

**Byers Gill Solar
EN010139**

6.4.7.8 Environmental Statement Appendix 7.8 Effects on Settings of Settlements

Planning Act 2008

APFP Regulation 5(2)(k)

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

Volume 6

Rule 17 Request - December 2024

Revision C01



Appendix 7.8 Effects on Settings of Settlements

Introduction

1. This appendix to chapter 7 of the ES is provided as part of the revisions to address the Regulation 17 request dated 10 December 2024. This appendix specifically addresses the second bullet point in the request which asks that the Applicant "*assesses landscape character setting of villages/settlements separately in accordance with the examples of other Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments provided by DBC [REP5-036] and provides an updated version of ES Chapter 7 Landscape & Visual [APP-030], in a comparable format clearly identifying any differences in the assessment of magnitude of change*".
2. It also addresses the requirement under the third bullet to give "*full consideration to DBC's Post-hearing submission of oral case of Stephen Laws - Glenkemp Landscape Architects [REP6-033]*", specifically taking account of the wider visual setting of all 3 villages identified in Appendix DBC2 to the Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP1-021].

Methodology

Derivation

3. As set out by both the Applicant and one of the examples provided by DBC [REP5-036], there is no established guidance that relates to an assessment of effects on the setting of villages. There is agreement between the Applicant and DBC that such an assessment – if it is to be carried out despite that absence of established guidance - requires consideration of changes to both character and views.
4. The examples provided by DBC [REP5-036] use the following methodologies:
 - North Angle Solar Farm - No methodology is set out for this aspect of the LVIA; no specific baseline description is provided for the character of the two assessed settlements or their settings. The assessment focusses on views "*from public viewpoints around the edge of the villages or from public footpaths connecting the villages*" and "*views of key landmark buildings*" in describing the effects.
 - Land north of Springwood Coast View, Swarland – A brief methodology is set out in 5.1-5.4 of this example and the assessment provides a description of the landscape features and views which form the setting of the village and a description of the contribution these makes to the character and identity of the village, followed by a description of changes to landscape features and character and separately to views for the setting of the village. The assessment is purely descriptive and provides no judgements as to the sensitivity of the village setting or the magnitude or level of effects.
5. The Applicant has also undertaken a review of recent solar farm NSIP/DCO applications to establish the approach each took to this matter; whether they included an assessment of effects on the setting of villages. The results of that review are summarised below:
 - Longfield – Local planning policy for this development explicitly references protection of the character of the landscape setting of a specific village, but no assessment was provided in relation to either of the character of the village or its setting and the setting of the settlement is not referenced in the LVIA or the Examining Authority's report.
 - Mallard Pass solar farm – The Mallard Pass LVIA does not consider the character or setting of villages as landscape receptors, but does specifically consider visual receptor groups in and around villages. Para 3.6.78 of the Examining Authority's report sets out conclusions in relation to effects on the "*visual setting and character*" of villages. The decision (para 4.40) also references the importance of setbacks from one village as being "*important in protecting the character and setting of the village*".
 - Sunnica - The setting of settlements is commented on in assessing effects on landscape character areas within the LVIA. This is the approach that would have been taken to Byers Gill, had DBC not requested a

specific assessment of each village and its setting. No mention is made of the setting of settlements in the Examining Authority's report or decision.


- Gate Burton - No specific assessment was provided in relation to the character or setting of villages and these matters are not referenced in the LVIA or the Examining Authority's report or the decision.
- Cottam – There are frequent descriptive references to the landscape settings of settlements throughout the LVIA, but no specific assessment is provided of effects on the character or setting of settlements. These matters are not referenced in the LVIA or the Examining Authority's report or the decision.


