Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Proposed development of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Associated Infrastructure at Land at West Leake Lane, Winking Hill

On behalf of RES.

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1. Introduction

1.1. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Chartered Landscape Architects at Pegasus Group on behalf of RES, to assist the local planning authority's consideration of a full planning application for the installation and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Associated Infrastructure at Land at West Leake Lane, Winking Hill.

1.2. The site is in the administrative area of Rushcliffe Borough Council and its location is shown on the Site Location Plan at **Figure 1.** The proposed development would be accessed off West Leake Lane to the east of the site and along the track that runs towards Winking Hill Farm.

Figure 1 – Site Location

1.3. This LVIA considers the site and its surrounding context in both landscape and visual terms, to assess the potential effects of the proposed development upon:

- Landscape features;
- Landscape character; and
- Visual amenity.

1.4. This assessment has been guided by the assessment criteria set out in **Appendix 1**. It has been prepared following desk study analysis of the site and its policy context and field assessment to

gain an appreciation of the landscape and visual context of the site, which has subsequently been used to inform mitigation recommendations, including landscape proposals shown on the Landscape Masterplan at **Appendix 4**.

2. Method

2.1. This LVIA has been undertaken in accordance with the principles of best practice, as outlined in published guidance documents listed in the reference section of this report, notably the third edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (GLVIA3), (Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

2.2. The method and assessment criteria for the assessment have been developed in accordance with the principles established in this best practice document. It should be acknowledged that GLVIA3 establishes guidelines, not a specific methodology. The preface to GLVIA3 states:

> *"This edition concentrates on principles and processes. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic 'recipe' that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand."*

2.3. The approach set out below and in detail in **Appendix 1** has been developed for this assessment to ensure that the assessment method is fit for purpose.

Distinction between Landscape and Visual Effects

2.4. In accordance with GLVIA3, landscape and visual effects are assessed separately, although the procedure for assessing each of these is closely linked. A clear distinction has been drawn between landscape and visual effects as described below:

- Landscape effects relate to the effects of the proposals on the physical and perceptual characteristics of the landscape and its resulting character and quality; and
- Visual effects relate to the effects on specific views experienced by visual receptors and on visual amenity more generally.

Landscape and Visual Assessment Process

2.5. The assessment of landscape effects which do not form part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) such as this, follows a recognised process set out below:

- Identify the baseline landscape resource (i.e. Individual landscape elements and a thorough understanding of landscape character both at a local scale and a wider scale) and its value;

- Evaluate the sensitivity of the landscape resource to the type of development proposed;
- Develop mitigation proposals / measures iteratively throughout the development process in order to avoid, reduce and ameliorate potential adverse landscape impacts and to maximise the beneficial landscape impacts of the development;
- Identify predicted landscape impacts of the development;
- Evaluate the magnitude of change to the baseline landscape resource; and
- Assess the level of residual effect of the development on the landscape.

2.6. The assessment of visual effects follows a similar process as set out below:

- Identify the geographical area within which views of the development are possible through field work;
- Identify potential visual receptors for the development (i.e. Groups of people who would have views of the development);
- Describe the nature of the baseline views towards the development for each receptor group, usually illustrated by a photograph;
- Evaluate the sensitivity of the visual receptor groups;
- Develop mitigation proposals / measures iteratively throughout the development process in order to avoid, reduce and ameliorate potential adverse visual impacts and to maximise the beneficial visual impacts of the development;
- Identify predicted visual impacts of the development on receptor groups;
- Evaluate the magnitude of change in the view of representative visual receptor groups; and
- Assess the level of residual effects on the views from representative receptor groups and on overall visual amenity.

Types of Landscape and Visual Impacts Considered and Duration

2.7. The LVIA assesses both the permanent and non-permanent effects of the proposed development and the temporary effects associated with its construction.

2.8. Consideration has been given to seasonal variations in the visibility of the development and these are described where necessary.

2.9. Both beneficial and adverse effects are identified in the assessment and reported as appropriate. Where effects are described as 'neutral' this is where beneficial effects are deemed to balance the adverse effects. The adverse and beneficial effects are communicated in each case so that the judgement is clear.

Assessment Criteria

2.10. The criteria used as guidance in assessing the effects of the proposed development is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Assumptions and Limitations of Assessment

Assessed Proposal

2.11. The project proposals have been developed iteratively in conjunction with the production of the LVIA with the intention of incorporating mitigation into the project from the outset. The effects identified and described as part of this LVIA are based on the landscape proposals shown on the Landscape Masterplan at **Appendix 4.**

Scope

2.12. The physical scope of this LVIA has been informed by desk study and field assessment, which has led to an understanding of the landscape and visual sensitivities of the site and its surroundings.

2.13. Desk study included analysis of online ordnance survey mapping, aerial photography, and relevant publications, along with analysis of the Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (SZTV) Plan shown at **Appendix 2**, which covers a 3 kilometre (km) study area around the site.

2.14. The SZTV is a useful tool used to provide focus on the area and receptors that are most likely to be affected by the proposed development. The building and vegetation data used for the SZTV is obtained from OS Open Map Local Data for buildings and woodland which is then used to create a Digital Surface Model. However, the screening effect provided by individual trees, smaller blocks of woodland and hedgerow and hedgerow trees, have not been taken into account in the SZTV. The SZTV is always subject to verification in the field.

2.15. LVIA field assessment, including verification of the theoretical visibility of the proposed development, was undertaken in September 2024. Weather conditions were dry and visibility was very good.

2.16. In considering the nature of the landscape surrounding the site, it is considered that the SZTV at **Appendix 2** provides a good overall reflection of potential visibility, noting that the actual extent of visibility is reduced by mature roadside and field boundary hedgerow and trees and by garden vegetation not taken into account in the SZTV. It should also be noted that the SZTV does not distinguish between the extent of the proposed development which could be theoretically visible, for example, whether this is the upper part of proposed development only.

2.17. Receptor and viewpoint locations have been identified and have been selected to show the nature of the landscape of the site and its surroundings and the nature and range of receptors views of the site and the proposed development. Viewpoint locations are shown on the SZTV and Viewpoint Locations Plan at **Appendix 2** and are discussed where relevant in this LVIA, with the Photo Record at **Appendix 3** and Photomontages for three of the viewpoints at **Appendix 5**.

Baseline Information

2.18. The baseline landscape resource and visual receptors were identified in part through a desk-based study of Ordnance Survey mapping, published landscape character assessment, relevant planning policies and guidance, interrogation of aerial photography and a site visit undertaken in September 2024.

2.19. Access during the site visit was from publicly accessible locations including public rights of way and roads. Assumptions have been made regarding the view from private properties. These assumptions have been based on an understanding of the properties and features present in the wider landscape gained during the site visits. Assumptions are guided by professional experience and judgement.

2.20. The site visit was conducted during appropriate visibility conditions allowing a good understanding of the landscape. The photography contained in the Photograph Record at **Appendix 08** was taken in September 2024 when trees and vegetation were in leaf. The effects discussed in this report consider both summer views and worst-case winter views.

Pre-application Consultation

2.21. A request for pre-application advice was made to Rushcliffe Council, which included a Zone of Theoretical Visibility Plan of the emerging development proposals, and the response included some feedback relating to landscape and visual matters, as follows:

"At this stage the assessment of visibility is appropriate, they can contact me if they wish to agree viewpoints for a full LVIA. We would be looking for views from the road network and nearby rights of way particularly those to the south which are clearly within the zone of theoretical visibility. It might be worth them looking at the RoW from Wrights Hill plantation to the north to confirm the site will not be visible from there.

