Proposed Solar PV Development

Byers Gill Solar
EN010139

6.2.7 Environmental Statement Chapter 7 Landscape and Visual

Planning Act 2008

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

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7. Landscape and Visual

7.1. Introduction

7.1.1. This chapter presents the findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and likely significant effects arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of Byers Gill Solar ('the Proposed Development') on landscape and visual receptors.

7.1.2. This chapter summarises the regulatory and policy framework, details the methodology followed for the assessment and describes the existing environment in the area surrounding the Proposed Development. Following this, the design, mitigation and enhancement measures are described and effects are assessed. Cumulative effects are assessed in Chapter 13 Cumulative (Document Reference 6.2.13).

7.1.3. Landscape and visual aspects considered within the chapter for the Proposed Development include:

- Landscape fabric;
- Landscape character;
- Visual receptors – i.e. people in the public domain; and
- Designated landscapes.

7.1.4. In considering effects on landscape fabric, this chapter considers the removal or addition of elements such as vegetation in relation to landscape change. The assessment of effects of the Proposed Development on ecological receptors is considered in Chapter 6 Biodiversity.

7.1.5. This chapter considers heritage assets in relation to their role in the landscape and its perceived value (for example, Conservation Areas are treated as areas where the character and views are valued). The assessment of effects of the Proposed Development on heritage receptors is considered in Chapter 8 Cultural heritage and archaeology.

7.1.6. Appendix 7.6 provides an assessment of effects on residential visual amenity, i.e. people within private property; which is a separate (though related) planning matter (see paragraphs 7.4.15-7.4.16).

7.1.7. This chapter is supported by the following appendices:

- ES Appendix 7.1 LVIA Methodology (Document Reference: 6.4.7.1);
- ES Appendix 7.2 Illustrative Views (Document Reference: 6.4.7.2);
- ES Appendix 7.3 Landscape Sensitivity (Document Reference: 6.4.7.3);
- ES Appendix 7.4 Viewpoint Analysis (Document Reference: 6.4.7.4);

- ES Appendix 7.5 Non-significant Effects (Document Reference: 6.4.7.5);
- ES Appendix 7.6 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (Document Reference: 6.4.7.6), and
- ES Appendix 7.7 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Document Reference: 6.4.7.7).

7.1.8. This ES Chapter and the supporting ES Appendices and ES Figures have been prepared by Chartered Landscape Architects at Abseline (on behalf of Stephenson Halliday). Full details of these competent experts are provided in ES Appendix 1.1 Competent Expert Evidence (Document Reference 6.4.1.1).

7.2. Legislative and policy framework

7.2.1. The relevant legislation, planning policy and guidelines which underpin the assessment methodology for the LVIA and inform the scope of the assessment are outlined in this section. A summary of relevant national planning policy for the Proposed Development is provided in Appendix 1.1 Planning Policy Framework.

Legislation

7.2.2. The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 is the legislation that underpins the LVIA.

Policy

7.2.3. Under Section 104 of the Planning Act 2008 (the Act), the Secretary of State (SoS) is directed to determine a Development Consent Order (DCO) application with regard to the relevant National Policy Statement (NPS), the local impact report, matters prescribed in relation to the Proposed Development, and any other matters regarded by the SoS as important and relevant. Following their designation on 17 January 2024, there are three NPSs which are considered to be 'relevant NPS' under Section 104 of the Act:

- Overarching NPS for energy (NPS EN-1)
- NPS for renewable energy infrastructure (NPS EN-3)
- NPS for electricity networks infrastructure (NPS EN-5)

7.2.4. It is considered that other national and local planning policy will be regarded by the SoS as 'important and relevant' to the Proposed Development. A detailed account of the planning policy framework relevant to the Proposed Development is provided in the Planning Statement (Document Reference 7.1). The Policy Compliance Document (Document Reference 7.1.1) evidences how the assessment of landscape effects has been informed by and is in compliance with the NPSs and relevant national and local planning policies. It provides specific reference to relevant sections of the ES which address requirements set out in policy.

Guidance

7.2.5. The following national planning guidance and baseline studies inform the assessment and mitigation by design:

- Planning Practice Guidance for Design: process and tools [9];
- Planning Practice Guidance: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy [10];
- National Design Guide [11]; and
- NCA 23 Tees Lowlands, Natural England (2014) [12].

7.2.6. The following local planning guidance and baseline studies inform the assessment:

- Darlington – Revised Design of New Development SPD (2011) [13];
- Darlington Landscape Character Assessment (2015) [14];
- Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment (2011) [15];
- Stockton on Tees Landscape Capacity Study (2011) [16];
- County Durham Landscape Character Assessment (2019) [17];
- County Durham Local Landscape Designation Review (2019) [18]; and
- County Durham Landscape Value assessment (2019) [19].

7.2.7. The following methodology guidance informs the assessment:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, (Third Edition), published jointly by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment (GLVIA 3) [20];
- Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals [21];
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment [22];
- An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment [23];
- TGN 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment [24];
- TGN 02/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations [25]; and
- Advice Note Seventeen: Cumulative Effects Assessment [26].

7.3. Scoping and Consultation

7.3.1. This section describes the scope of this Landscape and Visual Impact assessment, including how the assessment has responded to the Scoping Opinion. A description of the consultation and engagement undertaken with relevant technical stakeholders to develop and agree this scope is also provided.

Scoping

7.3.2. The EIA Scoping Report set out the proposed scope and assessment methodologies to be employed in the EIA and is provided in ES Appendix 4.1 EIA Scoping Report (Document Reference 6.4.4.1).

7.3.3. In response to the EIA Scoping Report, a Scoping Opinion was received from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on 6 December 2022 and is provided in ES Appendix 4.2 EIA Scoping Opinion (Document Reference 6.4.4.2)

7.3.4. ES Appendix 4.3 EIA Scoping Opinion Response Matrix (Document Reference 6.4.4.3) contains a table that outlines all matters identified by PINS in the EIA Scoping Opinion and how these have been addressed in the ES or other DCO application documentation.

Consultation

7.3.5. Engagement in relation to LVIA has been undertaken within a number of stakeholders throughout the EIA process. The stakeholders consulted were:

- Darlington Borough Council;
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council;
- Durham County Council; and
- Natural England.

7.3.6. The Consultation Report (Document Reference 5.1) submitted alongside the DCO application contains a full account of the previous statutory consultation process and issues raised in feedback. Matters raised regarding the scope, methodology or mitigation considered as part of the LVIA were then subject to further discussions directly with stakeholders.

7.3.7. Table 7-1 provides a summary of engagement with relevant stakeholders which has been undertaken to inform the EIA.

Table 7-1 Stakeholder engagement relating to LVIA

Stakeholder	Comments	Response
Matters raised in Scoping Opinion and responses		
PINS	Indicated that the Inspectorate is content to scope out consideration of effects on nationally designated landscapes on the basis that there are no national landscape designations within 5km of the Proposed Development.	The assessment does not consider effects on nationally designated landscapes.
Darlington BC (and PINS)	Requested a 5km study area and/or consideration of landscape and visual receptors beyond 2km based on the areas of visibility identified in the scoping ZTV studies.	At the scoping stage, it was agreed that a 5km study area would be used for the PEIR, with a view to reducing to 2km for the ES should the PEIR establish that effects beyond 2km would not be significant. Following publication of the PEIR, a 3km study area for the ES was agreed with Darlington Borough Council as set out at section 7.6 below.
PINS (and Natural England)	PINS request assessment of effects on National Landscape Character Areas "*where significant effects are likely to occur*".	As indicated by the Natural England scoping response and best practice as set out at paragraph 5.14 of GLVIA[3], local character studies provide the most appropriate scale for detailed assessment, with the National Character Areas providing additional context to the baseline, and this is the primary approach taken within this assessment. PINS suggested further clarification with Natural England and a response was received on 11 February 2023 indicating that effects on the NCA should be considered where significant effects on local character was identified. This assessment follows that suggested approach.
PINS	*"The ES should explain the process used to determine appropriate viewpoints through the consultation process and should take into count topography, long-distance views, views from Public Rights of Way and the setting of heritage receptors."*	Consultation regarding viewpoint selection is described within Appendix 7.4, and within this table. The ZTV studies used to inform viewpoint selection model the influence of topography on visibility. Viewpoints are included for a range of distances (up to 3km) and visual receptors (including PRoW users). The setting of heritage receptors is not a matter for LVIA and is considered in Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage and archaeology. That chapter sets out how viewpoints have informed the heritage assessment.
PINS	Expresses concern that components of the development other than the solar PV modules may be taller than the 4.35m modelled in the scoping ZTV studies and	The elements within the panel areas (panels, fencing, battery storage inverters) would not be taller than the panels (see Chapter 2 for images which illustrate these elements).

Stakeholder	Comments	Response
	may warrant a wider study area.	The 4.35m maximum height for elements within the panel areas was retained for the PEIR stage, but reduced for the ES to 3.5m maximum height. The substation and transmitter mast (See Chapter 2) would be taller, however given an increased 3km study area (compared to the 2km proposed at Scoping) has been used, a further increase is not required to consider these elements. Figure 7.8 shows the theoretical visibility of the substation, which would be limited beyond 3km from the site to occasional glimpses from roads and rights of way, where not screened by hedgerows.
Darlington BC	Requests that views from beyond 2km are considered, in particular from Sadberge, Whinney Hill, West Newbiggin and Darlington Back Lane.	These locations were subsequently discussed within the context of including a wider study area (see above). It was agreed that viewpoints from Sadberge and Darlington Back Lane and West Newbiggin would be included (viewpoints 31 and 32). In relation to Whinney Hill it was agreed that as the ZTV studies indicate little to no visibility from the settlement, any viewpoint would need to be located on the road to the north, which is the same receptor group as represented by viewpoint 29 and that therefore an additional viewpoint was not necessary. Taking account of the need to represent views from a range of directions within the study area, a potential viewpoint to the west of the A1 near Coatham Mundeville was also discussed and is included as viewpoint 33.
Darlington BC	Identifies the potential for cumulative effects with solar farms consented at Gately Moor (22/00727/FUL) and Whinfield (21/00958/FUL).	These two consents are considered as part of the future baseline and included in the assessment of effects within this chapter.
Darlington BC	Identifies that the scoping request did not include historic parklands designated by Darlington Local Plan policy ENV3 as receptors for assessment.	These receptors are considered within this assessment at Table 7-5.
Darlington BC	Effects on elements of the proposals other than the solar PV modules should be considered.	This assessment considers the effects of all elements of the Proposed Development.
Durham CC	Suggests visibility may arise from PRoW near Foxton	Viewpoint 30 has been included to represent views from this location.
Durham CC No response had been received as of 14/03/2023.	Indicates that "*effects on the county are likely to be largely restricted to local roads including Lodge Lane (C34A), C92 and the C37 from where there would be glimpsed, fleeting or intermittent sequential views*	It is not feasible for the Proposed Development to secure change (including to vegetation management) outside of the Order Limits. This assessment considers the effects which would arise without such measures.

Stakeholder	Comments	Response
	of the site…" but also that "*mitigation in the wider landscape of intervening hedgerows outside the site boundary is likely to be required to help create visual enclosure*."	
Durham CC	Requests that viewpoints and visual representations be agreed with the Durham CC landscape officer; the inclusion of summer and winter views, and that assumptions relating to vegetation growth be detailed in relation to the assessment and photomontages.	An email was sent in January 2023 to both the planning and landscape officers in relation to agreement of viewpoints, along with a request to reconsider the need for summer views given that project timing would mean that winter views (i.e. showing the maximum likely visibility) would be provided in the first instance. No response was received prior to the publication of the PEIR. After publication of the PEIR, a meeting with Durham CC was held on 24 August where Durham CC agreed that they were content with the viewpoint selection, the scope, approach and findings of the PEIR and that additional photography was not required.
Post-PEIR Consultation with Darlington BC		
Darlington BC	Requests that specific consideration is given to effects on the settlements – including the identification of effects on key views and the setting of settlements.	After detailed discussion at a meeting on 11/09/2023 it was agreed that effects on the character of Brafferton, Bishopton and Great Stainton would be considered individually, separating the settlements out from their host landscape character areas as described within the Darlington BC character assessment.
Darlington BC	Request 7 additional viewpoints included in planning response. Suggested 3 viewpoints could be moved in planning response.	Following further discussion, Norton Crescent, Sadberge was added as an illustrative view. Viewpoint 16 was not moved as that would have resulted in markedly reduced visibility of the proposals following design changes. Viewpoint 11 was not moved as that would have also resulted in markedly reduced visibility of the nearest panel area (B) and moved viewpoint 11 very close to viewpoint 12. Viewpoint 18 was not moved as the suggested location was an unsafe roadside location for photography.
Darlington BC	Request 8 additional viewpoints (included in landscape response)	Where not roadside views which would be unsafe to photograph, these locations were included as illustrative views (See Appendix 7.2). Viewpoint 34 was added, viewpoints 5 and 26 were moved to the nearby locations suggested to address this request.

Stakeholder	Comments	Response
	Request additional photography and detailed landscape design be provided in order to aid identification of 'worst case' viewpoints.	At the time of this request, the specific requests above had been accommodated and the assessment process was well advanced, with baseline photography having been undertaken nearly a year prior. Darlington BC declined to provide any further detail about the locations or receptors they considered to be under-represented, apart from suggesting that receptors such as Mill Lane merited more than one viewpoint. It is judged that the addition of further viewpoints would be disproportionate in the absence of a specific concern or receptor that is not currently represented being identified.
Darlington BC	Request that 'worst case' effects are considered.	Effects are considered on the basis of a realistic worst-case scenario as required by the EIA Regulations and in accordance with best practice guidance.
Darlington BC	Requests a 'breakdown of individual receptors' within visual receptor groups.	This is provided for relevant receptor groups (i.e. area based groups which include multiple routes) in the assessment below.
Darlington BC	Requests detailed design includes the number and siting of CCTV cameras as being necessary to inform the LVIA.	Given the CCTV cameras would be no taller than the solar panels and included within the panel fields, it is not considered that they would have markedly different effects on views and character to those of the other elements (panels, inverters, storage) of similar height within the panel areas. This detailed design information is not deemed necessary to inform the judgements of landscape and visual effects.
Darlington BC	Requests that winter views be used as the basis or photomontages.	The winter photography undertaken for the PEIR is used for photomontages.
Darlington BC	Expressed concern that some visual effects on residential properties would be 'missed', due to the 100m RVAA study area.	The Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) study area was agreed at the scoping stage as being adequate to consider all relevant effects on private residential amenity. Extending the RVAA study area would not identify additional properties where effects would exceed the RVAA threshold (see Appendix 7.6). The LVIA describes views from private properties which are associated with the routes and settlements being considered.
Darlington BC	Indicated that new hedges should not always be considered as being 'positive', in particular where they would screen currently open views across the wider landscape.	Hedges are proposed as mitigation where they are judged to be preferable to open views into the Panel Areas - See Chapter 2 The Proposed Development (Document Reference 6.2.2). Within the assessment the loss of open views is assessed to be an adverse impact, whether it results from screening by hedges or by other elements of the Proposed Development.

7.4. Assessment Methodology

7.4.1. This section outlines the methodology for assessing the likely significant landscape and visual effects from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. Full details of the assessment methodology is described in Appendix 7.1. The methodology remains substantially the same as that published within the PEIR Appendix 7.1 – though methodology aspects that were specific to the PEIR stage assessment and not used in this final assessment have been removed.

7.4.2. The assessment is informed by initial desk study and site visits to identify receptors (landscape character areas, landscape designations and groups of people who may be affected by changes to views). The desk study includes the preparation of a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study to identify potential areas of visibility of the development. This information is used to aid identification of the study area and receptors likely to be affected. Viewpoints are identified to represent a range of distances, directions and receptors, located in areas of visibility identified using the ZTV study and site survey. The viewpoint selection has also been refined via consultation (see Section 7.3). Viewpoints are used as 'sample' locations to inform the assessment of effects on receptors.

7.4.3. A summary of the approach and terminology used in setting out judgements is provided below.

Sensitivity

7.4.4. Sensitivity is judged by considering the component judgments about the value and susceptibility of the receptor as illustrated by Table 7-2.

7.4.5. Where sensitivity is judged to lie between levels, an intermediate assessment will be adopted. A slightly greater weight is given to susceptibility in judging sensitivity of visual receptors as indicated by Table 7-3.

