

SPALDING SOLAR FARM

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT



FOR EDF RENEWABLES UK LIMITED

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 RVDesign was appointed by Envams Ltd on behalf of EDF Renewables UK ('the Applicant') to carry out a Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) in connection with the proposed future development of land on the eastern edge of Spalding, Lincolnshire.
- 1.1.2 The LVA will accompany a planning application which is to be submitted to South Holland District Council (SHDC) as the determining authority. In brief, the application comprises the installation, operation and subsequent decommissioning of a 1.64 megawatt (MW) ground-mounted photovoltaic solar array on the land, with a private connection to an adjacent commercial premises ('the Development'). The Development would be temporary for a period of 40 years, with the energy generated being used exclusively by the commercial premises to help reduce its carbon footprint.
- 1.1.3 The land subject of the application ('the Site') extends to an area of approximately 4.9 ha (hectares). It comprises the existing commercial premises and two adjoining fields to the south, all within the ownership of Pilgrim's Pride UK. The eastern boundary of the Site adjoins the A16, whilst the western boundary adjoins Coronation Channel, a man-made waterway that defines the eastern edge of the town. The northern boundary coincides with the southern part of the existing commercial premises.
- 1.1.4 This report presents the findings of the LVA. It has recorded and analysed the baseline landscape and visual resources of the Site and surrounding area, identified landscape and visual receptors most likely to be affected by the Development and determined the extent to which these would be altered, or affected, with mitigation in place.

1.2 Content of the Assessment

- 1.2.1 The LVA contains the following sections:
- Section 1 (Introduction): Sets out the general background to, and content of, the assessment and any consultation undertaken;
 - Section 2 (Method and Process): Summarises the methods used in the assessment and the approach and processes followed in determining the effects of the Development on landscape and visual receptors;
 - Section 3 (Proposed Development and Mitigation): Describes the key elements of the Development, followed by measures incorporated with it to avoid or minimise adverse effects on landscape and visual receptors;
 - Section 4 (Landscape Baseline): Describes and analyses the existing landscape / townscape character of the area in which the Site is located, and identifies landscape receptors to be included in the assessment with an assessment of their sensitivity;
 - Section 5 (Visual Baseline): Identifies the broad area within which the Development would be likely to be seen, the visual receptor groups who are likely to gain visibility of it and the viewpoints where they would be affected, together with an assessment of their sensitivity;
 - Section 6 (Nature and Magnitude of Effects): Describes the nature of effects likely to arise from the Development;
 - Section 7 (Effects on Landscape Character): Identifies and describes the effects of the Development on landscape / townscape character, with mitigation in place;
 - Section 8 (Effects on Views and Visual Amenity): Identifies and describes the effects of the Development on views and visual amenity, with mitigation in place; and

- Section 9 (Summary and Conclusions): Summarises the effects of the Development and draws final conclusions.
- 1.2.2 The LVA includes the following appendices at the end of this document:
- Appendix A: Figures (refer to the contents page for the list);
 - Appendix B: Landscape Mitigation Plan (Planning Drawing 3); and
 - Appendix C: Tables of Criteria and Matrices for Landscape and Visual Assessment.
- 1.2.3 Neither the figures (Appendix A) nor the landscape mitigation Plan (Appendix B) are bound in the appendices, but are available as separate documents.

1.3 Pre-Application Consultation

- 1.3.1 A pre-application enquiry was submitted by the Applicant to SHDC, and a formal consultation response dated 12th October 2023 was received (reference PE-00132-23).
- 1.3.2 The consultation response included a summary of relevant planning policy as well as discussion on the merits of the scheme covering various topics, including landscape.
- 1.3.3 In terms of landscape and visual issues, the consultation response noted that the Site is located to the east of Spalding and "*is largely viewable from distance*". It also made reference to a plan submitted by the Applicant showing the zone of theoretical visibility of the Development. This is discussed further in Section 2.4 of this LVA but, to summarise, the plan shows the Development to be well contained with very limited visibility of it beyond its immediate setting.
- 1.3.4 The consultation response further acknowledged that the likely impact of the Development would be 'low', noting that it essentially comprises rows of solar panels no higher than 2.5 m. But it considered that there would be a cumulative impact and, therefore, requested a full landscape and visual impact assessment be submitted with the application, based upon Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3). However, site visits in conjunction with desktop reviews of maps and aerial photography did not identify any existing solar array / solar farm developments within the area local to the Site that would potentially give rise to cumulative effects.
- 1.3.5 Given the contained nature of the Site and the limited height of the Development, together with the absence of solar array / solar farm developments in the local area, a full or formal landscape and visual impact assessment was considered unnecessary. This is explained further in the following section.

2. METHOD AND PROCESS

2.1 Method

- 2.1.1 New development inevitably results in changes to the existing landscape and visual 'baseline' which are likely to affect landscape character and views in some way, for better or worse.
- 2.1.2 Judgments about what and who will be affected, how important is what is there and to whom, how sensitive is it to change and to what extent will it be changed need to be answered using an objective and evidence-based approach to determine whether the changes are acceptable or not, for instance, in relation to planning policy. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) can help answer these questions.
- 2.1.3 LVIA is the process by which the likely effects (adverse or beneficial) of proposed development on existing landscape character and visual amenity are determined together with the level, or degree, of such effects. LVIA methods are applied once a site has been selected and sufficient details of a proposed development are known.
- 2.1.4 In this instance, the main methods used in the assessment follow best practice guidance produced by the Landscape Institute in the third edition of its 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (commonly referred to as GLVIA3) published in 2013¹. Other guidance referred to is listed in the relevant sections of this assessment.
- 2.1.5 GLVIA3 defines landscape character as being the "*distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse*" (GLVIA3 Glossary page 157).
- 2.1.6 Visual amenity is defined as the "*overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area*" (GLVIA3 Glossary page 158).
- 2.1.7 GLVIA3 establishes the principles and processes that should be followed when undertaking a LVIA rather than providing a specific approach and methodology, this should always be developed on a job specific basis. It also explains how LVIA should ideally form part of an iterative design and assessment process, whereby the design of new development can evolve in response to the findings of the LVIA and other assessments to avoid or reduce adverse effects.
- 2.1.8 Although interrelated, GLVIA3 recommends that the effects of new development on landscape character and visual amenity are treated as separate chapters or topics in a LVIA. This is because change can affect landscape character regardless of whether it can be seen.
- 2.1.9 GLVIA3 also notes that whilst many assessments are referred to as LVIAs, a 'formal' (or full) LVIA is only required where new development falls within the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive and Regulations and landscape is an issue. But not all developments are subject to the EIA Regulations, in which case GLVIA3 advises that a more 'informal' assessment or appraisal may be undertaken as a standalone document. The same principles and processes as LVIA may be applied, however, when carrying out informal assessments or appraisals it is not necessary to establish whether identified effects are 'significant' or not, as the exercise is not being undertaken for the purposes of an EIA.

¹ The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013), Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, Routledge: London and New York.

- 2.1.10 In this instance an EIA has not been undertaken and, therefore, this assessment adopts a more informal approach. This is reflected in the naming of the assessment, which is referred to as a LVA rather than a LVIA. The LVA does, however, consider the relative importance / 'levels of effects' by combining judgments on the 'sensitivity' of landscape and visual receptors to the Development and the 'magnitude of effect' arising from the Development. This is explained further in Sections 2.5 to 2.7 below.
- 2.1.11 In all instances, GLVIA3 stresses that the approach to, and scope of, an assessment should be reasonable and proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposed change. The emphasis should always be on identifying and assessing effects that are likely to be of most importance to the decision-maker.

2.2 Approach and Process

- 2.2.1 In accordance with GLVIA3, the assessment process comprises the following key stages:
- Determining the likely extent of influence of the Development (or the study area boundaries);
 - Establishing the landscape and visual baseline (in other words, identifying and evaluating the current attributes and characteristics of the Site and wider study area and establishing the likely extent of visibility of the Development and people likely to be affected);
 - Identifying landscape and visual receptors with most potential to be affected by the Development together with an assessment of their sensitivity;
 - Assessing the likely magnitude of effects of the Development on identified landscape and visual receptors, taking account of agreed mitigation; and
 - Determining the level (rather than significance) of effects of the Development on each landscape and visual receptor assessed.
- 2.2.2 The key stages of the assessment process followed in this LVA are explained further below.

2.3 Study Area

- 2.3.1 The initial step in the assessment process is defining the 'area of influence' of the Development, or the study area boundaries. This was determined partly by diagrams illustrating Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) of the Development (see below), but also took account of the physical characteristics of the landscape in which the Development is located which have no bearing on visibility.
- 2.3.2 Analysis of the ZTVs and the particular characteristics of the landscape (including local landform, land use and landcover) identified the extent of area surrounding the Site in which the Development is most likely to have an influence on landscape / townscape character and visual amenity. This is limited to a radius of approximately 2 km from the centre of the Site and, in part, reflects the limited visibility indicated by the ZTVs.
- 2.3.3 The extent of the study area is shown on **Figure 1** (Site Location), Appendix A. A photographic image of the study area is shown on **Figure 2** (Aerial Photograph).

2.4 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

- 2.4.1 To assist with defining the area within which the Development would be likely to be seen (otherwise known as the 'visual envelope'), ZTV diagrams have been prepared. These diagrams set the broad visual context for the Development and help with identifying visual receptors and viewpoints to be included in the visual assessment. As noted above, ZTVs can also help with defining the study area.

- 2.4.2 ZTVs are computer generated from a digital terrain model of the study area with a three-dimensional model of the Development incorporated. In this instance, the digital terrain model has been produced using OS Terrain 5 software at 5 metre (m) resolution. The Development was then superimposed as a series of points equivalent to the highest parts of the scheme to enable a three-dimensional plot of the visible areas to be produced. The highest parts were taken to be 3 m above existing ground levels for the solar panels, although their maximum height would be no greater than 2.5 m.
- 2.4.3 The ZTVs illustrate the theoretical visibility of the Development throughout the study area as various percentages, ranging from 1-20% of the Development visible to 100% visible. They assume an average eye height of an adult person of 1.6 m above ground level, which is midway between the range of 1.5 m to 1.7 m given in GLVIA3.
- 2.4.4 Two ZTVs have been prepared corresponding with the extent of the study area: 'bare-earth' and 'screened' (refer to **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**, Appendix A). The parameters used in the preparation of the ZTVs is set out on each of the figures.
- 2.4.5 The bare-earth ZTV illustrates theoretical visibility of the Development based on local landform. It does not take into account screening by buildings and vegetation and, as such, it represents a 'worst-case scenario'. The screened ZTV takes account of existing buildings and woodland (identified from OS Vector Map District Data), however, the computer model does not take into account hedgerows and other linear vegetation present in the study area or containing the Site. In reality, therefore, actual visibility of the Development is likely to be less than that indicated by the screened ZTV when factoring in this additional screening.
- 2.4.6 It is also important to note that ZTVs do not take into account the effect of increasing distance on visibility, and the degree of change arising from this – the nature of what can be seen at a distance of 100 m will differ markedly from what can be seen at 1 km from a similar direction, but this is not distinguished by the ZTVs. The degree of change (or magnitude of effects) arising from visibility of the Development will therefore reduce with increasing distance from the Site.

2.5 Baseline Data Collection

- 2.5.1 Having defined the study area, the next step in the assessment process is to establish the existing baseline landscape character and visibility of the area. This has been determined through a combination of desktop research and site visits.
- 2.5.2 Desktop research was carried out before any site visits in order to gain an understanding of the landscape character of the area. It included reviews of reports and studies, as well as searches of government and other websites. Information obtained and mapped (and referred to in the relevant sections of the LVA) included landscape-related designations, cultural heritage and nature conservation assets, public rights of way, settlement and land use patterns, topography and significant vegetation.
- 2.5.3 Desktop research also included reference to 1:25,000 scale Ordnance Survey (OS) contour maps and Google Earth in order to identify publicly accessible viewpoints within the ZTV.
- 2.5.4 Site visits involved walking the Site to confirm existing land uses and boundary treatments, and their condition. It also involved looking outwards to establish what could be seen and noting this on 1:25,000 OS bases. This helped to provide an indication of the places and viewpoints from where the Site and potentially the Development could be seen in the surrounding area.
- 2.5.5 This was followed by a survey of the wider area on foot and by car noting and recording aspects of landscape character. It also involved visiting potential viewpoints identified from the desk studies and site survey to assess their suitability for inclusion in the visual assessment. The purpose of this was to test the findings of the desktop exercise in the field and refine the baseline studies.

- 2.5.6 Key landscape characteristics were noted and their present quality / condition and contribution confirmed. The extent to which the Site is typical of, or differs from, the local landscape character was also considered and recorded.
- 2.5.7 The extent of the ZTV was similarly verified and adjusted as necessary taking account of screening by local topography, vegetation and buildings not factored into the computer model. Key viewpoints were also confirmed or adjusted, and in some instances new viewpoints identified. For each viewpoint a baseline photograph was taken to illustrate the nature of the view.
- 2.5.8 This exercise provided a more realistic indication of the actual ZTV of the Development and further informed which viewpoints would be taken forward in the assessment.
- 2.5.9 The site surveys also helped to inform the extent and layout of the Development, and likely mitigation measures required to avoid or reduce likely adverse effects to acceptable levels.

