

7. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 Enzygo Limited (Enzygo) has been commissioned by Project Genesis Limited to undertake landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) to support a planning application for a proposed energy facility at Howngill Industrial Estate. The LVIA is summarised in this chapter and forms part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken for this project.

7.1.2 The application site is located at Howngill Park Consett, DH8 7EQ. The site measures approximately 1.64 hectares in area. The site is currently undeveloped but forms part of the surrounding Howngill Park industrial area which is included in the local development plan as land suitable for 'prestige industrial development'.

7.2 Aims and Objectives

7.2.1 The aim of this assessment is to appraise the likely effects of the proposed development on the landscape and views. The assessment will identify the existing landscape character and visual amenity resource, the likely effects of the proposals on this baseline situation and determine the residual effects of the proposals on landscape character and visual amenity and the significance.

7.2.2 This chapter is structured as follows.

-) Section 7.3 includes relevant legislation, landscape planning policy and guidance;
-) Section 7.4 provides the assessment methodology
-) Section 7.5 describes the baseline conditions
-) Section 7.6 describes the identification and evaluation of impacts
-) Section 7.7 describes the design response and identifies mitigation;
-) Section 7.8 includes an assessment of residual landscape and visual effects;
-) Section 7.9 provides a summary and conclusion to the assessment.

7.2.3 A detailed method for the assessment has been included at Appendix 7.1 and the landscape and visual impacts of the proposals are summarised in Appendix 7.2. Details of relevant correspondence and consultation with stakeholders is included as Appendix 7.3.

7.2.4 This chapter is supported by figures and images and should be read in conjunction with these which are included at Appendix 7.4 and listed in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Chapter 7 Supporting Figures and Appendices

Appendices	Title
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7.3 Legislation and Policy Context

7.3.1 This section identifies the legislation, planning policy and policy guidance information relevant to the proposed development, the site and surrounding area. This includes any statutory designations, national and local planning policy, planning history and/or guidance.

European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe, 2000

7.3.2 The context of landscape policy in the UK can be placed within the broad framework provided by the European Landscape Convention [ELC]. The ELC was signed by the Government in February 2006 and signals a commitment to support the aims of the Convention which include promoting landscape protection, management and planning. It suggests that “Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factor” and covers rural and urban situations.

National Planning Policy

7.3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF]; 2019 provides the national level planning guidance and promotes sustainable development through its twelve core planning principles. Section 12, Achieving well-designed places and section 15, Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment are relevant to the landscape and the proposed development.

7.3.4 Section 12, Achieving well-designed places states:

“127. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience”

7.3.5 Section 15, Conserving and enhancing the natural environment states:

“170. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) “protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services ± including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures; preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate”.

7.3.6 The National Planning Policy for waste includes guidance for local councils for waste management and sets out the Government’s ambitions to work towards a more sustainable and efficient approach to resource use and management. This includes ensuring the delivery of sustainable development and resource efficiency and allowing the provision of modern

infrastructure. It states the importance of identifying suitable sites and areas for waste management facilities.

Local Planning Policy

7.3.7 The application site is in the administrative area of County Durham Council, which is a unitary authority (unitised in 2009). The County Durham Plan has been prepared and recently adopted by the council (October 2020, it sets out policies for the period up to 2035.

7.3.8 The statutory development plan for County Durham is made up of a number of documents which include:

-) County Durham Plan, October 2020;
-) Neighbourhood Plans;
-) Minerals Local Plan; and
-) Waste Local Plan 2005.

7.3.9 There are no Neighbourhood Plans relevant to the site and the Minerals Local Plan is not relevant to the proposed development.

County Durham Waste Local Plan

7.3.10 The Waste Local Plan ensures that waste management facilities, such as recycling facilities and landfill sites are in appropriate areas to deal with waste. The plan was adopted by the council in April 2005 and covered the period until the end of 2016. It has been drawn up in response to the long-term objectives that are set out in European and national policies on waste management.