Table 7-2 Landscape Sensitivity

LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS		Susceptibility		
		High	**Medium**	**Low**
Value	**National**	High	High/Medium	Medium
	Regional	High/Medium	Medium	Medium/Low
	Community	Medium	Medium/Low	Low

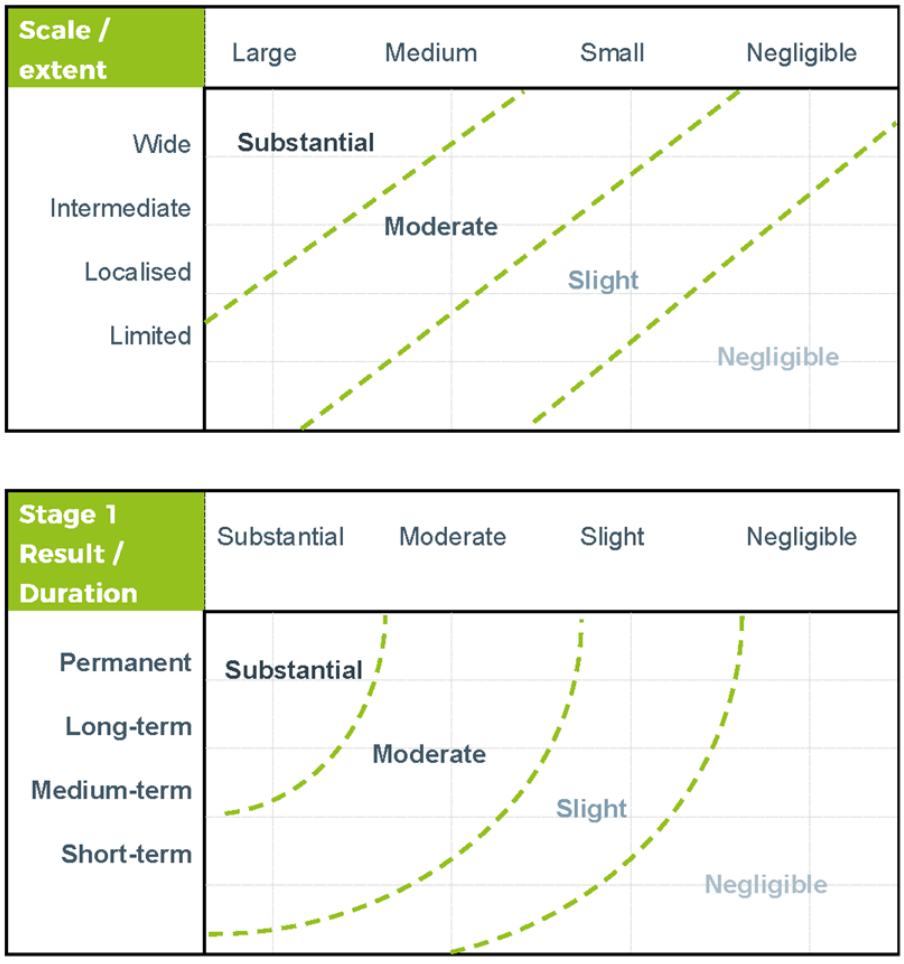
Table 7-3 Visual Sensitivity

VISUAL RECEPTORS		Susceptibility		
		High	**Medium**	**Low**
Value	**National**	High	High/Medium	Medium
	Regional	High/Medium	High/Medium	Medium/Low
	Community	High/Medium	Medium	Low

Magnitude

7.4.6. Scale of effect, (expressed as Large, Medium, Small, Negligible, or intermediate judgements between), is the primary factor in determining magnitude; which may be higher if the effect is particularly widespread and/or long lasting, or lower if it is constrained in geographic extent and/or timescale. Plate 7-1 illustrates how this judgement is considered as a two-step process.

Plate 7-1 Definition of Magnitude



7.4.7. Where magnitude (or other judgements) are judged to lie between levels, an intermediate assessment will be adopted and is expressed as e.g. Moderate/slight.

Significance of Effects

7.4.8. The significance of a landscape or visual effect is assessed through professional judgement, combining the sensitivity of the receptor with the predicted magnitude of change, as summarised in Table 7-4. Table 7-4 is not used as a prescriptive tool and illustrates the typical outcomes, allowing for the exercise of professional judgement.

Table 7-4 Significance

		Magnitude of Change			
		Substantial	**Moderate**	**Slight**	**Negligible**
Receptor Sensitivity	**High**	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible

7.4.9. The significance of any identified landscape or visual effect is assessed as Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible. Where the effect has been classified as Major or Major/Moderate this is considered to be equivalent to likely significant effects referred to in the EIA Regulations.

Beneficial/Adverse

7.4.10. Landscape and visual effects can be beneficial or adverse and in some instances, may be considered neutral. Neutral effects are those which overall are neither adverse nor positive but may incorporate a combination of both.

7.4.11. Changes to rural landscapes involving construction of man-made objects of a large scale are generally considered to be adverse.

Cumulative Assessment

7.4.12. Cumulative effects are the result of multiple actions on environmental receptors or resources over time. Two categories of cumulative effects are typically considered:

- In-combination effects from the interrelationship between different environmental effects of the Proposed Development (intra-project) – these are considered within this chapter as set out at 7.1.5 above; and
- Cumulative effects from the interrelationship between different projects along with the Proposed Development (inter-project).

7.4.13. The approach to cumulative assessment for LVIA is set out within Appendix 7.1, and a cumulative LVIA is provided in the Chapter 13 Cumulative Effects .

Night-time Assessment

7.4.14. The Proposed Development does not include permanent lighting. Infra-red security lighting would be used at night, and lighting would be available for emergencies. As a result, no significant effects are likely to arise at night, and night-time impacts are not assessed further.

Residential Amenity

7.4.15. As set out within Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) [24]:

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

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

7.4.16. Appendix 7.6 provides an assessment of effects on visual amenity for residential properties within 100m of the solar PV modules (the agreed scope of assessment).

Distances

7.4.17. Where distances are given in the assessment, these are approximate distances between the nearest Panel Area and the nearest part of the receptor in question, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

Visual Aids

7.4.18. Annotated photographs of the existing views and either matched wirelines or Year 0 and Year 15 photomontages at all viewpoints are provided in Figure 7.9 (Document Reference 6.3.7.9). The method of visualisation selected has been informed by Landscape Institute Technical Note 06/19 Visual representation [21], with annotated photographs and matched wirelines being used for the majority of viewpoints and photomontages used for viewpoints close to settlements and those which represent transport routes that pass close to the panel areas. The methodology of production for the visualisations is described in Appendix 7.1.

7.5. Assessment Assumptions and Limitations

7.5.1. No specific assumptions or limitations have affected the preparation of this assessment.

7.6. Study Area

7.6.1. The study area has been defined as 3km from the Panel Areas for this LVIA. As set out within Section 7.5, during scoping a 2km study area was proposed based on ZTV studies and site work. Darlington Borough Council requested a 5km study area given that the ZTV studies identified some visibility beyond 2km, and Durham County Council requested a viewpoint location near Foxton (beyond 2km but within 5km), and the study area was increased to 5km for the PEIR stage in response to this feedback with a view to reducing to 2km for the ES should the PEIR establish that effects beyond 2km would not be significant. The PEIR established that no significant effects would arise beyond 1km, however a 3km detailed study area is used within this EIA to retain the viewpoints requested beyond 2km within the assessment scope. ZTV studies (Figures 7.1 and 7.2) are presented to 5km to show the wider context of the assessment.

7.7. Baseline Conditions

7.7.1. Figure 7.1 illustrates the landscape context for the Proposed Development. The Site Area is located between Darlington, Stockton-on-Tees and Newton Aycliffe in an area of undulating mixed farmland with a network of local roads and rights of way and a mix of dispersed settlement, small villages and hamlets.

7.7.2. The Site Area does not coincide with any national or local landscape designations. The nearest national landscape designations are Registered Parks and Gardens located approximately 5km from Panel Areas A-F (as illustrated by Figure 7.1), with the nearest Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and National Parks located more than 20km from the Proposed Development. Effects on national designations have been agreed through Scoping to be scoped out of this assessment.

Baseline Documents

7.7.3. As set out at Section 7.2, there are a number of studies which have informed this assessment. Published baseline landscape character assessments (LCAs) include:

- National Character Area description for the host landscape character type; NCA 23 Tees Lowlands, Natural England (2014) [12];
- Darlington Landscape Character Assessment (2015) [14];
- Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment (2011) [15]; and
- County Durham Landscape Character Assessment (2019) [17].

7.7.4. The character areas and types identified within the study area by each of these documents are considered further below.

7.7.5. The Darlington LCA provides baseline description of the Landscape Character Areas within the Borough and includes a sensitivity analysis in relation to built development but not solar farms. The baseline descriptions, commentary on sensitivity and

observations from site work were used to inform consideration of the sensitivity of the character areas to the Proposed Development as set out within this chapter and Appendix 7.3.

7.7.6. The Stockton on Tees LCA provides baseline description of the Landscape Character Areas within the Borough. It is supported by the Stockton on Tees Landscape Capacity Study (2011) [16], which provides advice in relation to development within smaller landscape units within the Borough but does not specifically consider solar farms. The baseline descriptions, commentary on sensitivity and observations from site work were used to inform consideration of the sensitivity of the landscape character areas to the Proposed Development as set out within this chapter and Appendix 7.3.

7.7.7. The Durham LCA provides baseline description of the landscape character areas and types within the county. There is no sensitivity assessment provided, although the County Durham Local Landscape Designation Review (2019) [18] provides analysis for landscape value within the County which has been used, with the baseline descriptions, and observations from site work, to inform consideration of the sensitivity of the landscape character areas to the Proposed Development as set out within this chapter and Appendix 7.3.

7.7.8. The County Durham Landscape Value assessment (2019) [19] provides a criteria based assessment of landscape value within the administrative area and is used to inform consideration of landscape value within County Durham.

7.7.9. The County Durham Local Landscape Designation Review (2019) [18] provides information in relation to the Areas of Higher Landscape Value (AHLVs) identified within the County and has been used to inform the consideration of the special qualities and sensitivities of the designated areas to the Proposed Development as set out within this chapter.

Landscape Character

7.7.10. As shown by Figure 7.1, Panel Areas A-F will host the solar PV modules and lie within two Darlington Borough landscape character areas. Panel Areas A-D are within 6: Great Stainton Farmland and Panel Areas E-F are within 7: Bishopton Vale. Woodland, hedgerows and hedgerow trees are relatively frequent in the Great Stainton Farmland which along with the undulating landform serves to constrain visibility, though there are some more elevated and open locations with wider views. The lower lying and flatter area to the east (Bishopton Vale) has more arable farming and is less vegetated, with more open views.

7.7.11. The potential cable route options also pass through character areas within the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Area: 1 West Stockton Rural Fringe and 3 Billingham and Thorpe Becks.

7.7.12. Other character areas within the 3km study area are shown on Figure 7.1 and considered along with the host character areas identified above in the preliminary assessment.

Visual receptors

7.7.13. Visual receptors include residents, visitors and those travelling within 3km of the Panel Areas A-F, or within 200m of the cable routes as set out in Table 7-5. Local roads within settlements and short routes closely associated with settlements are considered as part of the settlement, other local roads passing through the study area are considered as part of visual receptor groups including homes and rights of way.

7.7.14. Key road and rail routes within 3km are also identified in Table 7-5. There are no long-distance footpaths, National Cycle Routes or National Trails within the study area.

Landscape Designations

7.7.15. Landscape designations within the study area and scope of assessment include locally designated historic parklands within Darlington and AHLVs within Durham. Those within the 3km study area are shown on Figure 7.1 and identified in Table 7-5.

Receptor Summary

7.7.16. Table 7-5 summarises landscape and visual receptors within the agreed 3km study area and scope of assessment, grouped by distance from the nearest Panel Area.

Table 7-5 Receptors grouped by distance from nearest Panel Area

Receptors within 1km	Receptors 1-3km
Landscape Character	
Darlington: 5 Upper Skerne Valley	Darlington: 4 Whessoe and Dene Beck
Darlington 6: Great Stainton Farmland (host area)	Darlington: 8 Middleton Farmland
Darlington 7: Bishopton Vale (host area)	D57 Darlington urban area
Durham: 73 Sedgefield, Windlestone and Aycliffe	Durham: 95 Newton Aycliffe urban area
Durham: 16 Butterwick and Shotton	Durham: 10 Bradbury Preston and Morden Carrs
Stockton-on-Tees: 3 Billingham and Thorpe Becks	Stockton-on-Tees: 1 West Stockton Rural Fringe
Brafferton	Stockton-on-Tees: 5 Wynyard
Great Stainton	
Bishopton	

Receptors within 1km	Receptors 1-3km
Visual Receptors	
Settlements	
Coatham Mundeville	Beaumont Hill
Brafferton	Newton Aycliffe & Aycliffe Village
Great Stainton	Preston-le-Skerne
Little Stainton	Redmarshall
Bishopton	Carlton
Old Stillington	Darlington
Stillington	
Whitton	
Rural routes and homes	
Within 1km - Between A167, Salters Lane, Lea Hall and Little Ketton Farm	Beyond 1km - Between Newton Aycliffe, Foxton and Stillington
Within 1km – East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane	Beyond 1km - East of Foxton, Stillington, Redmarshall and Whinney Hill
Within 1km – East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts	Beyond 1km – Between Redmarshall, Whinney Hill, and Hill House Lane
Within 1km - East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm	Beyond 1km – Between Hill House Lane, Darlington, Coatham Mundeville and Newton Aycliffe
Key Routes	
A167	A177
East Coast main line	Local rail line between Darlington and Newton Aycliffe
A1 (M)	
Designations	
Elstob AHLV	Bradbury, Preston and Mordon Carrs AHLV
Hall Garth	

7.7.17. Baseline description for receptors is provided within section 7.10 for ease of reference by setting out firstly the baseline and then the effects for each receptor.

Future baseline

7.7.18. The current baseline includes a number of operational solar farms, and the future baseline includes consented developments that are likely to be operational either before or during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development (see Chapter 13 and Figure 13.2). In relation to this assessment, the consented developments included in the future baseline are listed in Table 7-6. These are shown on Figures 7.5 and 7.7 and referenced within the baseline descriptions where relevant.

7.7.19. Other ongoing changes to the landscape include the continued loss of Ash trees to Ash die-back.

Table 7-6 Consented developments included in the future baseline

ID	Application Reference	Applicant for 'other development' and brief description
16	22/00727/FUL	Gately Moor solar farm
18	22/1511/FUL	California Farm solar farm
21	DM/21/02816/FPA / 21/00958/FUL	Whinfield solar farm
26	21/2290/FUL	High Meadow 2 solar farm
28	20/2692/FUL	Middlefield Farm solar farm
36	22/00213/FUL	Burtree Lane solar farm
40	20/2131/FUL	Thorpe Bank solar farm
41	22/01329/FUL	Long Pasture solar farm
42	DM/20/01991/FPA	Cowley House Farm solar farm
29	DM/19/00283/OUT	Forrest Park mixed-use development
33	15/00804/OUT	Berrymead Farm 1 housing
37	15/01050/OUT	Burtree Lane (S) housing

7.8. Potential impacts

7.8.1. Based on the design of the Proposed Development during operation and associated construction and decommissioning activities, the Proposed Development has the potential to impact on landscape and visual receptors during construction, operation and decommissioning.

7.8.2. Mitigation measures incorporated in the design and construction of the Proposed Development are reported as embedded mitigation in ES Chapter 2 The Proposed Development (Document Reference 6.2.2). Essential mitigation is reported in Section 7.9, design, mitigation and enhancement measures, of this ES chapter.

7.8.3. Potential impacts of the Proposed Development, prior to the implementation of any further essential mitigation, beyond that embedded in the Proposed Development are described in this section. The effects of the Proposed Development, accounting for any additional essential mitigation, are then described in Section 7.10.

Construction

7.8.4. Effects during construction on landscape fabric would arise from:

- removal of short sections of hedgerow to create access tracks;
- removal of short sections of hedgerow to lay cables (only where Horizontal Direct Drilling to go under the hedge is not feasible);
- planting of new trees and hedgerows;
- construction of the on-site substation, and
- the installation of fencing, tracks, solar PV modules and other infrastructure elements within fenced areas.

7.8.5. In the event that the on-road cable routes are used, the cables would be laid within the verge if feasible to do so without removing linear runs of hedges or removing trees, otherwise it would be laid under the road.