2.6 Assessment of Sensitivity

- 2.6.1 Once the baseline studies are complete and the information processed and analysed, the next step in the assessment process is to identify and evaluate the 'sensitivity' of landscape and visual receptors most likely to be affected by the Development. Landscape receptors include the local landscape in which the Site is located, and may also include individual elements and features of the landscape (trees, hedges, walls, etc.). Visual receptors are people who live, work, visit or travel through an area.
- 2.6.2 Sensitivity is the extent to which a landscape or visual receptor is able to accommodate the proposed change, and may be regarded as a measure of resilience or robustness. This is determined through a consideration of the 'susceptibility' of the receptor and any 'value' attached to the landscape / view by society. GLVIA3 defines susceptibility as "*the ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences*" (GLVIA3 Glossary, page 158). Levels of receptor susceptibility to the proposed change and any value attached to the landscape / view are then combined and professional judgment applied in order to reach an overall conclusion on sensitivity.
- 2.6.3 Levels of susceptibility, value and overall sensitivity applied in the assessment and criteria used to determine these levels are set out in Tables 1 to 3 (landscape character) and Tables 6 to 8 (visual amenity) of Appendix C at the end of this LVA. The levels are graded on a five-point scale from Very High to Very Low so that small variations in sensitivity are taken into account. This is also consistent with guidance on assessing landscape sensitivity published by Natural England².

2.7 Assessment of Magnitude of Effect

- 2.7.1 Having determined sensitivity, the next step in the assessment process is to evaluate the nature of change or 'magnitude of effect' for landscape and visual receptors that is likely to result from the Development.
- 2.7.2 Magnitude of effect is the degree to which a landscape or visual receptor is changed by the addition of the Development. This is determined through a number of variables that relate to the 'size or scale' of the change and the 'geographical extent' of area affected. The 'duration' and 'reversibility' of effects is also taken into account.
- 2.7.3 For each receptor assessed, the LVA considers whether identified effects are 'adverse' or 'beneficial'. This is discussed in more detail in Section 6, but in summary adverse effects generally relate to the loss of existing features or the introduction of features that are

² Natural England (2019), An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – To Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management.

uncharacteristic and would be considered detrimental to a landscape or view. Beneficial effects relate to the enhancement of existing features or the introduction of features that are characteristic of the landscape or view and would be considered to improve the baseline situation. In some instances, effects can be 'neutral'.

- 2.7.4 Levels of magnitude of effect applied in the assessment and criteria used to determine these levels are set out in Table 4 (landscape character) and Table 9 (visual amenity) of Appendix C at the end of this LVA. The levels are similarly graded on a five-point scale from Very Large to Negligible (adverse or beneficial) so that small changes in magnitude are taken into account.
- 2.7.5 In determining levels of magnitude of effect, it is important to have as much information as possible about the nature, scale and design of the proposed development so that judgments made are as accurate as possible. In this respect, the design of the Development which forms the basis of this LVA is discussed in the following section. Mitigation measures incorporated with it to avoid potentially unacceptable effects or which reduces them to acceptable levels are also discussed.

2.8 Level of Effect

- 2.8.1 Having determined sensitivity and magnitude of effect, the final step in the assessment process (when not forming part of an EIA) is to establish the overall 'level of effect'. This is a measure of the importance of an effect on landscape / townscape character or visual amenity arising from the Development and may be used to inform decision-makers regarding the likely level of harm or benefit caused.
- 2.8.2 The level of effect is determined, in part, by matrices whereby levels of sensitivity and magnitude, as described above, are combined to reach an initial judgment. Professional judgment must then be applied to reach a final decision.
- 2.8.3 Matrices used to determine overall levels of effect applied in the assessment are set out in Table 5 (landscape character) and Table 10 (visual amenity) of Appendix C. If the magnitude of effect is expressed as adverse or beneficial, then the overall level of effect will be expressed as 'negative' or 'positive'.

2.9 Limitations

- 2.9.1 As part of the assessment process, any limitations or restrictions that might have a bearing on the assessment should be identified or clarified, such as timing of visits, weather conditions, level of access, etc.
- 2.9.2 In this instance, site visits and viewpoint photography were carried out in August 2023 when the seasonal filtering and screening of views by deciduous vegetation when in leaf was apparent. Consequently, other views of the Site might be gained at other times of the year when deciduous vegetation is not in leaf. Site visits were also timed to coincide with favourable weather conditions affording good visibility even from more distant locations.
- 2.9.3 Whilst access to the Site was permitted, beyond the Site all survey and assessment work was restricted to publicly accessible locations (footpaths, roads, public open spaces, public vantage points, etc.). Similarly, all viewpoints included in the assessment were restricted to publicly accessible locations (other than those included from within the Site).
- 2.9.4 Although the assessment is primarily concerned with changes to public views, private views from residential properties have been considered where changes are likely to be important. However, a formal residential amenity survey has not been carried out as part of the assessment and, due to restrictions with access, private views have been assessed either from the closest publicly accessible locations or from within the Site. In either case, the assessment should be regarded as an informed estimate of likely visual effects.

- 2.9.5 Elements and features of heritage and ecological interest have been identified as part of the process of defining the physical resources, character and setting of the Site and wider study area. However, in accordance with GLVIA3, the assessment does not address their importance or potential effects on their setting, etc. arising from the Development. Where necessary, reference should be made to separate heritage and ecological studies which accompany the planning application.
- 2.9.6 Glint and glare has similarly been discussed within a separate technical study submitted with the application, and has not been addressed in this assessment. But as noted in the following section, the dark colour of the solar panels would help to minimise this.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND MITIGATION

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 In summary, the Development comprises the installation, operation and decommissioning of a 1.64 MW ground-mounted photovoltaic solar array on the Site, with a private connection to an adjacent commercial premises (Pilgrim's Pride UK). The energy generated by the scheme would be for the exclusive use of the commercial premises to help reduce its carbon footprint.
- 3.1.2 A full description of the Development can be found in the Planning, Design and Access Statement submitted with the planning application. This includes layout drawings and other technical details which illustrate what is proposed in plan and elevation.
- 3.1.3 Elements of the Development that are of most relevance to the LVA are summarised below and are shown on the Landscape Mitigation Plan (Planning Drawing 3) included in Appendix B. These are what formed the basis of the assessment of effects, and include mitigation measures incorporated with the scheme in order to avoid or minimise adverse effects on landscape and visual receptors.

Summary Development Description

Main Elements

- The Site comprises the southern part of the existing commercial premises and two small pasture fields which adjoin it to the south. The boundaries are defined by the A16 to the east, an artificial water course (Coronation Channel) contained by raised flood banks to the west and the commercial premises to the north.
- The approximate site area as defined by the redline application boundary is 4.9 ha.
- The main element of the scheme would be the solar panels. These would occupy approximately 2.64 ha of the total Site area, corresponding with both fields. The exact type and model of solar panels has yet to be confirmed, however, they would comprise photovoltaic cells which would be dark coloured and designed to maximise the absorbency of the sun's rays whilst minimising solar glare. The dark colour of the solar panels would also appear quite recessive in the landscape.
- The solar panels would be mounted on fixed metal frames with supports. These would be positioned within fence lines erected around the Site, and be pile driven into the ground to avoid the need for excavations and concrete footings.
- The frames would be arranged in parallel rows orientated to the south and would be spaced 3-4 m apart to prevent shading by adjacent panels and to take account of access requirements. The panels would also be tilted approximately 25 degrees from the horizontal with the lowest (southern) edge sat approximately 800 mm above the ground, rising to a maximum of 2.5 m at the highest (northern) edge.
- Located along the western edge of alternate rows of solar panels would be fifteen string inverters, each measuring approximately 1.5 m x 1.5 m x 600 mm.
- A transformer station would be situated at the north western corner of the southern field. This would be housed in a container measuring approximately 4 m x 4 m x 2 m high.
- A ring main unit would also be positioned directly adjacent to the existing commercial premises. This would be housed in a container measuring approximately 6.1 m x 2.5 m x 2.9 m high.

- Buried cables would link the solar panels with the transformer station and the ring main unit.
- A 2 m high timber post and wire mesh security fence would be erected around the perimeter of both fields.
- Fourteen CCTV cameras mounted on 5 m high poles would be provided inside the security fence. In addition, whilst there is no requirement to provide permanent lighting, motion activated lighting may be combined with the CCTV cameras to provide additional security at night.
- Access to the Site would be gained via the existing access arrangements leading to the commercial premises, with a new gated access formed off the existing staff car park at the southern extent.
- Within the Site, there would be no requirement to provide new (hard) access tracks.

Proposed Landscape Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

- Existing boundary vegetation within and to the perimeter of the Site would be retained and incorporated within the scheme to maintain landscape character.
 - Existing grassland beneath the area covered by the solar panels would be retained and modified to enhance its biodiversity value. Management techniques would include hay cutting and / or low intensity sheep grazing.
 - Existing grassland between the perimeter fence and Site boundary adjoining the A16 would also be retained and managed over time to enhance its biodiversity value. Management techniques would include hay cutting and overseeding if required.
 - A new native hedgerow would be planted along the length of the eastern boundary to filter and screen views of the Development from the A16. The hedge would be planted as a double staggered row (at 5 plants per linear metre) using locally indigenous hedgerow species supplied as forestry transplants (40 / 60 cm high). Once established, it would be maintained at a height of approximately 3 m.
 - Native hedgerow trees would be planted to the new hedgerow adjoining the A16 (approximately 12 no) to enhance characteristic features of the local landscape. The choice of trees would be based on locally indigenous tree species supplied as light standards (minimum 200 cm high).
- 3.1.4 Other mitigation measures incorporated with the Development include painting the container that houses the transformer station in a suitable colour to help minimise its visual appearance. The final choice of colour would be agreed with SHDC and could be subject to an appropriately worded planning condition, but for the purposes of this LVA it is assumed to be dark green in order to appear recessive in the landscape.
- 3.1.5 The construction phase of the Development would last approximately 3 months and the operational phase would be for 40 years. At the end of the operational phase, it is intended that the Development would be removed and the land returned to its existing use.

4. LANDSCAPE BASELINE

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 The landscape baseline identifies 'what is there' in relation to the existing landscape character of the study area and the Site itself. This includes the constituent elements and features that make up the landscape, its character and any variations in its character. It also takes account of any recognition or value attached to the landscape.
- 4.1.2 This information helps to establish how important the landscape is, to whom and why. It is used to determine levels of landscape susceptibility and landscape value, which are then combined to inform judgments about levels of landscape sensitivity at the end of this section (Section 4.4). This, combined with levels of magnitude of effect, informs judgments about the overall levels of effects reported in Section 7.

4.2 Landscape-related Designations and Protected Features

- 4.2.1 As part of the process of establishing the character of the landscape within the study area, the baseline description seeks to identify any value attached to it. This usually takes the form of landscape-related designations valued for their wild or scenic beauty at a national, regional or local level such as National Parks, AONBs and Special Landscape Areas (or equivalent designations). The baseline description considers the special qualities of any designations as set out in management plans and / or development plans.
- 4.2.2 The baseline description also takes account of any protected features within the study area which, in addition to contributing to landscape character, may indicate value at a national, regional or more local level. Protected features mostly relate to cultural heritage or nature conservation assets such as World Heritage Sites, Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodland, etc.
- 4.2.3 Landscape-related designations and protected features identified within the study area from searches of the MAGIC³ website and SHDC website are summarised below.

Designated Landscapes

- 4.2.4 Neither the Site nor the wider study area lie within a designated landscape.

Scheduled Monuments

- 4.2.5 No Scheduled Monuments were identified within the study area. The closest is Pinchbeck Engine, which lies approximately 2.8 km north of the Site.

Conservation Areas

- 4.2.6 One Conservation Area (CA) was identified within the study area:
- Spalding CA, which lies approximately 900 m west of the Site at its closest point and is separated from it by the intervening built form of the town.

Listed Buildings

- 4.2.7 There are a concentration of listed buildings within the built-up area of Spalding, with the majority situated within the Conservation Area. None have any intervisibility with the Site.
- 4.2.8 Outside of the Conservation Area, but within the built-up area of the town, a group of three listings lie approximately 500 m north of the Site at Fulney. These include the Church of

³ MAGIC website. Available online at: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk>

St. Paul (Grade I) and the Vicarage to the Church of St. Paul (Grade II*). The church spire is a noticeable feature of the skyline from within the Site, albeit it is seen in context with pylons and chimneys associated with a nearby power station.

- 4.2.9 Beyond the town, only one listing was identified within 1 km of the Site – Old Office Block of Land Settlement Association (Grade II*). This area of land lies approximately 900 m to the southeast where it is surrounded by an extensive area of commercial glasshouses and other modern agricultural / commercial buildings.

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

- 4.2.10 No Registered Historic Parks and Gardens were identified within the study area.

Biodiversity

- 4.2.11 Two designated sites of nature conservation interest / importance were identified within the study area:
- Arnolds Meadow Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which lies approximately 1 km south of the Site beside Coronation Channel.
 - Vernatts LNR, which lies approximately 1.4 km northwest of the Site beside Vernatts Drain within the built-up area of Spalding.

