objection, often without addresses, on different topics, and this makes it harder to appreciate the full nature of their concerns;
- around half of the objectors mention landscape and/or visual matters; and
- no new matters are raised which require consideration as part of my evidence.

2.6 Relevant Planning Policy

2.6.1 Relevant planning policies in relation to landscape and visual effects are set out for context within section 3 of the landscape and visual appraisal in Annex A to my evidence.

2.6.2 In relation to the application of planning policy to the landscape and visual evidence I provide, planning evidence is separately provided as part of this appeal by Robert Shaw.

3 Mitigation

3.1 Mitigation Planting

Guidance and Information Sources

3.1.1 There is no definitive guidance as to the assumptions to be made about the growth of mitigation planting in undertaking LVIA, however The Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professions (ISEP) – formerly known as IEMA, have published an article (available at: Predicting tree and hedge growth) which states that:

"Newly planted stock is unlikely to have any significant screening effect in the first year since it is typically planted as 60–80cm high transplants. It can be useful to include some feathered trees and standards 2–3m in height for a more instant effect. Stakes and shelters could be considered to have a negative visual effect.

Given that most UK mitigation planting will be of mixed natives in largely unexposed conditions, an average annual growth of 30cm per year in the first five years can normally be assumed.

Once established the plants' growth rate will increase and this can be anticipated to reach around 50cm a year for the next 10 years."

3.1.2 This advice is echoed by other sources, including:

- Advice in relation to the management of woodland provided by the Woodland Trust (available at: Types of woodland management – Woodland Trust) indicates that "*thinning is usually done from year 10, when trees reach around 7m tall.*"
- My own experience of planting mixed native hedging in Lincolnshire and observing its growth.

Predicted Rates of Growth

3.1.3 Taking account of the growth rates predicted at 3.1.1 above, the following assumptions are made about the growth of mitigation planting:

- Existing established boundary hedges will grow at a rate of 0.5m per year. Assuming that they currently range between 1 and 1.5m in height, they would achieve the design height of 3m (which is sufficient to screen views for equestrians and people in taller vehicles) in 3-4 years and be tall enough to screen views from adjacent routes for people walking, cycling or driving cars in a shorter timeframe as the full height of 3m would not be required to achieve this (2-2.5m should be adequate).
- For new hedgerow planting, both along the southwest boundary and where hedges are gapped up elsewhere (assuming 60-80cm transplants are used), after 5 years, these would have added 1.5m of growth, achieving heights of around 2.2m. A further 2 years would be sufficient to achieve the design height of 3m. These new hedges would also need to thicken to reduce views through the hedge, particularly in winter, and this process may take a little longer – up to 10 years in total.
- New tree planting would initially be 2-3m in height and would remain taller than the hedges as they mature, providing that they are managed as hedgerow trees and not cut with the hedges.

Conclusion

3.1.4 The Committee Report and reason for refusal are incorrect in assuming that mitigation would not be achieved until 15 years after completion of the Proposed Development. In reality, notable mitigation from the growth of existing hedges would be achieved within 2-4 years, with all planting maturing to achieve the design intent within 7-10 years.

3.2 Other Measures

3.2.1 In addition to hedgerow planting (and growth to 3m) to provide screening as discussed above, the design of the Proposed Development includes mitigation of landscape and visual effects via the following measures as set out within section 5 of the LVA (Annex A) :

- Solar panel heights are restricted to 3m, avoiding the potential for greater visual impacts which would arise from taller solar panels.
- Solar panels have been set back within the field to the northeast of homes in Hatton, making use of ground levels within that field to reduce the apparent height and proximity.
- The DNO substation would be sited immediately adjacent to similar development, reducing changes to character and views.
- Tree planting would be included within the new hedgerow as visual mitigation (and enhancement of the landscape fabric and character) along the southwest boundary to provide more rapid visual mitigation for nearby residents.
- The landscape fabric of the site would be maintained to ensure it remains suitable for future farming whilst supporting biodiversity during operation. These measures would also permit reinstatement of the present landscape character post-operation.

3.2.2 Further measures included in the reduced layout (as shown by the Landscape Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy [CD 8.15] include:

- Hedgerow planting to the south of the permissive footpath along the edge of Sotby Wood through the Site, in order to provide screening of the adjacent solar area once mature.
- Set back of panels and proposed tree planting in Bull Pen Field providing localised mitigation of landscape effects and visual effects for users of the adjacent road and bridleway.