The indicative plan does not include any landscaping, I note they make reference to existing mature trees and young planting along the A453 but I would suggest they don't rely on these, the mature trees seem to be in rapid decline when viewed on Google street view. Given this part of the Borough has a higher proportion of woodland blocks than average so robust screening planting should form part of the scheme. There may also be opportunities to replace lost hedgerows along the access road to Winkling Farm.

I note the comments about urbanising features close to the site, but at present there are pleasant views south-westwards from West Leake Lane. The LDO could change this outlook, but from this vantage point would largely be set back from the road and will be screened to a degree by future planting. The LDO demonstrated very special circumstances due to the benefits it will bring as a result of redeveloping the power station, but there shouldn't be a subsequent expansion of urbanising elements onto adjacent sites".

2.22. Regarding the LVIA viewpoints, given the extent of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility is so limited and there are only a small number of locations on the road network where it is safe to collect viewpoint photography, it is considered that the viewpoints locations included with the assessment are appropriate. There would also be no visibility from the footpath on Wrights Hill.

2.23. The planting alongside the A453 is a relevant consideration, but it is not relied upon for screening, and a notable extent of new planting is also provided as part of the Proposed Development, as set out on the Landscape Masterplan at Appendix 4.

2.24. The LDO is discussed in the assessment of cumulative effects at Section 8 and it would make a notable difference to the context of the site if it were to come forward. The comment regarding avoiding the expansion of urbanising elements is noted, but it is considered that the Proposed Development would only give rise to very limited landscape and visual effects, as set out in this LVIA, and that these should be taken forward into a planning balance where the benefits of the Proposed Development are also considered. This matter is addressed separately in the Planning Statement which accompanies the planning application.

3. Description of the Site and Proposed Development

3.1. The proposed development comprises the installation and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Associated Infrastructure at Land at West Leake Lane, Winking Hill.

The Site

3.2. The site comprises of a single agricultural field to the west of West Leake Lane, associated with Winking Hill Farm, which comprises residential property and numerous farm buildings. The site lies immediately to the south of the A453 dual carriageway, beyond which lies the large Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station complex.

3.3. There is notable mitigation planting which has been implemented as part of the recent highways works along the A453 which will in the near future begin to reduce and filter any views southwards from the route towards the site.

3.4. The site lies adjacent to a recently consented Ratcliffe-on-Soar Local Development Order (LDO) which includes for notable new buffer planting around the edges of the parcels of development which are proposed. This planting would serve to reduce the potential for any intervisibility between the two projects and further limit the potential for views of the proposed development from the landscape to the south-west of the site. The LDO is discussed further in the cumulative effects section of the Report.

The Proposed Development

3.5. The proposed development is shown on the proposal drawings submitted with the planning application, including the 'Infrastructure Layout', (reference 04875-RES-LAY-DR-PT-001 Rev 3), and is described in the submitted Planning Design and Access Statement.

3.6. The development would consist of modified ISO-style shipping enclosures set on concrete foundations, with typical dimensions of 6.1m long, 2.4m wide, and 2.9m high. Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) units are located at each end of each enclosure. The applicant is also considering modular battery enclosures, also set on concrete foundations, which are 'packed' together to form similar dimensions to that of the enclosures mentioned above. Other equipment required to support the development may include:

3.7. Power Conversion Systems and Transformers (8.1m x 2.4m x 2.4m)

3.8. Spare Enclosure (12.0m x 2.4m x 2.9m)

3.9. BESS Substation (10.0m x 5m x 4.5m)

3.10. Auxiliary transformers (2.5m x 2.3m x 2.7m)

3.11. Harmonic Filter (6.0m x 3.0m x 2.9m)

3.12. Pre-Insertion Resistor (3.3m x 2.7m x 2.7m)

3.13. Acoustic fencing (4m)

3.14. Security lighting/CCTV Column (4m)

3.15. Security Fencing (3m)

3.16. DNO Control Room (6.9m x 5.6m x 3.8m)

Landscape Mitigation

3.17. The proposed development has sought to avoid and minimise effects on landscape and views as far as practicable.

3.18. The layout of the proposed development would retain and enhance the existing field boundary trees and hedgerows and would introduce new vegetation.

3.19. Landscape and biodiversity enhancements within the site have been informed by this LVIA and are shown on the Landscape Masterplan at **Appendix 4**.

3.20. Landscape proposals include:

- Management and enhancement of existing boundary trees and hedgerow to enhance these landscape features;
- New mixed native hedgerow, scrub and tree planting, allowed to grow to and be maintained at a minimum height of 3m;
- Species-rich wildflower grassland to provide additional landscape and ecological enhancements on site; and
- Species-rich wildflower grassland suitable for wetlands within proposed drainage basin;

3.21. The landscape proposals would be in keeping with local landscape character and would further assimilate the proposed development into the landscape and views over time.

3.22. The effects identified and described as part of this LVIA are based on the proposed development including landscape proposals shown on the Landscape Masterplan.

4. Designations and Planning Context

4.1. This section discusses designations relevant to landscape across the site and its surroundings, and identifies relevant national and local planning policy and guidance.

Landscape Designations

4.2. The site and its surroundings within the 3 km study area are not included in any national or local landscape designations.

4.3. No Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) or Ancient Woodland have been identified in or adjacent to the site. The closest landscape designation is Kingston Park Pleasure Gardens Grade II Registered Park and Garden is situated 1.4km to the south of the site, however, as illustrated on the SZTV at **Appendix 2** there would be no visibility of the Proposed Development from the Kingston Park Pleasure Gardens.

4.4. There is no public access onto the site. The only PRoW running through the landscape surrounding the site with any potential visibility of the Proposed Development is Ratcliffe on Soar FP3, which runs approximately 300m to the south of the site.

4.5. The site is located in the Green Belt. Green Belt matters are discussed separately in Section 8.

Planning Policy Context

<u>European Landscape Convention</u>

4.6. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. The convention promotes landscape protection, management, and planning, as well as European co-operation on landscape issues. Signed by the UK Government in February 2006, the ELC became binding from March 2007. It applies to all landscapes, towns, and villages, as well as open countryside; the coast and inland areas; and ordinary or even degraded landscapes, as well as those that are afforded protection.

4.7. The Government has stated that it considers the UK to be compliant with the ELC's requirements and in effect the principal requirements of the ELC are already enshrined in the existing suite of national policies and guidance on the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

4.8. The ELC defines landscape as *"An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.' (Council of Europe 2000)."*

4.9. It is important to recognise that the ELC does not require the preservation of all landscapes although landscape protection is one of the core themes of the convention. Equally important though is the requirement to manage and plan future landscape change.

4.10. The ELC highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management, and planning of landscapes. The analysis of landscape and visual matters in this LVA read in context with appropriate national and local policy will enable decisions to be made with due regard to landscape character as promoted by the ELC.

National Planning Policy

4.11. National planning policy for England is set out in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) last updated in December 2024.

4.12. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and provides a framework within which the appropriate local Council can produce local and neighbourhood plans. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.

4.13. In Section 14, the NPPF sets out its support for renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure, as part of meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change, with subsequent paragraphs setting out how this can be achieved.

4.14. Paragraph 187 in Section 15 of the NPPF states the following in relation to valued landscapes:

> *"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*
>
> *a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
>
> *b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland…"*

4.15. The site is not within a landscape that has been nationally or locally designated because of its landscape value. It is therefore considered that the site is not considered a valued landscape as a result of such a designation. Other aspects of value which can contribute to landscape value are considered in section 6 of this LVIA below.

National Planning Practice Guidance

4.16. The NPPF is accompanied by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) available online. Those elements of PPG addressing matters in the scope of this LVIA, and relevant to the proposed development are referred to be below, and the guidance has been taken into account when designing and assessing the proposed development.