Recreation and Access

- 4.2.12 No long-distance walking routes pass through the study area, but National Cycle Route (NCR) 12 extends south of Spalding town centre following various roads entirely within the built-up area of the town.
- 4.2.13 Beyond the built form of the town a small number of public footpaths and bridleways lead eastwards, although none extend for any distance. One of these follows the western edge of the A16 immediately north of the Site.
- 4.2.14 Other informal footpaths follow the raised flood banks on either side of Coronation Channel where it adjoins the Site to the west.

4.3 Landscape Character

- 4.3.1 As noted in Section 2.1, landscape character is defined as the “*distinct and recognisable pattern of landscape elements and features that occurs consistently in a particular place and makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.*”
- 4.3.2 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the process by which the pattern of landscape elements and features is identified and described. The process of defining and explaining the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive is described by Natural England in its publication ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’ published in 2014⁴.
- 4.3.3 This document sets out three key scales at which LCAs can be undertaken – broad scale (national / regional), intermediate scale (county or district) and local / site scale. Local and site scale is noted as being the scale at which Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is typically undertaken.
- 4.3.4 This LVA focuses on the local / site scale and has considered the effects of the Development on the contextual landscapes in which the Site lies (the study area) where the influence of the Development would be greatest.

⁴ Natural England (2014), An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment.

Contextual Landscape Character

- 4.3.5 The landscapes of the Site and wider study area have been subject to detailed on the ground survey and analysis, supported by maps and aerial photographs. This section analyses the landscape character context corresponding with the study area; the following section describes the Site and its boundaries / immediate context.
- 4.3.6 For ease of reference, the study area described in this section is divided into geographical sectors (north to east, east to south, etc.), starting from north to east and working in a clockwise direction.
- 4.3.7 On a general note, the solid geology of the area within which the Site lies comprises Jurassic clays overlain by fertile calcareous and silty soils. This influences characteristics such as land use and landcover.

North to East Sector

- 4.3.8 This sector is characterised by a distinctive flat landscape that generally sits at 3 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). It is also a predominantly agricultural landscape and one which is quite open and somewhat featureless.
- 4.3.9 Land use is dominated by arable fields and in the north of the sector these are large-scale and of regular or sub-regular shape. Elsewhere, the field pattern is smaller but strongly rectilinear. Some small-scale horticultural / market gardening uses are also present, whilst farmsteads typically retain smaller pasture fields. Some of these have been sub-divided into paddocks grazed by horses, which has an urbanising influence on the landscape.
- 4.3.10 Field boundaries are defined by ditches or grassed strips, and agricultural fencing where enclosing paddocks, and the lack of enclosure adds to the sense of openness. Overall, the intensive agricultural practises have diminished the area's nature conservation interest and no designated sites exist in this part of the study area.
- 4.3.11 The busy A16 road crosses the western part of the sector following a north-south direction around the eastern edge of Spalding where it presently contains the settlement. The A151 also crosses the central part of the sector in a broadly east-west direction and converges with the A16 at Spalding. Both routes exert an urbanising influence along the corridor through which they pass. In addition, a number of minor roads cross the area, however, there are very few public rights of way in this sector.
- 4.3.12 Settlement is very dispersed, consisting of isolated farmsteads and small groups of houses strung out along the main roads. These tend to be slightly elevated above the surrounding area so that historically they remained useable during periods of flooding.
- 4.3.13 There is very little tree and woodland cover in the agricultural landscapes in this sector, just a few small blocks and occasional avenues / linear vegetation alongside the main roads and some minor roads which punctuate the landscape. Small groups of trees and tall evergreen hedges also surround many of the farmsteads and afford some measure of enclosure in the open landscape. In contrast, Spalding appears well-wooded in many views where there are a number of treed and wooded areas within the built-up area and on its boundaries, including along the A16.
- 4.3.14 Incongruous / detracting features include various large, modern industrial / commercial buildings that adjoin the west side of the A16 where it skirts around Spalding (including Pilgrim's Pride UK). A small group of glasshouses and other agricultural buildings also adjoin the A151 and stand out in the open landscape. Elsewhere, a row of pylons cross the northern part of the sector, the vertical structures being noticeable features in the flat, open landscape.

- 4.3.15 Overall, levels of landscape condition / quality are low and whilst the distinctive flat, open landscapes convey a strong sense of place, the proximity of Spalding and main roads which cross the area diminishes the sense of rural remoteness and tranquillity.

East to South Sector

- 4.3.16 Landscape patterns and land uses that characterise the North to East sector, as described above, extend into this sector.
- 4.3.17 Arable uses predominate as medium to large-scale fields of strong rectilinear shape with open boundaries. Some pasture uses are also present in the northwest of the sector where they include a number of mature field trees. But on the whole, tree and woodland cover is restricted to the odd small block and some avenues and shelterbelts along roads and enclosing some properties, including Furnley House and adjacent paddocks in the north of the area. Settlement is similarly sparse and limited to small groups of houses strung out along the minor roads which cross the area.
- 4.3.18 Contrasting with this broad pattern of uses is an extensive area in the centre of the sector devoted to market gardening / horticultural uses. Here, the field pattern has been subdivided into numerous small plots and these are interspersed with large expanses of glasshouses as well as other modern, commercial / agricultural buildings and related infrastructure. Collectively, these structures represent a significant urbanising feature in the otherwise open landscape. A sizeable area of allotments to the immediate northwest of this area adds to the general urbanising influences present in this sector.

South to West Sector

- 4.3.19 The majority of this sector comprises land within the built-up area of Spalding, which extends more widely to the west beyond the limit of the study area. It includes the historic core and town centre, as well as its eastern suburbs.
- 4.3.20 The A16 continues across the eastern part of this sector in a north-south direction and just to the west of this Coronation Channel defines the built-up edge of the town. The narrow strip of land in between is mainly in arable use but includes a small nature reserve (Arnold's Meadow) and an industrial / commercial complex.
- 4.3.21 Beyond the raised flood banks that contain Coronation Channel much of the area comprises modern residential development together with several schools and various commercial buildings in the town centre. The residential development generally extends to the built-up edge of the town in this sector and separates the historic core from the wider countryside to the east.
- 4.3.22 Although the majority of this sector is built-up, there are also several open green spaces scattered throughout. Most are associated with schools, such as playing fields and sports pitches, but some are parks or sit within residential areas as small amenity spaces. The River Welland also flows through the centre of the area, albeit as a narrow and highly canalised feature.
- 4.3.23 Native woodland is not characteristic in this sector, however, there are many mature trees in gardens, lining roads and watercourses, and in other green open spaces within the built-up area. This gives the impression of a well-wooded landscape, especially in views towards the town, and contrasts with the open character of the landscape to the east.

West to North Sector

- 4.3.24 As with the previous sector, this sector is dominated by the built form of Spalding.

- 4.3.25 Coronation Channel continues through the area and joins with the River Welland just north of the A151 crossing. Another highly canalised drainage channel (Vernatt's Drain) also passes through the centre of the area broadly parallel with the river.
- 4.3.26 The A151 itself passes through the town in an east-west direction. To the south of the road the area is predominantly residential and includes the suburb of Fulney with its Grade I listed church situated beside the road and Coronation Channel.
- 4.3.27 North of the A151, the majority of the sector is characterised by industrial and commercial uses. It includes a power station with prominent chimneys, a sewage works beside the River Welland, the town's main hospital and a cemetery situated further to the west. Industrial and commercial uses also extend to the east of the river as far as the A16, and on either side of the A151 at the approach to the town.
- 4.3.28 Green open spaces and woodland cover in this sector are mainly limited to residential areas and include the cemetery, playing fields and other amenity spaces. Vernatt's LNR is also situated just north of the cemetery beside Vernatt's Drain.

Character of the Site and Immediate Surrounds

- 4.3.29 The Site, as defined by the redline application boundaries, extends to an area of some 5.1 ha that is situated on the eastern edge of Spalding in a transitional landscape between the built form of the town and the open countryside. The location of the Site is shown on **Figure 1** (Site Location), Appendix A and it can also be seen in context with the town and surrounding area on **Figure 2** (Aerial Photograph).
- 4.3.30 The Site is essentially flat and low-lying. Ordnance Survey contour mapping of the area (1:25,000 scale) shows a series of spot levels across eastern parts of the study area (outside the built form of Spalding) of between 3 m and 4 m AOD.
- 4.3.31 The northern part of the Site comprises existing modern industrial / commercial buildings, hardstandings and other related infrastructure associated with Pilgrim's Pride UK. The southern part, where the proposed solar panels would be located, is presently in agricultural use as two small pasture fields of elongated shape, which come to a point at the southern extent of the Site. The fields are separated by a ditch with sporadic vegetation adjoining it, and the northern field has been sub-divided by post and wire fencing.
- 4.3.32 The boundary between the northern field and adjacent commercial premises is defined by timber post and rail fencing with metal security fencing immediately behind. An evergreen hedge approximately 4 m high also defines part of the boundary, but notwithstanding this the large modern-looking buildings on the Site are a significant feature in views from within the field. It is also possible to see the spire of St. Paul's church on the skyline above these buildings, as well as more distant pylons and chimneys associated with the power station on the northern edge of Spalding.
- 4.4.33 Timber post and rail fencing also defines the eastern boundary with the busy A16, which passes at a slightly higher level than the fields with a ditch alongside it. There is very little vegetation along this boundary and consequently traffic using the road is clearly visible (and audible across both fields). Visibility also extends a short distance beyond the road across small fields of pasture containing mature field trees, as far as a linear belt of vegetation adjoining Fulney Lane. A single property with outbuildings adjoins the lane and can also be seen from the northern field, albeit within a treed and wooded context.
- 4.3.34 Sporadic vegetation in conjunction with post and rail fencing defines the western boundary, beyond which the grassed flood bank that adjoins the east side of Coronation Channel is a noticeable feature where it sits approximately 2 m above the level of the Site. A scattering of vegetation along the flood bank softens its engineered appearance and together with a more substantial belt of vegetation on the opposite side of the channel restricts visibility towards Spalding. Some filtered views of residential properties on the built-up edge of the

town are possible where the vegetation is thinner, whilst people following an informal footpath along the top of the flood bank are clearly visible.

- 4.3.35 Some limited enclosure is provided at the southern end of the Site by a section of overgrown hedge on the western boundary and a maturing belt of trees on the eastern boundary that screen a roundabout on the A16. Lighting columns on the roundabout project above the height of the vegetation and add to the urbanising influence of the road, as does a telecommunications mast sited immediately south of the roundabout.
- 4.3.36 A line of telegraph poles cross the central part of the Site in an east-west direction and are minor detractors in the local landscape.
- 4.3.37 Access to the commercial premises is obtained directly off a roundabout junction on the A151 to the north. Access to the fields in which the solar panels would be located is presently gained via a gated field entrance on Low Road at the southern extent of the southern field, between a bridge crossing of Coronation Channel and the roundabout junction with the A16. Access can also be obtained via a gated field entrance off the A16 in the northeast corner of the northern field. Neither field entrance would be used as part of the Development.

4.4 Landscape Sensitivity

- 4.4.1 As described in Section 2.6, the overall levels of effect on landscape character arising from the Development are arrived at by combining judgments on landscape sensitivity and magnitude of effect (the latter as described in Section 7). Judgments about levels of landscape sensitivity for each receptor are derived by combining levels of 'susceptibility' to the proposed change and levels of 'value' attached to the landscape, and then applying professional judgment.
- 4.4.2 Levels of susceptibility to the proposed change and landscape value are determined through analysis of the information gathered during the baseline studies, as set out in the preceding sections, and assessed against criteria set out in Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix C. Not all criteria need to be met in order for a receptor to be categorised at a certain level of susceptibility or value, and professional judgment must be applied when deciding which ones are relevant.
- 4.4.3 The matrix in Table 3 shows how judgments on susceptibility and value combine to arrive at theoretical levels of receptor sensitivity. Again, professional judgment must be exercised and the preliminary findings tested and compared before reaching a final conclusion.
- 4.4.4 In light of the baseline studies set out above, the assessment concluded that the level of susceptibility to change of the contextual landscapes in which the Site lies was judged to be *low* and that of the Site was also judged to be *low* (in accordance with criteria in Table 1).
- 4.4.5 The level of landscape value of both the contextual landscapes and the Site was judged to be *low* (in accordance with criteria in Table 2).
- 4.4.6 The overall level of landscape sensitivity of the contextual landscapes of the study area was judged to be **Low** and that of the Site, **Low** (Table 3).

5. VISUAL BASELINE

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 The visual baseline identifies the broad area in which the Development would be likely to be seen (its visual envelope or ZTV), the visual receptor groups (people) who are likely to gain visibility of it, the viewpoints (places) where they are most likely to be affected and the nature of views at those points. GLVIA3 notes that *"these factors are all interrelated and need to be considered in an integrated way rather than as a series of separate steps."*
- 5.1.2 This information is used to determine levels of visual susceptibility and visual value, which are then combined to inform judgments about levels of visual sensitivity at the end of this section (Section 5.4). This, combined with levels of magnitude of effect, informs judgments about the overall levels of visual effects reported in Section 8.
- 5.1.3 The findings of the landscape baseline were also used to inform the visual baseline, as it provides an explanation for judgments about levels of visual value.