Extent of settings

6. There is a difference between DBC and the Applicant in terms of the extent of settings identified for each village as set out within the Applicant's response to DBC's LIR (REP2-008) pages 23-24, and illustrated by the minor differences in the areas shown by Figure 7.6 of the ES [APP-068] and page 22 of Appendix DBC2 to the LIR [REP1-021]. Both of these areas are illustrated for each of the three settlements in Insets 1 to 3 below. The Applicant is of the opinion, as set out within their response to the LIR, that this difference derives from the Applicant's focus on the setting which contributes to the (landscape) character of the village in their assessment, whereas DBC consider the visual setting – which is wider.
7. The Applicant remains of the view that the appropriate setting for consideration of effects on (landscape) character has been identified in the ES and Figure 7.6, but that the wider settings identified by DBC are appropriate for the consideration of effects on key views and the visual setting.
8. The character settings identify the areas of landscape that have a close relationship to each settlement, reflected in the locally characteristic smaller pasture fields around the settlement and the topography and vegetation which 'contains' each settlement such that the area identified feels as though it is part of, or closely associated with, the settlement. The settings identified by DBC include these areas and additional land which has relatively close views to the settlement, and/or is seen within, or forms the skyline from, the settlement.

Inset 1 – Setting of Brafferton





 Character setting as identified on ES Figure 7.6

 Darlington Borough Council visual setting as identified in LIR (p. 22)

Inset 2 – Setting of Great Stainton





 Character setting as identified on ES Figure 7.6

 Darlington Borough Council visual setting as identified in LIR (p. 22)

Inset 3 – Setting of Bishopton



 Character setting as identified on ES Figure 7.6

 Darlington Borough Council visual setting as identified in LIR (p. 22)

Applicant's Approach to Assessment

9. Taking into account the points summarised above, in particular the distinction identified for Mallard Pass in terms of the 'visual setting and character', and the ExA's specific request to "*assesses landscape character setting of villages/settlements separately*" (emphasis added) the following approach has been taken:
- ES Chapter 7 has been updated to split the effects on the character of Brafferton, Great Stainton and Bishopton and their settings into two separate judgements:
 - (1) effects on the character of the village, and
 - (2) effects on the character of the setting (See revised ES chapter 7 sections 7.10.53-7.10.79 (Document Reference 6.2.7, Revision 2).
- Both of these assessments retain the use of the areas identified as the extent of the village settings as shown by ES Figure 7.6 [APP-068] as it is considered that the village setting in terms of character does not extend as far as the wider visual setting identified by DBC.
- (3) A description and summary of effects during early operation on visual receptors within the visual setting of each settlement as identified by DBC, is provided below. This draws on the assessment of visual effects provided in ES Chapter 7, but has not been added to Chapter 7 as this would involve duplication by reporting the same visual effects twice. Effects on visual receptors within the villages of Brafferton, Great

Stainton and Bishopton are already assessed in ES Chapter 7 (sections 7.10.82-7.10.110) (Document Reference 6.2.7, Revision 2). The construction and decommissioning stages of the proposed development are not described as DBC have confirmed that the early operational stage forms the focus of their concerns as it would give rise to the greatest effects.

- A summary is provided identifying significant effects and the outcome of assessments (1), (2) and (3) listed above..
- Viewpoints referred to in this document include ES viewpoints 1-34 [APP-071 to 074]; Illustrative views A-M in ES Appendix 7.2 [APP-133]; and viewpoints DBC V1 to V14 illustrated in DBC’s Deadline 5 submission [REP5-036].

Assessments (1) and (2) - Effects on Character of Settlements and their Settings

10. Revised ES chapter 7 identifies significant adverse effects on the character of the settings of Great Stainton and Bishopton, and non-significant (Moderate) adverse effects on the setting of Brafferton. In general, amending the assessment to split effects on (1) the character of the villages from (2) effects on the settings of the villages has resulted in the identification of markedly reduced effects on the character of the villages, and slightly greater or the same effects on their settings as summarised in Table 4 below. At Brafferton, effects on the village character during construction and decommissioning would arise primarily from construction traffic and reduced effects are not identified within the village during these stages as a result of splitting the assessment.