7.3.11 The Waste Local Plan includes policies regarding the use of land for waste management. It is used a starting point when deciding on planning applications relating to all types of waste management schemes to meet the need for new waste management facilities without this resulting in damage to the environment.

7.3.12 Chapter 5 of the waste Local Plan includes overarching policies which contain sustainability and environmental protection as consistent themes. Policy W3 states *“Proposals for new waste development will be required to demonstrate that the natural and built environment and the living conditions of local communities will be protected and where possible enhanced.”*

7.3.13 Chapter 6 is concerned with ‘Environmental Protection’ and contains specific sections about ‘Landscape’, ‘Areas of High Landscape Value’ and ‘Visual Intrusion’.

- 7.3.14 Policy W6 states *“New buildings for waste management uses should be carefully sited and designed to complement the location and existing topography. Landscape proposals should be incorporated as an integral part of the overall development of the site.”*
- 7.3.15 In the accompanying notes to policy W6 with reference to ‘Landscape’ it is acknowledged that *“Waste developments can have a considerable impact on the character of the landscape”*. It goes on to explain how these may manifest for example through physical impacts to the natural topography and from the removal of landscape and or historic landscape features. The notes make reference to ‘visual impacts’ which may arise from the appearance of operational features of waste development and that these can often be avoided through sensitive site selection and design.
- 7.3.16 Paragraph 6.8 requires development to ensure that the character of the landscape of the County is not adversely affected. It draws the reference to the ‘Character Map of England’ and national character areas published by Natural England as a relevant source of information and the County Council’s landscape character assessment supplementary guidance.
- 7.3.17 Policy W7 states that *“Proposals for waste developments which would result in the loss of important landscape features or which would have a significant adverse effect on the character of the landscape will not be permitted. In determining applications for waste developments, the waste planning authority will have regard to the potential of waste developments to restore or enhance landscape character.”* This policy notes the importance of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and describes considerations for development proposed in or adjacent to the AONB. Policy W8 is also concerned with valued landscapes and notes that development in or adjacent to the AONB *“will be subject to the most rigorous examination”*.
- 7.3.18 Policy W9 notes criteria that will be applied in the consideration of proposed development in Areas of High Landscape Value set out in each District’s Local Development Plan.
- 7.3.19 Policy W33 requires development to incorporate suitable mitigation measures to ensure that any harmful impacts including visual intrusion are kept to an acceptable level. The policy cites *“Major sources of visual impact from waste management operations are the creation of new landforms through landfill and landraise operations; stockpiles of soils and processed material; removal of vegetation; chimney stacks; and plant and buildings.”* It notes that effects will depend on the local conditions such as topography, proximity to residential areas and the scale and nature of the development. The policy advises that *“Care in the detailed*

siting and design of the development can help to reduce visual intrusion. New facilities will be developed with appropriate screening and planting works to reduce visual impact. New plant and buildings should be constructed using appropriate colours and materials.”

County Durham Plan

7.3.20 The following sections include relevant policies from the County Durham Plan which are relevant to the proposed development at Hownsgill Park. The County Durham Plan was recently adopted by the Council in October 2020 and includes policies for the period up to 2035. It broadly sets out the vision and strategic aims for the county and priorities for sustainable development.

7.3.21 Chapter 3 of the plan states the Council’s Vision and Objectives for the future and notes a series of objectives including some which are broadly relevant to the site and development and topics including effective use of land, good quality design and protection of the natural environment. Objectives include:

) *‘Objective 8: Effective Use of Land - Make the most effective use of land, buildings and existing infrastructure, re-using land and buildings that have been previously developed, wherever possible, provided that, in the case of land, it is not of high social, heritage or ecological value and taking into account the need for remediation or the existence of unstable and/or contaminated land.*

) *Objective 9: Natural Environment - Protect, enhance, maintain and manage the county’s locally, nationally and internationally important natural environment, including through securing net gains, protecting connectivity and recognising the wider benefits from natural capital.*

) *Objective 11: Well Designed Places - Ensure the creation of high quality buildings and places that reflect local distinctiveness, promote sustainability, support the transition to a low carbon future and achieve safe and secure communities.’*

7.3.22 Chapter 5 includes Core Principles for the County and contains landscape specific policy under the subheading of ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment’. Policy 39 – ‘Landscape’ states that ‘*Landscape Proposals for new development will be permitted where they would not cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape, or to important features or views*’. It goes on to state that it is expected that proposals will incorporate appropriate mitigation measures which are designed to minimise adverse landscape and visual effects.