5.2 Method and Process

- 5.2.1 As explained in Section 2, the initial stage in the assessment process was to determine the extent of the developed site's visual envelope or ZTV. This was established initially by reference to computer generated ZTVs (bare-earth and screened), which illustrate areas within the study area from where all or some of the Development would in theory be seen (refer to **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**, Appendix A). The screened ZTV was more useful in this respect, as the computer model used to generate it took account of screening by buildings and woodland.
- 5.2.2 Publicly accessible places, roads, public rights of way and residential properties with theoretical visibility of the Development indicated by the screened ZTV were then identified and provisional viewpoints marked-up from where views of the Development were likely.
- 5.2.3 During the field studies, the provisional viewpoints were visited and adjusted as necessary to take account of localised topography and screening by hedgerows and other linear vegetation not factored into the ZTV model. Likely seasonal variations in screening by deciduous vegetation was also noted.
- 5.2.4 The viewpoints are either at specific places from where all or part of the Development is likely to be seen, such as local visitor attractions, or are representative of similar views, for example, along a section of road or footpath where views of the Site are continuous (or intermittent). The viewpoints are also restricted to publicly accessible locations and, as far as possible, cover a range of views and receptors from differing directions, distances and elevations around the Site.
- 5.2.5 At each viewpoint, an assessment was made of the visual sensitivity of the landscape (based on judgments of visual susceptibility and visual value) and the magnitude of effect arising from the Development. The elevation was noted and the distance between each viewpoint and the edge of the Site measured.
- 5.2.6 The locations of the selected viewpoints are shown in conjunction with the ZTVs on **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**, Appendix A.
- 5.2.7 Whilst the viewpoints provide a realistic indication of the likely ZTV of the Development, it should be noted that there may be other locations within the ZTV where all or some of the Development may be seen.
- 5.2.8 It is also important to note that the viewpoint assessment was carried out in August 2023 when the screening and filtering effects of deciduous vegetation when in leaf was at its greatest. Consequently, other views of the Development may be gained during the winter months when deciduous vegetation is not in leaf.

5.3 Visual Baseline

- 5.3.1 As set out in the landscape baseline, the Site lies in a transitional landscape between the built form of Spalding to the west and open countryside to the east. The screened ZTV broadly reflects this, with a very tight visual envelope shown to the west where contained by the built edge of the town. Similarly, the extent of the visual envelope to the east is limited by maturing vegetation adjoining the A16 and adjacent local roads.
- 5.3.2 Overall, views of the Site and likely views of the Development are restricted to locations in the immediate vicinity due to screening by buildings, vegetation and local landform on or immediately adjacent to the Site boundaries. Views obtained are a mixture of private views from some residential properties on the built edge of Spalding, and public views from the A16 and informal footpaths following Coronation Channel, both of which adjoin the Site.
- 5.3.3 Within the refined ZTV a total of seven viewpoints were identified and taken forward to the assessment of visual effects in Section 8.
- 5.3.4 A summary of the visual study's findings for each viewpoint (VP) is given below. Baseline photographic views obtained from each viewpoint in the direction of the Site are illustrated on **Figure 5** (Viewpoint Photographs) Appendix A, together with technical information about the photography (date of photograph, co-ordinates, distance from the Site, etc).
- 5.3.5 For ease of reference (and consistency with the landscape baseline), the study area was divided into geographical sectors starting with North to East and continuing in a clockwise direction. The descriptions below follow the same order.

North to East Sector

- 5.3.6 Only one viewpoint was identified in this sector – VP 1 which is from the A16 where adjoining the eastern boundary of the Site. It represents the first available views of the Development gained by users of the road heading south.
- 5.3.7 No other views of the Site (or likely views of the Development) were identified in this sector due to the broadly flat landform combined with screening by intervening vegetation, including along the A16. Buildings associated with Pilgrim's Pride UK also had a limiting effect on close and more distant views of the Site.

East to South Sector

- 5.3.8 As with the north to east sector, only one viewpoint was identified in this sector – VP 2 which is on Fulney Lane just east of the Site. It represents views from the lane and from some residential properties adjoining the lane.
- 5.3.9 All other views of the Site from within this sector were prevented by intervening vegetation and buildings.

South to West Sector

- 5.3.10 Of the three VPs identified in this sector (VPs 3-5), two (VPs 3 and 4) are located on or immediately adjacent to the Site boundaries – VP 3 is from the A16 and represents the first available views of the Site and the Development for users heading north. VP 4 is from the informal footpath that follows the top of the flood bank on the east side of Coronation Channel and represents views gained by users of the route, which is well used.
- 5.3.11 VP 5 is from the informal footpath that follows the flood bank on the west side of Coronation Channel, and represents some of the first available views of the Site and the Development for users heading north. It also represents views gained by some residential properties that adjoin the channel on the built-up edge of Spalding.

- 5.3.12 No other views were identified in this sector due primarily to screening by the built form of Spalding as well as vegetation within / adjoining the built-up area.

West to North Sector

- 5.3.13 Two viewpoints were identified in this sector (VPs 6 and 7). VP 6 is on the same section of footpath as VP 4 and represents the first available views of the Site and the Development for users heading south. VP 7 is on the same section of footpath as VP 5 and represents some of the first available views of the Site and the Development for users heading south, as well as views from some residential properties on the built edge of Spalding.
- 5.3.14 No other views were identified in this sector due primarily to screening by the built form of Spalding, including buildings associated with Pilgrim's UK.

5.4 Visual Receptor Sensitivity

- 5.4.1 As with landscape character, judgments about levels of effects on views and visual amenity arising from the Development are arrived at by combining predicted levels of visual receptor sensitivity and magnitude of effect (the latter as described in Section 8). Judgments about levels of visual receptor sensitivity are derived by combining levels of 'susceptibility' to the proposed change and levels of 'value' attached to views of the landscape, and applying professional judgment.
- 5.4.2 The susceptibility of visual receptors (people) to change is mainly a function of their occupation or activity whilst experiencing a view, and the extent to which their attention or interest is focussed on the view, for instance, whether they are static or moving.
- 5.4.3 The value attached to views of the landscape reflects the importance or otherwise that people or society attach to particular views for reasons such as scenic beauty, cultural associations or general interest, and likely numbers of visitors. The very highest levels of visual value tend to apply to views to or from landscapes designated at a national or international level (e.g. National Parks, AONBs, Registered Historic Parks & Gardens, etc.).
- 5.4.4 Criteria which have been applied in forming judgments about levels of visual susceptibility to change are set out in Table 6 of Appendix C and those for visual value in Table 7. Not all of the criteria listed in Table 7 need to be met in order for a view to be categorised at a certain level of value, and professional judgment must be applied.
- 5.4.5 The matrix in Table 8 shows how judgments on susceptibility and value combine to arrive at theoretical levels of receptor sensitivity. Professional judgment must then be exercised before a final conclusion is reached.
- 5.4.6 All of the viewpoints are located on the urban fringe of Spalding, and levels of sensitivity attributed to many of the visual receptors at these points took into account the fact that the quality of the landscape / scenery would not be the main reason for and focus of many people's visits to / through the area, which lowers its value.
- 5.4.7 In summary, people living in residential properties are classified as **Medium to High** sensitivity receptors.
- 5.4.8 Users of public footpaths including informal footpaths adjoining Coronation Channel are also classified as **Medium to High** sensitivity receptors.
- 5.4.9 Users of local roads are classified as **Medium** sensitivity receptors, whilst users of main A-class roads are classified as **Low to Medium** sensitivity receptors.
- 5.4.10 The sensitivity of each category of visual receptor is noted in the following assessment and factored into judgments on overall levels of effect.

6. NATURE AND MAGNITUDE OF EFFECTS

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 The assessment of effects described in the following sections considers the potential effects of the Development on the landscape character and visual amenity of the local area. Although interrelated, effects on landscape character and visual amenity are always assessed separately.
- 6.1.2 The methods used and processes followed in the assessment are described in Section 2. In summary, for each category, judgments about levels of effect are arrived at by combining levels of receptor 'sensitivity' (as set out in the previous sections) with the predicted levels of 'magnitude of effect' that are likely to arise from the Development being built and operated (as described in the following sections). Professional judgment must also be applied.
- 6.1.3 Predictions about levels of effects are based on the amount of information that is available about the Development at the time of the assessment. The more information that is available, the more accurate the predictions are likely to be.
- 6.1.4 In this instance the application is being made in full, which means that matters such as access and siting are known (matters of layout, density and design are of limited relevance to solar farms / solar arrays). Other aspects of the scheme such as extent of vegetation removal and proposals for soft landscaping as mitigation are also known.
- 6.1.5 A summary description of the Development which formed the basis of the assessment of effects is provided in Section 3, with further information given below as required.
- 6.1.6 Whilst the effects of development are normally considered during the construction and operational phases, in this case the duration of the construction phase is short (3 months) and effects are mostly temporary. As such, construction effects were not assessed.

6.2 Nature of Effects

- 6.2.1 In order to establish levels of effect, it is necessary to identify and describe the nature of effects which could potentially arise from the Development and whether these are 'negative' (adverse) or 'positive' (beneficial).
- 6.2.2 Negative effects relate to the loss of existing landscape elements and features, or the introduction of features that are uncharacteristic and weaken a landscape or view. Positive effects relate to the enhancement of existing landscape elements and features, or the introduction of features that are characteristic and improve a landscape or view. Effects can also be direct or indirect, temporary or permanent and cumulative.
- 6.2.3 In terms of what is proposed here, the types of potentially **negative** effects which need to be considered include:
- Introduction of solar panels, associated infrastructure and other urbanising features.
 - Changes to the character of the Site and the contribution it makes to the setting of Spalding.
 - Changes to / loss of views.
- 6.2.4 The types of potentially **positive** effects to be considered include:
- New native hedgerows and hedgerow trees to the perimeter of the Site, which enhances local landscape character and biodiversity.
 - Improved management of existing low quality grassland that covers the Site, which also enhances local landscape character and biodiversity.

- 6.2.5 At this point it should be borne in mind that there is always a measure subjectivity as to whether the effects of a proposed change are considered positive or negative. In this instance, the proposed change – from agricultural land in fair to poor condition in a low quality setting on the urban fringe, to that of solar panels with scope for enhancing its setting could be perceived as a positive one. At the same time, the assessment process requires effects to be assessed as objectively as possible adopting a worst-case scenario. As such, a precautionary approach has been applied whereby the overall effects of the Development described in the following assessment are assumed to be negative unless stated otherwise.

6.3 Magnitude of Effects

- 6.3.1 As described in Section 2.7, judgments about levels of magnitude of effect arising from the Development take into account matters such as the 'size or scale' of change, 'geographical extent' of area affected, the 'duration' of effects and their 'reversibility'.
- 6.3.2 The size or scale of change and geographical extent of area affected are described in the following sections.
- 6.3.3 Duration of effects and their reversibility take account of the timescales over which effects are experienced (typically short, medium or long-term), and whether they are temporary or permanent.
- 6.3.4 For a development of this type, most effects are assumed to be 'long-term' (as the operational phase would be for 40 years) and are not reiterated in the assessment. The effects would also be 'reversible', as the Development could be removed at the end of the operational phase and the land returned to its current agricultural use with no change to the field pattern but with enhanced landscape features.
- 6.3.5 It is also important to note that duration includes timescales for mitigation measures to become effective. This could take several years if, for example, new planting is provided to screen views but needs to achieve a certain height.
- 6.3.6 Timescales required for new planting to be effective at screening views is particularly important in the assessment of visual effects (as described in Section 8). As such, for this part of the assessment, levels of effect are assessed, firstly, at completion when new planting is in place but not effective (taken as Year 1) and, secondly, when new planting has matured sufficiently to be effective at screening views. In this instance, this is taken to be Year 10 due to the limited height of solar farms / solar arrays.
- 6.3.7 Levels of effects reported at Year 10 are also considered 'residual' effects that remain after mitigation has become effective and achieved its design intentions.
- 6.3.8 For consistency, effects on landscape character described in the following section are also assessed at Years 1 and 10, however, timescales required for planting to achieve an effective screen is less important since effects on landscape character are not dependent on visibility. As such, no meaningful reduction in levels of effect would be expected over this timescale even though planting provided to mitigate views can help to soften the appearance of development and integrate it with the wider landscape as it matures.

7. EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 This section considers the operational effects of the Development on those landscape character receptors identified in Section 4.3. These are the contextual landscapes within which the Site lies (the study area), and the Site itself and its immediate surrounds.
- 7.1.2 The sensitivity of landscape character receptors included in the assessment is set out in Section 4.4. Levels of landscape magnitude of effect applied to landscape character receptors and criteria used to determine these levels are described in Table 4 of Appendix C. Overall levels of landscape effect derived from combining judgments on sensitivity and magnitude are given in Table 5.