Design

4.17. PPG emphasises the importance of good quality design as an integral part of sustainable development. PPG on design advises on the key points to take into account on design, which include:

- Ensuring development can deliver a wide range of planning objectives;
- Enhance the quality of buildings and spaces, by considering, amongst other things, form and function; efficiency and effectiveness and their impact on well-being; and
- Address the need for different uses sympathetically.

Natural Environment

4.18. PPG reinforces the NPPF's commitment to recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supports the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding local distinctiveness and the use of Natural England's guidance on landscape character assessment.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

4.19. The NPPG for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy is intended to help developers and Councils understand the specific planning issues associated with renewable and low carbon energy projects and the Governments stated policy in this regard.

4.20. Paragraph 32 (ID: 5-032-20230814) deals with Battery Energy Storage Systems and states:

'Electricity storage can enable us to use energy more flexibly and de-carbonise our energy system cost-effectively – for example, by helping to balance the system at lower cost, maximising the usable output from intermittent low carbon generation (e.g. solar and wind), and deferring or avoiding the need for costly network upgrades and new generation capacity'.

Local Planning Policy and Guidance

4.21. The site is in the administrative area of Rushcliffe Borough Council. The adopted development plan for the Rushcliffe area consists of the Rushcliffe Local Plan. The Local Plan consists of Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy, adopted December 2014, Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies, adopted October 2019 and any adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The policies that are relevant to the site and the Proposed Development include the following.

Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2014)

- Policy 4 - Nottingham-Derby Green Belt
- Policy 10 - Design and Enhancing Local Identity
- Policy 16 - Green Infrastructure, Landscape, Parks and Open Space

Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies (2019)

- Policy 16 - Renewable Energy
- Policy 21 –Green Belt
- Policy 37 –Trees and Woodlands

4.22. The above local planning policies have been used to inform the design of the Proposed Development to ensure it is befitting of the site context, with existing landscape features and visual amenity considered, and additional landscape features and enhancement proposed.

5. Effect on Landscape Features

5.1. This section provides an overview of the landscape features of the site, an indication of their sensitivity to development of the type proposed, assessment of the magnitude of the change, in terms of its scale or size, and an assessment of the predicted level of effect resulting from the proposed development.

5.2. The sensitivity of landscape features is a function of both their susceptibility to change and their value, which is discussed further in the Assessment Criteria at **Appendix 1**.

5.3. The assessments of the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change are combined with the duration of the effect and the reversibility of the effect, to assist in determining the relative level of effect on each landscape feature.

5.4. The effect of the proposed development on landscape features within the site is considered below.

Landscape Features

Landform and Topography

5.5. The site is generally level at approximately 35 m above ordnance datum (AOD). Beyond the site the land rises notably to the south-east, as part of Winking Hill, which has a highpoint of 81 m AOD, and also to the north-east as part of Cottagers Hill, which has a highpoint of 97 m AOD.

5.6. The landform and topography of the site is judged to be of medium value and is judged to have medium/low susceptibility to change. The overall sensitivity of the site's landform and topography is assessed as medium/low.

5.7. Proposed changes to the topography of the site would be minimal, to accommodate foundations of the proposed BESS compound, fencing, access track and other structures. Some ground disturbance would occur during the construction of access tracks and foundations for proposed buildings and ancillary elements including fencing and CCTV poles. The prevailing ground levels and the perception of the landform would continue as currently experienced.

5.8. During construction, the proposed development would result in a **very low** magnitude of change on site landform and topography overall and the level of effect would be **negligible adverse**.

5.9. During operation (at Year 1 and Year 15), the proposed development would result in a minor alteration to topography across the site, associated with proposed building foundations. The magnitude of change would be **very low** and there would be a **negligible adverse** level of effect on site landform and topography.

Land Use, Buildings, and Infrastructure

5.10. The current land use of the site is agricultural and there is no existing built form within the site. There are no public rights of way (PRoW) within the site.

5.11. The value of site land use is judged to be medium and its susceptibility to change is judged to be medium. Overall, the land use of the site is considered to have medium sensitivity overall to the proposed change.

5.12. Land use across the site would change from being agricultural to a construction site to an operational BESS with new native hedgerow, shrub and tree planting and species-rich wildflower grass areas.

5.13. Proposed construction activity would result in a **high** magnitude of change on site land use and the level of effect would be **major adverse** during construction.

5.14. On completion, the land use of the site would change from farmland to an operational BESS, including new young hedgerow, shrub and tree planting and newly seeded grassland areas. At Year 1, the proposed development would result in a **high** magnitude of change on site land use, buildings, and infrastructure. The level of effect would be **major adverse**.

5.15. At Year 15 the proposed development and proposed planting and seeding would be established, and in combination with managed site trees and hedgerow, maturing proposed planting would strengthen the landscape framework of the site, would provide greater habitat connectivity with existing vegetation, and would provide increased enclosure of the operational development. The site would however continue to be occupied by development and the magnitude of change would remain **high** and the level of effect **major adverse**.

Waterbodies and Drainage

5.16. There are no waterbodies or drainage features within the site.

5.17. During construction, the proposed development would include appropriate measures to protect the surrounding watercourses and drainage features, with no effect arising**.** During operation, the addition of proposed drainage features would result in a **low** magnitude of change and a **minor beneficial** level of effect due to the ability to store and control water on site and to create additional water features benefitting site biodiversity.

Vegetation

5.18. The value of site hedgerows is considered to be medium, and the value of site trees is considered to be medium. The susceptibility of site hedgerow to change is medium. The susceptibility of site trees, most of which are mature is high. The sensitivity of site hedgerow to the proposed development is judged to be medium and the sensitivity of site trees is judged to be high.

5.19. The proposed development would retain and protect existing hedgerow and trees, including root protection areas. There would be no magnitude of change on these landscape features during construction of the proposed development.

5.20. The proposed development would introduce new hedgerow and hedgerow trees onto the site, as shown on the Landscape Masterplan at **Appendix 4.**

5.21. At Year 1, the proposed development would result in a **low** magnitude of change on site hedgerow and shrubs and the level of effect on these landscape features would be **minor beneficial**. At Year 15, hedgerow and shrub planting would be mature and would provide beneficial habitat, habitat connectivity and screening of the proposed development. The magnitude of change on site hedgerow would increase to **medium** and the level of effect would be **moderate beneficial**.

5.22. At Year 15, hedgerow planting would be mature and would provide beneficial screening of the proposed development. The magnitude of change on site hedgerow would be **medium** and the level of effect would be **moderate beneficial**.

5.23. At Year 1, new tree planting would result in a **low/medium** magnitude of change on the site's tree resource and a **moderate/minor beneficial** level of effect on site trees.

5.24. At Year 15, tree planting would be established and maturing, resulting in a **medium** magnitude of change and a **moderate beneficial** level of effect overall.

5.25. Overall, proposed hedgerow, shrub and tree planting would improve the landscape framework of the site and ecological corridors along the edges of the proposed development and along the watercourse and ditches in the site.

Summary of Effects on Landscape Features

5.26. The table overleaf summarises the above assessment of effects on landscape features in the site.

Table–1 - Summary of Effects on Landscape Features

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Landscape Features				
Landform and topography	Medium/low	Construction	Very Low	Negligible adverse
		Year 1	Very Low	Negligible adverse
		Year 15	Very Low	Negligible adverse
Land use, buildings, and infrastructure	Medium	Construction	High	Major adverse
		Year 1	High	Major adverse
		Year 15	High	Major adverse
Waterbodies and Drainage	Medium	Construction	None	No effect
		Year 1	Low	Minor beneficial
		Year 15	Low	Minor beneficial
Vegetation	Medium (Trees - High)	Construction	Low	Minor beneficial
		Year 1	Low	Minor beneficial
		Year 15	Medium	Moderate beneficial

6. Effect on Landscape Character

6.1. This section provides an overview of the landscape character of the site and its locality with reference to published landscape character assessment. It provides an indication of the sensitivity of the landscape character to the proposed development and the resulting effects which would arise from the development proposals.