7.8.6. Effects during construction on landscape character would arise from:

- short-term change of farmland to construction site; and
- changes to landscape fabric as described above.

7.8.7. Effects during construction on visual receptors would arise from:

- short-term movement of vehicles and plant within and travelling to and from the Proposed Development to deliver and install the solar farm components, and other site infrastructure; and
- increasing coverage of the Panel Areas with solar PV modules and other components of the Proposed Development, with similar effects to the operational stage.

7.8.8. Effects during construction on designated landscapes would arise from short-term changes to the special qualities as a result of the construction activity taking place in a nearby area.

Operation

7.8.9. Effects during operation on landscape fabric would arise from:

- the long-term presence of the fencing, tracks, solar PV modules and other infrastructure elements within fenced areas; and
- growth of new planting.

7.8.10. Effects during operation on landscape character would arise from:

- the long-term change of farmland to solar farm; and
- changes to vegetation cover and accessibility.

7.8.11. Effects during operation on visual receptors would arise from changes to views towards the Panel Areas to include the fencing, tracks, solar PV modules and other infrastructure elements within fenced areas, both from static locations and when moving along routes (both existing and proposed) through the landscape.

7.8.12. Effects during operation on designated landscapes would arise from changes to the special qualities as a result of visibility of the solar farm in a nearby landscape.

Decommissioning

7.8.13. Decommissioning would take place over a period of 12 months in total, a Short-term duration. Activity would take place simultaneously across the Site Area, but would only be obviously different from farming activities in closer views and at the start of the panel removal, at which stage effects would be similar to those during operation.

7.8.14. Effects during decommissioning would be short-term and similar to those arising during construction except in reverse in terms of the Panel Areas being reinstated to farmland.

7.9. Embedded mitigation

7.9.1. The Proposed Development has been designed, to avoid and prevent adverse environmental effects on landscape and visual receptors through the process of design development and consideration of good design principles.

7.9.2. Mitigation measures incorporated in the design and construction of the Proposed Development, considering the potential impacts, are reported as embedded mitigation in ES Chapter 2 The Proposed Development (Document Reference 6.2.2) and are detailed more fully in the Design Approach Document (Document reference 7.2), and ES Figure 2.20 Landscape Concept Masterplan (Document Reference 6.3.2.20) and the Environmental Masterplans (Document Reference 2.5). The effects of the Proposed

Development are assessed considering embedded mitigation is in place and are reported in Section 7.10.

7.9.3. Where further mitigation is deemed to be required as a result of potentially significant effects, this is termed essential mitigation and is set out as part of the assessment of effects in Section 7.10.

7.9.4. Further detail in relation to the definition of mitigation measures and how they are considered in the EIA is provided in Section 4.5 in ES Chapter 4 Approach to EIA (Document Reference 6.2.4).

7.10. Assessment of likely significant effects

Introduction

7.10.1. This section presents the likely effects on landscape and visual receptors resulting from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

7.10.2. The assessment of effects takes into account the potential impacts to each receptor (as set out in Section 7.8) following the implementation of embedded mitigation (as set out in Section 7.9). Where required to mitigate potentially significant effects, essential mitigation measures are outlined as part of the assessment, and the overall significance of residual effects set out.

7.10.3. Apart from the on-site substation and associated communications mast, the solar PV modules would be the most visible elements of the solar farm. The description of effects primarily focuses on these larger elements but takes account of all elements of the Proposed Development in considering the likely significant effects.

7.10.4. The structure of the assessment considers effects as follows:

- effects on landscape fabric within the Site Area;
- the geographic extent of effects beyond the Site Area;
- effects on landscape and settlement character;
- effects on visual receptors; and
- effects on designated landscapes.

7.10.5. This avoids repetition or forward referencing as effects on landscape fabric inform the consideration of effects on landscape character; and effects on fabric, character and views inform the consideration of effects on designations. For each receptor, the baseline is described first, followed by effects.

7.10.6. There would be no effects arising from cable routes during operation and the assessment of the operational stage focuses on the effects that would arise from the solar PV modules and other above ground infrastructure.

Landscape Fabric

Baseline

7.10.7. The landscape fabric of the Panel Areas and substation site consists of a mix of arable and pasture fields, typically of medium scale and separated by hedgerows. In places those hedgerows are sparse, and in others they also include trees. For the cable routes, the site area is a mix of farmland and road surfaces and verges.

Effects during construction

7.10.8. As set out at 7.8.5 above, use of the on-road cable routes would not involve the removal of trees, and hedgerow removals (and reinstatement) would be restricted to locations where the cables need to cross hedgerows in moving from the road/verge into the adjacent fields. Impacts would include excavation and reinstatement of road surfaces and/or grass verges if those routes are used. For both cable-route options, there would be some hedgerow removals and reinstatement where the route cross hedgerows between fields. Effects within the panel areas during construction would consist of localised removals of hedgerows for access (150m in total) and cable laying and the gradual change of arable or pasture fields to accommodate solar PV modules and other infrastructure including access tracks. No hedges covered by the Hedgerow Regulations would be removed. No trees covered by Tree protection Orders would be removed, and only 1 Category B tree and 6 Category U trees would be removed in total as set out within Appendix 7.7.

7.10.9. The substation construction would involve groundworks and the construction of the substation compound and mast.

7.10.10. New planting would also be undertaken to seed panel areas, gap up or reinstate removed hedgerows and provide new hedgerows as shown by the Environmental Masterplans (Document Reference 2.5). The net change at this stage would result in short term removals of some sections of mature hedgerow before the new planting has matured, and the loss of some trees which are not suitable for long term retention, and would result in some localised adverse effects which would not be significant.

7.10.11. No essential mitigation is required and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.12. During operation the cables will be underground and vegetation will quickly re-establish (including any hedgerows that may need to be removed and reinstated). Effects on landscape fabric during operation would not be significant. They would consist of the continued presence of the solar farm, increasing maturity of the proposed hedgerow and tree planting, along with the continued maintenance of the grassland within the panel areas. There would be localised non-significant positive effects on the landscape fabric as a result of the hedgerow and tree planting both in the medium term (as hedges mature), increasing biodiversity within the panel areas and

those areas managed as habitat for specific species, and permanent positive changes as the trees mature.

7.10.13. No essential mitigation is required and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.14. Underground cables and vegetation planted as part of the proposals will be left in situ within the cable corridors (i.e. between Panel Areas and to the Norton Substation). Solar PV modules and other infrastructure within the Panel Areas, including tracks and cabling, would be removed. Effects on landscape fabric during decommissioning would consist of the removal of infrastructure within the panel areas (except potentially the substation as noted in section 7.8) and the return to arable or pasture. These effects would not be significant and would substantially return the Site to its baseline condition, with the exception of a continuation of the Localised, Permanent beneficial effects as a result of the maturation of planting implemented as part of the Proposed Development.

7.10.15. No essential mitigation is required and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Geographic Extent and Duration of Effects

7.10.16. The assessment of effects on landscape and visual receptors beyond the Site has been informed by the consideration of ZTV studies and viewpoint analysis and the duration of effects as described below.

ZTV studies

7.10.17. ZTV Studies have been prepared to identify the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, as follows:

- ES Figure 7.2 (Document Reference 6.3.7.2) indicates how many of the six Panel Areas can be seen within a 5km radius from the Panel Areas and was used to assist in siting viewpoints to show effects from areas where more than one Panel Area can be seen.
- ES Figure 7.3 (Document Reference 6.3.7.3) indicates how many of the ZTV points (spaced 100m apart within Panel Areas A-F) analysed are visible within a 5km radius from the Panel Areas – providing an indication of how much of the Proposed Development would be visible. This study clearly indicates that for much of area within 5km either none, or 15% or less, of the development would be theoretically visible. Locations with greater theoretical visibility are focussed within open fields between the Panel Areas and in more distant areas along the slopes facing towards the Panel Area between Sadberge and Redmarshall; and in areas of higher ground to the northeast and west of the Panel Areas. These latter areas are represented within this assessment by additional viewpoints requested by consultees during scoping.

- ZTV studies included within ES Figures 7.5-7.7 have been informed by the viewpoint analysis set out within Table 7-7 and indicate how many of the ZTV points would be visible within 1km (i.e. where visibility may give rise to changes to views which would be small scale or greater).

7.10.18. The areas of visibility identified have been verified during site visits and it was noted that local hedgerow and tree cover markedly reduces the extent of visibility from that shown on the ZTV studies, with visibility generally extending in practice to no more than 1-1.5km from Panel Areas A-F apart from:

- occasional distant elevated views from beyond 2km, e.g. near Foxton (see viewpoint 30) and to the west of the site (see viewpoint 33), where the Proposed Development is typically seen as small areas of narrow horizontal strips within the landscape, filtered through intervening tree cover in the winter and more screened in the summer; and
- views from the southeast of Panel Areas C and D where the panels would occupy slopes facing towards this direction and would be seen looking across low lying land towards the skyline, e.g. from viewpoints 31 and 32.

Viewpoint Analysis

7.10.19. Appendix 7.4 (Document Reference 6.4.7.4) provides a review of the likely visibility of the Proposed Development from the viewpoints. The locations of viewpoints are shown on Figures 7.2-7.3 and visualisations are provided in Figure 7.9. The summary of the judgements in relation to the scale of visual effects at each viewpoint is provided in Table 7-7. Some of the judgements included in Table 7-7 have been revised from the PEIR, as a result of:

- reduced panel heights from 4.35-3.5m;
- reductions to Panel Areas;
- changes to viewpoint locations; and/or
- based on a more detailed understanding of the likely visibility informed by the wirelines.

7.10.20. Judgements relating to the scale of effects with mature planting assume that the growth rate of hedging would be around 50cm per year, which allowing for cutting to thicken hedges would mean that existing hedges which are currently 1.5-2m would mature to 3-3.5m height in 3-5 years and new planting would mature to 3-3.5m height in 7-10 years. On this basis the effects during early operation are assessed to have a Medium-term duration, and effects for the remainder of the operational period are assessed as though Permanent given that the duration of operation (40 years) would be longer than the 25-year period defined as Long-term within the methodology set out in Appendix 7.1.

Table 7-7 Viewpoint Analysis Summary

VP	Location	Distance from nearest panel area	Scale of effects during early operation (Medium-term)	Potential scale of effects with mature mitigation planting (up to year 40)
1	Lime Lane (near A1)	0.3km	Medium, Adverse in winter Medium/small, Adverse in summer	Medium, Adverse in winter Medium/small, Adverse in summer
2	Brafferton	0.2km	Medium/small, Adverse in winter Small, Adverse in summer	Small, Adverse
3	Footpath west of High House	0.2km	Small, Adverse	Small, Adverse
4	Lime Lane (near Ricknall Lane)	0.3km	Medium/small, Adverse	Negligible, Neutral
5	Bridleway near Brafferton	0km	Large, Adverse	Large, Adverse
6	Bridleway near Ketton Hall	0.2km	Medium, Adverse in winter Medium/small, Adverse in summer	Medium, Adverse in winter Medium/small, Adverse in summer
7	Beaumont Hill	1.5km	Negligible, Neutral	Negligible, Neutral
8	Footpath near Moor House	1.2km	Negligible, Neutral	Negligible, Neutral
9	Newton Ketton	0.3km	Medium/small, Adverse in winter, Negligible, Neutral in summer	Small, Adverse in winter, Negligible, Neutral in summer
10	Salters Lane / Catkill Lane	0.5km	Negligible, Neutral	Negligible, Neutral
11	Salters Lane	0.1km	Large/medium, Adverse in winter Medium, Adverse in summer	Medium, Adverse in winter, Medium/small, Adverse in summer
12	Bridleway near Stainton Hill House	0.1km	Large, Adverse	Small, Adverse
13	Footpath near Hauxley Farm	0.1km	Medium, Adverse	Small, Neutral
14	Footpath northeast of Hauxley Farm	0.2km	Large, Adverse	Large/medium, Adverse
15	Lodge Lane	0.2km	Small, Adverse	Negligible, Neutral
16	Footpath northwest of Viewley Hill Farm	0.1km	Medium, Adverse	Small, Neutral
17	Footpath east of Great Stainton	0.1km	Large, Adverse	Large, Adverse
18	Great Stainton, Elstob Lane	0.2km	Medium/small, Adverse	Small, Adverse
19	Elstob Lane	0.3km	Medium, Adverse	Medium/small, Adverse

VP	Location	Distance from nearest panel area	Scale of effects during early operation (Medium-term)	Potential scale of effects with mature mitigation planting (up to year 40)
20	Catkill Lane	0km	Large, Adverse at this atypical location (a gap in the woodland edge), typically Small, Adverse in winter and Negligible, Neutral in summer.	Large, Adverse at this atypical location (a gap in the woodland edge), typically Small, Adverse in winter and Negligible, Neutral in summer.
21	Local road west of Bishopton	0.1km	Large/medium, Adverse	Medium/small, Neutral
22	Footpath, Folly Bank	0km	Large, Adverse	Large, Adverse
23	Footpath southwest of Bishopton	0.4km	Small, Adverse	Small/negligible, Neutral
24	Bishopton Recreation Ground	0.1km	Large, Adverse	Large/medium, Neutral
25	Old Stillington	0.7km	Medium/small, Adverse	Negligible, Neutral
26	Mill Lane	0.1km	Large, Adverse	Medium, Adverse
27	Bridleway between Stillington and Whitton	0.8km	Small, Adverse in winter Small/negligible, Neutral in summer	Small/negligible, Neutral
28	Footpath near Redmarshall	1.1km	Negligible, Neutral	Negligible, Neutral
29	Local Road south of Bishopton	1.2km	Negligible, Neutral	Negligible, Neutral
30	Foxton	2.3km	Negligible, Neutral	Negligible, Neutral
31	Darlington Back Lane near Newbiggin	2.6km	Negligible, Neutral	Negligible, neutral
32	Sadberge	2.9km	Negligible, Neutral	Negligible, Neutral
33	Footpath near Coatham Lane	2.3km	Small/negligible, Adverse	Small/negligible, Adverse
34	Footpath between Lovesome Hill Farm and Newton Ketton	0.1km	Large, Adverse	Medium, Adverse

7.10.21. As identified above and shown by Figure 7.7.1, which illustrates the scale of effects in winter during early operation at each viewpoint, the distribution of potential effects would be as follows:

- Large and Large/medium scale effects would arise at locations within 0.2km of the Panel Areas;
- Medium and Medium/small scale effects would arise up to 0.7km from the Panel Areas, identifying a pattern of open and elevated views from the north and northeast and views from Brafferton and Great Stainton towards the nearby Panel Areas;

- Small scale effects would arise up to approximately 1km from the solar PV modules in the south and southeast of the study area from the solar PV modules; and
- beyond this area, effects would tend toward Negligible scale, apart from some Small/negligible effects arising in views from elevated areas to the west towards Panel Area A.

7.10.22. As identified above and shown by Figure 7.7.2, which illustrates the scale of effects at each viewpoint in winter once planting has matured, the distribution of potential effects would be as follows:

- Large and Large/medium scale effects would arise at locations within 0.2km of the Panel Areas, though in some locations these would be mitigated by planting such that they would reduce from the early operational stage or change from Adverse to Neutral as a result of views being largely of hedges and/or trees rather than open views of solar panels. Where open elevated outlooks over the wider area would be blocked by the development (e.g. viewpoints 5, 14 and 22) or where panels would be seen above the perimeter hedges (e.g. viewpoints 1, 2, 11 and 17), effects would remain Adverse;
- Medium and Small scale effects would arise up to 0.3km from the Panel Areas, identifying a pattern of open and elevated views from the north and northeast and views from Brafferton and Great Stainton towards the nearby areas of panels;
- beyond this area, effects would tend toward Negligible scale, apart from some Small/negligible effects arising in views from elevated areas to the west towards Panel Area A.

Extent and duration of effects during construction and decommissioning

7.10.23. Construction would take place over a period of 18 months to 2 years, a Short-term duration. Construction activity may take place simultaneously across the Panel Areas or may be phased and would only be obviously different from farming activities in closer views (within approximately 0.5km) and towards completion of the panel installation, at which stage effects would become similar to those during operation.

7.10.24. Short-term changes to views and character would arise within the Order Limits and to distances of approximately 0.5km from the Panel Areas as a result of the construction activity within the Panel Areas. Construction activity associated with cable routes would either affect the area described above (if using the off-road' option), or for the 'on-road' option, would be indistinguishable from other roadworks except where it may potentially arise within Bishopton.