7.2 Effects on Contextual Landscape Character

- 7.2.1 The Site sits in a transitional landscape on the eastern edge of Spalding where it makes a small but broadly positive contribution to the setting of this part of the town. Its contribution to the character of the wider rural landscape is, however, limited where separated from it by the busy A16 and vegetation adjoining the road.
- 7.2.2 The Development as proposed (with mitigation measures embedded in the scheme) would have a limited adverse effect on landscape elements / features of the contextual landscape mainly relating to a change in land use. It would also deliver some localised enhancements in terms of boundary treatments, land cover and habitat creation. Furthermore, its area of influence in the contextual landscape would not extend beyond the Site and its immediate setting. This reflects the limited height of the Development (maximum 2.5 m), combined with the strong measure of containment afforded by vegetation, buildings and engineered landform (flood bund) on or immediately adjacent to the Site. This includes buildings on the northern part of the Site associated with Pilgrim's Pride UK.
- 7.2.3 The level of landscape sensitivity of the contextual landscape was judged to be **Low**.
- 7.2.4 Judgments about the magnitude of effect on the contextual landscapes took into account the introduction of the solar panels and associated infrastructure contained by buildings, vegetation and local landform. These effects are judged to be moderate adverse. They also took account of the proposed landscape mitigation measures (as described above), the effects of which are judged to be negligible beneficial. On balance, the magnitude of effect on the character of the contextual landscape is judged to be **Small adverse** (at Years 1 and 10).
- 7.2.5 The combination of the **Low** landscape sensitivity attributed to the contextual landscapes and the **Small** adverse magnitude of effect predicted, is judged to result in a level of effect of **Minor Negative** on the contextual landscapes character (at Years 1 and 10).

7.3 Effects on Character of the Site and Immediate Surrounds

- 7.3.1 The Site essentially comprises two small pasture fields contained by a weak framework of vegetation and various industrial / commercial buildings associated with Pilgrim's Pride UK. Whilst its predominant characteristic is urban / urbanising in view of its proximity to the built edge of Spalding with other urbanising influences in the immediate vicinity, the Site also displays some rural characteristics.
- 7.3.2 The nature of effects that could arise, which the LVA considered, are listed in Section 6.
- 7.3.3 The main effect of the Development would be the addition of regular rows of solar panels across the Site together with related infrastructure including perimeter fencing and CCTV cameras. This would introduce a new land use of an urban / industrial nature, however,

this would not be uncharacteristic in the vicinity of the Site given its urban fringe location and existing industrial uses on the northern part of the Site.

- 7.3.4 The Development would not result in the loss of any characteristic or valued landscape elements or features. Indeed, the topography of the Site would not be altered and existing boundary vegetation would be retained and protected as the solar arrays would sit entirely within the existing field boundaries with appropriate offsets.
- 7.3.5 The Development would deliver a number of localised enhancements by improving field boundaries and landcover, and creating new habitats. Measures incorporated with the Development include new native hedgerows and hedgerow trees, which would also help to integrate the Development into the wider landscape over time. Existing pasture uses which cover the Site would also be managed to improve their biodiversity value.
- 7.3.6 The level of landscape sensitivity attributed to the Site was judged to be **Low**.
- 7.3.7 Judgments about the magnitude of effect on the character of the Site and its immediate surrounds took into account the introduction of the solar panels and associated infrastructure contained by a framework of existing and new vegetation, as described above. These effects are judged to be large adverse. Judgments also took account of localised enhancements, which at the site level are judged to be small beneficial. On balance, the magnitude of effect on the character of the Site and its immediate surrounds is judged to be **Moderate adverse** (Years 1 and 10).
- 7.3.8 The combination of the **Low** landscape sensitivity attributed to the Site and the **Moderate** adverse landscape magnitude of effect predicted, results in a level of effect of **Minor to Moderate Negative** on the landscape character of the Site and its immediate surrounds (Years 1 and 10).

8. EFFECTS ON VIEWS AND VISUAL AMENITY

8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 This section deals with changes in the composition of available views of the landscape arising from the Development during its operational phase, and the effects this has on those visual receptors (people) who experience the view. Effects on views and visual amenity are always assessed separately from effects on landscape character since change can affect the character of the landscape regardless of whether anyone can see it.
- 8.1.2 In order to gain an understanding of the nature of changes to views and visual amenity arising from visibility of the Development, several viewpoints were identified in the visual baseline section (Section 5) to represent visibility from key visual receptor groups (e.g. residents, recreational walkers, road users, etc.). The viewpoints are also a good indication of the extent of the area from which views of the Development are likely to be gained i.e. its ZTV (or visual envelope).
- 8.1.3 The methods used and processes followed in assessing the effects of the Development on views and visual amenity are as described in Section 2. These are broadly the same as when assessing effects on landscape character described in the previous section, in that judgments concerning levels of effect on views and visual amenity are arrived at by combining levels of visual receptor 'sensitivity' with the likely 'magnitude' of effect arising from visibility of the Development. Professional judgment must also be applied.
- 8.1.4 The sensitivity of visual receptors included in the following assessment is set out in Section 5.4 of the visual baseline. Levels of visual magnitude of effect applied to visual receptors and criteria used to derive these levels are described in Table 9 of Appendix C. Overall levels of visual effect derived from combining judgments on sensitivity and magnitude are given in Table 10.
- 8.1.5 As described in Section 6.3, visual effects are normally assessed at the year of completion (taken as Year 1) and 10 years following completion in order to assess the effectiveness of structural planting at reducing levels of effects on views. In this instance, existing vegetation on or immediately adjacent to the Site boundaries provides only limited containment. As such, new hedgerows are proposed to improve the filtering and screening of views of the Development, particularly from the A16.
- 8.1.6 Where new hedgerows are provided it is assumed they would achieve a height of approximately 3 m by Year 7, and thereafter would be maintained at this height to minimise shading of the solar panels. This is based on an initial planting height of 50 cm and an average annual growth rate of 30 cm per year for the first five years until established, increasing to 50 cm per year thereafter⁵. These anticipated rates of growth assume adequate site preparation is undertaken and adequate levels of aftercare are provided.
- 8.1.7 The assessment also took seasonality into account when considering the effectiveness of existing vegetation at screening the Development. In some instances the density of vegetation meant that unless it was removed the Development would be largely screened throughout the year, but in other instances where vegetation is thin filtered views are likely to be available in winter when it is not in leaf.
- 8.1.8 Where notable differences are likely between levels of effects in summer and winter this is noted. Judgments about levels of effects recorded in the following assessment are, however, based on a worst-case winter scenario when screening by deciduous vegetation is least effective.

⁵ Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), 2013, Predicting Tree and Hedge Growth. Available online at: [Predicting tree and hedge growth - IEMA](#)

8.2 Visual Effects

- 8.2.1 In summary, the Site lies in an area characterised by a broadly flat, open landscape with extensive views. However, the immediate context of the Site is one of a high level of containment arising from its proximity to the built edge of Spalding where there is a greater concentration of vegetation. So visual effects would be confined to a very localised area.
- 8.2.2 The Site has a very tight ZTV to the west where adjoining the raised flood banks along Coronation Channel and the built-up edge of the town immediately beyond. The developed ZTV is also tight to the north, where buildings associated with Pilgrim's Pride UK occupy part of the Site, and to the south, where mature vegetation adjoins the roundabout on the A16. To the east, the edge of the ZTV is less well defined but generally extends a short distance to Fulney Lane and linear vegetation adjoining it.
- 8.2.3 Within the area of the ZTV as defined above, the assessment found that the Development would be visible from a limited number of viewpoints and effects would be experienced by a relatively small number of receptors (people) in the immediate vicinity of the Site.
- 8.2.4 The location of the viewpoints included in the assessment is shown in conjunction with the ZTVs on **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**, Appendix A.
- 8.2.5 Baseline photographic views obtained from each viewpoint which informed the assessment of visual effects are illustrated on **Figure 5** (Baseline Viewpoint Photographs), Appendix A. All photographs were taken in August when the seasonal screening and filtering effects on views by deciduous vegetation when in leaf was at its greatest. Consequently, other views of the Development may be obtained at other times of the year when deciduous vegetation is not in leaf, which are not factored into the assessment.
- 8.2.6 The photographs which accompany the viewpoint assessment have been taken using a digital SLR camera with a 50 mm equivalent focal length lens and a camera height of approximately 1.6 m above ground level. These parameters follow technical guidance for undertaking viewpoint photography published in 2019 by the Landscape Institute (LI)⁶.
- 8.2.7 The guidance sets out various types of visualisation that may accompany an assessment, of which Type 1 visualisations (annotated baseline photographs) are provided here.
- 8.2.8 The baseline photographs may be presented as single frame images on an A3 sheet where the full extent of a site and sufficient context is captured. Where this is not possible, the LI guidance recommends panoramic images be used to capture a site presented as a 90-degree horizontal field of view at A1 width. In this instance, the horizontal nature of the Development and proximity of the viewpoints to the Site was such that a panoramic shot was necessary from each viewpoint to capture the Site with sufficient context. These have been created by stitching individual photographs together using Photoshop imaging software to create a panorama centred on the Site.
- 8.2.9 When printed at the appropriate paper size, the LI guidance recommends the viewpoint photographs "*be viewed at a comfortable arm's length*" in order to replicate the correct viewing distance. When viewed in a digital format, it is acknowledged that the variable sizes of computer screens can constrain the size of images and result in uncertainty as to what distance they should be viewed at. In this instance, the LI guidance recommends best endeavours be used to view at or near the viewing information given on the image.

⁶ Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 (2019), Visual Representation of Development Proposals.

North to East Sector

- 8.2.10 Only one viewpoint was identified from within this sector with likely visibility of the Development – VP 1 which is located on the Site's eastern boundary with the A16 and is representative of views gained by users of the road.
- 8.2.11 From this viewpoint the Site occupies the full width of the outlook as two small-scale fields with boundaries defined by sporadic vegetation. The flood bund which adjoins Coronation Channel is a noticeable feature where it sits above the level of the Site, and above this mature vegetation on the built-up edge of Spalding defines the limit of the view. To the far right of the outlook a tall evergreen hedge partly encloses buildings and hardstandings associated with Pilgrim's Pride UK, whilst to the far left traffic using the A16 can be seen where the road passes at a slightly higher level than the Site.
- 8.2.12 At Year 1, the solar panels and perimeter fencing would be seen over the majority of the view, albeit the northern part of the northern field seen in the immediate foreground would remain as such. The panels would also be at a similar level as the flood bund and seen from the side supported by metal frames. The absence of boundary vegetation ensures there would be no noticeable change in the outlook during the summer months to that reported below, which is based on a winter scenario.
- 8.2.13 At Year 10, new hedgerow planting along the boundary with the A16 would have matured sufficiently to limit visibility to filtered views in winter.

Viewpoint 1 (refer Figure 5-1, Appendix A)*Location / Direction*

A16 at the northeast corner of the Site looking southwest. The viewpoint represents the first available views of the Site and the Development gained by users of the road heading south where the road adjoins the Site.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Road Users (main roads): **Low to Medium**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 1)

Moderate adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 1)

Between **Minor to Moderate** and **Moderate Negative**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 10)

Negligible adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 10)

Between **Negligible to Minor** and **Minor Negative**

East to South Sector

- 8.2.14 As with the previous sector, only one viewpoint was identified from within this sector with likely visibility of the Development – VP 2 which is on Fulney Lane and represents views gained by users of the local road. It also represents views from a property that adjoins the lane immediately adjacent to the viewpoint and is visible from within the Site. The property is orientated towards the Site from its rear and side elevations where boundary hedgerows have a limiting effect on views at ground level, but from upper floor windows a mostly open aspect is gained that includes the A16.

- 8.2.15 From this viewpoint the outlook is partly screened by a number of field trees that sit between the viewer and the Site, however, traffic using the busy A16 is clearly visible. Some limited visibility of the flood bund that adjoins Coronation Channel is also gained above the level of the road, and above this mature vegetation on the built edge of Spalding defines the limit of the view. Some highly filtered views of buildings at Pilgrim's Pride UK are also gained to the right of the outlook, but the surface area of the Site cannot be seen from here.
- 8.2.16 At Year 1, the solar panels would just be visible above the level of the A16 and at a similar height as the flood bund, albeit seen within a treed and vegetated context. Furthermore, during the summer months when deciduous vegetation is in leaf, views of the Development would be partly screened and therefore the magnitude of effect would be less than that reported below, which is based on a winter scenario.
- 8.2.17 At Year 10, new hedgerow planting along the boundary with the A16 would have matured sufficiently to prevent any visibility of the solar panels from the local road even in winter. From the upper floor windows of the residential property the outlook would be largely unchanged.

Viewpoint 2 (refer Figure 5-2, Appendix A)*Location / Direction*

Fulney Lane, approximately 150 m east of the Site looking west. Representative of views gained by users of the local road and for a property adjoining the lane adjacent to the viewpoint.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Road Users (local roads): **Medium**

Residential: **Medium to High**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 1)

Road Users: **Small** adverse

Residential: **Small** adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 1)

Road Users: **Minor to Moderate Negative**

Residential: **Minor to Moderate Negative**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 10)

Road Users: **None**

Residential: **Small** adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 10)

Road Users: **Neutral**

Residential: **Minor to Moderate Negative**

South to West Sector

- 8.2.18 Of the three viewpoints identified in this sector (VPs 3-5), two (VPs 3 and 4) are located on or immediately adjacent to the Site's eastern and western boundaries – VP 3 is beside the A16 and is representative of views gained by users of the road. VP 4 is on the informal

footpath / non-designated public right of way that follows the top of the flood bund on the east side of Coronation Channel and represents views gained by users of the path.