National Landscape Character Assessment

6.2. The site is in National Character Area (NCA) 74 - Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds with the location of the site shown on **Figure 2.**

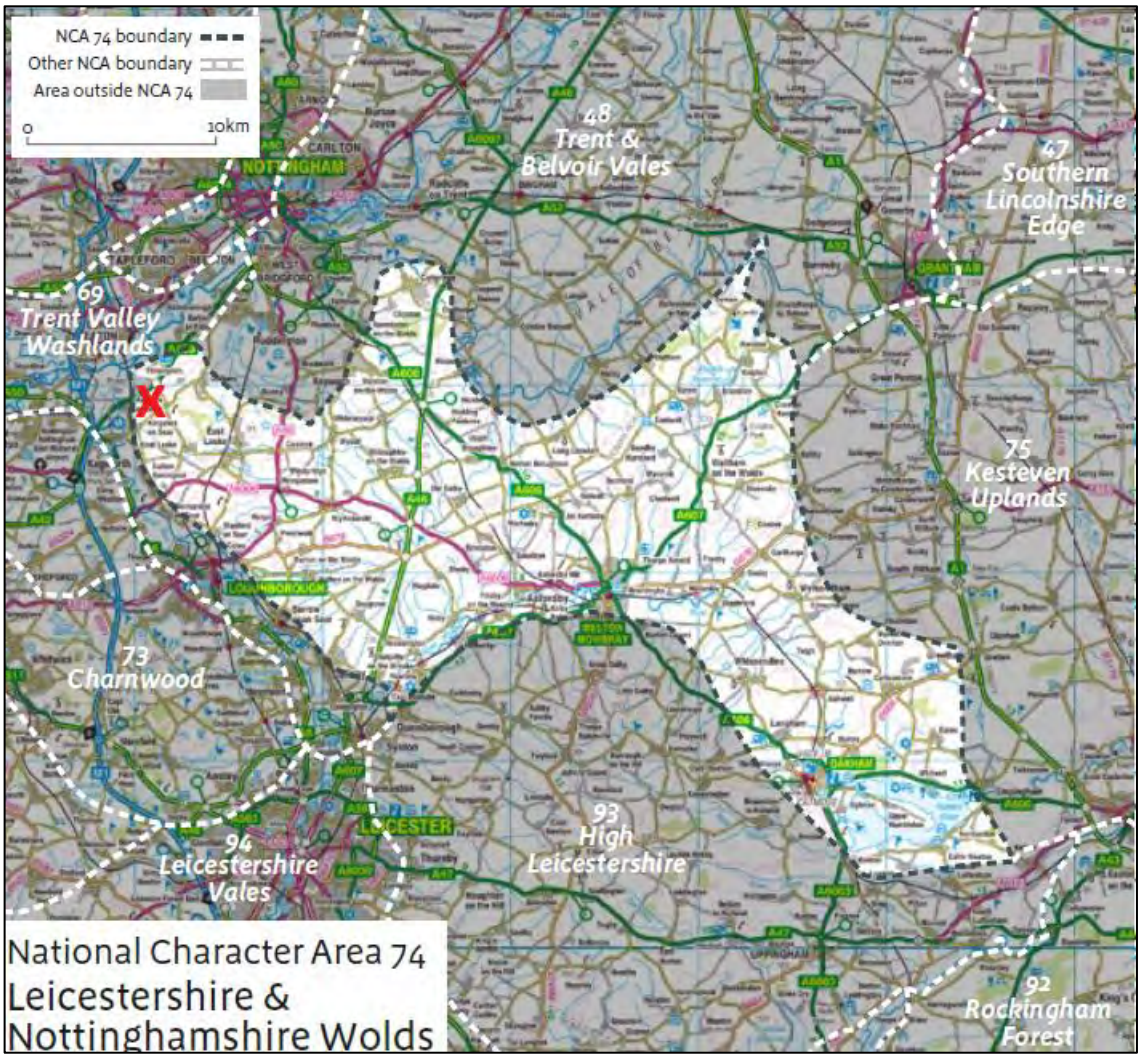

Figure 2 - Site Location within National Character Area 74

6.3. The key characteristics of 74 - Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds are reported as follows:

- *A range of rolling hills, with elevated plateaux, narrow river valleys and distinctive scarp slopes.*
- *Woodland cover is generally sparse, except for some wooded scarps and in the Wreake Valley and adjacent to Rutland Water.*
- *Elsewhere, spinneys, fox coverts, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and streamside trees provide moderate cover.*
- *Agricultural land use dominates with arable farming on the plateaux tops and pasture on steep sloping valley sides.*
- *Agricultural land use has diminished semi-natural habitat although important habitats do remain, including species-rich neutral grasslands, wet meadows, parkland, reservoirs, rivers and streams.*
- *Urban influences include overhead lines, mineral extraction sites, airfields and the busy A46 and A60 although these do not weaken the rural character.*

6.4. Natural England's national level assessment gives a broad impression of a region and provides a useful contextual overview of the character of the wider landscape, however, due to the relatively small size of the site and proposed development when set against the extent of this NCA, the proposed development is not considered to have the potential to result in effects on landscape character at this national scale and is not taken forward for detailed assessment.

Regional Landscape Character Assessment

<u>The East Midlands Region Landscape Character Assessment (2010)</u>

6.5. The East Midlands Region Landscape Character Assessment identifies the site as being part of Group 8 Clay Wolds which is further subdivided into landscape character types. The site falls into 8a Clay Wolds landscape character type. The key characteristics of 8a Clay Wolds are reported as follows:

- *Broad plateaux overlain by thick mantle of till surrounded by undulating ridges and valleys, and prominent scarp slopes;*

- *Clay plateaux drained radially by streams occupying arrow valleys creating rolling landform;*
- *Mixed farming but with mainly arable on the plateau tops and pasture on steep sloping land and along valleys; hedged fields generally medium to large scale, with some evidence of amalgamation;*
- *Well treed character from hedgerows, hedgerow trees, copses and small woodlands despite limited areas of large woodland;*
- *Sparse settlement pattern of small villages and farms with little modern development;*
- *Ironstone and limestone churches and vernacular buildings, but brick the most abundant and -widespread building material;*
- *Frequent and prominent ridge and furrow close to villages;*
- *Quiet and remote, often empty character with expansive views contrasting with more intimate and intricate areas close to villages; and*
- *Damming of several valleys to create reservoirs which have localised.*

6.6. The East Midlands Region Landscape Character Assessment also provides a useful contextual overview of the character of the wider landscape. However, the Greater Nottingham Landscape Character Assessment provides a more appropriate scale against which to consider the effects of the Proposed Development and is the primary document used in the assessment of effects.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

<u>The Greater Nottingham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)</u>

6.7. The Greater Nottingham Landscape Character Assessment identifies the site as being part of the Nottinghamshire Wolds Regional Character Area. The Regional Character Areas are then subdivided into Draft Policy Zones with the site falling into NW02 'East Leake Rolling Farmland', as shown on **Figure 3**.