Table 4 – Effects on the character of villages and their settings during Operation

Receptor	Effects reported in original ES Chapter 7	Effects reported in revised ES chapter 7
Brafferton	<i>Character of settlement and setting:</i> Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant	<i>Character of settlement:</i> Negligible, Neutral, not significant <i>Character of setting:</i> Moderate, Adverse, no significant (Years 1-10) Moderate/minor, Adverse, not significant (Years 10-40)
Great Stainton	<i>Character of settlement and setting:</i> Major/moderate, Adverse, significant	<i>Character of settlement:</i> Negligible, Neutral, not significant <i>Character of setting:</i> Major/moderate, Adverse, significant
Bishopton	<i>Character of settlement and setting:</i> Major/moderate, Adverse, significant (Years 1-10) Moderate, Adverse, not significant (Years 10-40)	<i>Character of settlement:</i> Moderate, Adverse, no significant (Years 1-10) Minor, Adverse, not significant (Years 10-40) <i>Character of setting:</i> Major/moderate, Adverse, significant (Years 1-10) Moderate, Adverse, not significant (Years 10-40)

Assessment (3) Visual Effects within Settlement Settings

Brafferton

11. Appendix DBC2 [REP1-021] to the LIR illustrates the visual setting of Brafferton on Pages 22 and 29, identifying key views towards the village from the vicinity of viewpoints 1, 5 and DBC V4, though omitting another key view from the footpath to the southwest of the village illustrated by Illustrative view B in Appendix 7.2 to the ES [APP-133]. Key views looking out from the village are identified from viewpoint 2 (and DBC V1) and residential properties on the north edge of the village (see Illustrative View C in Appendix 7.2 to the ES). As noted at 7.10.53 of the revised ES chapter 7, of the key views towards Brafferton, the most coherent and characteristic views are from the south and northwest. In views from the northeast the linear form of the village and similarity of buildings is not apparent and the mix of building orientations, sizes and materials present a less coherent appearance.
12. Visual receptors within the visual setting of the village, identified by a blue dashed outline on the figure on page 29 of Appendix DBC2 [REP1-021], include users of local roads and rights of way considered within the 'Between A167, Salters Lane, Lea Hall and Little Ketton Farm' receptor group, at 7.10.117 and Table 7-8 of ES chapter 7, as illustrated by Inset 4 and set out in Table 1:

Inset 4 – Visual receptors within the visual setting of Bishopston



- EIA Viewpoints
- Illustrative Viewpoints (ES Appendix 7.2)
- Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Viewpoints

 DBC Village Setting

Visual Receptors

-  Bridleway from Brafferton via East Ketton to Ketton Lane
-  Footpath along High House Lane from Brafferton to Whinfield






-  Footpath from Brafferton via Lovesome Hill Farm to Newton Ketton
-  Footpath NE from Brafferton to High Grange
-  Footpath NE from Brafferton to High House
-  Lime Lane
-  Routes south from Brafferton to Ketton Hall

Table 1 – Effects on visual receptors within visual setting of Brafferton

Receptor	Effects described in ES chapter 7 (where quoted)	Maximum Scale of Effect (from ES Chapter 7)
Lime Lane	<i>“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.”</i>	<i>Medium, reducing to Medium /small in summer.</i>
Footpath NE from Brafferton to High Grange	<i>“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 viewpoints 3 and DBC V2 and V3. Viewpoint DBC V4 illustrates close views of the solar panels would be available through gaps in the hedge.”</i>	<i>Large</i>
Footpath NE from Brafferton to High House	<i>“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 viewpoints 3, DBC V2 and V3.”</i>	<i>Large</i>
Footpath along High House Lane from Brafferton to Whinfield	<i>“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.”</i>	<i>Large</i>
Footpath from Brafferton via Lovesome Hill Farm to Newton Ketton	Effects on this route are described in Table 7-8 of the ES, but only the northern section of this route near Lovesome hill farm lies within the identified visual setting. From this part of the route, views of the solar panels to the south would be available from the route near Lovesome Hill Farm, with close views of panels over an existing hedge as it passes alongside a field containing panels further south.	<i>Large</i>
Routes south from Brafferton to Ketton Hall	<i>“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.”</i>	<i>Medium, reducing to Medium/small in summer</i>
Bridleway from Brafferton via East Ketton to Ketton Lane	<i>“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.”</i>	<i>Large</i>

13. Considering each of the key views in turn:

- Views from the south include those from bridleway between Brafferton and East Ketton as illustrated by viewpoint 5. The solar panels (and hedge once mature) would intervene in views towards the village from viewpoint 5 and locations south of viewpoint 5, however the majority of views towards the village arise from further north on the route and the Proposed Development would be behind the direction of view when looking towards the village.
- Views from the south also include occasional views from the footpath and bridleway between Brafferton and Ketton Hall. Key views include infrequent close views as illustrated by Illustrative View B – which would be unaffected by the Proposed Development; and more distant elevated views such as Viewpoint 6, in which the

development would be seen within the view towards the village – which would remain visible and be seen separated from the solar panels.