7.10.25. The assessment of effects arising from decommissioning considers the effects arising during that stage rather than the effects that would remain afterwards. Decommissioning would take place over a period of 12 months in total, a Short-term duration. Activity would take place simultaneously across the Panel Areas, but would only be obviously different from farming activities in closer views (within approximately

0.3km) and at the start of the panel removal, at which stage effects would become similar to those during operation. The extent and frequency of views into the Panel Areas would be reduced by the mature hedges around and within the Panel Areas and there would be no construction activity associated with cable routes during this stage. For all receptors, effects would be of a shorter duration and slightly reduced extent than those during construction.

7.10.26. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Landscape and settlement character

7.10.27. Effects for receptors which would be significantly affected at any stage of the Proposed Development, effects for host landscape character areas, and effects on the character of the three settlements requested by Darlington Borough Council (Brafferton, Great Stainton and Bishopton) are described in full in this chapter. Other effects are summarised below and described in full in Appendix 7.5 (Document Reference 6.4.7.5).

Darlington: 6 Great Stainton Farmland (includes Panel Areas A-D and substation)

Baseline

7.10.28. As shown by Figure 7.1, this character area lies between Newton Aycliffe, Barmpton and Bishopton, occupying most of the area within 1km of Panel Areas A-D and the substation compound, and extending up to 2km to the south. It has rolling hills of mixed pasture and arable farmland divided by hedgerows with trees and woodland. It is crossed by a number of lanes and rights of way and with few roads and limited settlement. Whinfield solar farm, which is under construction, will be located partly within this character area, to the north of Panel Area A. Key sensitivities identified within the Darlington Landscape Character Assessment include:

- *"strongly rural character without development and few roads;*
- *visually important woodlands on the skyline, particularly when seen from the vale to the south;*
- *long views from open elevated locations, including from roads around Great Stainton;*
- *many field boundaries contribute to landscape character."*

7.10.29. Other key sensitivities are identified in relation to Brafferton and Great Stainton and these are considered in relation to the character of these settlements at 7.10.42 and 7.10.47 below.

7.10.30. Appendix 7.3 (Document Reference 6.4.7.3) provides a detailed review of landscape sensitivity identifying that the area is of Community value (undesignated with limited historic, cultural and biodiversity interest, but with good access, rural scenic interest and relatively tranquil). The rolling landform and medium scale, and the mix of visual

containment and openness with some areas forming local skylines have been taken into account in judging the area to be of High/medium susceptibility and Medium sensitivity.

Effects during construction

7.10.31. Large scale, Short-term changes to character as a result of the construction activity would arise within the Panel Areas, with Medium to Small scale changes within approximately 0.5km of the Panel Areas as illustrated by Figure 7.5 as a result of the sight and sound of construction activity which would be more noticeable away from the local roads. With phased development these changes to character would be of slightly longer duration and affect a more restricted (and changing) extent as construction moves to different Panel Areas. With simultaneous development, the duration would be reduced but changes would arise across a Wide extent of the character area. The magnitude of change during construction would be Moderate and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.32. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.33. As illustrated by Figures 7.1 and 7.5, Panel Areas A, B, C and D would physically occupy an Intermediate extent of this character area, and there would be frequent, close views resulting in a sense of proximity and ubiquity of the Proposed Development when travelling through the area, except within the southernmost part of the character area where visibility would be largely screened. The solar farm would become one of the key characteristics of this area, and would markedly alter the undeveloped character and be seen in most of the more open and elevated views, giving rise to Large and Medium scale changes to character within a Wide extent of the character area. These effects would be widespread but not ubiquitous, and in the lower-lying and more vegetated valleys and hedge-lined lanes, visibility of the solar panels would mostly be screened by hedges, trees or terrain and the character would be unaffected. Mitigation planting in this character area would include reinforcement, reinstatement and the addition of hedgerows and tree lines, which would be both in keeping with the character and a minor improvement to the landscape condition. Over time they would also reduce visibility of the solar PV modules in views across the character area, reducing effects to an Intermediate extent of the character area. The magnitude of change would be Substantial and effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and significant** during all stages of operation.

7.10.34. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.35. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Large scale changes to character would arise

within the Panel Areas, with occasional pockets of Medium or Small scale effects beyond where there are close views into the Panel Areas. These changes to character would arise for an Intermediate extent of the character area for a Short-term duration. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.36. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Darlington: 7 Bishopton Vale (includes Panel Areas E and F)

Baseline

7.10.37. As shown by Figure 7.1, this character area lies between Stillington, Whinney Hill and Sadberge, including Panel Areas E and F within its northern end. It is a gently undulating, more open and intensively farmed, and lower lying landscape than the adjacent Great Stainton Farmland, which forms the skyline to the northwest. The consented Gately Moor solar farm is located within this character area, approximately 1kmto the south of Bishopton and the consented Gately Moor solar farm is located within the character area approximately 0.6km to the north of Sadberge. Key sensitivities identified within the Darlington Landscape Character Assessment include:

- *"open nature, with long views and overlooked from higher ground;*
- *areas of more rural character particularly in pastoral areas with smaller fields;*
- *connected series of waterbodies along Newbiggin Beck;*
- *distant views to Roseberry Topping"*

7.10.38. Other key sensitivities are identified in relation to Bishopton and these are considered in relation to the character of this settlement at 7.10.57 below.

7.10.39. Appendix 7.3 provides a detailed review of landscape sensitivity identifying that the area is of Community value (undesignated with historic villages, limited cultural and biodiversity interest and intensive large-scale farming). The large scale which reduces around villages, openness and expansive views and low-lying landform contained by higher ground have been taken into account in judging the area to be of Medium susceptibility and Medium/low sensitivity. The character area description also notes that the northern end of the character type marks a transition to a more varied landscape around Stillington.

Effects during construction

7.10.40. Large scale, Short-term changes to character as a result of the construction activity would arise within the Panel Areas, with Medium to Small scale changes within approximately 0.5km of the panel areas as illustrated by Figure 7.5 as a result of the sight and sound of construction activity which would be more noticeable away from the local roads. With phased development these changes to character would be of

slightly longer duration and affect a more restricted (and changing) extent as construction moves to different Panel Areas. With simultaneous development, the duration would be reduced but would arise across a Localised extent at the northern end of the character area. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.41. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.42. As illustrated by Figures 7.1 and 7.5, Panel Areas E and F would physically occupy a Localised extent of this character area, and there would be occasional, close views resulting in a sense of proximity to the Proposed Development when travelling through the northern end of the area between Stillington, Bishopton and Little Stainton. These effects would diminish with distance and occasional limited views from areas beyond 1km, such as from viewpoints 29, 31 and 32 would have negligible effects on the perceived character as seen from those locations.

7.10.43. The location of the Panel Areas in the more varied northern transition area would result in a notable change to the character northeast of Little Stainton and with the consented solar farms would have the effect creating a pattern of solar farm development at regular intervals about 1.5-2km apart across the character area.

7.10.44. The main body of the character area would be largely unchanged by the Proposed Development. Effects would be Large and Medium scale in the area between Bishopton, the bridleway which passes through West House Farm the higher ground north of Out House farm and the edge of Bishopton around Panel Area F. An area of Large and Medium scale effects would also arise within the area of slightly flatter ground to the west of Castle Hill, extending to around 0.3-0.5km from Panel Area E to the west of Castle Hill. Taken together these effects would be Localised in extent and although the extent of effects would reduce slightly as planting matures, they would remain Localised in the context of the character area. Mitigation planting in this character area would include reinforcement, reinstatement and the addition of hedgerows and tree lines, which would be both in keeping with the transitional character of the northern part of the character area and a minor improvement to the landscape condition. The magnitude of change would be Substantial/moderate and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.45. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.46. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Hedgerows would not markedly reduce views into Panel Area D from lower lying areas to the south and east due to the elevating sloping

nature of this part of the Site Area. Large scale changes to character would arise within the Panel Areas, with limited areas of Small scale effects near Panel Areas E and F and Medium and Small scale effects extending up to 0.3km south and east from Panel Area D. These changes to character would arise for a Localised extent of the character area for a Short-term duration. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.47. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Landscape character – other areas

7.10.48. Operational stage effects on non-host character areas would arise from views of the solar PV modules and would have the potential to give rise to significant effects on character where the scale of visual change would be Medium/small or greater, given such changes may result in a sense of proximity to the solar farm and changes to the way in which the character is perceived (e.g. it may be perceived as being more developed). Small scale changes or less would not be significant as such a limited change to the appearance of a neighbouring landscape would have little influence on character. Based on the viewpoint analysis provided in Table 7-7, such effects would extend up to 0.7km from the Panel Areas before mitigation planting has matured, reducing to 0.3km once planting is mature. The effects arising would not be significant and are described within Appendix 7.5 and summarised below.

- Darlington: 5 Upper Skerne Valley (0.1km, west) – Minor/negligible and Adverse effects arising as a result of glimpsed views of Panel Area A through trees and hedges, resulting in a sense of proximity to the solar farm, within the area to the east of the railway at the northern end of the character area.
- Durham: 73 Sedgefield, Windlestone and Aycliffe (0km, north) – Moderate/minor and adverse effects arising from a sense of proximity to the solar farm as a result of close views of Panel Area B above the roadside hedges and beyond the buildings and vegetation at Preston Lodge and Stainton Hill House. As new tree planting matures and hedges grow taller these effects would reduce to Minor/negligible and Adverse.
- Durham: 16 Butterwick and Shotton (0km, N) – Minor/negligible and Adverse effects arising as a result of glimpsed views of Panel Area F through trees and hedges within the area to the west of Old Stillington at the southern end of the character area.
- Stockton-on-Tees: 3 Billingham and Thorpe Becks (0.5km, E) - Minor/negligible and Adverse effects arising as a result of views across Bishopton Beck towards Panel Area F before planting matures from the area near Old Stillington at the western end of the character area.
- National Character Area (NCA) 23 Tees Lowlands (includes Site Area) – Moderate/minor and Adverse effects arising as a result of the presence of the Proposed Development and a sense of proximity as a result of views towards it in

the area between the East Coast mainline, Beaumont Hill, Lime Lane, Catkill Lane plantation woodland; and the bridleway through West House Farm and the the higher ground north of Out House Farm; an area approximately 8km east-west and 3km north-south.

7.10.49. Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects on the above character areas during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible, Neutral and not significant.

7.10.50. Effects on more distant landscape character areas (as listed within Table 7-5) would be Negligible and are not considered further.

7.10.51. No essential mitigation is required, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Settlement Character

7.10.52. As set out within Table 7-1, Darington Borough Council requested that effects on Brafferton, Great Stainton and Bishopton be considered separately from the landscape character areas that they lie within. Appendix 7.3 provides a detailed sensitivity analysis for each settlement and baseline descriptions are provided below. Illustrative Views (Appendix 7.2) show key views from, towards and within each settlement, and Figures 7.6.1-7.6.3 show the context of each settlement.

Settlement character: Brafferton (0.1km, west)

Baseline

7.10.53. As shown by Figure 7.6.1, Brafferton is a linear village situated just to the east of the east coast rail line and A1. It occupies a localised ridgeline between two becks. The setting of the village is defined by the rising ground beyond the beck valleys, by Lovesome Hill to the east and by Aycliffe Lane and the railway to the west. The village has a mix of houses, bungalows and farms built in local stone and/or pale coloured brick giving an overall harmonious and small scale architectural character (see Illustrative Views D). There are two Grade II listed buildings, but the village otherwise has little heritage interest and is not within a Conservation Area. There are limited views out from the main street to the wider landscape giving the public spaces and inward-looking character. However, houses within the village and one bridleway as it leaves the village, have open outlooks to the south and northwest over the beck valleys as shown by Viewpoint 2, and Illustrative Views A-C. Taking these factors into account, the susceptibility is judged to be High/medium and the character is judged to be of Community value and Medium sensitivity.

Effects during construction

7.10.54. Short-term changes to the character of this settlement would arise during the construction of Panel Area A. As set out within ES Chapter 12 Traffic and Transport (Document Reference 6.2.12), construction traffic accessing the parts of Panel Area A

to the northeast of Brafferton would run part-way through the village before turning south at the farm access. This would involve a small number of larger vehicles delivering solar panels and vehicles during morning and evening bringing personnel to site. The majority of the construction traffic for Panel Area A would not pass through the village and would approach the fields to the south of Brafferton from the west.

7.10.55. Changes to the character of the settlement would arise primarily from the perception of proximity to the construction work of a solar farm, resulting from changes to private views from homes and visibility of Panel Area A from the public rights of way radiating from the settlement. Approaching by road and walking along the main street or visiting the village hall, the construction work would not be a noticeable presence and the core character would be unaffected. Considered together, these effects would result in a Short-term, Medium/small scale of change to an Intermediate extent of the village and its setting. The magnitude of change would be Slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.56. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.57. Changes to the character of the settlement would arise primarily from the perception of proximity to the solar farm, resulting from changes to private views from homes and visibility of Panel Area A from the public rights of way radiating from the settlement. Approaching by road and walking along the main street or visiting the village hall, the solar farm would not be a noticeable presence and the core character would be unaffected. The closer panels would be just within the edge of the topographic setting of the village, though with time, the new and reinforced planting would create stronger lines to define the edge of the village setting. Considered together, these effects would result in a Medium/small scale of change to a Localised extent of the village and its setting. The magnitude of change would be Slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.58. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.59. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Mature hedgerows and tree lines would slightly reduce views from the village of panels being removed from within Panel Area A, but the presence of vehicles bringing workers and transporting away items removed from the site would be a noticeable change in the village. Medium/small scale changes to character would arise for an Intermediate extent of the village for a very Short-term duration. The magnitude of change would be Slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.60. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Settlement character: Great Stainton (0.1km, northwest)

Baseline

7.10.61. As shown by Figure 7.6.2, Great Stainton is a small village situated at the crossroads between two busy local roads. It occupies a highpoint overlooking the lower-lying vale to the southeast. The trees and church spire to the west of the village and houses on the east identify the village as a landmark in views up to 5km to the south (see viewpoints 19, 31 and 32) and nearby areas to the east (see Illustrative View F). From the north and west the village is less distinctly visible except when the church spire can be seen (e.g. Illustrative view E). The setting of the village is defined by the smaller fields, rising ground and woodland to the west and southwest and the local roads to the north, and a more gradual transition to open flatter countryside and larger fields beyond the localised gentle ridge line between the local roads, roughly aligned between the access tracks to Broad Lea and Viewley Hill Farm.

7.10.62. The village has a mix of house types, materials, ages and sizes along with the former village pub which has a large car park and set along two streets and around a small village green as shown by Illustrative Views G. There are a number of listed buildings including the church and Stainton Grange and listed buildings which are separated from the centre of the village by Elstob Lane and Town Farm, but the village is not within a Conservation Area. There are no views out from the main street to the wider landscape giving the public spaces an inward-looking character. However, houses within the village have elevated, open outlooks to the east and south as shown by the visualisation included within Appendix 7.6 in relation to views from Hawthorn House. Roads and footpaths leaving the village to the east and south also have these views as illustrated by viewpoint 17 and 18, albeit they are more constrained in terms of visibility looking south than from the rear gardens and elevations of some of the houses. Taking these factors into account, the susceptibility is judged to be High/medium and the character is judged to be of Community value and Medium sensitivity.

Effects during construction

7.10.63. Construction traffic would pass to the north of this settlement, accessing Panel Areas D, E and F. This route is relatively busy for a local road and the village largely faces south and east away from the road. Changes to the character of the settlement would arise primarily from the perception of proximity to the construction work in Panel Area D, resulting from changes to private views from homes, and visibility of Panel Area D (and to a lesser extent Panel Area C) from the footpaths and local roads emerging from the settlement towards the south and east. From the streets within the village, the construction work would not be a noticeable presence and the core character would be unaffected. Considered together, these effects would result in a Short-term, Large/Medium scale of change to an Intermediate extent of the village and

its setting. The magnitude of change would be Moderate and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.64. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.65. Changes to the character of the settlement would arise primarily from the perception of proximity to the solar farm, resulting from changes to private views from homes, and visibility of Panel Area D (and to a lesser extent Panel Area C) from the footpaths and roads radiating from the settlement. From the streets within the village, the solar farm would not be a noticeable presence and the core character would be unaffected. Panel Area D would be within the setting of the village, particularly to the east and southeast, and less so to the south. Considered together, these effects would result in a Large/Medium scale of change to an Intermediate extent of the village and its setting. The magnitude of change would be Substantial\moderate and effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and significant**.