Figure 3 - Site Location within Greater Nottingham Landscape Character Assessment Policy Zones

6.8. Amongst the 'Characteristic Features' listed for area NW02 it states: '*Rural character present across the area although there are views towards urban elements such as Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station*'. It is set out that the landscape condition of the area is 'moderate' with the supporting text noting *'The man-made landform changes around the power station have an influence*'. The strength of character of the area is noted to be 'Strong' although the caveat is added that *'A minor amount of fragmentation is present in the north of the area where land has been altered adjacent to the power station*'. The overall landscape strategy for area NW02 is noted to be *'Conserve and Enhance*'.

6.9. The only other Draft Policy Zone with potential visibility of the Proposed Development is a small part of NW01 'Gotham and West Leake Hills and Scarps', which lies to the east of West Leake Lane.

Landscape Sensitivity

6.10. The character of the site and its surroundings potentially influenced by the proposed development, (as indicated on the SZTV Plan at **Appendix 2** and discussed in section 7 below),

has been reviewed and the sensitivity of the site and local landscape context assessed. Landscape sensitivity sequentially combines judgements on the value attached to the landscape and the landscape's susceptibility to change to the type of development proposed.

6.11. Consideration of the landscape value of the site and its surroundings and its susceptibility to change is set out below.

Landscape Value

6.12. The site is not covered by any designation that recognises a specific landscape or scenic importance and neither the site nor its local landscape, is considered to be a valued landscape in the context of paragraph 180 of the NPPF referred to in section 4 above.

6.13. There also is no indication from published information that the site and its surroundings are of a specific character and/or contain landscape features or elements which are considered particularly important examples.

6.14. There are no nature conservation designations or heritage assets in or adjoining the site. Nature conservation and heritage designations in the wider context of the site do not influence the landscape potentially affected by the proposed development, or views including the site.

6.15. There is no public access onto the site, and the closest PRoW to the site is Ratcliffe on Soar FP3, which runs approximately 300m to the south of the site boundary at its closest point.

6.16. The site and its surroundings does have several positive attributes, namely its relatively rural character and mature trees and hedgerows on some of its boundaries; however, the nearby former Ratcliffe on Soar power station and the A453 to the north of the site as seen in the Photograph Record at **Appendix 3,** are visual detractors in the site's context, with traffic on the road audible, reducing the tranquillity of the site and its immediate surroundings.

6.17. With consideration to the above, and the LVIA Method at **Appendix 1**, the landscape character of the site and its surroundings (potentially influenced by the proposed development) is judged to be of medium value.

Landscape Susceptibility to Change

6.18. The susceptibility of landscape receptors to change depends on the characteristics of the receiving landscape and the nature of the proposed development.

6.19. The susceptibility of the landscape character of the site to a development of the type proposed is considered to be medium. This is on the basis that the site is currently a relatively small undeveloped agricultural field, albeit that notable existing development is visible from the site to the north and vegetation and topography in the local area mean that the potential visibility of the development and its potential influence on the surrounding landscape is restricted to a very localised area.

6.20. Overall, the susceptibility of the landscape of the site and its surroundings (potentially influenced by the proposed development) to change from the proposed development is assessed as medium.

Landscape Sensitivity

6.21. With consideration to the medium value of the landscape of the site and its surroundings potentially influenced by the proposed development, and its medium susceptibility to change, the landscape of the site and its surroundings is judged to be of medium sensitivity to the proposed development.

Effect on the Landscape Character of the Site

6.22. During construction, agricultural land in the site would be replaced with a temporary construction site occupying most of the site. There would be an increased level of activity and movement of construction vehicles and plant within the site which would have a temporary short-term effect on landscape character at the site and in its immediate surroundings. Whilst farming activity occurs on the site, and vehicles move along the existing access track to Winking Hill Farm, proposed construction activity would introduce uncharacteristic features into the landscape of the site. Landscape effects would be temporary and short-term and construction works would be carried out in accordance with best practice to avoid, reduce or limit the extent of effects as far as possible.

6.23. Existing site hedgerows and trees would be retained and protected during construction. The proposed development would be offset from existing vegetation to protect tree root zones where relevant.

6.24. During construction, the proposed development would result in a **high adverse** magnitude of change on the landscape character of the site. The temporary and short-term level of effect on the medium sensitivity landscape would be **major adverse**.

6.25. During operation, the proposed development would result in the loss of a small area of agricultural farmland and the introduction of new energy storage development across the site. The proposed development would be introduced into an existing landscape framework comprising trees and hedgerow on part of the site's boundaries, plus new planting to the north of the site associated with the recent works to upgrade the A453.

6.26. The site would change from agricultural fields, (in the context of the former power station site and A453 to the north of the site), to an energy storage development, which would result in a major change in the land use. The proposed development would however require limited maintenance and access for personnel to operate and would not be an active or 'busy' land use.

6.27. Retained hedgerow and trees also would, in part, provide a mature landscape setting to the proposed development, and would be supplemented with new hedgerow, scrub and tree planting as part of the proposed development.

6.28. At Year 1, the proposed development would result in a **high** magnitude of change on the site. The level of effect would be **major** adverse.

6.29. At Year 15, the influence of the development on the character of the site itself would continue to result in a **major adverse** level of effect. The proposed planting would however strengthen the landscape framework of the site, would provide greater habitat connectivity with existing vegetation, and would provide increased enclosure of the operational development.

6.30. Effects upon landscape character arising from the proposed development would be long-term, but the proposed development would result in some long-term beneficial landscape effects as a result of proposed species-rich wildflower grassland mixes, and new hedgerow, shrub and tree planting, which overtime would provide increased enclosure of the proposed development and reduce its influence on the surrounding landscape. Proposed planting also would remain beyond the life of the proposed development.

Effect on NW02 'East Leake Rolling Farmland' and NW01 'Gotham and West Leake Hills and Scarps'

6.31. The site and its surroundings potentially affected by the proposed development are in NW02 'East Leake Rolling Farmland'.

6.32. The proposed development would result in the loss of agricultural land within a very small part of the 'East Leake Rolling Farmland and would introduce development in the context of the existing former power station site and A453 to the north of the site.

6.33. The proposed development would be largely contained by landform and mature trees, hedgerow, and woodland in the surrounding landscape, and would be perceived from only a small part of its surroundings in the NW02 area, as indicated by the SZTV Plan included at **Appendix 2**.

6.34. New planting would be implemented as part of the proposed development, as shown on the Landscape Masterplan at **Appendix 4**, which over time would mature and supplement existing and enhanced vegetation screening and would provide increased enclosure of the proposed development reducing visibility of the proposed development from its immediate context.

6.35. The proposed development would result in no greater than a minor alteration to the physical and perceptual attributes of the landscape within NW02 'East Leake Rolling Farmland'. The magnitude of change on NW02 'East Leake Rolling Farmland' is judged as being **low** during the construction and operation of the proposed development and the level of effect no greater than **minor adverse**.

6.36. For the neighbouring NW01 'Gotham and West Leake Hills and Scarps', there is also little potential for notable impacts to landscape character due to the limited visibility of the proposed development and the existing influence of the development at the former power station site. The magnitude of change on NW01 'Gotham and West Leake Hills and Scarps' is judged as being **low** during the construction and operation of the proposed development and the level of effect no greater than **minor adverse**.

Summary of Effects on Landscape Character

6.37. A summary of effects upon landscape character is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of Effects on Landscape Character

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
The Site	Medium	Construction	High	Major adverse
		Year 1	High	Major adverse

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
		Year 15	High	Major adverse
NWO2 'East Leake Rolling Farmland'	Medium	Construction	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Minor adverse
NWO1 'Gotham and West Leake Hills and Scarps'	Medium	Construction	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	Minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	Minor adverse

7. Effect on Views

7.1. This section considers the area within which the proposed development may be visible and identifies the different groups of people who would experience views of the proposed development (the visual receptors). An assessment of the effect of the proposed development on receptor views identified is then provided, with reference to assessment viewpoints shown on **Figure 2** and illustrated in the Photo Record at **Appendix 3** and Photomontages at **Appendix 5**.