7.3.23 The policy requires development proposals have regard to the evidence documents ‘County Durham Landscape Character Assessment’ and ‘County Durham Landscape Strategy’ and that where possible proposals should contribute to the conservation or enhancement of the local landscape.

7.3.24 The policy notes Areas of High Landscape Value that are defined in the plan at Map H.

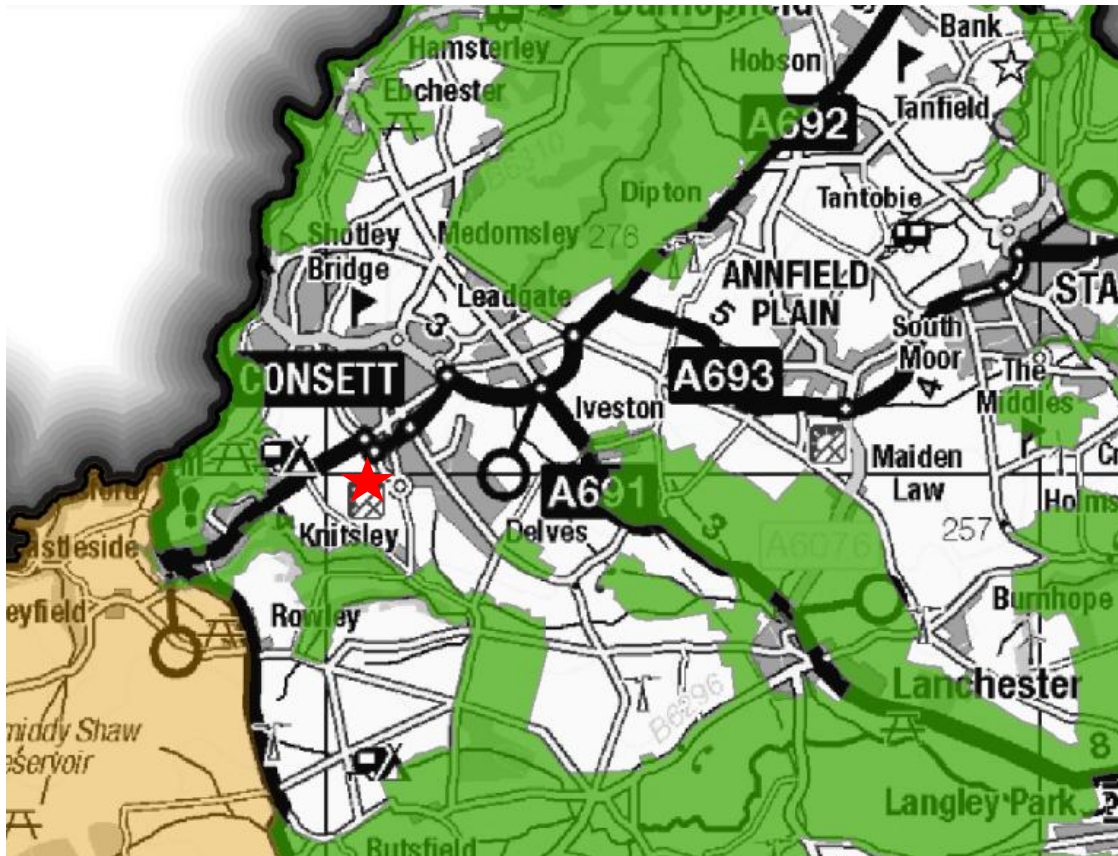


Image 7.1 Areas of High Landscape Value in the vicinity of the site, not to scale
(source: County Durham Plan Map H)

★ Approximate location of the site

7.3.25 The site is in an area allocated for employment use and is inside the Project Genesis boundary, see image 7.2 below.