- Views from the northwest are from Lime Lane, as illustrated by viewpoint 1, where the solar panels would be seen to the left of the village.
 - Views from the northeast arise from the two footpaths between Brafferton, High House Farm and High Grange. From the closest views parts of these routes (e.g. Illustrative Viewpoint A), views to the village would be unaffected. As the routes pass through Panel Areas A, views towards the village would be screened by panels (e.g. viewpoint DBC V4), and in more distant views (e.g. DBC V3) solar panels would be seen beside and in front of the village. Brafferton would remain visible just above the solar panels which would be screened by the existing hedge once it grows taller.
14. Considered together, the more important coherent close views from the south would be largely unaffected, key elevated views from the south and northeast would retain views to the village with the Proposed Development seen alongside, but separated from the village and the most affected views would be the less coherent views from the northeast and some more distant views from the bridleway to East Ketton (near to and south of Viewpoint 5).

Great Stainton

15. Appendix DBC2 [REP1-021] to the LIR illustrates the visual setting of Great Stainton on Page 22. As set out at section 7.10.60 of the ES, key views to and from the village relate to its elevated position overlooking the open vale to the east and south as illustrated by viewpoints 17, 18, 19, 31, 32, DBC V7, V10, V13, V14 and Illustrative View F in Appendix 7.2 to the ES. Illustrative View E shows the more limited visual relationship of the village to the landscape to the north and west.
16. Visual receptors within the visual setting of the village, identified by a grey dashed outline on the figure on page 22 of Appendix DBC2 [REP1-021], include users of Elstob Lane and footpaths Near Viewley Hill Farm considered within the 'East of Salters Lane between Lea Hall, Newton Ketton, Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane' receptor group at 7.10.131 and Table 7-9 of the ES, and users of the local road between Great Stainton and the Woogra farm entrance), and users of PRoW, considered within the 'East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts' receptor group at 7.10.147 and Table 7-10 of ES chapter 7, as illustrated by Inset 5 and summarised in Table 2 below:

Inset 5 – Visual receptors within the visual setting of Great Stainton



- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ EIA Viewpoints ⊙ Illustrative Viewpoints (ES Appendix 7.2) ⊙ Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Viewpoints ▭ DBC Village Setting <p>Visual Receptors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Elstob Lane - - Footpath east from Great Stainton to local road | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - Footpath from Hauxley Farm to Great Stainton - - Footpath south from Elstob Lane to Little Stainton Beck - - Footpaths between Viewley Hill Farm and Elstob Lane — Local road between Great Stainton and entrance to Woogra Farm |
|---|---|

