



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

**BYERS GILL SOLAR
DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
IP reference number BGSF-AFP412**

**Post-hearing submission of oral case of Stephen Laws, Glenkemp Landscape Architects on
behalf of Darlington Borough Council**

**Issue Specific Hearing 7 (ISH7) on Environmental Matters (Cumulative Effects)
Wednesday 27 November 2024**

Landscape and visual amenity cumulative effects

DBC confirmed there were a number of landscape and visual receptors listed in item DBC 059 in the SoCG [REP4-015] on which there was still disagreement with regard to the significance of landscape and visual effects. DBC is of the opinion that agreement is unlikely to be reached on these matters due to a number of outstanding differences relating to issues discussed at earlier Hearings (such as worst-case views and village setting) but also differences of opinion on the impact of potential cumulative effects. It is acknowledged that the Applicant has included cumulative solar farms in the study area baseline which have consent or under construction.

By way of example, DBC referred to photograph V2 on page 9 of the Supplementary Information to the DBC LIR on Landscape and Visual Amenity [REP5-036]. The photograph clearly shows the visibility of Whinfield Solar Farm (under construction) from the public footpath between Brafferton and High House. Photograph V3 on page 10 of the Supplementary Information illustrates what DBC believes to be the worst-case winter views of the Application Site, where visible on land to the south-west of Lovesome Hill Farm (south of High House Lane). The photograph confirmed that this part of the solar farm would be visible in residual winter views from this footpath. DBC is unclear whether these worst-case views were taken into account by the Applicant in the ES visual assessment. Table 7-7 in ES Chapter 7 [APP-030] refers to Viewpoint 3 to assess the change in view from the section of footpath beyond the Application Site. The scale of effect at Viewpoint 3 is judged to be *small/adverse*. The viewpoint is referenced in Table 7-8 to describe the effects on other parts of the footpaths between Brafferton and High Grange/High House. However, there is no descriptive text for Viewpoint 3 which refers to the visibility of Whinfield Solar Farm, the change in view of Brafferton village or the long term visibility of solar panels on part of the Application Site, south of High House Lane.

Table 7-8 in ES Chapter 7 describes the overall visual effect on the footpaths between Brafferton and High Grange/High House as large. This is due to the effect on views where the footpath will pass through the Application Site on a diverted route. There is no reference to the visibility to Whinfield Solar Farm in any of the descriptions in the ES and it is unclear if such effects have been taken into account. Even if this was the case, it is doubtful it would alter the assessment in Table 7-8 for these footpaths, given the scale of effect is judged to be *large*. However, this is not the key issue. The fact remains that potential cumulative effects have not been identified in the ES for this receptor. The descriptions in the ES would suggest that visual effects on this route would diminish as walkers travel further from Brafferton, when in fact, this isn't the case if Whinfield Solar Farm is visible and becomes more visible towards High Grange/High House.

DBC is of the opinion that the potential impact of cumulative effects on Brafferton, due to Whinfield Solar Farm, is not fully assessed in the ES due to the limited extent of the setting shown in ES Figure 7.6.1 and also the omission of any assessment of visual effects generated by this cumulative development on receptors located within the setting.

Differences remain between DBC and the Applicant on the assessment of potential effects on landscape character area 7 Bishopton Vale. These arise due to differences in the assessment of cumulative effects of solar farms located in the character area. Further details are provided in paragraph 9.5 in the DBC LIR on Landscape and Visual Amenity.

Differences also remain between DBC and the Applicant on the significance of cumulative visual effects on the main highway connecting the villages in the study area. DBC provides further explanation in paragraph 9.7 in the DBC LIR on Landscape and Visual Amenity [REP1-021].