7.10.66. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.67. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Mature hedgerows and tree lines would slightly reduce views from the village of nearby panels being removed from within Panel Area D, but there would be some visibility over the hedges of work ongoing in the fields beyond. Small scale changes to character would arise for an Intermediate extent of the village for a Short-term duration. The magnitude of change would be Slight/negligible and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.68. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Settlement character: Bishopton (0.1km, southwest)

Baseline

7.10.69. As shown by Figure 7.6.3, Bishopton is located within the valley of Bishopton Beck. It is a larger village with a primary school, village hall, pub and church. It is closely associated with the castle mound Scheduled Monument at the southern end of the village and is within a Conservation Area. The older houses, linear greens and mature trees along the main street through the village create a scenic character as shown by Illustrative Views K in Appendix 7.2. This character fragments towards the southern and eastern edges of the village where there are larger more utilitarian buildings in modern materials. The low-lying position of the settlement means it is not widely visible with the only notable views towards the village being from the south looking along the valley

(e.g. viewpoint 29), and the village setting is defined by the surrounding higher ground as shown by Figure 7.6.3. Houses at the northern edge of the village have views out from upstairs windows over gently rising fields as shown by Illustrative View I. Houses on the south side have more limited outward views as shown by viewpoint 23 and Illustrative View H. The eastern edge of the village includes the primary school, recreation ground and equestrian centre and some dispersed properties along Cobby Castle Lane. Recreational access to the wider countryside is provided by footpaths which head north and south, and Mill Lane to the east. Taking these factors into account, the susceptibility is judged to be High/medium and the character is judged to be of Regional/community value and High/medium sensitivity.

Effects during construction

7.10.70. Short-term changes to the character of this settlement would arise during the construction of Panel Areas E and F. No construction traffic would run through the village, and traffic accessing Panel Areas E and F would approach those areas from the west. Short-term changes to the character of this settlement would arise during the construction of Panel Areas E and F, and during cable construction if the on-road route through the village is used. In the event that this is necessary, there would be roadworks through the village for a very short period while the cables are laid.

7.10.71. Changes to the character of the settlement would arise primarily from the perception of proximity to the construction work, resulting from visibility of construction work within Panel Area F from the recreation ground and school, and from Mill Lane; and limited visibility of the construction work within Panel Area E from the footpath to the southwest. Considered together with the cable route work, and changes to views from private homes which front onto the main street or the small number which have open outlooks towards Panel Area F, these effects would result in a Short-term, Large/medium scale of change to a Wide extent (reducing to Localised once cable construction is complete, or if the on-road route is not required) of the village and its setting – primarily arising from the cable construction along the main street; the presence of construction work in the field east of the recreation ground (viewpoints 24 and 26) and close views of construction within Panel Area E when approaching Bishopton via Folly Bank (viewpoint 22) and passing Coal Bank (viewpoint 21). The magnitude of change would be Moderate and effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and significant**.

7.10.72. If the on-road cable route through the village is not required, the magnitude of change would be Slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and Not significant**.

7.10.73. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.74. Changes to the character of the settlement would arise primarily from the perception of proximity to the solar farm, resulting from changes to private views from a small number of homes, and visibility of Panel Areas E and F from the footpaths and roads radiating from the settlement. From the streets within the village and most of the homes and gardens, the solar farm would not be a noticeable presence and the core character would be unaffected. Panel Area F would be visible within the setting of the village, particularly to the east, and less so to the north before proposed planting matures.

7.10.75. Once the community orchard matures (anticipated within approximately 6 years, but assessed as up to 10 years on a precautionary basis) and taller hedgerows establish along Mill Lane (expected within 2-3 years), the main change to the village character and setting to this side would be a change from a setting of open arable fields to the east to a more enclosed and vegetated character similar to the north-western edge of the village. A similar change to a more enclosed character would arise along Folly Bank where views would remain open towards the village, but would be initially open towards panels over the hedge, and then enclosed by a tall hedgerow to the west of the road as it approaches Bishopton where Panel Area E would be at the edge of the village setting. Initially open views of panels, later enclosed by hedges, would also arise along Coal Bank as it passes Panel Area E. Both Folly Bank and Coal Bank already have an enclosed character as they get closer to the village.

7.10.76. Considered together, these effects would result in a Large scale of change to a Localised extent of the village and its setting in the Medium-term before planting matures – primarily arising from the presence of panels in the field east of the recreation ground (viewpoints 24 and 26) and close views of Panel Area E when approaching Bishopton via Folly Bank (viewpoint 22) and passing Coal Bank (viewpoint 21). The magnitude of change would be Substantial/moderate and effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and significant**.

7.10.77. Once planting matures, effects would reduce to Medium scale, remaining Localised in extent. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant.**

7.10.78. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.79. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Mature hedgerows and tree lines would markedly reduce views from the village of nearby panels being removed from within Panel Areas E and F, and there would be no decommissioning activity within the village as cables would not be removed. Small scale changes to character would arise for a Localised

extent of the village for a Short-term duration. The magnitude of change would be Slight/negligible and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.80. No essential mitigation is required, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Visual receptors

7.10.81. The highest sensitivity receptors within the study area would be local residents and users of local recreational routes (who would have high susceptibility) where views would be of at most Regional value (within locally designated landscapes), indicating High/medium sensitivity. Taking this into account there would be the potential for significant visual effects where the scale of visual change would be Medium/small or greater. Based on the viewpoint analysis provided in Table 7-7, such effects would extend up to 0.7km from the Panel Areas, potentially affecting the visual receptors considered in detail below.

7.10.82. Effects on visual receptors beyond 1km would be Negligible and are not considered further. This includes all visual receptors listed as being 1km or beyond in Table 7-5. Receptors within 1km are considered below.

Brafferton (0.1km, west)

Baseline

7.10.83. Brafferton is a linear village located close to the A1(M). Views out from the village are relatively open to the south and southeast looking across lower lying ground towards the rising ground within Panel Area A. Views to the northwest similarly look out over lower lying ground towards Lime Lane and Newton Aycliffe. To the northeast, views are contained by slightly higher ground within Panel Area A. People living in and visiting Brafferton would have a High susceptibility to changes to views which are of Community Value. Sensitivity for this receptor group is judged to be High/medium.

Effects during construction

7.10.84. As described at paragraph7.10.49 above, some construction vehicles would be seen passing through the western end of the village during construction of Panel Area A, but otherwise there would be limited visibility of the construction work from public areas of the village, except for from the footpath to the south (viewpoint 2) – though this may be closed at times given it is an access route for the construction stage. At most, Short-term effects would be Medium/small scale affecting a Limited extent of the views from the public areas of the village. The magnitude of change would be Slight/negligible and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not Significant**.

7.10.85. Residents of the south edges of and northeast edges of Brafferton would have views of construction work within Panel Area A. Properties on the south edge (see Illustrative View B in Appendix 7.2) have outlooks similar to that shown from viewpoint 2 and would have views of construction activity at distances of 250m or more. Some of the properties at the northeast edge of the village have garden areas designed to take

advantage of the open outlook to the northwest. The closest group of these properties would have garden areas within 100m of Panel Area A and is considered in Appendix 7.6.

7.10.86. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.87. Visibility of the Proposed Development would be screened from public areas within the core of the village, with views of the solar PV modules only becoming available upon leaving the village via the footpaths which radiate from the eastern end of the village (e.g. viewpoint 2). At most effects would be Medium/small scale until proposed planting matures, reducing to Small scale beyond the Medium-term, affecting a Limited extent of the views from the public areas of the village. Throughout the operational stage, the magnitude of change would be Slight and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not Significant**.

7.10.88. Houses on the north and northeast part of the village would have some close views of the solar PV modules as reported within Appendix 7.6, though the panels would not be seen in the open views to the northwest. Houses on the south side of the village would have views towards solar PV modules on rising ground with filtering and screening by trees breaking up the panel areas and screening some parts of the Proposed Development in summer – similar to the views shown by viewpoint 3.

7.10.89. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.90. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Mature hedgerows and tree lines would slightly reduce views from the village (including from homes and gardens) of nearby panels being removed from within Panel Area A, but the presence of vehicles accessing the site would be noticeable within the village. Short-term effects would be Medium/small scale affecting a Limited extent of the views from the public areas of the village. The magnitude of change would be Slight/negligible and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not Significant**.

7.10.91. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Great Stainton (0.1km, northwest)

Baseline

7.10.92. This small village set around a village green in an elevated position which allows for extensive views across the lower-lying vale to the east and southeast from homes and

gardens, and from the two local roads and footpaths which leave the village heading south and east. Views to the west are contained by vegetation and rising ground. People living in and visiting Great Stainton would have a High susceptibility to changes to views which are of Community Value. Sensitivity for this receptor group is judged to be High/medium.

Effects during construction

7.10.93. Visibility of the Proposed Development would be screened from public areas within the core of the village, with public views of the construction work only becoming available upon leaving the village on one of the roads or footpaths (e.g. viewpoints 17 and 18). Short-term changes to eastward views would be Large scale for a Localised extent, while those to southward views would be Medium/small scale for a Limited extent of the village. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.94. Residents of the south and east edges of Great Stainton would have elevated views over construction work within Panel Area D at distances of around 100m. Some of the properties at the south and south-east of the village are situated to take advantage of the open and elevated outlook (see viewpoints 17 and 18) and have gardens and facades oriented towards Panel Area D. The closest of these properties is Hawthorn House which would be within 100m of Panel Area D and is considered in Appendix 7.6.

7.10.95. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.96. Visibility of the Proposed Development would be screened from public areas within the core of the village, with public views of the solar PV modules only becoming available upon leaving the village on one of the roads or footpaths (e.g. viewpoints 17 and 18). Changes to eastward views would be Large scale for a Localised extent, while those to southward views would be Medium/small scale, reducing to Small scale as mitigation planting matures and the open edges of Panel Area D are screened leaving only more distant views over lower lying parts of Panel Area D in front of Woogra Farm for a Limited extent of the village. As proposed planting matures it would reduce the open visibility of solar panels, but the presence of hedges would in itself continue to be a marked change to the currently open views to the east. Throughout the operational stage, the magnitude of change would be Substantial/moderate and effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant.**

7.10.97. Houses on the eastern edge of the village would have more limited visibility of the Proposed Development than is indicated by viewpoint 17 as the panels have been set downslope to mitigate effects on views from homes and the houses are set further back than the viewpoint and have views partly screened by sheds and garden vegetation. Solar PV modules on the south side of the village have also been set back

beyond existing hedges and a gentle ridgeline to mitigate effects by avoiding views of panels on slopes facing towards the village and to increase the screening effectiveness of new hedgerow and tree planting to the north of the panels. Appendix 7.6 includes an assessment of effects on residential visual amenity for the closest property to the development within Great Stainton.

7.10.98. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.99. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Mature hedgerows would restrict visibility of the nearest panels being removed from Panel Area D, but activity in more distant fields would be visible looking towards Woogra Farm from footpaths, homes and gardens. Short-term effects would be Small scale affecting a Localised extent of the views from the public areas of the village. The magnitude of change would be Slight/negligible, and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not Significant**.

7.10.100. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Bishopton (0.1km, southwest)

Baseline

7.10.101. Bishopton is set within the lower lying vale landscape. The village is closely associated with the nearby scheduled castle mound and is covered by a Conservation Area designation. Outward views from the southwest side of the village include slightly elevated outlooks from the footpath (see viewpoint 23) and views of the castle mound from the southern end of the village. Public views from the north side of the village are restricted from the footpath which emerges from the northern edge of the village until the route moves beyond the isolated property at Gorann, and views from Cobby Castle Lane are restricted by the roadside hedgerows. The recreation ground has open views to the east and northeast as shown by viewpoint 24, as does the adjacent primary school and nearby Mill Lane which is used by local residents as a recreational route. Views from roads and streets looking in other directions are contained by rising ground, hedgerows and trees. People living in and visiting Bishopton would have a High susceptibility to changes to views which are of Regional Value. Sensitivity for this receptor group is judged to be High/medium.

Effects during construction

7.10.102. Effects on the views experienced by residents and visitors would arise during the construction of Panel Areas E and F. If the on-road cable route is required, there would be very Short-term, Medium/small scale changes to views along the main street through the village as a result of the roadworks required for the cable construction.

Construction work within Panel Area F would also be visible from the recreation ground and school, and from Mill Lane. There would be limited visibility of the construction work within Panel Area E from the footpath to the southwest. Short-term effects would be Large scale for a Localised extent (at the eastern edge of the village around the recreation ground, primary school and Mill Lane), and Small scale for an Intermediate extent (from the footpath to the southwest and views of cable construction along the main street). The magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.103. Residents of the north edge of Bishopton would have visibility of the construction work within Panel Area F at distances of around 250m in views from windows and gardens with some localised screening by intervening vegetation (see illustrative view I in Appendix 7.2). Residents of the southwest edge of Bishopton may have more limited and oblique views of construction activity more than 300m away in Panel Area E if construction takes place in winter. In summer screening by mature trees limits views from homes in this area (see Illustrative view H in Appendix 7.2).

7.10.104. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.105. Visibility of the Proposed Development would be screened from public areas within the core of the village, with views of the solar PV modules only becoming available upon leaving the village on one of the roads or footpaths (e.g. viewpoints 23 and 26), or when visiting the recreation ground or school where there would open views of nearby panels (see viewpoint 24).

7.10.106. Before proposed community orchard mitigation planting matures sufficiently to provide a good degree of screening (expected within approximately 6 years, but assessed as up to 10 years on a precautionary basis), effects would be Large scale for a Localised extent (at the eastern edge of the village around the recreation ground, primary school and Mill Lane), and Small scale for a Limited extent (from the footpath to the southwest). The magnitude of change would be Substantial/moderate and effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant**.

7.10.107. In the Short-term (around 3 years), once existing hedges alongside Mill Lane and Folly Bank grow taller, changes to views would reduce to Medium scale and Neutral along Mill Lane as a result of the increased enclosure by vegetation on the north side of the route and Negligible in views from the footpath to the southwest. In the Medium-term, once the proposed community orchard establishes adjacent to the recreation ground and primary school, changes to views in this Limited extent of the village would remain Large scale as a result of the enclosure of previously open views, but become Neutral as views across arable fields would be replaced by views of the orchard trees. Once mitigation planting is mature, the magnitude of change would be Moderate and effects would be **Moderate, Neutral and not significant**.

7.10.108. Residents of the north edge of Bishopton would have visibility of the Proposed Development within Panel Area F at distances of around 250m in views from windows and gardens with some localised screening by intervening vegetation (see Illustrative view I in Appendix 7.2). Residents of the southwest edge of Bishopton may have more limited and oblique views of the Proposed Development 300m away in Panel Area E during winter. In summer screening by mature trees limits views from homes in this area (see Illustrative view H in Appendix 7.2).

7.10.109. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.110. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Mature hedgerows would restrict visibility of the nearest panels being removed from Panel Areas E and F, and there would be no decommissioning activity within the village as cables would be left in situ. Short-term changes to views would be Medium or Small scale as a result of glimpsed views of the decommissioning activity through field gates from roads and footpaths at the edges of the village. The magnitude of change would be Slight/negligible and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not Significant**.

7.10.111. No essential mitigation is required, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Routes and homes within 1km – between A167, Salters Lane, Lea Hall and Little Ketton Farm (includes Panel Area A)

Baseline

7.10.112. As shown by Figure 7.7, this area has a general lack of local road access with only Lime Lane, the western end of Lodge Lane and the southern end of Ricknall Lane all located to the north of the area. A network of public rights of way, some of which are hedged green lanes, run across the area connecting between the roads, rural properties and farms. The undulating terrain, hedgerows and trees within this area mean that the nature of views varies from contained to open and elevated (see viewpoints 1-6, 9-11 and 34). Views in this area are of Community Value. Road users would have a Medium susceptibility and Medium sensitivity to changes to views as the narrow roads are busy and there is limited opportunity to enjoy the views. People using recreational routes in this area would have a High susceptibility and High/medium sensitivity to changes to views.

Effects during construction

7.10.113. Local roads in this area are relatively distant from the Panel Areas and are mostly hedgelined, and effects arising from construction activity within the Panel Areas would be Negligible. If the on-road route is used for the cables there would be some short

term roadworks, however these would not appear different to normal roadworks activity and would give rise to Negligible effects.