- 8.2.19 VP 5 is also on the informal footpath that follows the top of the flood bund, albeit on the opposite (west) side of the channel to VP 4. It represents views gained by users of the footpath and also views from residential properties that adjoin the watercourse on the built-up edge of Spalding. These properties are generally orientated towards the channel, however, the flood bund and mature vegetation growing along the bund has a considerable limiting effect on views. Some visibility of the Site is gained from the upper floor windows of some of these properties where the vegetation is thinner.
- 8.2.20 From VP 3 existing buildings associated with Pilgrim's UK are clearly visible on the northern part of the Site as is traffic using the A16, both conveying an urbanising influence on the outlook. The flood bund which adjoins the Site along its western boundary is also a noticeable feature and, above this, mature vegetation on the built-up edge of Spalding defines the limit of the view. However, it is possible to see the spire of St. Paul's Church on the skyline in the centre of the view, as well as more distant chimneys and pylons associated with a power station on the northern edge of the town.
- 8.2.21 At Year 1, close views of the solar panels and perimeter fencing would be gained over the majority of the view, with the panels orientated directly towards the viewer. The height of the panels would also have a limiting effect on the outlook, although the church spire would remain a visible feature of the skyline. Given the sporadic nature of the existing boundary vegetation, there would be no noticeable change in the outlook throughout the year.
- 8.2.22 At Year 10, new hedgerow planting along the boundary with the A16 would have matured sufficiently to limit visibility to filtered views in winter.

Viewpoint 3 (refer Figure 5-3, Appendix A)

Location / Direction

A16 at the southeast corner of the Site looking north. The viewpoint represents the first available views of the Site and the Development gained by users of the road heading north.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Road Users (main roads): **Low to Medium**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 1)

Large adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 1)

Between **Minor to Moderate** and **Moderate Negative**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 10)

Negligible adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 10)

Between **Negligible to Minor** and **Minor Negative**

- 8.2.23 From VP 4, which occupies a slightly elevated position relative to the Site, the outlook extends a short distance across the Site to the A16, with maturing vegetation adjoining the road and Fulney Lane defining the limit of the view. Buildings associated with Pilgrim's Pride UK on the northern part of the Site are a noticeable feature of the view as is traffic using the A16, and this conveys an urbanising influence to the outlook.

- 8.2.24 At Year 1 close views of the solar panels, perimeter fencing and other infrastructure would be gained over the majority of the view, albeit the panels would be seen from the side and in context with the existing commercial buildings. The elevated nature of the viewpoint ensures the view would not be obstructed, however, the sporadic nature of the boundary vegetation also ensures there would be no noticeable change in the outlook throughout the year.
- 8.2.25 At Year 10, improved management of existing boundary vegetation would have some beneficial effect at filtering and screening the Development, however, the elevated nature of the viewpoint relative to the Site ensures the magnitude of effect would be broadly unchanged.

Viewpoint 4 (refer Figure 5-4, Appendix A)

Location / Direction

Flood bund adjoining the east side of Coronation Channel immediately west of the Site looking northeast. The viewpoint represents some of the first available views of the Site and the Development gained by users of the informal footpath / non-designated public right of way that follows the top of the bund when heading north.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Recreational walkers: **Medium to High**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 1)

Large adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 1)

Between **Moderate** and **Moderate to Major Negative**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 10)

Large adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 10)

Between **Moderate** and **Moderate to Major Negative**

- 8.2.26 From VP 5 a similar outlook is obtained as VP4 where it is situated on the opposite flood bank. Coronation Channel occupies the immediate foreground and beyond this the outlook extends across the Site to a vegetated skyline in the near distance. But it is possible to see buildings associated with Pilgrim's Pride UK as well as fleeting views of traffic using the A16.
- 8.2.27 At Year 1 some limited visibility of the solar panels and other infrastructure would be gained above the height of the flood bund on the opposite side of the channel, albeit within a treed and vegetated context. From residential properties views are mostly filtered by mature vegetation adjoining the bund. During the summer months when deciduous vegetation is in leaf, views of the Development would be partly screened (mostly screened from residential properties) and therefore the magnitude of effect would be less than that reported below, which is based on a winter scenario.
- 8.2.28 At Year 10 improved management of existing boundary vegetation would have some beneficial effect at filtering and screening the Development, however, the elevated nature of the viewpoint relative to the Site ensures the magnitude of effect would be broadly unchanged.

Viewpoint 5 (refer Figure 5-5, Appendix A)*Location / Direction*

Flood bund adjoining the west side of Coronation Channel, approximately 100 west of the Site looking northeast. The viewpoint represents the first available views of the Site and the Development gained by users of the informal footpath / non-designated public right of way that follows the top of the bund when heading north. It also represents views gained by some residential properties that adjoin the channel.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Recreational walkers: **Medium to High**

Residential: **Medium to High**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 1)

Recreational walkers: **Moderate** adverse

Residential: **Small** adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 1)

Recreational walkers: **Moderate Negative**

Residential: **Minor to Moderate Negative**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 10)

Recreational walkers: **Moderate** adverse

Residential: **Small** adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 10)

Recreational walkers: **Moderate Negative**

Residential: **Minor to Moderate Negative**

West to North Sector

- 8.2.29 Two viewpoints were identified in this sector (VPs 6 and 7). VP 6 is on the same section of footpath as VP 4 and represents the first available views of the Site and Development for users heading south. VP 7 is on the same section of footpath as VP 5 and represents views for users heading south.
- 8.2.30 VP 7 is also representative of views gained by residential properties that adjoin the watercourse on the built-up edge of Spalding. Although these properties are orientated towards the channel, the flood bund and mature vegetation growing along the bund has a considerable limiting effect on views. Some visibility of the Site is gained from the upper floor windows of some of these properties where the vegetation is thinner.
- 8.2.31 From VP 6 the outlook extends a short distance across the Site to maturing vegetation adjoining the A16 where approaching the roundabout at the southern end of the Site. This and other vegetation adjoining Fulney Lane defines the limit of the view.
- 8.2.32 At Year 1 close views of the solar panels, perimeter fencing and other infrastructure would be gained over much of the view, albeit the panels would be seen from the rear in conjunction with supporting frames. The elevated nature of the viewpoint ensures the view would not be obstructed, however, the sporadic nature of the boundary vegetation also ensures there would be no noticeable change in the outlook throughout the year.
- 8.2.33 At Year 10 there would be no noticeable change to the outlook.

Viewpoint 6 (refer Figure 5-6, Appendix A)*Location / Direction*

Flood bund adjoining the east side of Coronation Channel immediately west of the Site looking southeast. Representative of views gained by users of the informal footpath / non-designated public right of way that follows the top of the bund heading south.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Recreational walkers: **Medium to High**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 1)

Large adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 1)

Between **Moderate** and **Moderate to Major Negative**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 10)

Large adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 10)

Between **Moderate** and **Moderate to Major Negative**

- 8.2.34 From VP 7, a similar outlook is obtained as VP6 where the viewpoint is situated on the opposite flood bank. Coronation Channel occupies the immediate foreground and beyond this the outlook extends across the Site to a vegetated skyline in the near distance. But it is possible to see buildings associated with Pilgrim's UK to the far left of the view as well as fleeting views of traffic using the A16.
- 8.2.35 At Year 1 some visibility of the solar panels and other infrastructure would be gained above the height of the flood bund on the opposite side of the channel, albeit within a treed and vegetated context. From residential properties views are mostly filtered by mature vegetation adjoining the bund. During the summer months when deciduous vegetation is in leaf, views of the Development would be partly screened (mostly screened from residential properties) and therefore the magnitude of effect would be less than that reported below, which is based on a winter scenario.
- 8.2.36 At Year 10 improved management of existing boundary vegetation would have some beneficial effect at filtering and screening the Development, however, the elevated nature of the viewpoint relative to the Site ensures the magnitude of effect would be broadly unchanged.

Viewpoint 7 (refer Figure 5-7, Appendix A)*Location / Direction*

Flood bund adjoining the west side of Coronation Channel, approximately 150 west of the Site looking southeast. The viewpoint represents the first available views of the Site and the Development gained by users of the informal footpath / non-designated public right of way that follows the top of the bund when heading south. It also represents views gained by some residential properties that adjoin the channel.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Recreational walkers: **Medium to High**

Residential: **Medium to High**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 1)

Recreational walkers: **Moderate** adverse

Residential: **Small** adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 1)

Recreational walkers: **Moderate Negative**

Residential: **Minor to Moderate Negative**

Magnitude of Effect (Year 10)

Recreational walkers: **Moderate** adverse

Residential: **Small** adverse

Level of Visual Effect (Year 10)

Recreational walkers: **Moderate Negative**

Residential: **Minor to Moderate negative**

8.2.37 The assessments findings, as set out above, are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Visual Assessment - Summary

VP No	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect	Level of Effect
North to East Sector			
VP 1	Road Users: Low to Medium	Year 1: Moderate adverse	Road Users: Between Minor to Moderate and Moderate Negative
		Year 10: Negligible adverse	Road Users: Between Negligible to Minor and Minor Negative
East to South Sector			
VP 2	Road Users: Medium Residents: Medium to High	Year 1: Road Users: Small adverse Residents: Small adverse	Road Users: Minor to Moderate Negative Residents: Minor to Moderate Negative
		Year 10: Road Users: None Residents: Small adverse	Road Users: Neutral Residents: Minor to Moderate Negative
South to West Sector			
VP 3	Road Users: Low to Medium	Year 1: Large adverse	Road Users: Between Minor to Moderate and Moderate Negative
		Year 10: Negligible adverse	Road Users: Between Negligible to Minor and Minor Negative
VP 4	Walkers: Medium to High	Year 1: Large adverse	Walkers: Between Moderate and Moderate to Major Negative
		Year 10: Large adverse	Walkers: Between Moderate and Moderate to Major Negative
VP 5	Walkers: Medium to High Residents:	Year 1: Walkers: Moderate adverse Residents: Small adverse	Walkers: Moderate Negative Residents: Minor to Moderate Negative

VP No	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect	Level of Effect
	Medium to High	Year 10: Walkers: Moderate adverse Residents: Small adverse	Walkers: Moderate Negative Residents: Minor to Moderate Negative
West to North Sector			
VP 6	Walkers: Medium to High	Year 1: Large adverse	Walkers: Between Moderate and Moderate to Major Negative
		Year 10: Large adverse	Walkers: Between Moderate and Moderate to Major Negative
VP 7	Walkers: Medium to High Residents: Medium to High	Year 1: Walkers: Moderate adverse Residents: Small adverse	Walkers: Moderate Negative Residents: Minor to Moderate Negative
		Year 10: Walkers: Moderate adverse Residents: Small adverse	Walkers: Moderate Negative Residents: Minor to Moderate Negative

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Summary

- 9.1.1 This LVA has been carried out in order to assess the likely landscape and visual effects associated with the proposed Spalding Solar Farm ('the Development') located on the eastern edge of Spalding, Lincolnshire ('the Site'). The Site extends to an area of some 5.1 ha and comprises an existing commercial premises and two fields (approximately 2.64 ha) where the solar panels would be sited, all within the ownership of Pilgrim's Pride UK.
- 9.1.2 The LVA has recorded and analysed the baseline landscape and visual resources of the Site and surrounding area. It has also identified those landscape and visual receptors most likely to be affected by the Development and determined the extent to which they would be altered, or affected, with mitigation in place.
- 9.1.3 Mitigating measures embedded with the Development to reduce likely levels of adverse landscape and visual effects include:
- Protecting / retaining existing boundary vegetation where present and incorporating it within the Development to maintain landscape character; and
 - Planting native hedgerows to the length of the eastern boundary with the A16 to filter and screen views of the Development from the road.
- 9.1.4 Other enhancement measures embedded with the Development include:
- Planting 12 native hedgerow trees to the new hedgerow to strengthen / reinstate characteristic features of the landscape; and
 - Retaining / managing existing grassland across the Site to improve its biodiversity value.
- 9.1.5 The LVA concluded that whilst the Development would give rise to varying degrees of negative landscape and visual effects on a number of receptors, the degree of effects predicted to arise would be very small and restricted to the Site and its immediate setting.

Effects on Landscape Character

- 9.1.6 The main effect on landscape character would be largely associated with the change from existing pasture uses immediately adjacent to the commercial premises to that of rows of solar panels and related infrastructure set within the same context on the eastern edge of Spalding, between the A16 and Coronation Channel. Existing boundary vegetation would be retained and reinforced with new planting, whilst existing grassland which covers the Site would be retained and managed to enhance its biodiversity value.
- 9.1.7 In summary, and taking account of landscape mitigation measures embedded with the Development as outlined above, levels of effect on landscape character receptors (at Years 1 and 10) are predicted to be:
- Contextual Landscape Character: **Minor Negative**
 - Site / immediate surrounds: **Minor to Moderate Negative**

Effects on Views and Visual Amenity

- 9.1.8 Effects on views and visual amenity arising from the Development have been determined through analysis of a screened ZTV diagram and a number of viewpoints that represent visibility for a range of visual receptors (people).
- 9.1.9 In this instance, the ZTV shows theoretical visibility of the Development is confined to a very tight area extending to a radius of approximately 500 m around the Site. This reflects

the limited height of the Development and the high level of screening afforded by buildings, vegetation and raised embankments on or immediately adjacent to the Site.