7.2. The visual assessment assesses the sensitivity of the visual receptors whose views would be affected by the proposed development; the magnitude of the change in the receptor view; and the level of effect, in accordance with the Assessment Criteria included at **Appendix 1** of this LVIA.

7.3. Effects are considered during construction, and during operation at Year 1 and at Year 15. Effects during decommissioning would be similar to those experienced during the construction stage of the proposed development. New planting takes a number of years to mature and average growth rates have been taken into consideration. The effectiveness of proposed planting both in terms of integrating the proposed development into the surrounding landscape and in providing visual screening would improve over time and needs to be considered appropriately. A summary of visual effects is included in Table 3 at the end of this section.

Visibility of the Site and Proposed Development

7.4. Field assessment in September 2024 considered the proposed development of the site from public locations in the site's surroundings, focussed on the areas of theoretical visibility shown on the SZTV Plan at **Appendix 2**.

7.5. Field assessment determined that visibility of the site and the proposed development from within the areas of theoretical visibility were limited further by mature roadside and field boundary hedgerow and trees, and other vegetation not taken into account in the SZTV model.

7.6. The different visual receptors identified following field assessment are summarised below:

- Users of a short section of West Leake Lane to the east of the site;
- Users of a short section of the A453 to the north of the site;

- Users of public right of way (PRoW) Ratcliffe on Soar FP3 to the south of the site; and
- Residents and workers at Winking Hill Farm.

7.7. The Photograph Record included at **Appendix 3** shows the nature of existing views towards the site from six public vantage points representing the receptors referred to above, three of which are illustrated with Photomontages included at **Appendix 5**. The viewpoints are shown on the SZTV and Viewpoint Location Plan at **Appendix 2.** The viewpoints are referred to where relevant in the following assessment.

Receptor Sensitivity

7.8. Judgements on the sensitivity of identified visual receptors is made with consideration to the Assessment Criteria identified at **Appendix 1** of this LVIA.

7.9. Persons using recreational routes such as local public rights of way (PRoW) have high sensitivity to changes in their view.

7.10. Persons on roads such as West Leake Lane and the A453 have medium sensitivity to changes in their view.

7.11. Residential receptors at their property generally are considered to have high sensitivity to changes in their view. It is generally accepted however, that sensitivity decreases within upper floors due to the use of upper storeys generally not being associated with primary living spaces. As a precautionary approach, the default position adopted is that residential receptor sensitivity is high.

Effect on Visual Receptors during Construction

7.12. During construction visual effects would arise from construction activities on the site, including from the establishment of the temporary site compound and parking; the storage of materials; and the erection of the built components of the proposed development.

7.13. The effect of construction activity on visual amenity would be incremental and would vary during the construction period. Construction phase visual effects also would be short term and temporary. All construction works would be carried out in accordance with best practice to avoid, reduce or limit the extent of adverse visual effects as far as possible. Visual effects during construction would be the same as those reported below at Year 1 of the proposed development.

Effect on Visual Receptors during Operation

7.14. The following paragraphs assess the magnitude of change and the level of effect of the proposed development (with consideration to receptor sensitivity) on views experienced by identified receptors. Judgements on the magnitude of change and on the level of effect on each receptor is made with consideration to the Assessment Criteria identified at **Appendix 1** of this LVIA.

Views from Public Right of Way Ratcliffe on Soar FP3

7.15. Public Right of Way Ratcliffe on Soar FP3 runs approximately 300m to the south of the site. The SZTV suggests that there would be the potential for views of the development from a short section of the route as it runs westwards from West Leake Lane. However, in reality, the route runs behind a mature hedgerow which screens views for the first part of the route, at which point it diverts around the edge of a block of woodland. From here, as illustrated by Viewpoint 6, views are also screened by a combination of foreground vegetation, and at the time of the site visit, a mature maize crop in the adjacent field. In winter months more open views may be available, but at over 300m from the Proposed Development the potential for any visual impact would remain limited.

7.16. The magnitude of change on views from Ratcliffe on Soar FP3 would be no greater than **low** and the level of effect **minor adverse** at Year 1 and at Year 15.

Views from West Leake Lane

7.17. West Leake Lane is a minor road which runs to the east of the site and is the point of access into the site. The route runs on a broadly north-south alignment from the A453 to the village of West Leake. The SZTV illustrates that there would only be the potential for views of the development from a short section of the northernmost part of the route, from where it passes it over the top of Winking Hill down to the A453. Viewpoints 4 and 5 are located on this section of the route, with Viewpoint 5 illustrating the point at which the access is taken into the site from the road. The former power station site is a notable element in views travelling northbound on this section of the route, seen directly behind the Proposed Development site.

7.18. For much of the route the theoretical views shown on the SZTV would not be available due to the mature roadside hedgerows which line much of West Leake Lane. The only clear open view would

be at the site entrance, as illustrated by Viewpoint 5, but this would be no more than a fleeting view for road users. Viewpoint 4 is therefore more typical of those views which would be available, with the hedgerow screening much of the view. Viewpoint 3, from the roundabout where the A453 joins with West Leake Lane, also shows a slightly more open view in the north-east corner of the site, but again would not be the primary focus of attention to those moving around the roundabout.

7.19. For the majority of the route there would be no views of the Proposed Development and no impact. For a short section there would be the potential for some glimpsed views, above hedgerow screening, resulting in a **low magnitude** and a **minor adverse** level of effect at Year 1 and at Year 15. Immediately as the route passes the site entrance views would be more open, resulting in a **medium to high** magnitude and **moderate/major** effect at Year 1 and at Year 15.

Views from the A453

7.20. The A453 runs to the north of the site on a broadly south-west to north-east alignment. In the last few years it was subject to improvement works, including the provision of a realigned slip road for users travelling westbound on the route accessing from West Leake Lane. As part of these works, a notable area of new vegetation planting was implemented directly north of the site boundary. This vegetation is already beginning to gain height and will provide notable screening of the views southwards from the A453 towards the site in this area in the coming years.

7.21. The SZTV illustrates that there would be the potential for views of the development from a short section of the route as it runs in close proximity to the former power station complex to the north. Viewpoints 1 and 2 represent this section of the route (taken from safe locations close to the route). Both viewpoints illustrate that for much of the route the theoretical views shown on the SZTV would not be available due to the mature roadside vegetation which lines much of the south side of the road. There would however be a short section immediately to the north of the site where views would be more open, until such time as the vegetation planting associated with the road improvement works become mature. It should be noted however that the development which forms part of the consented Local Development Order (LDO) would be seen in these views in future following its construction. The LDO is discussed in more detail in the cumulative assessment section.

7.22. For the majority of the route there would be no views of the Proposed Development and no impact. For a short section there would be the potential for some glimpsed views, in the context

of the vegetation lining the road, resulting in a **low magnitude** and a **minor adverse** level of effect at Year 1 and at Year 15. Immediately as the route passes to the north of the site views would be more open, resulting in a **medium magnitude** and **moderate effect** at Year 1 and at Year 15.

7.23. However, it should also be noted that views would be at an oblique angle to drivers as they pass by the site and the road speeds are such that any views would be limited to only a short period of time. At this point in the journey along the road the view is already characterised to a notable degree by the Power station complex to the north and so the road already has large urbanising features in close proximity.