4 Landscape and Visual Effects

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A full appraisal of landscape and visual effects ('LVA') is provided within Annex A to my evidence. This is supported by Figures 1-3 provided within Annex B, and visualisations for viewpoints 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 22, 104 and 111 provided in Annex C.

4.1.2 A 1km study area was used, taking into account the effects identified in the previous LVIA studies which used a 2km study area, site observations and the findings of a review of all of the LVIA viewpoints, reported in Appendix 3 to the LVA provided in Annex A.

4.1.3 A site visit was taken to the primary areas of visibility within 2km of the Site. Some additional areas of visibility were noted which are not included in the viewpoints, but changes to views at these locations would either be Negligible scale or are already represented by the viewpoints considered.

4.1.4 The methodology used for the assessment is set out within Section 2 and Appendix 1 of the LVA. It should be noted that the magnitude and level of effects take account of the geographic extent and duration of the effects as well as the scale of change in accordance with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Version 3 (LI & IEMA, 2013).

4.2 Landscape Character Baseline and Effects

4.2.1 Effects on landscape character are set out in section 6.5 of the LVA provided in Annex A. The site is located in landscape character area (LCA) E1 Wragby to Horsington Vale Woodland and Farmland which is a gently rolling vale landscape with medium to large scale arable fields enclosed by hedges with areas of woodland and occasional small villages. The LCA extends westwards from the town of Horncastle which lies within the eastern edge of the LCA and A-roads radiate from the town through the LCA with winding rural roads connecting the villages and hamlets. Key characteristics are described on page 43 of the East Lindsey District Landscape Character Assessment [CD 6.2], which also identifies the LCA as having 'moderate to high' sensitivity (in general rather than to a specific form of development).

4.2.2 The assessment provided in Annex A concludes that the LCA is of Community value; it has some features of biodiversity value including the limewoods and has a relatively intact and distinctive character, but is otherwise an undesignated 'ordinary' landscape which is not a 'valued landscape' as agreed in the SoCG with East Lindsey District Council [CD 8.3].

4.2.3 Susceptibility to the type of development proposed (based on the advice provided in 'An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity (Natural England, June 2019) [CD 7.44] is considered in detail in the LVA provided in Annex A. The susceptibility is identified as being Medium, taking account of a range of factors including the gently undulating landform which may give rise to wider visibility, the enclosure by woodlands and hedges with trees; the higher susceptibility of the small villages and vernacular building styles and complexity of the landcover and patterns, and lower susceptibility of the medium to large scale arable fields and lack of distinctive skylines and focal points. Considering susceptibility and value together the LCA is assessed to have a Medium/low sensitivity.

4.2.4 Effects on landscape character during construction and early operation would arise within the Site as a result of the change of use, and in nearby areas where there would be close views of the solar farm, giving rise to a change to the largely rural undeveloped character. Changes to character within the Site would be Large scale, reducing to Small scale up to 0.6km to the west across the fields towards Hatton and up to 0.5km to the east. To the south and north changes to character would be contained by vegetation and the localised ridgeline along Sturton Road and by Sotby Wood. The DNO substation would not alter character given it would be situated adjacent to an existing electrical substation and the larger gas compressor station.

4.2.5 Once mitigation planting matures, changes to character would be largely confined to the Site with more limited views from beyond the Site giving rise to Negligible scale changes to character beyond the Site.

4.2.6 Moderate/minor, Adverse effects would arise on the host landscape character area E1 Wragby to Horsington Vale Woodland and Farmland. The main effects would arise within the Site as a result of the change of use from arable farmland to solar farm, with more limited changes to character beyond the Site as a result of changes to views from in the character area within approximately 0.6km east and west of the Site.

4.2.7 The effects described above would be very slightly reduced in extent as a result of the adoption of the revised design. This would not alter the judgements of the magnitude of impact and level of effects.

4.3 Visual Receptor Baseline and Effects

4.3.1 Visual receptors within 1km of the Site consist primarily of local residents and visitors close to their homes or travelling for local journeys along rural roads, or enjoying the recreational opportunities offered by public rights of way, open access land and permissive footpaths. Longer distance journeys are likely to be taken by users of the A158 Lincoln Road.