- 9.1.10 Within the area defined by the ZTV seven viewpoints were identified from where the effects of the Development were examined on a range of visual receptors. The highest levels of adverse visual effects would be experienced by people walking along well-used footpaths that follow the flood bunds beside Coronation Channel immediately adjacent to the Site's western boundary, who are of medium to high sensitivity. For these receptors effects are predicted to be between **Moderate** and **Moderate to Major Negative** at Years 1 and 10 given the elevated nature of these routes relative to the Site. However, it should be noted that these footpaths are not formally designated public rights of way.
- 9.1.11 People living in residential properties immediately adjacent to the Site on the built edge of Spalding and along Fulney Lane are also medium to high sensitivity receptors. For these properties the highest levels of effect would be **Minor to Moderate Negative** at Years 1 and 10 as they are mainly screened by mature vegetation, particularly along Coronation Channel.
- 9.1.12 For other lower sensitivity visual receptors (road users, etc.) the highest level of visual effect would apply to users of the A16 which adjoins the Site's eastern boundary, who are of low to medium sensitivity. For these receptors effects are predicted to be between **Minor to Moderate** and **Moderate Negative** at Year 1, reducing to between **Negligible to Minor** and **Minor Negative** at Year 10 as new hedge planting establishes.

9.2 Conclusion

- 9.2.1 The nature, scale and form of the Development would inevitably result in some adverse effects on landscape character and on visual amenity, as summarised above. However, the limited height of the Development combined with the urban fringe location of the Site and containment afforded by buildings and vegetation on or immediately adjacent to its boundaries ensures that effects would be limited to the Site and its immediate setting. Where possible, these effects have been reduced or minimised as a result of the mitigation measures embedded with the Development.

APPENDIX A
LANDSCAPE FIGURES

(available as separate documents)

APPENDIX B
LANDSCAPE MITIGATION PLAN

(available as a separate document)

APPENDIX C

TABLES OF CRITERIA AND MATRICES FOR LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Landscape

- Table 1: Criteria for Judging Levels of Landscape Susceptibility to Change
- Table 2: Criteria for Judging Levels of Landscape Value
- Table 3: Matrix for Evaluating Levels of Landscape Sensitivity
- Table 4: Criteria for Judging Levels of Landscape Magnitude of Effect
- Table 5: Matrix for Evaluating Overall Levels of Landscape Effects

Visual

- Table 6: Criteria for Judging Visual Receptors Susceptibility to Change
- Table 7: Criteria for Judging Levels of Visual Value
- Table 8: Matrix for Evaluating Levels of Visual Sensitivity
- Table 9: Criteria for Judging Levels of Visual Magnitude of Effect
- Table 10: Matrix for Evaluating Overall Levels of Visual Effects

Table 1: Criteria for Judging Levels of Landscape Susceptibility to Change

Susceptible Rating	Criteria	Definition
Very High	Scale and Enclosure	The landscape is of very small in scale in terms of landform/land cover/field patterns and/or has a negligible level of containment resulting in a significant degree of interaction with adjacent landscapes
	Manmade Influence	There is no existing reference in the landscape to type of change proposed and/or no other manmade influences present
	Detractors	There are no detracting features present in the area
	Replacement or Substitution	The majority of existing landscape characteristics/elements/features of value could not be replaced/substituted and their loss could not be compensated for
	Mitigation	There are very limited or no opportunities for mitigating the type of change proposed
	Ability to Accept Change	The landscape has very limited ability to accept the type of change proposed without serious negative consequences for maintaining the baseline situation
High	Scale and Enclosure	The landscape is of small scale in terms of landform/land cover/field pattern and/or has a low level of containment resulting in a high degree of interaction with adjacent landscapes
	Manmade Influence	There is limited existing reference in the landscape to the type of change proposed and/or limited manmade influences present
	Detractors	There are few detracting features in the area and where present they have limited influence on the character or experience of the landscape
	Replacement or Substitution	Many of the existing landscape characteristics/elements/features of value would not be easy to replace/substitute and it is unlikely that their loss could not be compensated for
	Mitigation	There is some potential for mitigation and enhancement of the type of change proposed
	Ability to Accept Change	The landscape has limited ability to accept the type of change proposed without serious negative consequences for maintaining the baseline situation
Medium	Scale and Enclosure	The landscape is of medium scale in terms of landform/land cover/field patterns and/or has a moderate level of containment resulting in a moderate degree of interaction with adjacent landscapes
	Manmade Influence	There is some existing reference in the landscape to the type of change proposed and/or some other manmade influences present
	Detractors	Some detracting features present and these have a localised influence on the character or experience of the landscape
	Replacement or Substitution	Existing landscape characteristics/elements/features are of limited value and could potentially be replaced/substituted and/or loss be satisfactorily compensated for
	Mitigation	There is good potential for mitigation and enhancement of the type of change proposed

Susceptible Rating	Criteria	Definition
	Ability to Accept Change	The landscape has some ability to accept the type of change proposed but with some concerns for maintaining the baseline situation without mitigation
Low	Scale and Enclosure	The landscape is of large scale in terms of landform/land cover/field pattern and/or has a high level of containment resulting in a slight degree of interaction with adjacent landscapes
	Manmade Influence	There are many existing references in the landscape to the type of change proposed and/or many other manmade influences are present
	Detractors	Several detracting features present which have a negative influence on the character or experience of the landscape
	Replacement or Substitution	There are few or no landscape characteristics/elements/features of value present, or where present, they could be easily replaced/substituted and/or loss could be satisfactorily compensated for
	Mitigation	There is very good potential for mitigation and enhancement of the type of change proposed
	Ability to Accept Change	The landscape is able to accept the type of change proposed with only limited concerns for maintaining the baseline situation
Very Low	Scale and Enclosure	The landscape is of very small in scale in terms of landform/land cover/field pattern and/or has a very high level of containment resulting in little or no interaction with adjacent landscapes
	Manmade Influence	The landscape displays the characteristics of the type of change proposed and/or other manmade influences are widespread
	Detractors	Widespread detractors present which have an overwhelming negative influence on the character or experience of the landscape
	Replacement or Substitution	There are no landscape characteristics/elements/features of value present
	Mitigation	The proposed change could result in noticeable improvements to the area
	Ability to Accept Change	The landscape is able to accept the type of change proposed with no concerns for maintaining the baseline situation

NOTE: Criteria and levels of susceptibility given in the table apply to landscape characteristics and also to individual landscape elements / features. The susceptibility of individual landscape elements / features is largely determined by the ease with which they can be replaced or substituted.

NOTE: Not all criteria listed under a particular level of susceptibility need to be met in order for a particular characteristic / element / feature to be categorised at a certain level. Similarly, criteria from other levels of susceptibility may apply to a particular characteristic / element / features when determining judgments on susceptibility. Professional judgment must be applied when deciding which ones are relevant.

Table 2: Criteria for Judging Levels of Landscape Value

Value Rating	Criteria	Definition
Very High	Landscape Designations	International and/or national landscape designations e.g. World Heritage Sites, National Parks, AONBs
	Landscape Quality (condition)	Landscapes in excellent condition with a consistent and intact pattern of characteristic components/elements/features
	Scenic Quality (visual appeal)	Awe inspiring landscapes with negligible or no incongruous features or detractors present
	Rarity	Many rare elements/features present and/or a rare landscape character type/area
	Representativeness	Excellent representation of the wider landscape type/area/ characteristics and/or important examples of elements/features
	Conservation Interests	Presence of landscape, natural or heritage designations of international and/or national importance e.g. Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, SSSIs, National Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodland, Ancient Monuments, Grade I/ II* listed buildings, etc.
	Recreation Value	Significant contribution to wider public amenity, access and recreation e.g. national trails, National Trust land, etc.
	Aesthetic and Perceptual Aspects	Exceptional scenic beauty, iconic views, very strong sense of place, very high degree of wildness/remoteness or tranquillity
	Cultural Associations	Significant recorded associations
High	Landscape Designations	Regional and/or local landscape designations e.g. Areas of Local Landscape Value, or landscapes subject to strategies/guidance
	Landscape Quality (condition)	Landscapes in very good condition with a largely consistent and intact pattern of characteristic components/elements/features
	Scenic Quality (visual appeal)	Very attractive landscapes with few incongruous features or detractors present
	Rarity	Some rare elements/features present and/ or an unusual landscape character type/ area
	Representativeness	Very good representation of the wider landscape type/area/ characteristics and/or uncommon examples of elements/features
	Conservation Interests	Presence of landscape, natural or heritage designations of regional/county importance e.g. Country Parks, Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, TPOs, Conservation Areas, Grade II listed buildings, etc.
	Recreation Value	Important contribution to wider public amenity, access and recreation e.g. long distance trails, well-used public footpaths, public open space, local green space, etc. May be protected.
	Aesthetic and Perceptual Aspects	High degree of scenic beauty, fine/key views, strong sense of place, high degree of wildness/remoteness or tranquillity
	Cultural Associations	Important recorded associations
Medium	Landscape Designations	Undesignated (everyday) landscapes, may be subject to strategies/guidance

Value Rating	Criteria	Definition
	Landscape Quality (condition)	Landscapes in good to fair condition but with the pattern of characteristic components/elements/features showing some signs of erosion or loss
	Scenic Quality (visual appeal)	Attractive landscapes with some uncommon landscape components and some incongruous features or detractors
	Rarity	Few rare elements/features
	Representativeness	Reasonable representation of the wider landscape type/ area/ characteristics but common examples of elements/features
	Conservation Interests	Presence of undesignated/ informally designated/locally important landscape, natural or heritage areas/features
	Recreation Value	Important contribution to local public amenity, access and recreation e.g. well used public footpaths, green spaces, common land, etc.
	Aesthetic and Perceptual Aspects	Moderate degree of scenic beauty, local key views, some sense of place, some degree of wildness/ remoteness or tranquillity
	Cultural Associations	Some recorded associations of local importance
Low	Landscape Designations	Undesignated (everyday) landscapes, unlikely to be subject to strategies/guidance
	Landscape Quality (condition)	Landscapes in fair to poor condition where the pattern of components/elements/features is degraded or in decline
	Scenic Quality (visual appeal)	Pleasant but ordinary landscapes containing common landscape components and a number of incongruous features or detractors
	Rarity	Few if any rare elements/features
	Representativeness	Limited representation of the wider landscape type/ area/ characteristics and/or common examples of elements/features
	Conservation Interests	Few, if any, landscape, natural or heritage areas/ features of importance
	Recreation Value	Limited contribution to public amenity, access and recreation e.g. community sports facilities, local footpaths and local open spaces
	Aesthetic and Perceptual Aspects	Limited scenic beauty, little if any sense of place, little or no sense of wildness/remoteness or tranquillity
	Cultural Associations	Few if any recorded associations of importance
Very Low	Landscape Designations	Undesignated (degraded) landscapes, unlikely to be subject to strategies/guidance (unless for restoration)
	Landscape Quality (condition)	Landscapes in poor condition where the pattern of characteristic components/elements/features is mostly degraded, fragmented or missing
	Scenic Quality (visual appeal)	Poor or degraded landscapes with areas that contain many incongruous features or detractors
	Rarity	Negligible or no rare elements/features
	Representativeness	Poor or no representation of the wider landscape type/area/ characteristics and/or common examples of elements/features

Value Rating	Criteria	Definition
	Conservation Interests	No landscape, natural or heritage areas/features of importance
	Recreation Value	No contribution to public amenity, access and recreation
	Aesthetic and Perceptual Aspects	High levels of landscape and visual disturbance, negative sense of place, no sense of wildness/ remoteness or tranquillity
	Cultural Associations	No recorded associations of importance

NOTE: Criteria and levels of value given in the table apply to landscape characteristics and to individual landscape elements / features. The value of individual landscape elements / features is largely determined by their quality / condition, rarity and representativeness.

NOTE: Not all criteria listed under a particular level of value need to be met in order for a particular characteristic / element / feature to be categorised at a certain level. Similarly, criteria from other levels of value may apply to a particular characteristic / element / feature when determining judgments on landscape value. Professional judgment must be applied when deciding which ones are relevant.

Table 3: Matrix for Evaluating Levels of Landscape Sensitivity

Level of Landscape Value	Level of Landscape Susceptibility to Change				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Very High	Very High	High to Very High	High	Medium to High	Medium
High	High to Very High	High	Medium to High	Medium	Low to Medium
Medium	High	Medium to High	Medium	Low to Medium	Low
Low	Medium to High	Medium	Low to Medium	Low	Very Low to Low
Very Low	Medium	Low to Medium	Low	Very Low to Low	Very Low

NOTE: Landscape receptors with a **Very High** or **High to Very High** sensitivity rating are least able to accommodate the proposed change. Receptors with a **High** or **Medium to High** sensitivity rating have limited potential to accommodate the proposed change. Receptors with **Medium** or **Low to Medium** sensitivity ratings have some potential to accommodate the proposed change. Receptors with **Low** or **Very Low** sensitivity ratings have most potential to accommodate the proposed change.