Views from Residents and workers at Winking Hill Farm

7.24. Winking Hill Farm lies to the west of the site and is accessed by the existing access from West Leake Lane that will also be used to access the Proposed Development. The farm includes a residential property and various associated agricultural buildings. The residents at Winking Hill Farm are the land owners who are involved in the development. Views of the Proposed Development from the residential property would be very limited due to its north-south alignment and the screening provided by adjacent farm buildings, combined with its offset from the proposals. The agricultural buildings have no windows orientated towards the Proposed Development and most views from the curtilage of the buildings would be screened by other buildings or vegetation.

7.25. The magnitude of change on views from the Winking Hill Farm complex would be no greater than **low** and the level of effect **moderate/minor adverse** at Year 1, reducing to **minor** at Year 15 as the proposed scrub and tree planting began to mature.

Summary of Effects on Visual Receptors

7.26. A summary of effects on visual receptors assessed above is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Summary of Effects on Visual Receptors

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Public Right of Way Ratcliffe on Soar FP3	High	Construction	Low	minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	minor adverse

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
		Year 15	Low	minor adverse
West Leake Lane	Medium	Construction	Ranging from low to medium/high (passing the site entrance only)	Ranging from minor adverse to moderate/major adverse (passing the site entrance only)
		Year 1	Ranging from low to medium/high (passing the site entrance only)	Ranging from minor adverse to moderate/major adverse (passing the site entrance only)
		Year 15	Ranging from low to medium/high (passing the site entrance only)	Ranging from minor adverse to moderate/major adverse (passing the site entrance only)
A453	Medium	Construction	Ranging from low to medium (immediately north of the site only)	Ranging from minor adverse to moderate adverse (immediately north of the site only)
		Year 1	Ranging from low to medium (immediately north of the site only)	Ranging from minor adverse to moderate adverse (immediately north of the site only)
		Year 15	Ranging from low to medium (immediately north of the site only)	Ranging from minor adverse to moderate adverse (immediately north of the site only)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Development Phase	Magnitude of change	Level of Effect
Residents and workers at Winking Hill Farm	High	Construction	Low	moderate/minor adverse
		Year 1	Low	moderate/minor adverse
		Year 15	Low	minor adverse

8. Cumulative Effects

8.1. This section sets out a consideration of the potential for cumulative effects with other nearby developments which are either consented or proposed. The methodology used to assess cumulative effects is in accordance with the principles set out in Chapter 7 of The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013). It is important to note in particular that at GLVIA3 para 7.5, states that such an assessment is to be kept *'reasonable and in proportion to the nature of the project under consideration*'.

8.2. There are two projects considered relevant to the cumulative assessment. Firstly, the recently consented Ratcliffe-on-Soar Local Development Order (LDO) which lies adjacent to the north, south and west of the site. Secondly, there is an application which was recently refused consent by Rushcliffe Council (Ref. No. 23/01285/FUL) for a Proposed Battery Energy Storage Facility on Land Off West Leake Lane, on the opposite side of the Lane to the Proposed Development.

8.3. The LDO includes for includes for notable new buffer planting around the edges of the parcels of commercial development which are proposed. This planting would serve to reduce the potential for any intervisibility between the two projects and further limit the potential for views of the proposed development from the landscape to the south-west of the site. Furthermore, it is also relevant to consider the extent to which the LDO will also be present in future views southwards from the A453, with the character of these views set to change to one which includes notable views of large scale commercial development, albeit beyond mitigation planting. The current views towards the Winking Hill site from the A453 are therefore set to change notably from what is currently visible when both the roadside planting begins to mature and the LDO is constructed. It is in this context that the views of the proposed development from the road should be considered. Overall, however when the LDO development is also considered alongside the Proposed Development there would be no change to the landscape and visual effects set out in the main assessment above.

8.4. The Proposed Battery Energy Storage Facility on the opposite side of West Leake Lane to the Proposed Development included a Landscape and Visual Appraisal as part of its planning application. This outlined a series of localised impacts, which can be summarised as follows:

- *Minor beneficial effects in relation to vegetation within the Site.*
- *Minor to Negligible adverse effects to landscape character and landform*

- *Visual effects from Minor adverse to Negligible for a limited number of receptors, limited to those in close proximity to the Site*

8.5. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal also highlighted that the development would:

'…sit within the existing landscape character without causing significant harm. Whilst some negative landscape and visual effects will arise from the proposed development as it emerges, the development of this land is sensitively located and is visually well contained. Furthermore, the landscape and visual effects are limited to the Appraisal Site and local level receptors only in close proximity to the Appraisal Site, as identified in this Appraisal'.

8.6. It goes on to state that *'The LVA finds that the scheme has been designed to respect the character of the surrounding landscape and screen the internal infrastructure by enclosing the battery storage facility within a landscaped area which is consistent with adjacent landform. Native mitigation hedgerow planting is proposed to soften the periphery landscaping, integrating the site into the surrounding landscape and deliver a considerable increase in biodiversity gain, which will assist with reducing any effects over time as the proposed planting adjacent to the Site boundaries matures'*.

8.7. In the context of the above findings, the potential for any notable cumulative landscape or visual impacts between the Proposed Development and the Proposed Battery Energy Storage Facility on the opposite side of West Leake Lane would be highly limited. This is particularly the case given the very limited extent of impacts of the Proposed Development in its own right. The only receptors where there would be the potential for cumulative effects of any note to arise would be West Leake Lane and the A453, however in each case the road users would be moving at speed, allowing only short duration views and in the case of the A453 the views would be largely oblique to the direction of travel.

8.8. Overall, when the Proposed Battery Energy Storage Facility on the opposite side of West Leake Lane is also considered alongside the Proposed Development there would be no more than minor additional cumulative effects above the landscape and visual effects set out in the main assessment above.

9. Green Belt

Introduction

9.1 This section provides landscape and visual information to inform the consideration of the proposals in relation to the Green Belt. In particular it provides a consideration of the potential for the proposals to impact on the openness of the green belt, as well as addressing the proposals in relation to the five purposes of the green belt, where these relate to landscape and visual matters.

Policy Context

9.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the national planning framework to be used in the determination of planning applications. The NPPF considers Green Belt Matters in Section 13. This confirms at paragraph 142 that:

'The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence'

9.3 There is no definition given to 'openness' in the NPPF. However, further clarification is provided in the 'Green Belt' Guidance, provided online by the UK Government. This sets out at paragraph 001 (Reference ID: 64-001-20190722) that:

'Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- *openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;*
- *the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and*
- *the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.'*

9.4 Paragraph 143 of the NPPF goes on to note that the Green Belt 'serves five purposes', as follows:

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;

c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

9.5 Paragraph 153 addresses development proposals affecting the Green Belt and states that:

'When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations'

9.6 The matter of the overall consideration of whether 'very special circumstances' exist or not is addressed separately elsewhere in the Planning Statement. This Section however provides information regarding any landscape and visual harm to the Green Belt so that this can be used to inform that wider planning exercise.

Potential for Impact on Openness - Spatial component

9.7 In order to consider the 'spatial' component of openness it is necessary to firstly understand the extent of the existing uses and built form at the site. In this case, the site currently comprises of agricultural fields with no existing built form. On that basis it is therefore acknowledged that with regard to the 'spatial' component of openness there would be an increase in the extent of development within the green belt.

9.8 However, it is important to recognise that the potential for impact to openness should be based on a consideration of both the 'spatial' component and the 'visual' component, which is addressed subsequently below.

