

**Byers Gill Solar
EN010139**

6.4.7.5 Environmental Statement

Appendix 7.5 Non-significant effects

Planning Act 2008

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)

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

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APPENDIX 7.5: NON-SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

Introduction

1. Effects which are deemed significant (i.e. those that are Major/moderate or greater are reported in Chapter 7. Where effects on landscape character or visual receptors receptors are judged to be non-significant they are described below.

Landscape Character

Darlington: 5 Upper Skerne Valley (0.1km, west)

2. **Baseline:** This is an incised valley landscape with small scale and complex pattern of fields, trees and settlement and is contained by the valley sides. Indicators of landscape value include the Conservation Area and locally designated historic parkland at Coatham Mundeville and Hall Garth, the Green Gaps identifying locally important landscape function at Barmpton and Great Burdon, and recreational facilities including golf courses and PRow. The area is judged to be of Regional value. The small-scale landscape and complex patterns indicate higher sensitivity, while the enclosure, limited intervisibility and presence of the A167, mainline railway and urban edge of Darlington reduce sensitivity to modern development. The area is judged to be of Medium susceptibility and Medium sensitivity.
3. **Effects during operation:** As shown by Figure 7.5, this LCA would have visibility, particularly from the northern end of the LCA, of Panel Area A (0.1km, northeast). As indicated by viewpoints 7 (within the LCA), 6 and 8 (nearby to the northwest) – other Panel Areas would be barely perceptible (if visible). The main area of visibility would arise in the area between Coatham Mundeville and Skerningham Manor. In this area views of the solar farm would be screened by a series of lines of trees along field boundaries, the railway and the River Skerne as well as the tree belts within the golf course at Hall Garth, confining changes to character to the fields east of the railway line which would lie within 0.4km of the nearest panels resulting in a sense of proximity to the solar farm and giving rise to Small scale changes to character within this Limited extent of the character area, both before and after planting matures. The magnitude of change would be Negligible and effects would be **Minor/negligible, Adverse and not significant**.
4. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

Durham: 73 Sedgfield, Windlestone and Aycliffe (0km, north)

5. **Baseline:** This area forms part of the Tees Lowland character type and is a broadly undulating lowland plain with open large scale arable fields divided by low hedges with occasional hedgerow trees. The area closest to the Site Area is sparsely settled with a network of lanes and increasingly affected by the A1, railway and Newton Aycliffe to the west. The County Durham Landscape Value assessment (2019)²¹ identifies this area as being of variable value, with the areas closest to the Site Area being identified as typically High-medium/medium value (Grindon Lane unit); Low-medium (Preston South unit). Taking account of the AHLV designation and the higher assessed value of the character type where it adjoins Panel Area B, the area is judged to be of Regional value. The area is judged to be of Medium susceptibility and Medium sensitivity.
6. **Effects during operation:** As shown by Figure 7.5, this LCA would have theoretical visibility of Panel Areas A (0.2km, south) and B (0km, south), primarily of Panel Area B in the area between the main

line railway and Grindon Lane, with more limited and distant views of other Panel Areas. In practice the combination of gently undulating ground and hedgerows with trees further restricts visibility and the effects would mainly arise in areas closest to the Panel Areas, such as near viewpoints 4 and 12. The area around viewpoint 4 near Whinfield House will be host to the consented Whinfield solar farm which lies within this character area, and the addition of the Proposed Development would not give rise to additional effects on character in this context. The main area of effects would arise near Preston Lodge and Stainton Hill House as a result of close proximity to panels in Panel Area B. In this area the roadside hedges along Lodge Lane and the buildings and vegetation around Stainton Hill House and Preston Lodge would provide a degree of screening and limit visibility of the solar farm except from Lodge Lane. There would be Medium scale changes to character within a Limited extent of the character area before planting matures (Medium-term duration) giving rise to a Slight magnitude of change and effects which would be Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant. Once the hedgerows and trees along the northern edges of the panel areas mature, changes to character would reduce to Negligible scale. The magnitude of change would be Negligible and effects would be **Minor/negligible, Adverse and not significant**.

7. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

Durham: 16 Butterwick and Shotton (0km, N)

8. **Baseline:** This area forms part of the Tees Lowland character type and is a broadly undulating lowland plain with open large scale arable fields divided by low hedges with occasional hedgerow trees. The area closest to the Site Area is sparsely settled with a network of lanes and affected by the railway and Lambs Hill wind farm near Merton Grange. The County Durham Landscape Value assessment (2019)²¹ identifies this area as being typically Low-Medium value in the areas closest to the Site Area, with an area of High-medium/medium value (Elstob unit) coinciding with the AHLV designation. Taking account of the typical value in the area most affected (within 0.8km of the Panel Areas), the area is judged to be of Regional value. The area is judged to be of Medium susceptibility and Medium sensitivity.
9. **Effects during operation:** As shown by Figure 7.5, this LCA would have theoretical visibility of Panel Area F (0km, south). In practice the combination of gently undulating ground and hedgerows with trees restricts visibility and there would be a Limited extent of Small scale changes to character as a result of visibility of Panel Area F beyond trees and hedges from the southern end of the character area to the west of Old Stillington. These changes would reduce to Negligible scale as planting matures. The magnitude of change both before and after proposed planting matures would be Negligible and effects would be **Minor/negligible, Adverse and not significant**.
10. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

Stockton-on-Tees: 3 Billingham and Thorpe Becks (0.5km, E)

11. **Baseline:** This area is described as a 'green corridor' following the beck valley between Stockton and Billingham, which extends into the rural area to encompass Stillington and Old Stillington. The field pattern varies, but are typically irregular reflecting the meandering beck, and used for pasture. Field boundaries are typically hedge and small woodlands occur frequently. The valley landform and vegetation typically restricts visibility from lower-lying areas whilst offering more open cross-valley views elsewhere (e.g. viewpoints 25 and 27). Larger rectilinear fields occur more frequently towards the west where there is a transition to the larger scale adjacent character areas. There are no

designations covering the area, which is judged to be of Community value. The area is judged to be of High/medium susceptibility and Medium sensitivity.

12. **Effects during operation:** As shown by Figure 7.5, this LCA would have areas of relatively open views of solar PV modules within Panel Area F near Old Stillington and between Stillington and Whitton. As illustrated by viewpoints 25, 27 and 28, the changes to views (and character) would be Negligible, except from near Old Stillington at the western end of the character area, before proposed planting matures. The nearby presence of Stillington and its visible industrial area, along with the railway and nearby Lambs Hill wind farm bring influences of modern development to this location. Medium-term changes to character arising from a sense of proximity to the solar farm would be Small Scale for a Limited extent of the character area. The magnitude of change would be Negligible at all stages of development and effects would be **Minor/negligible, Adverse and not significant**.
13. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

National Character Area (NCA) 23 Tees Lowlands

14. In response to a scoping clarification, Natural England requested that effects on the National Character Area be considered if significant effects on the local character areas were identified. The assessment above indicates significant effects on Area 6 Great Stainton Farmland; Moderate and not significant effects on 7 Bishopton Vale and Minor/negligible (not significant) effects on 5 Upper Skerne Valley, 73 Sedgfield, Windlestone and Aycliffe and 16 Butterwick and Shotton.
15. All of these character areas lie within NCA 23 Tees Lowlands which covers most of the study area, and extends southwards to the Cleveland Hills and east to the coast between Redcar and Hartlepool. The exception is a small area in the northwest around Newton Aycliffe, which is neither within NCA 23 nor identified as receiving potentially significant effects.
16. **Baseline** - The area is described as “*a broad, low-lying and open plain of predominantly arable agricultural land, with low woodland cover and large fields*” with key characteristics including urban and industrial areas around the Tees estuary key transport links and power lines along with wooded river valleys and “*quieter rural areas*” including around the Site Area. The carr landscape to the east of Newton Aycliffe is also identified as a key characteristic.
17. The majority of the character area has no particular indicators of value and is judged to be of Community value within the study area. Given the large scale, flat and developed nature of the character area, along with the more prevalent vegetation cover and undulating landform within the study area, and the proximity to the carr landscape of the River Skerne susceptibility to the Proposed Development is judged to be Medium/low, and sensitivity Medium/low.
18. **Effects during operation:** Based on the effects identified for the local character areas, there would be likely to be an area of Large and Medium scale effects within 0.5km of the Panel Areas, extending 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. In the context of the extensive character area, this would be a Limited extent. The magnitude of change would be Moderate and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.
19. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages and the frequency of construction work in this LCA which has many urban and industrial areas and roads, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

Visual Receptors

Coatham Mundeville (0.6km, west)

20. **Baseline:** Coatham Mundeville is a linear settlement along the A167 with the rear of properties facing out over the Skerne Valley towards Panel Area A. Westward views are screened by housing and rising ground. People living in and visiting Coatham Mundeville 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.
21. **Effects during operation:** 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. Throughout the operational stage the magnitude of change would be Slight/negligible and effects would be **Minor/negligible, Adverse and not significant**.
22. Properties on the east side of the A167 are likely to have views of Panel Area A from upstairs windows, and from downstairs windows and more elevated areas of the gardens where not screened by vegetation.
23. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

Little Stainton (0.6km, south)