Table 4: Criteria for Judging Levels of Landscape Magnitude of Effect

Level of Magnitude	Definition
Very Large Adverse	Major alteration to, or complete loss of, key elements/features or characteristics of the baseline condition and/or the introduction of highly uncharacteristic elements/features
	Size, scale and/or geographical extent of change likely to affect several landscape character types/areas. Elements/features likely to be affected across the whole of the site in which the proposed change is located
	Effects are likely to be long term/permanent and irreversible
Large Adverse	Substantial alteration to, or significant loss of, key elements/features or characteristics of the baseline condition and/or the introduction of uncharacteristic elements/features
	Size, scale and/or geographical extent of change likely to affect the wider landscape character type/area in which the proposed change is located. Elements/features likely to be affected across most of the site in which the proposed change is located
	Effects are likely to be long term/permanent and very difficult to reverse
Moderate Adverse	Partial alteration to, or some loss of, key elements/features or characteristics of the baseline condition and/or the introduction of elements/features which are not uncharacteristic in the area
	Size, scale and/or geographical extent of change likely to affect the landscape character type/area in which the proposed change is located, but at a more local level. Elements and features likely to be affected across part of the site in which the proposed change is located
	Effects are likely to be long term/permanent, but potentially reversible
Small Adverse	Minor alteration to, or limited loss of, key elements/features or characteristics of the baseline condition and/or the introduction of elements/features which are characteristic in the area
	Size, scale and/or geographical extent of change likely to be limited to the landscape surrounding the proposed change. Elements/features likely to be affected across a small part of the site in which the proposed change is located
	Effects may be short to medium term or long term/permanent, but are reversible
Negligible Adverse	Barely perceptible alteration to, or loss of, key elements/features or characteristics of the baseline condition and/or the introduction of elements/features which are entirely characteristic of the area
	Size, scale and/or geographical extent of change likely to be limited to the site/immediate setting of the landscape in which the change is proposed. Elements/features likely to be affected across a very small part of the site in which the proposed change is located
	Effects may be temporary, short to medium-term or long term, but can be easily reversed
Neutral	No change to the baseline condition
Negligible Beneficial	Barely perceptible improvements to key elements/features or characteristics of the baseline condition and/or the introduction of elements/features which result in barely discernible improvements
	Size, scale and/or geographical extent of improvements likely to be limited to the site/immediate setting of the landscape in which the change is proposed
	Improvements may be temporary, short to medium term or long term and permanent

Level of Magnitude	Definition
Small Beneficial	Minor improvements to key elements/features or characteristics of the baseline condition and/or the introduction of new elements/features which result in minor improvements
	Size, scale and/or geographical extent of improvements likely to be limited to the landscape surrounding the proposed change
	Improvements may be short to medium term or long term and permanent
Moderate Beneficial	Partial improvements to key elements/features or characteristics of the baseline condition and/or the introduction of elements/features which result in partial improvements
	Size, scale and/or geographical extent of improvements likely to affect the landscape character type/area in which the proposed change is located, but at a more local level
	Improvements are likely to be long term and permanent
Large Beneficial	Substantial improvements to key elements/features or characteristics of the baseline condition and/or the introduction of elements/features which result in substantial improvements
	Size, scale and/or geographical extent of improvements likely to affect a large part of the landscape character type/area in which the proposed change is located
	Improvements are likely to be long term and permanent
Very Large Beneficial	Major improvements to key elements/features or characteristics of the baseline condition and/or the introduction of elements/features which result in major improvements
	Size, scale and/or geographical extent of improvements likely to affect several landscape character types/areas.
	Improvements are likely to be permanent

Table 5: Matrix for Evaluating Overall Levels of Landscape Effects

Sensitivity of Receptor	Level of Magnitude of Effect (Adverse or Beneficial)				
	Very Large	Large	Moderate	Small	Negligible
Very High	Substantial	Major	Moderate to Major	Moderate	Minor to Moderate
High	Major	Moderate to Major	Moderate	Minor to Moderate	Minor
Medium	Moderate to Major	Moderate	Moderate	Minor to Moderate	Minor
Low	Moderate	Minor to Moderate	Minor to Moderate	Minor	Negligible to Minor
Very Low	Minor to Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible to Minor	Negligible

Note:

1. The magnitude of effect can be expressed as Adverse or Beneficial and the overall level of effect can be expressed as Negative or Positive.
2. If the magnitude of effect is Neutral (i.e. No Change), all effects will be Neutral.
3. Effects assessed as being **Substantial** or **Major** are those which should be given the greatest weight in the decision-making process as they represent important changes in the landscape. **Moderate to Major** or **Moderate** levels of effect also represent important changes, albeit they are of progressively lesser importance. Effects assessed as being **Minor to Moderate** or **Minor** are those which the decision-maker should be aware of as they constitute noticeable changes in the landscape, however, they are unlikely to be important to the decision-making process. **Negligible to Minor** or **Negligible** levels of effect warrant the least weight in the decision-making process.

Table 6: Criteria for Judging Levels of Visual Receptors Susceptibility to Change

Susceptibility Rating	Receptor
Very High	Visitors to internationally or nationally designated landscapes/features e.g. World Heritage Sites, National Parks, AONB, Registered Historic Parks and Gardens and other places where the landscape/feature is the main reason for the visit
	People using national walking or cycling trails where views of the landscape are likely to be the main focus of attention
	Communities living in areas where the landscape setting makes a highly important contribution to visual amenity
High	Visitors to regional or countywide designated landscapes/features e.g. Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), Country Parks, Conservation Areas and other places where the landscape/feature is part of the reason for the visit
	People engaged in outdoor recreation, e.g. walkers, riders, cyclists, river and canal users whose attention is likely to be focussed on the landscape and for whom views of the landscape are likely to be important to the enjoyment of the activity
	People travelling through a landscape by road or rail following sign-posted scenic routes where there is a distinct awareness of views of the landscape
	People living in residential properties
Medium	Visitors to undesignated landscapes/features of local importance where the landscape/feature is not necessarily part of the reason for the visit
	People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation e.g. golf whose attention is unlikely to be focussed on the landscape and for whom views of the landscape are not necessarily important to the enjoyment of the activity
	People staying at camp sites, hotels and healthcare facilities who are likely to appreciate views of their surroundings
	People travelling along local roads for whom an appreciation of the landscape is likely to form part of the journey
Low	People at school, their place of work, shopping centres and other places where the view is not central to the activity
	People travelling along main A and B class roads or rail corridors who are likely to be travelling for reasons other than to enjoy the view
Very Low	People travelling along motorways and main line railways often at high speed with limited interest/opportunity to focus on views of the landscape

Table 7: Criteria for Judging Levels of Visual Value

Value Rating	Criteria
Very High	Views from, or towards, designated landscapes/features of international or national importance e.g. World Heritage Sites, National Parks, AONBs, Registered Historic Parks and Gardens
	View is of outstanding scenic quality, with no detractors
	Views from landscapes/recognised viewpoints within highly popular visitor attractions/tourist destinations and/or from national trails used by large numbers of people
	Views with social/cultural/historic associations of international/national importance, e.g. referenced in works of art/literature, important vista across a battlefield, etc.
High	Views from, or towards, designated landscapes/features of regional or countywide importance e.g. Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), Country Parks, Conservation Areas
	View is of high scenic quality, with few detractors present
	Views from popular visitor attractions/tourist destinations e.g. long distance trails, heritage coasts, public open spaces, etc. used by relatively large numbers of people
	Views with social/cultural/historic associations of countywide importance
Medium	Views from, or towards, undesignated landscapes/features of local importance
	View is of moderate scenic quality, with some detractors present
	Views from locally popular recreation areas/green open spaces/ public rights of way, etc. but not used by many people
	Views with social/cultural/historic associations of local importance
Low	Views from, or towards, undesignated landscapes/features of site wide importance
	View is of low scenic quality, with many detractors present
	Views from landscapes/viewpoints which are not particularly popular or recognised as being destinations in their own right, including infrequently used rights of way
	Views with little or no social/cultural/historic associations
Very Low	Views from, or towards, undesignated landscapes/features of no importance
	View is of no scenic quality, with widespread detractors and/or the landscape may be degraded

NOTE: Not all criteria listed under a particular level of value need to be met in order for a particular view to be categorised at a certain level. Similarly, criteria from other levels of value may apply to a particular view when determining judgments on visual value. Professional judgment must be applied when deciding which ones are relevant.

Table 8: Matrix for Evaluating Levels of Visual Sensitivity

Level of Visual Value	Level of Visual Susceptibility to Change				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Very High	Very High	High to Very High	High	Medium to High	Medium
High	High to Very High	High	Medium to High	Medium	Low to Medium
Medium	High	Medium to High	Medium	Low to Medium	Low
Low	Medium to High	Medium	Low to Medium	Low	Very Low to Low
Very Low	Medium	Low to Medium	Low	Very Low to Low	Very Low

NOTE: Visual receptors with a **Very High** or **High to Very High** sensitivity rating are least able to accommodate the proposed change. Receptors with a **High** or **Medium to High** sensitivity rating have limited potential to accommodate the proposed change. Receptors with **Medium** or **Low to Medium** sensitivity ratings have some potential to accommodate the proposed change. Receptors with **Low** or **Very Low** sensitivity ratings have most potential to accommodate the proposed change.

Table 9: Criteria for Judging Levels of Visual Magnitude of Effect

Level of Magnitude	Definition
Very Large Adverse	The proposed change causes a major deterioration in, or change to, the baseline view, becoming a dominant or commanding new feature and focus of the view
	The change may be visible over a very large geographical area
	Effects are likely to be permanent and irreversible
Large Adverse	The proposed change causes a substantial deterioration in, or change to, the baseline view, becoming a prominent or unmistakable new feature in the view
	The change may be visible over a large geographical area
	Effects are likely to be long term/permanent and very difficult to reverse
Moderate Adverse	The proposed change causes a noticeable deterioration in, or change to, the baseline view, becoming a conspicuous or clearly visible new feature in the view
	The scale of change may be visible over a more limited geographical area
	Effects are likely to be long term/permanent, but potentially reversible
Small Adverse	The proposed change causes a minor deterioration in, or change to, the baseline view, becoming an apparent or visible new feature in the view
	The change may be visible over a small geographical area or be seen at such a distance that it has a limited effect on the view
	Effects may be short to medium term or long term /permanent, but are reversible
Negligible Adverse	The proposed change causes a barely discernible deterioration in, or change to, the baseline view
	The change may be visible over a very small geographical area or be seen at such a distance that it has a very little effect on the view
	Effects may be temporary, short to medium-term or long term, but can be reversed
Neutral	No change to the baseline view
Negligible Beneficial	The proposed change results in a barely discernible improvement the baseline view
	The change may be visible over a very small geographical area or be seen at such a distance that it has a very little effect on the view
	Effects may be temporary, short to medium-term or long term, but easily reversed
Small Beneficial	The proposed change results in a minor improvement to the baseline view
	The change may be visible over a small geographical area or be seen at such a distance that it has a limited effect on the view
	Effects may be short to medium term or long term /permanent, but are reversible
Moderate Beneficial	The proposed change results in a noticeable improvement to the baseline view
	The scale of change may be visible over a limited geographical area
	Effects are likely to be long term/permanent, but potentially reversible
Large Beneficial	The proposed change results in a substantial improvement to the baseline view
	The change may be visible over a large geographical area
	Effects are likely to be long term/permanent and very difficult to reverse
Very Large Beneficial	The proposed change results in a major improvement to the baseline view
	The change may be visible over a very large geographical area
	Effects are likely to be permanent and irreversible

Table 10: Matrix for Evaluating Overall Levels of Visual Effects

Sensitivity of Receptor	Level of Magnitude of Effect (Adverse or Beneficial)				
	Very Large	Large	Moderate	Small	Negligible
Very High	Substantial	Major	Moderate to Major	Moderate	Minor to Moderate
High	Major	Moderate to Major	Moderate	Minor to Moderate	Minor
Medium	Moderate to Major	Moderate	Moderate	Minor to Moderate	Minor
Low	Moderate	Minor to Moderate	Minor to Moderate	Minor	Negligible to Minor
Very Low	Minor to Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible to Minor	Negligible

Note:

1. The magnitude of effect can be expressed as Adverse or Beneficial and the overall level of effect can be expressed as Negative or Positive.
2. If the magnitude of effect is Neutral (i.e. No Change), all effects will be Neutral.
3. Effects assessed as being **Substantial** or **Major** are those which should be given the greatest weight in the decision-making process as they represent important changes to views. **Moderate to Major** or **Moderate** levels of effect also represent important changes, albeit they are of progressively lesser importance. Effects assessed as being **Minor to Moderate** or **Minor** are those which the decision-maker should be aware of as they constitute noticeable changes to views, however, they are unlikely to be important to the decision-making process. **Negligible to Minor** or **Negligible** levels of effect warrant the least weight in the decision-making process.