7.10.114. Large scale, Short-term changes to views would arise for users of the rights of way which pass through Panel Area A (as shown on Figure 7.7) as a result of temporary diversions during construction, and/or from close views of the construction activity where safe access is provided. Medium scale, short-term changes to views would arise from routes within up to 0.5km where there would be visibility of the construction activity within Panel Area A as illustrated by Figure 7.7. Similar effects would arise for the northern section of Salters Lane where construction activity within Panel Area B would be visible from parts of the route near viewpoint 11 and Oat Hill Farm. Users of some routes within this receptor group would experience negligible effects including public rights of way to the north of Lime Lane, and public rights of way to the south of Ketton Hall and Newton Ketton.

7.10.115. Large scale changes to views would arise for an Intermediate extent of the routes within this area, with the extent increasing to Wide when both Large and Medium scale changes to views are considered. The magnitude of change would be Moderate and taking into account the High/medium sensitivity of users of public rights of way, effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant**.

7.10.116. The few rural properties within this area typically have outbuildings and/or vegetation that would screen close views of the construction process, though the two homes at Lovesome Hill Farm are likely to have short-term views of construction activity within Panel Area A at a distance of just over 300m within their main outlooks to the southeast. There may also be some visibility of construction activity through trees from the bungalow at Newton Ketton (similar to nearby viewpoint 9).

7.10.117. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.118. Drivers using Lime Lane, particularly in taller vehicles, would have occasional views of the solar PV modules within Panel Area A which would be located to the north and northeast of Brafferton, with parts of the Proposed Development in these fields on slopes facing towards the road which has an elevated outlook over a shallow valley in this area (see viewpoints 1 and 4). Close views of the consented Whinfield solar farm will be a more dominant influence closer to Whinfield House. Visibility from Lodge Lane and Ricknall Lane would be more distant and there would be limited visibility as shown by Figure 7.7.

7.10.119. Effects for road users would be Localised in extent and at most Medium scale, reducing to Medium /small scale in summer when there is greater screening by trees as illustrated by viewpoint 1. As planting matures visibility of towards Panel Area A would be reduced from Lime Lane near viewpoint 4 where effects would be Negligible scale, but a Limited extent of Small scale effects would remain near viewpoint 1. The

magnitude of change for road users in this area would be Medium/small and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant** during early operation, decreasing to **Small/negligible magnitude, Negligible and not significant** once planting matures.

7.10.120. Table 7-8 sets out effects for user of PRoW in this receptor group.

Table 7-8 PRoW between A167, Salters Lane, Lea Hall and Little Ketton Farm

Route	Description of changes to views from route	Maximum scale of effect
Footpath NE from Brafferton to High Grange	Would pass through the panels along the existing hedge-lined track and within the northern margin of one of the panel fields. Views from more distant parts of the route close to High Grange would be similar to nearby viewpoint 3.	Large
Footpath NE from Brafferton to High House	Would be diverted to run along the northern field boundary rather than diagonally across as it does at present. Will have close views of the panels as it passes through during early operation, but will run between hedges once planting is mature, with the remainder of the route more distant and retaining open views as shown by viewpoint 3.	Large
Footpath along High House Lane from Brafferton to Whinfield	Occasional views of panels through field gates or thinner sections of hedge near to Brafferton, with more open visibility from the elevated and more open section of the route near High House as shown by Illustrative View M in Appendix 2.	Large
Footpath from Brafferton via Lovesome Hill Farm to Newton Ketton	Viewpoint 34 illustrates effects on this route. Would include three short sections where the route runs adjacent to panels, though only one of these sections where the route is not outside and existing hedge. The proposed diversion towards the southern end of the route would remove a short section of path which currently has a framed view of Moorhouse wind farm in front of distant hills, but would divert the route alongside an existing hedge rather than retaining a walking route with panels to both sides. Once proposed tree and hedgerow planting matures, this section of the route would be enclosed by vegetation to both sides.	Large, reducing to Large /medium once planting matures.
Footpath along track between High House Lane and Newton Ketton	There would be limited visibility of the solar panels from this route except for where it joins High House Lane, where panels may be visible through sparser sections of the high hedges, and a short stretch of visibility for walkers heading south as they descend towards the proposed junction with the diverted footpath. Proposed planting at the corner of this field would reduce this visibility over time.	Large, reducing to Small once planting matures
Salters Lane	With the exception of near viewpoint 11, where there would be relatively close views of Panel Area B for northbound walkers, there would be occasional limited and distant views of the solar panels (similar to viewpoint 10) from this hedge-lined lane.	Large/medium, reducing to Medium with mature planting and Medium/small in summer
Routes south from Brafferton to Ketton Hall	The footpath and byway closer to Brafferton have eastwards views screened by vegetation and would have little or no visibility of the solar panels. Users of the bridleway between Ketton Hall would have some elevated views (e.g. viewpoint 6) and some close views of the panels as it passes the southwest corner of Panel Area A.	Medium, reducing to Medium/small in summer

Route	Description of changes to views from route	Maximum scale of effect
Bridleway from Brafferton via East Ketton to Ketton Lane	This would be the most affected route in this group, passing through Panel Area A for much of its length between Brafferton and East Ketton Farm. Panels and or proposed hedges would enclose the views which in some places (e.g. viewpoint 5) offer wider outlooks to the northwest.	Large
Network of routes between Newton Ketton, Little Ketton Farm, Ketton Lane and Skerningham Plantation	As shown by Figure 7.7 there would be limited visibility form these routes with the closest and most open views being illustrated by viewpoint 9.	Small, Negligible in summer
Footpaths west of railway near Coatham Mundeville	Vegetation within the golf course and along the railway and watercourse would screen views towards the site.	Negligible

7.10.121. In summary, for users of the PRoW network, any walking route would be likely to include either passing through or close to the solar PV modules at some point on the route (e.g. viewpoints 5 and 34), along with views of panels at a greater distance, often filtered through trees, in the more open and elevated areas (e.g. viewpoints 2,3,6, 9 and 10). In many places tall hedges and lines of trees alongside the routes would screen views of the panels and some of the open and elevated views (for example from the footpath southwest of Newton Ketton would have little or no visibility of the Proposed Development. Effects for PRoW users would range from Large scale in the closer views, to Medium and Small scale in the more distant open and elevated views. Whilst the occurrences of each of these effects would generally be localised to short sections of the routes where views open up or a route passes through or adjacent to Panel Area A, views of the Proposed Development would be unavoidable whilst using the routes in the area and the extent of effects is judged to be Wide.

7.10.122. Taking the distribution and scale of effects described above into account, the magnitude of change would be Substantial, reducing to Substantial/Moderate as proposed planting matures and existing hedges grow taller. Effects on this receptor group would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant** throughout the operational stage.

7.10.123. The few rural properties within this area typically have outbuildings and/or vegetation that would screen close views of the Proposed Development, though the two homes at Lovesome Hill Farm are likely to have views of part of Panel Area A at a distance of just over 300m within their main outlooks to the southeast. There may also be some visibility through trees from the bungalow at Newton Ketton (similar to nearby viewpoint 9).

7.10.124. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.125. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Mature hedgerows would restrict visibility of the nearest panels being removed from Panel Areas A and B and there would be Large scale effects for users of routes which pass through Panel Area A (which may be subject to short term diversions or closures), and Medium and Small scale effects up to 0.3km from Panel Areas A and B. The magnitude of change would be Moderate and taking into account the High/medium sensitivity of users of public rights of way, effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant**. Effects on rural properties would be similar to those described at 7.10.86 above and effects on road users would be Negligible as set out at 7.10.84 above.

7.10.126. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Routes and homes within 1km – East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane (includes Panel Areas B and C)

Baseline

7.10.127. As shown by Figure 7.7, this area has a general lack of local road access with only Lodge Lane and Elstob Lane/Hill House Lane located towards the north and east edges of the area. Lodge Lane is bounded by hedges to both sides offering occasional glimpses into adjacent fields through field gates (see viewpoints 12 and 15). Views from Elstob Lane are more open as hedges are sparser and/or lower and there are elevated views to the south and southeast as the road descends from Great Stainton as illustrated by viewpoint 18. A network of public rights of way, some of which are hedged green lanes, run across the area connecting between the roads, rural properties and farms. The undulating terrain, hedgerows and trees within this area mean that the nature of views varies from contained to open and elevated (see viewpoints 8 and 10-19). Views in this area are of Community Value. Road users would have a Medium susceptibility and Medium sensitivity to changes to views as the narrow roads are busy and there is limited opportunity to enjoy the views. People using recreational routes in this area would have a High susceptibility and High/medium sensitivity to changes to views.

Effects during construction

7.10.128. Road users would experience Large scale changes to views from Lodge Lane passing Stainton Hill House (viewpoint 12), reducing to Small scale for other glimpsed views through field gates (e.g. viewpoint 15). Construction activity within Panel Areas C and D would also be visible from parts of Elstob Lane near viewpoints 18 and 19, giving rise to Medium and Medium/small scale changes to views between Great Stainton and Long Pasture House Farm, affecting an Intermediate extent of the rural roads in this area. The magnitude of change would be Moderate and taking into account the Medium sensitivity of road users, effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.129. Large scale, Short-term changes to views would arise for users of the rights of way which pass through Panel Areas B and C (as shown on Figure 7.7) as a result of temporary diversions during construction, and/or from close views of the construction activity where safe access is provided. Medium scale, short-term changes to views would arise for users of rights of way within up to 0.5km where there would be visibility of the construction activity within Panel Areas B and C as illustrated by Figure 7.7. Large scale changes to views would arise for a Localised extent of the public rights of way within this area, with the extent increasing to Wide when both Large and Medium scale changes to views are considered. Users of some public rights of way within this receptor group would experience negligible effects – including public rights of way to the north of Lodge Lane, most of the length of Catkill Lane except at viewpoint 20, and public rights of way to the south of Catkill Lane. The magnitude of change would be Moderate and taking into account the High/medium sensitivity of the visual receptors in this receptor group, effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant**.

7.10.130. Some rural properties within this area are financially involved in the Proposed development and/or would have limited visibility of the construction activity due to screening by vegetation and landform. Oathill Farm, Stainton Hill House, Preston Lodge and Carr House are not financially involved and would have short-term views of construction activity within Panel Area B; these effects are considered within Appendix 7.6. There would be some visibility of construction activity within Panel Area D at a distance of just over 300m within their main outlooks to the east from the two homes at Viewley Hill Farm.

7.10.131. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.132. Drivers using Lodge Lane, particularly in taller vehicles, would have close views of the Proposed Development within Panel Area B as they pass the Site near Stainton Hill House (see viewpoint 12), with occasional more distant views where gaps in hedges allow (see viewpoint 15). Drivers using Elstob Lane would have views of panels to either side of the road to the south of Great Stainton, with the effects being most noticeable for southbound drivers as they descend the hill where there will be views of Panel Areas C and D, in both cases set back from the road, and ahead of the direction of travel as illustrated by viewpoint 18. Views of the substation building and within in the southern area of Panel Area C would also be available as the road passes the driveway entrance to the Mount (see viewpoint 19). These would add to close views of Long Pasture Solar Farm where Elstob Lane passes the site of that consented solar farm. Effects for road users would Large scale near Stainton Hill House on Lodge Lane; Medium to Medium/small scale on Elstob Lane to the south of Great Stainton and there would be occasional Small scale changes to views elsewhere along Lodge Lane, affecting an Intermediate extent of the rural roads in this area. The magnitude of

change would be Moderate and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant** before planting matures.

7.10.133. After proposed planting matures, visibility of the Proposed Development would reduce and the scale of changes to views would be at most Small scale (near viewpoint 12 on Lodge Lane), Negligible elsewhere on Lodge Lane, and Medium/small or Small along Elstob Lane. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.134. Table 7-9 sets out effects for user of PRoW in this receptor group.

Table 7-9 PRoW east of Salters Lane, between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane

Route	Description of changes to views from route	Maximum scale of effect
Catkill Lane	Catkill Lane is a straight green lane which is hedgelined along much of the route, with the eastern end passing through woodland. There would be very limited visibility of the Proposed Development from most of the route, as illustrated by viewpoint 10 and Figure 7.7, with views towards nearby Panel Area C typically screened or filtered by hedges and trees. There would be a close and fairly open view from viewpoint 20, where the woodland edge is atypically thin.	Large
Footpath from Salters Lane to Hauxley Farm	There would be limited visibility of the Proposed development from the southern end of the route, but close views as it passes through the Panel Area B near Hauxley Farm, until the proposed hedgerow matures, enclosing the route between hedges. Visibility would quickly diminish with distance due to the existing hedges – as illustrated by viewpoint 13.	Large, reducing to Medium once planting matures.
Footpaths from Hauxley Farm to Great Stainton and Viewley Hill Farm	Both of these routes would pass through Panel Area B, and the stretches of the routes which currently have an open outlook to the southeast would include close and open views of the Proposed Development until proposed hedges mature as illustrated by viewpoints 14 and 16. The open vistas seen to the southeast as the path descends towards Viewley Hill Farm (see viewpoint 16) would have negligible visibility of the panel areas to the east. The footpath between Great Stainton and Panel Area B would only have visibility as it closely approaches the Panel Area, and an open view would be retained where this route passes through a corner of the Panel Area – providing interpretation about the Proposed Development.	Large
Footpath heading north from Great Stainton Church	There may be some limited visibility of Panel Area B beyond hedges from this route.	Small
Footpaths between Viewley Hill Farm and Elstob Lane	These two routes descend east facing slopes towards Elstob Lane and would have some visibility of Panel Area D on rising ground seen across Elstob Lane and (in the closest views) beyond the tree line which marks the beck.	Large/medium

Route	Description of changes to views from route	Maximum scale of effect
Footpath from Viewley Hill Farm to The Mount	Walkers descending from Byers Gill Wood towards Viewley Hill Farm would see Panel Area D ahead, beyond the tree line which marks the brook and at distances of 0.5km or more. There would be close views of the Proposed Development within Panel Area C as the route passes through the Site, though existing and proposed hedge planting would largely screen these views once mature.	Large, reducing to Medium once planting matures.
Footpath between Elstob Lane and Catkill Lane	This route would pass through Panel Area C for much of its length and there would be a considerable change from the currently open views across fields both before and after proposed mitigation planting matures as a result of the creation of a route enclosed by vegetation.	Large, reducing to Large/medium once planting matures
Footpath heading southwest from Catkill Lane to Moor House	As shown by Figure 7.7 there would be very limited visibility of the Proposed Development from this route until more than 1km distant (e.g. near viewpoint 8 at Moor House wind farm).	Negligible
Bridleway along Grindon Lane	As shown by Figure 7.7 there would be very limited visibility of the Proposed Development from this route except where it joins Lodge Lane (viewpoint 12).	Large, reducing to Small once mitigation planting matures, but only at viewpoint 12, mostly Negligible.

7.10.135. In summary, for users of the public right of way network, any walking route would be likely to include either passing through or close to the solar PV modules at some point on the route (e.g. viewpoints 12, 13, 14 and 20), along with views of panels at a slightly greater distance in the more open and elevated views (e.g. viewpoints 10 and 16). In many places tall hedges and lines of trees alongside the routes would screen views of the panels – particularly along most of Catkill Lane (see viewpoint 11). Effects for PRoW users would be Large scale in the open views and routes which pass through the panels areas near Hauxley Farm, Viewley Hill Farm and Square Wood. Whilst the occurrences of each of these effects would generally be localised to short sections of the routes where views open up or a route passes through or adjacent to Panel Areas B or C, views of the Proposed Development would be unavoidable whilst using most of these routes and the extent of effects is judged to be Wide. Taking the distribution and scale of effects described above into account, the magnitude of change until planting matures would be Substantial/moderate and effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant**.

7.10.136. The proposed planting would markedly reduce close open views of the Proposed Development once mature, limiting them to gaps in the woodland edge of Catkill Lane (near viewpoint 20) and the intentional view of the solar farm within Panel Area B. Effects would remain Large scale as a result of the enclosure of previously open views on the elevated footpath between viewpoints 14 and 16 east of Hauxley Farm, but would otherwise be at most Large/medium scale or Medium scale for a Wide extent of

the routes. The magnitude of change once planting matures would be Moderate and effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant**.