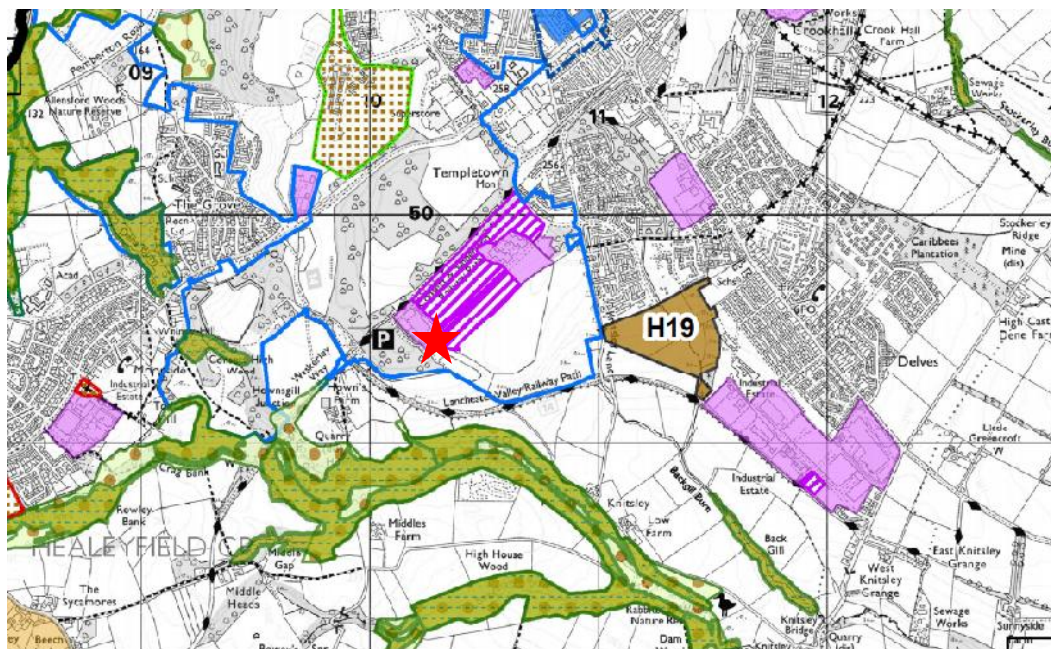


Image 7.2 Extract from the County Durham Plan Proposals Map, (Consett Inset Plan 6) not to scale.

Approximate location of the site

Legend

- | | |
|--|---|
| Housing Land Allocations | Mineral and Waste Sites - Safeguarding Zones |
| Housing Commitments - Started | Trees, Woodlands and Hedges - Ancient Woodland |
| Housing Commitments - Not Started | Protected Species and Sites - Local Nature Reserves |
| Employment Land - Allocation | Protected Species and Sites - Local Geological Sites |
| Project Genesis | Protected Species and Sites - Local Wildlife Sites |
| Employment Land - Protected Site | Protected Species and Sites - Site of Special Scientific Int. |
| Retail - Primary Shopping Areas | North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| Retail - Town Centres | |
| Historic Environment - Conservation Areas | |
| Historic Environment - Scheduled Monuments | |
| Minerals and Waste - Safeguarded Sites | |

7.3.26 The County Durham Landscape Value Assessment (2019) and the County Durham Plan Local Landscape Designations Review (2019) form part of the evidence base supporting the Adopted County Durham Plan and are available from the Council’s website.