4.3.2 Annex A provides a detailed assessment of effects on visual receptors within 1km of the Proposed Development. Effects beyond this area, and for other publicly accessible locations within 1km would be Negligible. Figures 2 and 3 in Annex B illustrate viewpoint locations and the scale of changes to views (the primary factor in determining the magnitude of visual effect) during construction and early operation (Figure 2) and once mitigation planting has matured (Figure 3)

4.3.3 The greatest effects on visual receptors would arise for users of the bridleways to the east of the Site during construction and operation. Close, open views of fences, solar arrays and CCTV cameras as one of the routes passes alongside the eastern edge of the Site, and more distant views elsewhere on parts of these routes would give rise to Major/moderate, Adverse effects before mitigation planting matures. These effects would reduce to Moderate and Adverse once planting has grown, due to a combination of continued visibility of the solar arrays from more elevated views and the enclosure of the route by hedges as it passes adjacent to the Site.

4.3.4 Users of the footpath north of Amberholme Farm would experience Moderate Adverse visual effects as a result of close open views of the DNO substation. These effects would reduce to Minimal and Neutral once planting matures and the view returns to being similar to the baseline.

4.3.5 People living in and visiting Hatton would experience Moderate/minor and Adverse visual effects as a result visibility of the solar arrays, fences and CCTV cameras, when looking out across the field to the northeast from the footpath which connects parts of the village and a short stretch of Sturton Road. Homes with views from windows and gardens facing towards the Site would experience similar effects. These effects would reduce to Minor/minimal and Adverse once planting matures, with the only remaining visibility likely to be from near the western end of the footpath where there are slightly elevated views over the Site.

4.3.6 Local road users would experience Moderate/minor and Adverse visual effects before mitigation planting matures, due to a combination of glimpsed close views of the Proposed Development through gaps in hedges along Panton Road, Sturton Road and Sturton Lane, and slightly more elevated and more distant views over roadside hedges from Wass Lane/Roman Road/Moor Lane and Sturton Lane. Once planting matures the effects on views from Panton Road and Sturton Road would be reduced, but continued visibility through Site entrances and over hedges from Wass Lane/Roman Road/Moor Lane and Sturton Lane would give rise to Minor, Adverse effects.

4.4 Cumulative effects

4.4.1 Section 2.9 of the LVA provided in Annex A deals with the assessment of cumulative effects. As set out within guidance, operational developments are included in the baseline; consented development which is expected to be constructed typically forms part of the future baseline and the assessment of cumulative effects focusses on other projects in planning (and/or in scoping where sufficient information is available).

4.4.2 No proposals in planning or scoping require consideration in relation to the Proposed Development. The effects set out above take account of cumulative effects with operational and consented developments.

5 Residential Visual Amenity

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The THAG Statement of Case [CD 8.7] makes reference to the proximity and/or potential visibility of the Proposed Development to homes at The Old Barn (to the southwest of the Site), Corner Farm to the south of the Site, and a group of four homes (Greenacres, Swallow Barn, Moor Farm and Owl Cottage) located to the northeast of the Site.

5.1.2 As set out in Annex A, effects on residential visual amenity are a separate planning matter to LVA / LVIA which considers public views. Residential Visual Amenity Assessment is covered by separate guidance (Landscape Institute TGN 02/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)) [CD 7.45] which notes in its introduction that:

"Changes in views and visual amenity are considered in the planning process. In respect of private views and visual amenity, it is widely known that, no one has 'a right to a view.' …

It is not uncommon for significant adverse effects on views and visual amenity to be experienced by people at their place of residence as a result of introducing a new development into the landscape. In itself this does not necessarily cause particular planning concern. However, there are situations where the effect on the outlook / visual amenity of a residential property is so great that it is not generally considered to be in the public interest to permit such conditions to occur where they did not exist before."

5.1.3 Paragraph 47 sets out guidance relating to RVAA study areas and development types, as follows:

"When assessing relatively conspicuous structures such as wind turbines, and depending on local landscape characteristics, a preliminary study area of approximately 1.5 - 2 km radius may initially be appropriate in order to begin identifying properties to include in a RVAA. However, other development types including potentially very large but lower profile structures and developments such as road schemes and housing are unlikely to require RVAA, except potentially of properties in very close proximity (50-250m) to the development. For example, when assessing effects of overhead transmissions lines, generally only those properties within 100 – 150 metres of the finalised route are potentially considered for inclusion in a RVAA."