Table 2 – Effects on visual receptors within visual setting of Great Stainton

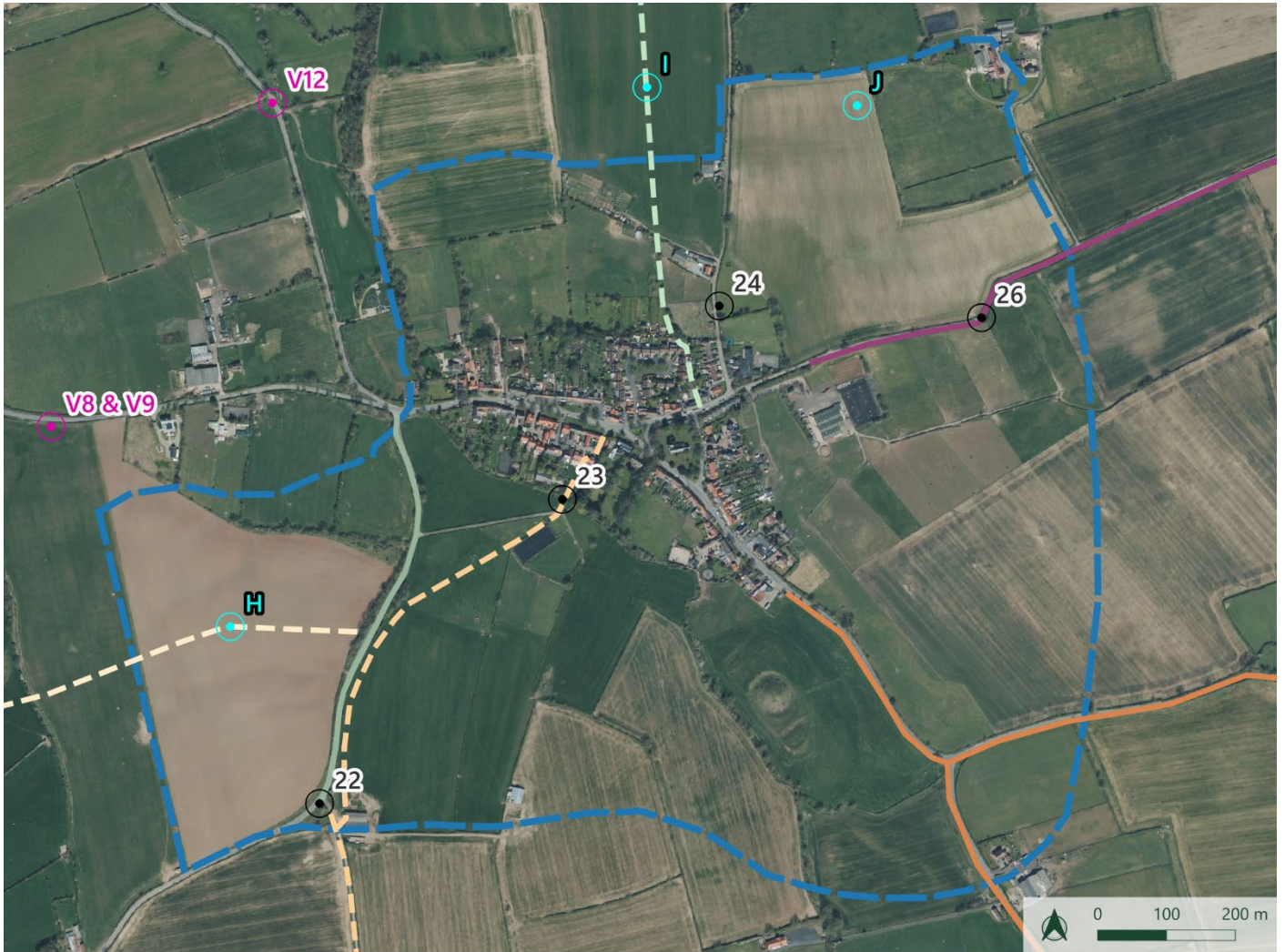
Receptor	Effects described in ES chapter 7 (where quoted)	Maximum Scale of Effect (from ES Chapter 7)
Elstob Lane	<i>“Drivers using Elstob Lane would have views of panels to either side of the road to the south of Great Stainton, with the effects being most noticeable for southbound drivers as they descend 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 viewpoints 18 and DBC V7.”</i>	<i>Medium to Medium/small scale</i>
Local road between Great Stainton and entrance to Woogra Farm	<i>“Changes to views arising from the proposed Development would include ... close views of Panel Area D from the road which connects Great Stainton and Bishopton as illustrated by viewpoint DBC V10”</i>	<i>Large</i>
Footpaths between Viewley Hill Farm and Elstob Lane	<i>“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 - similar to the view shown by viewpoint DBC V7.”</i>	<i>Large/medium</i>
Footpath from Hauxley Farm to Great Stainton	Only the western end of this route lies within the identified visual setting of Great Stainton. There would be no visibility of the Proposed Development from this part of the route.	Negligible
Footpath east from Great Stainton to local road	<i>“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.”</i>	<i>Large</i>
Footpath south from Elstob Lane to Little Stainton Beck	<i>“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.”</i>	<i>Large</i>