7.10.137. Some rural properties within this area are financially involved in the Proposed development and/or would have limited visibility of the construction activity due to screening by vegetation and landform. Oathill Farm, Stainton Hill House, Preston Lodge and Carr House are not financially involved and would have views of the Proposed Development within Panel Area B; these effects are considered within Appendix 7.6. There would be some visibility of Panel Area D at a distance of just over 300m within their main outlooks to the east from the two homes at Viewley Hill Farm.

7.10.138. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.139. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Mature tree and hedgerow planting along the northern boundaries of the Proposed Development would restrict views of the decommissioning activity from local roads to a possible brief glimpse through the field gate near Stainton Hill House (viewpoint 12) where changes to views would be Small scale. Decommissioning activity within Panel Areas C and D would also be visible from parts of Elstob Lane near viewpoints 18 and 19, giving rise to Medium/small and Small scale changes to views between Great Stainton and Long Pasture House Farm, affecting an Intermediate extent of the rural roads in this area. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and taking into account the Medium sensitivity of road users, effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.140. For users of public rights of way, mature hedgerows would restrict visibility of the nearest panels being removed from Panel Areas B, C and D, but public rights of way which pass through the Panel Areas may be subject to short term diversions or closures and there would be Large scale changes to views where the routes remain open and offer open close views into the Panel Areas. Occasional glimpses through field gates or from more elevated locations within 0.3km would give rise to some Medium or Small scale changes to views. These changes to views would arise for an Intermediate extent of the public rights of way within this area. Users of some public rights of way within this receptor group would experience negligible effects – including public rights of way to the north of Lodge Lane, most of the length of Catkill Lane except at viewpoint 20, and public rights of way to the south of Catkill Lane. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and taking into account the High/medium sensitivity of the visual receptors in this receptor group, effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.141. Effects on Oathill Farm, Stainton Hill House, Preston Lodge and Carr House are considered within Appendix 7.6. There would be some visibility of decommissioning activity within Panel Area D at a distance of just over 300m within their main outlooks to the east from the two homes at Viewley Hill Farm.

7.10.142. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Routes and homes within 1km – East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts (includes Panel Areas D and E)

Baseline

7.10.143. As shown by Figure 7.7, road access in this area includes local routes radiating from Bishopton to Great Stainton, Little Stainton, Whinney Hill and Mordon. The routes are often tree and/or hedge lined with limited outward views, though there are occasional more elevated and open sections and areas where hedges are clipped low (e.g viewpoints 22 and 29). There is also a relatively sparse network of footpaths connecting the villages which typically run through open arable fields, though there are areas of smaller pastoral fields closer to the villages and farms, and the route alongside Little Stainton Beck runs alongside the tree-lined waterway. Views in this area are of Community Value. Road users would have a Medium susceptibility and Medium sensitivity to changes to views as the narrow roads are busy and there is limited opportunity to enjoy the views. People using recreational routes in this area would have a High susceptibility and High/medium sensitivity to changes to views.

Effects during construction

7.10.144. Large and Large/medium scale, short-term changes to views would arise for users of the local road between Great Stainton and Bishopton, and Folly Bank where there would be close views of the construction activity as these roads pass each Panel Area as illustrated by Figure 7.7 and viewpoints 21 and 22. Similar effects would arise for road users approaching Great Stainton from Old Stillington where construction activity within Panel Area D would be seen in front of the direction of travel as the road approaches the junction. Elsewhere, visibility from roads would be limited by roadside hedges and undulating terrain. Large and Large/medium scale changes to views would arise from a Localised extent of the local roads in this area, giving rise to a Moderate magnitude of change. Effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.145. Large scale, Short-term changes to views would arise for users of the public rights of way which pass through Panel Areas D and E (as shown on Figure 7.7) as a result of temporary diversions during construction, and/or from close views of the construction activity where safe access is provided. Effects on public rights of way close to Little Stainton would be negligible. Large and Medium scale changes to views would arise for a Wide extent of the public rights of way within this area. The magnitude of change would be Moderate and taking into account the High/medium sensitivity of the visual receptors in this receptor group, effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant**.

7.10.146. Isolated residential properties in this area include Lea Close and Broad Lea farms to the north and northeast of Panel Area D which would have views of the construction activity from near homes at more than 300m, and close views on entering and leaving

the farm access. Woogra Farm and Sundial Farm would have views screened by nearby barns and /or vegetation. Coal Bank and Hambleton view would be within 100m of the construction in Panel Area E and the visual effects arising are considered in Appendix 7.7.

7.10.147. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.148. Effects for road users would include sequential effects when passing both Gately Moor solar farm and the Proposed Development, though sequential close views of both developments would not arise from individual roads, and combined views would be both infrequent and with only one solar farm being a notable presence in views at any given location. Changes to views arising from the proposed Development would include close views of Panel Area E above hedges from roads to the west of Bishopton (see viewpoints 21 and 22) and close views of Panel Area D from the road which connects Great Stainton and Bishopton, giving rise to Localised Large scale changes to views. There would also be more distant views of panels within Panel Area F from more open and elevated sections of roads - near the junction of Bleach House Bank with the local road to Old Stillington, and near viewpoint 29 (adjacent to Gately Moor solar farm), giving rise to a Limited extent of Small to Negligible scale changes to views. There would be a Medium magnitude of change to views and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.149. Table 7-10 summarises effects for user of PRoW in this receptor group.

Table 7-10 PRoW East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts

Route	Description of changes to views from route	Maximum scale of effect
Footpath east from Great Stainton to local road	This route would pass through Panel Area D and is proposed to be diverted around the edge of fields, between proposed and existing hedgerows rather than following its present route through the middle. There would be close views of the Proposed Development on leaving the edge of the village as illustrated by viewpoint 17 and along the rest of the route as it passes through the panel area until hedges mature, after which the route would be enclosed by hedgerows preventing the open, elevated views currently available from the higher stretches of this route.	Large
Footpath south from Elstob Lane to Little Stainton Beck	This route is proposed to be diverted such that it would pass alongside the stream rather than through fields, with a proposed hedgerow screening the adjacent Panel Area D once mature. This would create a different visual experience, of a lower lying and more vegetated route, rather than the present open elevated fields, and there would be close views of Panel Area D on slightly higher ground to the east.	Large
Footpath between Elstob Lane and Little	Panel Area D would be seen through the trees along the Beck, with fairly open views from about half of the route in winter and before	Large/medium, reducing to Small

Route	Description of changes to views from route	Maximum scale of effect
Stainton alongside Little Stainton Beck	proposed planting matures. The main focus of views along this route is to the south and southwest across open fields rather than across the beck.	as mitigation planting matures.
Footpath between Little Stainton and Folly Bank	Effects would typically be Negligible from the western end of the route. The eastern end is proposed to be diverted around the edge of Panel Area E where there would be close and open views of the Proposed Development until proposed hedges mature, and a change from open and elevated views from the centre of an arable field, to views enclosed by hedges and the lower lying beck valley and trees once planting is mature.	Large
Footpath between Pitfield Farm and Bishopton	This route descends slightly from Pitfield Farm and the rises again towards Folly Bank, and is lower lying than Panel Area E throughout this section, such that there would only be limited visibility of Panel Area E through much of the route except near viewpoint 22 at Folly Bank.	Large near viewpoint 22, typically Negligible
Footpath between Stoney Flatt Farm and Bishopton	This route passes through a low-lying area and in theory would have some visibility of Panel Area F. In practice the limited visibility that may arise is likely to be screened by intervening vegetation. Walkers on this route will pass through Gately Moor solar farm to the south of Stoney Flatt Farm.	Negligible

7.10.150. In summary, for users of the PRoW network in this area, there would be close views of the Proposed Development, giving rise to Large scale effects from the routes which pass through that Panel Areas D and E, giving rise to an Intermediate extent of Large scale effects. From the route which follows Little Stillington Beck between Elstob Lane and Little Stainton there would be more limited visibility close to Panel Area D where views would be filtered through the nearby trees along the beck, giving rise to a Limited extent of Large/medium scale effects which would reduce to Low once mitigation planting matures.

7.10.151. Taking the distribution and scale of effects described above into account, the magnitude of change for public right of way users in this receptor group would be Substantial/moderate and effects throughout the operational stage would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant**. These effects would not reduce once hedges mature as the enclosure of the routes with hedges would in itself be a notable change from the open and elevated views available from footpaths which pass through the Panel Areas.

7.10.152. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.153. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Mature tree and hedgerow planting along the boundaries of Panel Areas D and E would limit visibility of the decommissioning activity

to views through field gates or along the road from Old Stillington to Great Stainton, where there are views into more elevated parts of Panel Area D. Large and Large/Medium scale changes to views would arise from a Limited extent of the local roads in this area, giving rise to a Moderate/slight magnitude of change. Effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.154. Mature hedges would limit visibility of decommissioning activity from the footpaths. Large scale, Short-term changes to views would arise for users of the rights of way which pass through Panel Areas D and E (as shown on Figure 7.7) as a result of temporary diversions during decommissioning, and glimpses through field gates into the adjacent fields where work is taking place. Effects on public rights of way close to Little Stainton would be negligible. Large scale changes to views would arise for a Limited extent of the public rights of way within this area. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and taking into account the High/medium sensitivity of the visual receptors in this receptor group, effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.155. Isolated residential properties in this area include Lea Close and Broad Lea farms to the north and northeast of Panel Area D which would have views of the decommissioning activity from near homes at more than 300m, and close views on entering and leaving the farm access. Woogra Farm and Sundial Farm would have views screened by nearby barns and /or vegetation. Coal Bank and Hambleton view would be within 100m of the construction in Panel Area E and the visual effects arising are considered in Appendix 7.7.

7.10.156. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Routes and homes within 1km – East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm (includes Panel Area F)

Baseline

7.10.157. As shown by Figure 7.7, road access in this area consists of local routes connecting the nearby settlements. Routes to the north of Bishopton have short, elevated sections with open views to the south (see viewpoint 25) or southwest, and the road approaching Bishopton has elevated views looking north from near viewpoint 29, but for the most part views from roads are enclosed by hedges. Mill Lane forms a central 'spine' to the public rights of way network in the area, connecting a mix of short footpaths and bridleways to the nearby settlements. Views in this area are of Community Value. Road users would have a Medium susceptibility and Medium sensitivity to changes to views as the narrow roads are busy and there is limited opportunity to enjoy the views. People using recreational routes in this area would have a High susceptibility and High/medium sensitivity to changes to views.

Effects during construction

7.10.158. Large scale changes to views would arise from the section of Mill Lane which is close to Panel Area F. This has low hedges in places and is used as recreational route by local residents; these effects would reduce to Medium scale within a short distance. Effects on users of other roads in this receptor group would be negligible. Large and Medium scale changes to views would arise for a Limited extent of the roads within this area. The magnitude of change would be Moderate and taking into account the Medium sensitivity of road users, effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.159. Large scale, Short-term changes to views would arise for users of the footpath which passes through Panel Area F (as shown on Figure 7.7) as a result of temporary diversions during construction, and/or from close views of the construction activity where safe access is provided. Medium scale, short-term changes to views would also arise for users of the bridleway near West House Farm. Effects on users of other public rights of way in this receptor group would be negligible. Large and Medium scale changes to views would arise for an Intermediate extent of the public rights of way within this area. The magnitude of change would be Moderate and taking into account the High/medium sensitivity of the visual receptors in this receptor group, effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant**.

7.10.160. Rural residential properties to the north of Bishopton would be within 100m of the construction activity within Panel Area F and are considered in Appendix 7.7. The residents of homes at Downlands Farm would have some visibility of construction activity, particularly from upstairs windows that face east and approaching and leaving homes along the driveway.

7.10.161. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during operation

7.10.162. Road users between Stillington and Old Stillingtonwould have occasional views of the solar PV modules within Panel Area F at distances of 0.5km or more giving rise to a Limited extent of Medium/small scale effects where the northern edge of the Panel Area would be visible in views across the nearby beck valley (see viewpoint 25) before mitigation planting matures, at which stage effects would reduce to Negligible as illustrated by viewpoint 25. Otherwise, visibility from these roads would generally be restricted by buildings, terrain and/or vegetation. Mill Lane (see viewpoint 26) which connects Bishopton to Whitton is a notable exception and drivers would have close views of the Panel Area F above the roadside hedges during the Short-term period of operation before the hedges grow taller as they pass the Panel Area, giving rise to Large scale effects within a Limited extent. These effects would reduce to Medium scale once hedgerows mature as a result of the enclosure of northward views from the road. Before mitigation planting matures, there would be a Medium magnitude of change and effects on road users in this area would be **Moderate, Adverse and not**

significant. Once hedgerows mature, the magnitude of change would reduce to Slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.163. Table 7-11 summarises effects for users of PRoW in this receptor group.

Table 7-11 PRoW East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm

Route	Description of changes to views from route	Maximum scale of effect
Mill Lane (used as a recreational route by residents of Bishopton)	Included as part of the assessment of Bishopton at 7.10.75-7.10.82 above.	
Footpath between Redmarshall and Mill Lane	As shown by viewpoint 28, the more distant sections of this route have intervening layers of trees which largely screen views of the Proposed Development. As the route more closely approaches Mill Lane, layers of hedgerows alongside Mill Lane continue to provide screening and the Proposed Development would be seen as narrow bands of solar panels above existing hedges at distances of 0.4km or more.	Small
Bridleway between Mill Lane and Stillington	North of West House Farm, nearby Panel Area F would not be visible, but changes within the fields as a result of habitat creation would be seen. South of West House Farm, the edge of Panel Area F would be seen beyond the hedges (which are sparse and/or low in places) which line both the bridleway and the boundary of Panel Area F. As mitigation planting around the Site boundary matures the development would be largely screened from view.	Medium, reducing to Negligible as planting matures.
Bridleway and footpath between Whitton and Stillington	The bridleway has open and elevated views to the west within which the Proposed Development would be seen as illustrated by viewpoint 27. The footpath follows a valley and as shown by Figure 7.7, there would be limited visibility of the Proposed Development from this route, with any changes to views arising being no greater than those at nearby viewpoint 27.	Small, reducing to Small/negligible in summer and when mitigation planting is mature.
Footpaths within and around the western edge of Stillington	There would be little or no visibility of the Proposed Development from these routes.	Negligible
Footpath between Bishopton and Old Stillington	This route would pass through Panel Area F and is proposed to be diverted to follow field boundaries and be enclosed by hedges as it passes through Panel Area F, and follow the beck to the north of Panel Area F, rather than passing through the centre of fields as it currently does. This would create a different visual experience, of a lower lying and more vegetated route, rather than the present open fields, and there would be close views of Panel Area F as the route passes through the Panel Area before planting matures, and more distant and elevated views (as illustrated by Viewpoint 25) from Old Stillington.	Large
Footpath from Old Stillington to Foxton	Roadside hedges and field boundary vegetation would largely screen views from this route towards the Proposed Development.	Negligible

Route	Description of changes to views from route	Maximum scale of effect
Bridleway from Old Stillington to Bleach House Bridge	As shown by Figure 7.7, the landform of Round Hill and the block of woodland on it would screen views from the northern part of the route. East of Round Hill, vegetation along the roadside and Stillington Beck would largely screen views of the Proposed Development.	Negligible

7.10.164. In summary, for users of the PRoW network in this area, there would be close views of the Proposed Development from the route which passes through Panel Area F giving rise to Large scale effects, both as a result of the close views of the Proposed Development, and as a result of the diversion of the route, resulting in the loss of open and slightly elevated views from arable fields and the creation of a lower-lying and more vegetation route. There would also be more distant views from the elevated bridleway route and lower-lying footpath connecting Whitton and Stillington (see viewpoint 27) and views over hedges from the bridleway near West House Farm. Taken together these changes to views would affect a Localised extent of rights of way in the area. Taking the distribution and scale of effects described above into account, the magnitude of change for this receptor group would be Moderate and effects would be **Major/moderate, Adverse and Significant** during early operation, reducing to **Moderate, Adverse and not significant** once proposed planting has matured.

7.10.165. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Effects during decommissioning

7.10.166. As described at 7.10.27 above, effects would be similar to those during construction but of reduced duration and extent. Mature tree and hedgerow planting around boundaries of Panel Area F limit visibility of the decommissioning activity from roads to glimpsed views from Mill Lane giving rise to a Limited extent of Medium scale changes to views. The magnitude of change would be Slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.167. Large scale, Short-term changes to views would arise for users of the footpath which passes through Panel Area F (as shown on Figure 7.7) as a result of temporary diversions during construction, and/or from close views of the construction activity in adjacent fields through field gates where safe access is provided, affecting a Limited extent of the routes in this area. Effects on users of other public rights of way would be Negligible. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/minor and taking into account the High/medium sensitivity of the visual receptors in this receptor group, effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

7.10.168. Rural residential properties to the north of Bishopton would be within 100m of the construction activity within Panel Area F and are considered in Appendix 7.7. The residents of homes at Downlands Farm would have some visibility of construction activity, particularly from upstairs windows that face east and approaching and leaving homes along the driveway.