5.1.4 A 3m high structure has limited potential for overbearing effects – for instance it is commonly considered acceptable for two-storey houses to be constructed 20m apart (allowing for 10m minimum garden lengths, or distances across residential streets). The primary consideration with solar farms is whether effects would be 'overwhelming', such that a home would feel closely surrounded by solar panels. RVAA study areas of 50m to 100m (from above ground structures) are most commonly used for solar farms, which if applied to the Proposed Development would only include Corner Farm.

5.1.5 The guidance indicates that an assessment of Residential Visual Amenity may draw on the LVIA findings as part of the first stages of an RVAA assessment in order to inform the identification of which properties require detailed assessment. The guidance specifically notes that (footnote 7, page 12) "*It is important for assessors to keep in mind that RVAA is only concerned with those properties in the highest magnitude category.*"

5.1.6 Considering each of the properties, groups named by THAG in turn:

- Visual effects at the Old Barn, which is located more than 200m to the southwest of where the nearest solar arrays would be, are illustrated by viewpoint 9, which is located close to the rear of the property. Changes to views here are identified as being Medium scale during construction and early operation, and even if experienced from the entirety of the property (which they would not be) would not have the potential to be of Large magnitude.
- Visual effects from the curtilage of Corner Farm are represented by viewpoint 3. However, these close and open views would only be seen from the edge of the property along the roadside. Views towards the Proposed Development from the house and garden would be screened by the barns and the main

outlook is to the south, away from the Site. Effects would not have the potential to be of Large magnitude.

- Visual effects from the bridleway adjacent to the group of homes to the northeast of the Site are assessed to be Medium scale during construction and early operation as shown by Figure 2 in Annex B. Owl Cottage and Swallow Barn are to the north of the other two homes. Moor Farm and Greenacres have gardens which extend to within 120m of the Proposed Development. There are mature hedges around the southern boundary of Greenacres and successive layers of trees and hedges between Moor Farm and the Site. The most affected home would be Greenacres, which is the closest and has least screening. Taking account of Medium scale changes to views, even in winter, the effects would not have the potential to reach Large magnitude.

5.1.7 As indicated in the LVA provided in Annex A, none of the homes closest to the Site would experience changes to views sufficient to require detailed assessment in relation to Residential Visual Amenity. There is no potential for the RVA Threshold (defined in the guidance as the point at which the visual impact "*potentially affects 'living conditions' or Residential Amenity*" and become a matter to be considered in the planning balance).

6 Summary and Conclusions

6.1.1 The visual containment provided by the woodlands to the north, and hedges and gently undulating landform elsewhere, limit the landscape and visual effects arising from the development. Landscape and visual effects would be confined to an area extending 0.7km to the east and northeast, to Wass Lane/Roman Road/Moor Lane and Sotby Wood to the north, Sturton Road to the south and a short length of footpath and adjacent road near the DNO substation.

6.1.2 No valued landscapes or recognised scenic or valued views would be affected by the Proposed Development.

6.1.3 Effects on landscape character would be confined to a small part of the host LCA E1 Wragby to Horsington Vale Woodland and Farmland. Mitigation planting would reduce the effects beyond the Site once mature. Effects would be Moderate/minor and Adverse during all stages of the Proposed Development.

6.1.4 During construction and early operation, the following visual effects would arise:

- Major/moderate, Adverse effects on users of the bridleways to the east of the Site;
- Moderate, Adverse effects on users of the footpath north of Amberholme Farm;
- Moderate/minor and Adverse effects on people living in and visiting Hatton (as a result of changes to views from the footpath and a short stretch of Sturton Road), and
- Moderate/minor and Adverse effects on local road users (Panton Road, Sturton Road, Sturton Lane and Wass Lane/Roman Road/Moor Lane).

6.1.5 After planting matures to design heights, which would require 7-10 years for new hedges and 2-4 years for existing hedges, the following visual effects would arise:

- Moderate, Adverse effects on users of the bridleways to the east of the Site;
- Minor/minimal and Adverse effects on people living in and visiting Hatton, and
- Minor and Adverse effects on local road users (Sturton Lane and Wass Lane/Roman Road/Moor Lane).

6.1.6 The effects described above accord in terms of their extent with those raised in the THAG SoC [CD 8.7], which (apart from residential properties) does not mention landscape and visual effects of concern to THAG beyond these receptors. The effects identified also correspond with matters agreed between the Appellant and East Lindsey District Council at pages 23-24 of the SoCG [CD 8.3].