Potential for Impact on Openness - Visual Component

9.9 In order to consider the visual component of openness, regard has been had to what extent the proposed development would be visible from the Green Belt. A summary of the effects on visual amenity from locations in the green belt is set out below:

9.10 The proposed layout has sought to retain and augment the existing field boundary vegetation, including the introduction of trees and hedgerows, therefore, minimising harmful visual effects. Due to the undulating nature of the wider surrounding landscape which includes a network of

surrounding woodlands, tree lined hedgerows and sporadic built elements the visibility of the proposed development would generally be limited in nature, even beyond the limited area shown on the SZTV.

Potential for Impact on the Purposes of the Green Belt

9.11 The first three purposes (a – c) are considered relevant to consider from a landscape and visual perspective and are considered below:

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

9.12 The proposals have sought to integrate into the existing framework of field boundaries and sensitively offset the proposals to respond to the landscape features within the site. Furthermore, the proposals have sought to reinforce these boundaries, through the strategic introduction of further planting to reinforce these boundaries for the long term. The proposed development would not therefore facilitate the unrestricted sprawl of the urban environment, but rather contain it within an existing and strengthened network of landscape features.

b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

9.13 It is not considered that the proposed development would make any material contribution to the merging of any of the nearby settlements either physically or perceptually.

c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

9.14 It is acknowledged that the proposed development would encroach into the countryside as far as the actual footprint of the new built form is confirmed. However, any impact on the wider countryside would be limited by the sensitive design and the landscape mitigation proposals included with the scheme.

Summary and Conclusion

9.15 It is considered with regard to the sensitive design of proposed development and the additional landscape mitigation proposed that the actual perceivable extent of any harm to the Green Belt is relatively limited, especially in future years as the mitigation develops. This harm should therefore be weighed accordingly alongside the benefits of the proposals, as set out in the wider analysis of the 'very special circumstances' presented in the Planning Statement which accompanies the planning application.

10. Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

10.1. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Chartered Landscape Architects at Pegasus Group on behalf of RES, to assist the local planning authority's consideration of a full planning application for the installation and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Associated Infrastructure at Land at West Leake Lane, Winking Hill.

10.2. It considers the site and its surrounding context in both landscape and visual terms, to assess the effect of the proposed development upon landscape features, landscape character and visual amenity.

Landscape Effects

10.3. The site and its surroundings are not included in any national or local landscape designations that recognise a specific landscape importance.

Landscape Features

10.4. During operation, the proposed development would result in the following levels of effects:

- **Negligible adverse** level of effect on site landform and topography, at Year 1 and at Year 15;
- **Major adverse** level of effect on site land use, buildings and infrastructure, at Year 1 and at Year 15;
- **Minor beneficial** level of effect on site waterbodies and drainage at Year 1 and at Year 15;
- **Minor beneficial** level of effect on vegetation in the site at Year 1 becoming **moderate beneficial** by Year 15 following establishment and maturing of proposed trees, scrub and hedgerows.

10.5. In summary, the proposed development would result in the loss of agricultural land and would introduce new development onto the site. The proposed development would however retain and enhance existing landscape features including mature trees and hedgerow along site boundaries, as part of the proposed development. Proposed planting and seeding, improved species diversity

and the incorporation of landscape features of ecological benefit, would comprise beneficial aspects of the proposed development.

Landscape Character

10.6. The proposed development would result in the loss of a small area of agricultural land and the introduction of new development across the site. There would be no loss of existing site trees or hedgerow within the footprint of proposed buildings; and only very limited modifications to ground levels across the site.

10.7. At Year 1, new seeding would be establishing, and new hedgerow and shrub planting would be young, supplemented with more mature tree planting within existing and proposed hedgerow and along sections of the watercourse running through the proposed development. Proposed tree planting would provide some instant filtering of the proposed development at Year 1. The level of effect on the landscape character of the site would be **major adverse** at Year 1.

10.8. At Year 15, the influence of proposed energy storage development on site character would continue to result in a **major adverse** level of effect within the site. The proposed enhancement of existing trees and hedgerow and proposed planting would however strengthen the landscape framework of the site, would provide greater habitat connectivity with existing vegetation, and would provide increased enclosure of the operational development.

10.9. The proposed development would impact the character of a very small part of NW02 'East Leake Rolling Farmland', and the neighbouring NW01 'Gotham and West Leake Hills and Scarps' but would introduce development in the context of the existing former power station site and A453 to the north of the site. It would be largely contained by landform and mature trees, hedgerow, and woodland in the surrounding landscape, and would be perceived from only a small part of its surroundings. The level of effect on NW02 'East Leake Rolling Farmland' and NW01 'Gotham and West Leake Hills and Scarps' is judged as being no greater than **minor adverse**.

10.10. The proposed development would however result in some long-term beneficial landscape effects as a result of proposed species-rich wildflower grassland, and new hedgerow, shrub and tree planting, which overtime would provide increased enclosure of the proposed development and further reduce its influence on the surrounding landscape.

Visual Effects

10.11. Field assessment has determined that the proposed development in the site has a small localised visual envelope limited by intervening landform and vegetation in the site's surroundings which reduce visibility of the site. Six viewpoints show the nature of views towards the site.

10.12. Construction activity within the site visible in receptor views would result in short-term, temporary visual effects.

10.13. Effects on users of Public Right of Way Ratcliffe on Soar FP3, which runs approximately 300m to the south of the site would be no greater than **minor adverse** at Year 1 and at Year 15.

10.14. West Leake Lane runs to the east of the site and is the point of access into the site. For the majority of the route there would be no views of the Proposed Development and no impact. For a short section there would be the potential for some glimpsed views, above hedgerow screening, resulting in a **low magnitude** and a **minor adverse** level of effect at Year 1 and at Year 15. Immediately as the route passes the site entrance views would be more open, resulting in a **medium to high** magnitude and **moderate/major** effect at Year 1 and at Year 15.

10.15. The A453 runs to the north of the site on a broadly south-west to north-east alignment. For the majority of the route there would be no views of the Proposed Development and no impact. For a short section there would be the potential for some glimpsed views, in the context of the vegetation lining the road, resulting in a **low magnitude** and a **minor adverse** level of effect at Year 1 and at Year 15. Immediately as the route passes to the north of the site views would be more open, resulting in a **medium magnitude** and **moderate effect** at Year 1 and at Year 15.

10.16. However, it should also be noted that views would be at an oblique angle to drivers as they pass by the site and the road speeds are such that any views would be limited to only a short period of time. At this point in the journey along the road the view is already characterised to a notable degree by the Power station complex to the north and so the road already has large urbanising features in close proximity.

10.17. Winking Hill Farm lies to the west of the site and is accessed by the existing access from West Leake Lane that will also be used to access the Proposed Development. The farm includes a residential property and various associated agricultural buildings. The residents at Winking Hill Farm are the land owners who are involved in the development. The magnitude of change on views from the Winking Hill Farm complex would be no greater than **low** and the level of effect

moderate/minor adverse at Year 1, reducing to **minor** at Year 15 as the proposed scrub and tree planting began to mature.

10.18. Overall, visual effects would be limited and localised, the greater impacts occurring on views experienced by road users in the immediate context of the site. Proposed mitigation planting would help to reduce visual effects over time as it would increase filtering and screening of the built elements of the development.

Conclusion

10.19. The proposed development has been designed with consideration to local character and has appropriate regard to its surrounding landscape setting. It recognises the site's intrinsic character and that of the wider landscape whilst seeking to improve and enhance local character and biodiversity.

10.20. During the construction and operation of the proposed development, there would inevitably be some localised effects on landscape features, character, and visual amenity. However, these effects would be limited and restricted in extent, in part due to screening by landform and existing vegetation. The addition of landscape enhancements and proposals shown on the Landscape Masterplan at **Appendix 4** would further assimilate the proposed development within the existing landscape framework of the site and its surroundings.