7.10.169. No essential mitigation is available, beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Other Visual Receptors

7.10.170. Effects would be **not Significant** for the following visual receptors and are described in Appendix 7.5 and operational stage effects are summarised below:

- Coatham Mundeville (0.6km, west) - From publicly accessible areas (the A167, Brafferton Lane, Coatham Lane and the footpath across the golf course) visibility towards Panel Area A is screened by hedges, trees and houses and would be restricted to glimpsed views of small parts of the development (if any). At most changes to views would be Small scale for a Limited extent. Effects would be Minor/negligible, Adverse and not significant.
- Little Stainton (0.6km, south) –This settlement lies among one of the significantly affected groups of routes and homes but is well screened by vegetation with the main open views being to the south away from the Proposed Development. Effects would be Negligible and Neutral.
- Old Stillington (0.6km, north) – There are open southward views from the eastern end of the village, where as shown by viewpoint 25, the northern edge of Panel Area F would be seen along the skyline. Before proposed tree and hedgerow planting along the boundary matures, effects would be Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant. Once mitigation planting is mature, there would be very limited visibility of the Proposed Development and effects would be Minor/negligible, Neutral and not significant.
- Stillington (0.6km, north) – is a larger village with an established industrial area and a country park to the northwest edge. Changes to views from South Street and the footpath towards Whitton (see viewpoints 25 and 27) would arise before proposed planting matures, giving rise to effects which would be Minor/negligible, Adverse and not significant.
- Whitton (0.7km, east) – is a small nucleated village with outward views from streets generally contained by rising ground, buildings and/or vegetation. Filtered views in winter of the edges of Panel Area F along the skyline from Mill Lane before it descends towards the beck, and from the footpath heading towards Stillington (see viewpoint 27). Would give rise to effects which would be Minor/negligible, Adverse and not significant.
- A167 (0.5km, west) – passes to the west of Panel Area A. A short section of the route between the A1(M) junction and the south edge of Coatham Mundelville is within 1km of the Proposed Development, but views west from the route are screened by houses and roadside vegetation and effects would be Negligible, Neutral and not significant.
- East Coast main line (0.1km, west) - passes to the west of Panel Area A. There may be glimpsed views of the western edges of Panel Area A where it slopes

towards the railway through hedges and trackside vegetation. Effects would be Minor/negligible, neutral and not significant.

- A1(M) (0.5km, northwest) - passes to the west of Panel Area A. As the route passes within 1km of the Panel Areas it is typically enclosed by hedges and/or embankments and there would be no noticeable views of the Proposed Development. Effects would be Negligible, Neutral and not significant.

7.10.171. Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects on the above visual receptors during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible, Neutral and not significant.

7.10.172. Effects on more distant visual receptors (as listed within Table 7-5) would be Negligible and are not considered further.

7.10.173. No essential mitigation is required, or available beyond that already embedded in the Proposed Development, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Designations

7.10.174. As set out above, changes to character would be negligible beyond 0.7km and changes to views would be negligible beyond 1km. Given this, changes to the special qualities of designated areas would be expected to also be negligible beyond 1km. This includes all locally designated landscapes identified as being beyond 1km in Table 7-5.

7.10.175. Effects on the following designated landscapes were assessed as being not significant and are described within Appendix 7.5 and summarised below:

- Elstob AHLV (0km, north) – This locally designated landscape within Durham is designated for its "*scenic value, condition (reflecting recent enhancement in the west of the area) and representativeness*". Effects on character and scenic value at the southern edge of the AHLV would give rise to effects that would be Moderate, Adverse and not significant before planting matures, reducing to Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant once hedgerows and trees mature along the northern edge of Panel Area B. The short-term effects of construction and decommissioning would give rise to Moderate/minor Adverse and not significant effects during construction when views would be more open and Minor, Adverse and not significant effects during decommissioning when mature hedges and trees would screen most views into Panel Area B.

7.10.176. **Hall Garth** (0.5km, West) is a locally designated historic parkland is a golf course at Coatham Mundeville. Parts of nearby Panel Area A slope west towards the designated area which lies beyond the railway and River Skerne valley. Figure 7.6 indicates some visibility of the solar PV modules from parts of Hall Garth, however this does not take account of vegetation along the railway line, river banks and within the golf course. In practice there is unlikely to be visibility of the Proposed Development from the designated area, and changes to its designated qualities during all stages of the

Proposed Development would be of Negligible scale. The magnitude of change would be Negligible and effects would be **Negligible, Neutral and not Significant.**

7.10.177. No essential mitigation is required, and therefore residual effects remain as outlined.

Cumulative effects

7.10.178. Developments meeting the scoping criteria (EIA projects within 3km, and area based or linear projects within 2km), or requested for inclusion by consultees, and which are short-listed (see Appendix 13.2 and Figure 13.2) have been considered in relation to potential cumulative effects as set out within Chapter 13 Cumulative Effects. Figure 13.3, identifies potential cumulative developments considered in relation to cumulative landscape and visual effects.

7.10.179. Site observations in relation to the potential for visibility of cumulative developments are provided within Appendix 7.4.

7.11. Monitoring

7.11.1. There is no monitoring proposed in relation to the landscape and visual effects. The Outline LEMP at ES Appendix 2.14 (Document Reference 6.4.2.14) includes measures to ensure the successful establishment of mitigation planting.

7.12. Summary

7.12.1. This chapter has considered:

- effects on landscape fabric;
- effects on local and national landscape character areas;
- effects on visual receptors including people within settlements, travelling along transport and recreational routes and within recreational areas;
- effects on local landscape designations.

7.12.2. Effects on people within their homes are considered within the residential visual amenity assessment provided in Appendix 7.6 and the potential for cumulative effects in combination with other existing, consented and proposed developments is considered in Chapter 13 and Appendix 7.4.

7.13. Summary

Landscape Character

7.13.1. Significant effects would arise during operation on Darlington LCA 6 Great Stainton Farmland which would host Panel Areas A to D. As shown by Figure 7.1, the Panel Areas would occupy a notable proportion of this character area, making the solar farm a key characteristic. Planting of hedgerows and hedgerows with trees would reinforce the characteristic vegetation pattern, providing a positive legacy after decommissioning,

but this planting would not markedly mitigate the effects on the character of this area during operation.

Settlements

7.13.2. Significant effects would arise on the character of Great Stainton due to the presence of panels to the east of the village on the upper slopes which form part of the village setting. Enclosure by hedgerow planting would screen the solar panels with time and views would be retained over the hedges, but this increase in enclosure of views to the east would in itself represent a notable change to the currently open setting of the village. These changes would also give rise to significant effects on views from Great Stainton during the operational stage. Given the topographic relationship between great Stainton and its setting, additional planting would not mitigate effects.

7.13.3. Significant effects would arise on the character of Bishopton during construction if the on-road cable route is used due to excavation and cable installation works along the main road through the village which would bring construction activity into the valued historic core of the village, combined with close views of construction activity from Mill Lane and the recreation ground. No significant effects would arise should the off-road cable route (the preferred option) be used.

7.13.4. Significant effects on the character of Bishopton would also arise during the early years of operation as a result of close and open views of solar panels from the recreation ground before the proposed hedges and community orchard planting mature, and from Mill Lane before the existing hedgerow has increased in height sufficiently to provide screening. These changes would also give rise to significant effects on views from Bishopton during the early operational stage before planting matures. Following the establishment of the mitigation, effects would reduce to become not significant.

Public rights of way

7.13.5. Significant visual effects would arise for users of public rights of way within 1km of the Panel Areas during the construction and operational stages, with the exception of changes to views from routes East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm where effects would not be significant once proposed planting matures. Additional planting would not beneficially further mitigate effects on the rights of way network as the effects arise due to routes frequently passing through and close to the panel areas and widespread enclosure of currently open views would in itself give rise to adverse effects.

Other effects

7.13.6. Effects on receptors mentioned in the summary above would not be significant during other phases of the Proposed Development.

7.13.7. Effects on all other landscape and visual receptors, including on landscape fabric, the host landscape character area for Panel Areas E and F (Darlington LCA7 Bishopton

Vale), rural road users, key long distance routes through the area and designated landscapes would not be significant.

7.13.8. Beyond 1km from the Panel Areas, effects would reduce to negligible for all receptors.

Summary Tables

7.13.9. Table 7-12 and Table 7-13 provide a summary of the identified impacts, mitigation and likely effects of the Proposed Development on Landscape and Visual receptors:

- Table 7-12 sets out the effects at all stages for receptors which would receive significant effects during any stage of the Proposed Development.
- Table 7-13 summarises effects for receptors which would receive non-significant effects during all stages of the Proposed Development.
- Where impacts on receptors listed in Table 7-5 would be negligible, those impacts on those receptors are not reported in Table 7-12 and Table 7-13.

Table 7-12 Landscape and Visual impact assessment summary – Receptors receiving significant effects

Note: For landscape and visual receptors mitigation is embedded and includes the extent of the panel layout, the height of the panels and other infrastructure, and proposed planting and management of existing hedgerows as shown in the Environmental Masterplan (Document Reference 2.5), the Landscape Concept Masterplan (Document Reference 6.3.2.20) and set out within the Outline LEMP [Document Reference 6.4.2.14].

Impact	Stage	Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Character				
Changes to character of LCA Darlington 6: Great Stainton Farmland	Construction	Medium	Moderate	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of LCA Darlington 6: Great Stainton Farmland	**Operation**	Medium	Substantial	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to character of LCA Darlington 6: Great Stainton Farmland	Decommissioning	Medium	Moderate	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of Great Stainton	Construction	Medium	Moderate	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of Great Stainton	**Operation**	Medium	Substantial/Moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to character of Great Stainton	Decommissioning	Medium	Moderate	Minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of Bishopton	**Construction (on road cable route)**	High/medium	Moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to character of Bishopton	Construction (off road cable route)	High/medium	Slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of Bishopton	**Operation (Years 1-10)**	High/medium	Substantial/moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to character of Bishopton	Operation (Years 10-40)	High/medium	Moderate/slight	Moderate, Adverse, not significant

Impact	Stage	Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Changes to character of Bishopton	Decommissioning	High/medium	Moderate/slight	Minor, Adverse, not significant
Visual Receptors				
Changes to views at Great Stainton	Construction	High/medium	Moderate/slight	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views at Great Stainton	**Operation**	High/medium	Substantial/moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views at Great Stainton	Decommissioning	High/medium	Moderate/slight	Minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views at Bishopton	Construction	High/medium	Moderate/slight	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views at Bishopton	**Operation (Years 1-10)**	High/medium	Substantial/moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views at Bishopton	Operation (Years 10-40)	High/medium	Moderate	Moderate, Neutral, not significant
Changes to views at Bishopton	Decommissioning	High/medium	Moderate/slight	Minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km – Between A167, Salters Lane, Lea Hall and Little Ketton Farm	**Construction**	High/medium	Moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km - Between A167, Salters Lane, Lea Hall and Little Ketton Farm	**Operation (Years 1-10)**	High/medium	Substantial	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km - Between A167, Salters Lane, Lea Hall and Little Ketton Farm	**Operation (Years 10-40)**	High/medium	Substantial/moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km - Between A167, Salters Lane, Lea Hall and Little Ketton Farm	**Decommissioning**	High/medium	Moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**

Impact	Stage	Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Changes to views from ProW within 1km – East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane	**Construction**	High/medium	Moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km - East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane	**Operation (Years 1-10)**	High/medium	Substantial/moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km - East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane	**Operation (Years 10-40)**	High/medium	Moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km – East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane	Decommissioning	High/medium	Moderate/slight	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from ProW within 1km – East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts	**Construction**	High/medium	Moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km - East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts	**Operation**	High/medium	Substantial/moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km – East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts	Decommissioning	High/medium	Moderate/minor	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km - East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm	**Construction**	High/medium	Moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km - East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm	**Operation (Years 1-10)**	High/medium	Moderate	Major/moderate, Adverse, **Significant**

Impact	Stage	Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km - East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm	Operation (Years 10-40)	High/medium	Moderate	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from PRoW within 1km - East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm	Decommissioning	High/medium	Moderate/minor	Moderate, Adverse, not significant

Table 7-13 Landscape and Visual impact assessment summary – Receptors receiving only non-significant effects

Note: For landscape and visual receptors mitigation is embedded and includes the extent of the panel layout, the height of the panels and other infrastructure, and proposed planting and management of existing hedgerows as shown in the Environmental Masterplan (Document Reference 2.5), the Landscape Concept Masterplan (Document Reference 6.3.2.20) and set out within the Outline LEMP [Document Reference 6.4.2.14).

Impact	Stage	Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Landscape Fabric				
Hedgerow removals for access and cable routes	Construction			Not significant, Adverse
Changes to landscape fabric as a result of establishment of new hedgerows and trees	Operation & Decommissioning			Not significant, Positive
Character				
Changes to character of LCA Darlington 7: Bishopton Vale	Construction	Medium/low	Moderate/slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of LCA Darlington 7: Bishopton Vale	Operation	Medium/low	Substantial/moderate	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of LCA Darlington 7: Bishopton Vale	Decommissioning	Medium/low	Moderate/slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of LCA Darlington: 5 Upper Skerne Valley	Operation	Medium	Negligible	Minor/negligible, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of LCA Durham: 73 Sedgefield, Windlestone and Aycliffe	Operation	Medium	Negligible	Minor/negligible, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of LCA Durham: 16 Butterwick and Shotton	Operation	Medium	Negligible	Minor/negligible, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of LCA Stockton-on-Tees: 3 Billingham and Thorpe Becks	Operation	Medium	Negligible	Minor/negligible, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of Brafferton	Construction	Medium	Slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant

Impact	Stage	Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Changes to character of Brafferton	Operation	Medium	Slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to character of Brafferton	Decommissioning	Medium	Slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Visual Receptors				
Changes to views at Brafferton	Construction	High/medium	Slight/negligible	Minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views at Brafferton	Operation	High/medium	Slight	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views at Brafferton	Decommissioning	High/medium	Slight/negligible	Minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views at Coatham Mundeville	Operation	High/medium	Slight/negligible	Minor/negligible, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views at Old Stillington *(before mitigation planting matures)*	Operation (Years 1-10)	High/medium	Slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views at Old Stillington *(after mitigation planting matures)*	Operation (Years 1-10)	High/medium	Negligible	Minor/negligible, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views at Stillington	Operation	High/medium	Negligible	Minor/negligible, Neutral, not significant
Changes to views at Whitton	Operation	High/medium	Negligible	Minor/negligible, Neutral, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km - Between A167, Salters Lane, Lea Hall and Little Ketton Farm	Operation (Years 1-10)	Medium	Moderate/slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km – East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane	Construction	Medium	Moderate	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km – East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane	Operation (Years 1-10)	Medium	Moderate	Moderate, Adverse, not significant

Impact	Stage	Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km – East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane	Operation (Years 10-40)	Medium	Moderate/minor	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km – East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane	Decommissioning	Medium	Moderate/minor	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km - East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts	Construction	Medium	Moderate	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km - East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts	Operation	Medium	Moderate	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km - East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts	Decommissioning	Medium	Moderate/slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km - East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm	Construction	Medium	Moderate	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km - East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm	Operation (Years 1-10)	Medium	Moderate	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km - East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm	Operation (Years 10-40)	Medium	Slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from rural roads within 1km - East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm	Decommissioning	Medium	Slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to views from East Coast main line	Operation	Medium	Negligible	Minor/negligible, Neutral, not significant
Designations				
Changes to valued qualities of Elstob AHLV	Construction	High/medium	Slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant

Impact	Stage	Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Changes to valued qualities of Elstob AHLV	Operation (Years 1-10)	High/medium	Moderate/slight	Moderate, Adverse, not significant
Changes to valued qualities of Elstob AHLV	Operation (Years 10-40)	High/medium	Slight	Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant
Changes to valued qualities of Elstob AHLV	Decommissioning	High/medium	Negligible	Minor, Adverse, not significant

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