7.3.27 The County Durham Landscape Value Assessment (LVA) was carried out to provide information on the value of local landscapes to inform policies and allocations in the County Durham Plan. The LVA uses the information in the landscape areas and types identified in the council’s landscape character assessment and factors based on those given in GLVIA (2013) to consider value including:

-) Condition
-) Scenic quality
-) Rarity
-) Representativeness
-) Conservation interests: Natural environment
-) Conservation interests: Historic environment
-) Recreation
-) Perceptual aspects
-) Cultural associations

- 7.3.28 Criteria were developed to in order to score value ranging from low to high. This give rise to a range of results for analysis of character types. As further explained in the Baseline Conditions section of this ES chapter the application site is in the Broad Landscape Character Type: Coalfield Upland Fringe and Broad Character Area: Northern Upland Fringe. The LVA derives and maps attributes which together indicate areas of potentially higher local value.
- 7.3.29 The Landscape Designations Review document considers the areas that are currently designated and identifies potential Areas of Higher Landscape Value (AHLV) for designation in the County Durham Plan. The document identifies a method for review of the designations against the findings of the County Durham Landscape Value Assessment 2018 (LVA). The review was undertaken at the level of County Character Areas.
- 7.3.30 This involved identifying areas that were designated in Local Plan as AHLV but were not indicated as having elevated value in the Landscape Value Assessment and the converse, areas where the LVA indicated elevated values but which were not designated as AHLV. These candidate Areas of Higher landscape Value were reviewed by relevant professionals at the local authority and the outcome was final proposed Area of Higher Landscape Value.
- 7.3.31 As noted above, the application site and proposed development are near to existing AHLV (approximately 500m south, see image 7.3) but not inside any AHLV boundary.

7.4 Assessment Methodology

Introduction to Method

7.4.1 The approach for this assessment has been prepared with reference to the recognised industry guidance. The study follows the relevant industry guidance.

7.4.2 Reference has also been made to other sources of data and information, as referred to in the following baseline information. Further information about the method is included at Appendix 7.1.

Relevant Guidance

7.4.3 The assessment was undertaken by a Landscape Architect experienced in undertaking LVIA with reference to the best practice outlined in published documents including:

-) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition [2013] Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (referred to as GLVIA3); and
-) Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland [2002]; The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Consultation

7.4.4 In carrying out this LVIA, consultation has included:

-) The EIA scoping process; and
-) Consultation regarding the choice of representative viewpoints.

7.4.5 Consultation was undertaken with the local planning authority (LPA), by email on 4th August 2020 regarding the location of proposed representative viewpoints. A map of proposed viewpoint locations was sent to the LPA and the Council was invited to comment on the proposed selection, see Appendix 7.3. A list of the preliminary viewpoints sent to the council is included in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Preliminary Viewpoint Locations

Number	Location
1	Consett & Sunderland Railway Path
2	Ovington Court, next to Howngill Industrial Estate
3	Consett & Sunderland Railway Path
4	Knitsley Lane

5	Footpath [056 22] near to derelict farm
6	Footpath [056 24], near to Dyke Nook Farm
7	Lanchester Valley Railway Path and Footpath [023 78
8	Footpath [069 41], next to mast
9	Millershill Lane], next to access road to China Hall Farm
10	Whitehall Moss

7.4.6 Enzygo received an initial response from the LPA by email on 12th August 2020 which agreed generally with the proposed viewpoints and suggested consideration of views from additional locations. A further response was received 14th August 2020 which supported the content of the first email response and provided more detail regarding potential viewpoint locations. Additional viewpoints were visited and reviewed and are considered in the assessment.

7.4.7 The LPA issued its EIA scoping opinion dated 25th September 2020 which contained comments specific to the landscape assessment.

7.4.8 In this scoping opinion and following on from the earlier consultation noted above with the LPA regarding viewpoints, it was acknowledged that information had been exchanged by e mail between the Council's landscape architects and Enzygo and that the final selection of viewpoints is anticipated to reflect the content of those previous emails and that 'the location of representative and/or important viewpoints identified in the study should be agreed with the council's Landscape Officers.'

7.4.9 The scoping opinion comments relating to landscape include the points set out below which have been considered and incorporated into the LVIA.