24. **Baseline:** This small linear settlement has open views to the south from the road at the southern edge of the village, but otherwise views from the streets and from the footpaths as they leave the village heading north and east are contained by the houses and trees around garden boundaries and along the beck. People living in and visiting Little 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.
25. **Effects during operation:** As indicated by Figure 7.7, there would be limited to no visibility of the Proposed Development from this village and changes to views would be Negligible scale. The magnitude of change would be Negligible and effects would be **Negligible, Neutral and not significant**. Some homes at the western edge of the village may have views of the Proposed Development within Panel Area C at distances of just over 1.1km, potentially including the substation (if it is not entirely screened by the trees near Carr House).
26. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

Old Stillington (0.6km, north)

27. **Baseline:** Old Stillington is a small linear settlement to the southwest of Stillington. It is situated with open views to the south and southeast over the beck valley from the eastern edge of the settlement and footpath as shown by viewpoint 25. The road leaving the village to the west also has elevated and open views looking southwest. Homes, barns and garden vegetation screen the majority of southward views from other parts of the settlement. Rising ground and barns restrict views to the north. People living in and visiting Old Stillington 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.

28. **Effects during operation:** As shown by viewpoint 25, the northern edge of Panel Area F would be seen along the skyline, beyond the existing sparse hedgerows for a wide arc of the view during early operation with some of the panels towards the east and west edges seen descending the slopes facing the village. Before proposed tree and hedgerow planting along the boundary matures, the scale of changes to views would be Medium/small scale in the Intermediate extent of the village where there are open southward views. The magnitude of change would be Slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant.**
29. Once mitigation planting is mature, there would be very limited visibility of the Proposed Development, with some visibility of the eastern and western edges only. Changes to views would be Negligible scale, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and effects would be **Minor/negligible, Neutral and not significant.**
30. Homes towards the eastern end of the village would have views of the development similar to those shown for viewpoint 25, albeit some of the houses on the south side of the road would have a degree of screening provided by garden trees and hedges. Homes towards the western end of the village have southward views screened by trees and barns and would have limited or no visibility of the Proposed Development.

Stillington (0.6km, north)

31. **Baseline:** Stillington is a larger village with an established industrial area and a country park to the northwest edge. Housing on the southwest edge descends into the nearby beck valley from the village core with views towards the south and southeast typically screened by a mix of buildings, terrain and vegetation. People living in and visiting Stillington 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.
32. **Effects during operation:** Before mitigation planting matures, visibility of the Proposed Development would be screened from public areas within the core of the village, with views of Panel Area F only becoming available upon leaving the village via South Street or the bridleway towards Whitton (see viewpoints 25 and 27). Changes to views would be Medium/small scale for a Limited extent, reducing to Negligible scale as planting matures. Throughout the operational stage the magnitude of change would be Negligible and effects would be **Minor/negligible, Neutral and not significant.**
33. Homes facing onto South Street at Victory Gardens would be likely to have some views of the proposed development looking over, and through gaps in, the roadside hedges – particularly from upstairs windows. Changes to views here would be similar to those illustrated for nearby viewpoint 25. Visibility from homes and gardens elsewhere in the village would be limited by terrain and vegetation, though there may be some visibility of the northwest-edge of the Proposed Development from upstairs windows of houses facing southwest over the recreation ground at Mount Pleasant Walk.
34. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

Whitton (0.7km, east)

35. **Baseline:** Whitton is a small nucleated village. Some additional dwellings are currently under construction at the northeast edge of the settlement. Outward views from streets within the village are generally contained by rising ground, buildings and/or vegetation. People living in and visiting Whitton 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.
36. **Effects during operation:** There would be no visibility of the Proposed Development from public spaces within the village, except for potential 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). Changes to views within this Limited extent of the village would be Small scale in winter during the Medium-term, reducing to Small/negligible scale in summer and once mitigation planting is mature. The magnitude of change would be Negligible and effects would be **Minor/negligible, Adverse and not significant**.

37. A small number of homes near the western edge of the village would have elevated views towards Panel Area F, similar to those illustrated from viewpoint 27, from west facing windows and gardens.
38. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

A167 (0.5km, west)

39. **Baseline:** As shown by Figure 7.7, the A167 passes through the western side of the study area connecting Darlington and Newton Aycliffe. The route has a mix of single and dual carriageway sections and variable speed limits and users of this route would have a Medium susceptibility to changes to views which would be of Community value. Sensitivity of route users would be **Medium**.
40. **Effects during operation:** Visibility of the Panel Areas from the route beyond 1km would result in Negligible changes to views. Visibility within 1km is indicated by the ZTV study from south of the A1(M) as the route passes through Coatham Mundeville, however this section of the route is lined by trees and houses and there would be no visibility of the Proposed Development. Changes to views would be Negligible and the magnitude of change would be Negligible. Effects on this route would be **Negligible, Neutral and not Significant**.