17. As illustrated by viewpoints 17, 18, 19, 31, 32, DBC V7, V10, V13, V14, the Proposed Development would be seen within most of the key views towards Great Stainton and in most of the key outward views. In views approaching the village from roads to the south, or footpaths to the southwest, the solar panels would be seen alongside the village, whereas in views from the east and southeast the solar panels would be seen set on slopes below the village, which would remain fully visible above. From the diverted footpath to the east, as it passes through the Proposed Development views towards the village and out to the southeast would be screened by solar panels to the north and a hedge to the south as illustrated by Sheet 8 of the Environmental Masterplan [AS-016] rather than the more open views illustrated by DBC V5/V6. From the diverted footpath to the south, open views towards Great Stainton would remain between the northern edge of the panel area and the village, looking across the ecological mitigation area. In the key outward views, panels would be set back and downslope to retain the wider outlook above the Proposed Development.

Bishopton

18. Appendix DBC2 [REP1-021] to the LIR illustrates the visual setting of Bishopton on Page 37. There are no particularly distinctive views towards or out from the village, which is set within a valley. In most of the views which are available towards the village its character and form are not readily apparent as shown by Illustrative Views H and I. The most open views available from within the visual setting are from the footpath to the north as it crosses open arable fields. The recreation ground currently has an open outlook towards Downlands Farm across an open field as illustrated by Viewpoint 24.
19. Visual receptors within the visual setting of the village, identified by a pale blue outline on the figure on page 37 of Appendix DBC2 [REP1-021], include users of Folly Bank and the local roads to the south of Bishopton, and footpaths east and south of Bishopton considered within the 'East of Elstob Lane and Hill House Lane, between Bleach House Bank, Stoney Flatt Farm and Gillyflatts' receptor group at 7.10.147 and Table 7-10 of ES chapter 7. The visual setting of Bishopton identified by DBC also includes users of Mill Lane considered at 7.10.161 of the ES, and the footpath to the north of Bishopton considered within the 'East of Bleach House Bank between Stillington, Redmarshall and Stoney Flatt Farm' in Table 7-11 of the ES, as illustrated by Inset 6 and summarised in Table 3 below:

Inset 6 Visual receptors within the visual setting of Bishopton



- EIA Viewpoints
- Illustrative Viewpoints (ES Appendix 7.2)
- Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Viewpoints
- ▭ DBC Village Setting

Visual Receptors

- Folly Bank
- Footpath between Bishopton and Old Stillington
- Footpath between Little Stainton and Folly Bank
- Footpath between Pitfield Farm and Bishopton
- Local roads south of Bishopton
- Mill Lane

Table 3 – Effects on visual receptors within visual setting of Bishopton

Receptor	Effects described in ES chapter 7 (where quoted)	Maximum Scale of Effect (from ES Chapter 7)
Mill Lane	Users of "Mill Lane (see viewpoint 26) ... 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"	Large
Folly Bank	"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 ... 22)"	Large
Local roads south of Bishopton	There would be no visibility of the Proposed Development from these stretches of local road.	Negligible
Footpath between Little Stainton and Folly Bank	"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	"there would only be limited visibility of Panel Area E through much of the route except near viewpoint 22 at Folly Bank."	Large
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

20. The Proposed Development would largely obscure views towards Bishopton from the diverted footpaths through Panel Areas E and F as shown on the Environmental Masterplan sheets 9 and 10 [AS-016].

Assessment (3) Statement of significance

21. The additional information provided in this further analysis of visual effects on people within the settings of settlements primarily relates to the identification and description of key views within the visual setting of each village as highlighted by DBC in several of their submissions and their responses in Hearings. No new visual effects have been identified as a result of this analysis; all effects on visual receptors within the visual settings of Brafferton, Great Stainton and Bishopton were reported in the original ES chapter 7. The assessment of visual effects in Chapter 7 has not been revised and identifies significant effects on visual receptors within the settings of Brafferton, Great Stainton and Bishopton.