1. The LVIA should be carried out in accordance with GLVIA3 and by suitably qualified personnel;
2. The LVIA should have regard to County Durham documents:
 - County Durham Landscape Character Assessment (2008)
 - County Durham Landscape Strategy (2008)
 - County Durham Landscape Guidelines
 - County Durham Landscape Value Assessment (2019)
 - County Durham Plan Local Landscape Designations Review (2019)

3. The LVIA should have regard to relevant policies in the statutory development plan-comprising the County Durham Waste Local Plan , County Durham Minerals Local Plan and the Derwentside Local Plan (noting that in this case the County Durham Minerals Local Plan is not relevant to the proposed development and there is no neighbourhood plan activity in this locality currently).
4. The study area should be within a 5km radius of the site, while the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) of the proposed development within a 7 km radius of the site is recommended. This is to enable consideration of receptors on higher ground of the AONB around Smiddy Shaw to the south-west and from South Snods to the north-west. The preparation of ZTVs should follow the advice given in GLVIA3.
5. Photographs and visualisations included as part of the analysis of views should conform to the standards set out in Visual Representation of Development Proposals (Landscape Institute Technical Guidance note 06/19) unless agreed otherwise with the council's Landscape Officer.

The Study Area

- 7.4.10 A preliminary study area of 7km from the centre of the site has been used as a starting point to consider the effects of the proposed development, including the mapping of the zone of theoretical visibility for the project and to identify preliminary viewpoint locations prior to site survey. This distance was considered appropriate based on initial desk study in acknowledgement of the scale of the development the nature of the local topography and the extent of vegetation cover and built form within the immediate environs. A focused, inner study area of 2.5km was used to map local landscape features and constraints.
- 7.4.11 The study area for the character assessment comprises the wider context of the area surrounding the site [but ultimately limited by the study area radius from the centre of the site as appropriate reference to consider the context in sufficient detail].
- 7.4.12 The study area for the visual assessment is defined by the visual envelope of the proposals, the broad area over which any part of the scheme components would be seen and is derived following an analysis of landscape features such as topography, significant vegetation and built form which was verified in the field study.

Baseline Assessment

7.4.13 The baseline assessment consists of:

-) Desk based studies; and
-) Field survey.

7.4.14 The baseline landscape and visual assessment comprised a desktop study of information from the various data sources including local authority and statutory consultee websites. Maps and plans were prepared using Ordnance Survey mapping and data from the relevant sources. Refer to references for a list of data and information sources.

7.4.15 The site and surrounding area were visited on July 16th 2020 to survey the baseline character and visual amenity and to obtain data including:

-) Photographs of the site and surrounding landscape and from representative viewpoints;
-) A corroboration of the findings of the desk-top review;
-) Gather information about the views to refine the visual envelope for the proposed development; and
-) Any relevant additional information about the landscape and its features.

7.4.16 Site survey was undertaken during period of sun and lightly overcast weather and from public highways, Public Rights of Way [PRoW] and publicly accessible areas such as areas of public open space and or permissible routes where relevant. No access to private land was sought.

Assessment of Impact

- 7.4.17 This section provides an overview of the method used for the assessments and describes the predicted resultant effects on the landscape and visual amenity of the area. It should be read in conjunction with the assessment summary tables provided at Appendix 7.3. Further detailed information about the methods of assessment is provided at Appendix 7.1.

Distinction between Landscape and Visual Effects

- 7.4.18 LVIA separately identifies and assesses effects resulting from a proposed development on both the landscape and views (referred to also as visual effects and visual amenity). Landscape and visual effects are two distinct but related areas of study, which will be assessed separately in accordance with the approach outlined below. Landscape and visual effects do not necessarily coincide and can be beneficial or adverse. A distinction is drawn between landscape and visual effects in this assessment as follows:

-) Landscape effects relate to how the development will affect the physical and other characteristics notable in the landscape making up its existing quality and overall perceived character.
-) Visual effects relate to how and to what extent the development will affect views experienced by people (visual receptors) at various locations in the area surrounding the development.