East Coast main line (0.1km, west)

41. **Baseline:** Views from this main line rail route are particularly valued through some stretches, but not within the study area, where views are of Community value. Rail users on fast main line routes have a Low susceptibility to changes, although trains in this stretch would generally be travelling at lower speeds either slowing down towards or accelerating from Darlington Station and susceptibility is judged to be Medium/low. Sensitivity of rail users would be Medium/low.
42. **Effects during operation:** As illustrated by Figure 7.7, there may be visibility of Panel Area A within 1km of the railway as the route leaves Darlington heading north past Beaumont Hill, Brafferton and Coatham Mundeville. The train route is lined by trees and scrub as it passes through these parts of the study area and any views would be restricted to brief glimpses of panels in the western edge of Panel Area A where the fields slope westwards towards the rail line. The Limited extent of changes to views would be no more than Small scale. The magnitude of change would be Negligible and effects would be **Minor/negligible, Neutral and not significant**.
43. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

44. A1(M) (0.5km, northwest)

45. **Baseline:** Road users on the A1(M) will typically be undertaking longer distance journeys and travelling through the area at speed. Whilst there are open views across the Carr landscape from just south of Bradbury (beyond the study area to the north), views as the route passes within 1km of the Panel Areas are typically enclosed by hedges and/or embankment. Views are judged to be of Community value and road users would have a Low susceptibility and Low sensitivity to the Proposed Development.

46. **Effects:** There are not likely to be any noticeable views of the Proposed Development as the route passes close to the Site Area, given the enclosure by vegetation and embankments. Changes to views from this route would be of Negligible scale and the magnitude of change would be Negligible. Effects would be **Negligible, Neutral and not significant**.
47. **Effects during construction and decommissioning:** Taking into account the Short-term duration and reduced extent of effects during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects during these stages would be of Negligible magnitude and would be Negligible and not significant.

Designations

Elstob AHLV (0km, north)

48. **Baseline:** As illustrated by Figures 7.6, this designated area is located to the north of Lodge Lane and spanning Elstob Lane near Great Stainton. The County Durham Local Landscape Designation Review (2019)³⁵ identifies this area as being of higher landscape value due to its “*scenic value, condition (reflecting recent enhancement in the west of the area) and representativeness*”.
49. **Effects:** Effects on character (representativeness) in this area would be as described for the landscape character area (Durham: 73 Sedgefield, Windlestone and Aycliffe) as set out above. The scenic value would only be affected from Lodge Lane (viewpoints 12 and 15) and the southern end of the bridleway along Grindon Lane where it joins Elstob Lane (viewpoint 12) as set out in Appendix 7.4. The table below considers these effects together for each stage of the Proposed Development:

Designated quality	Sensitivity	Scale and extent of effects during construction	Scale and extent of effects during operation	Scale and extent of effects during decommissioning
Condition	Regional value, High susceptibility, High/medium sensitivity	None – the Proposed Development is not within the AHLV.	None – the Proposed Development is not within the AHLV.	None – the Proposed Development is not within the AHLV.
Representativeness (character)	Regional value, Medium susceptibility, Medium sensitivity	There would be Medium scale changes to character within a Limited extent of the character area as a result of proximity to the construction activity and increased vehicle movements along Lodge Lane.	There would be Medium scale changes to character within a Limited extent of the character area before planting matures (Medium-term duration). Once the hedgerows and trees along the northern edges of the panel areas mature, changes to character would reduce to Negligible scale.	Short term glimpsed views of decommissioning activity through the field gate on Lodge Lane near Stainton Hill House would give rise to Negligible changes to character.
Scenic value	Regional value, High susceptibility, High/medium sensitivity	A Limited extent of Large scale effects along Lodge Lane close to Stainton Hill House, and Localised Small scale changes where more distant views of construction activity through gaps in	A Limited extent of Large scale effects along Lodge Lane close to Stainton Hill House, and Localised Small scale changes where more distant views through gaps in hedges from Lodge Lane arise.	Possible short term glimpsed views of decommissioning activity through the field gate on Lodge Lane near Stainton Hill House would give rise to Negligible changes to scenic value.

Designated quality	Sensitivity	Scale and extent of effects during construction	Scale and extent of effects during operation	Scale and extent of effects during decommissioning
		hedges from Lodge Lane arise.		

50. **Effects during construction:** Considering these Short-term changes to the designated qualities together, it is considered that the magnitude of change would be Slight and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant.**
51. **Effects during operation:** Considering these changes to the designated qualities together, it is considered that before planting matures the magnitude of change would be Moderate/slight and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant.** Once hedgerows and trees planting along the northern edges of Panel Area B are mature, effects would reduce to Slight magnitude and would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant.**
52. **Effects during decommissioning:** Considering these changes to the designated qualities together, it is considered that effects would be of Negligible magnitude and would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant.**