Approach to the Assessment

- 7.4.19 LVIA broadly considers the potential effects of the development on:
-) Individual landscape features and elements;
 -) Landscape character; and
 -) Visual amenity and the people who view the landscape.
- 7.4.20 The assessment broadly includes the following stages:
-) Baseline data collection via desk-top, consultation and field work;
 -) Description of the baseline landscape character and visual amenity of the site and surrounding area which identify the relevant landscape and visual receptors [including representative viewpoints] and determine their sensitivity to change;
 -) Description of the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the proposals. Identify aspects of the proposed development likely to result in potential landscape

and visual effects based on an understanding of the appearance of its different components and how they will be constructed and operated;

-) Description of the magnitude (scale) of change in the landscape and visual amenity as a consequence of the proposed development;
-) Apply professional judgement to determine overall significance of the effect, noting whether it is beneficial or adverse; and
-) Development of strategic mitigation proposals which seek to avoid, minimise and or compensate for any significant adverse effects, where possible enhancing and safeguarding beneficial effects and finally review the anticipated residual effects.

7.4.21 Baseline information regarding landscape features and sensitive visual receptors, the likely change in the landscape character and visual amenity of the site and its surroundings have been used to identify potential effects and inform the final scheme as appropriate.

7.4.22 Strategic mitigation measures will be developed in tandem with the finalising proposals to minimise adverse effects as part of an iterative design process. Options for screening and integrating various components of the scheme will be investigated and mitigation measures recommended where appropriate.

7.4.23 Criteria thresholds for assessing the degree of change as a result of the scheme will be established and the final layout of the scheme will be reviewed to ascertain the magnitude of change in the landscape and in views.

Sensitivity of Receptors, Magnitude of Change and Significance of Effects

7.4.24 The sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors is judged as high, medium or low. The magnitude of change is judged to be high, medium, low or negligible.

7.4.25 Significance of effects combines judgements about the sensitivity of receptors with the magnitude of change likely to occur to result of the proposed development. Judgements are made based on this method including factual information together with the experience and knowledge of the assessor. It is expressed as either neutral, minor, moderate or substantial, and effects may be either beneficial or adverse.

Visual Envelope and Extent of Visibility

7.4.26 The visual envelope defines the approximate area from which it may be possible to see the whole or part of the proposed development i.e. the geographical extent over which the

development is visible. Generally, the development is not considered to be visible outside this defined area or would be very difficult to perceive.

- 7.4.27 Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping is a computer-based tool used in defining visual envelopes. This is typically used as a starting point to consider the potential extent of visibility the study area for field survey and appropriate viewpoints for assessment. ZTV mapping has some limitations as described at Appendix 8.1 and it is necessary to also use field survey in conjunction with ZTV work to verify the visual envelope.
- 7.4.28 The ZTV for the development has been modelled with 1No stack 50m in height.

Representative Viewpoints

- 7.4.29 Representative viewpoints are used to assess the effects on the different range of views towards the site. These are chosen primarily from publicly accessible locations and near to private property (as representative) and should be typical of views from those locations.
- 7.4.30 Viewpoints are illustrated photographically in images presented in this report together with the site location and significant features identified together with landmarks and features in the surrounding area as required.
- 7.4.31 Photomontages have been provided from 2 of the representative viewpoint locations.

Temporal Scope

- 7.4.32 2020 has been taken as the baseline year for defining the existing landscape. The relevant impacts resulting from development will be assessed:
-) During construction;
 -) Year 1:- one year after completion [Opening Year] to assess the impacts once the construction is complete and the site is operational; and
 -) Year 15:- fifteen years after opening [Design Year] to allow for any mitigation planting to establish and go some way toward the intended effect.

Cumulative Impact

- 7.4.33 Reference has been made to any major proposed developments within the vicinity of the project which would lead to a significant change in the baseline situation.
- 7.4.34 The EIA scoping request to the LPA included a list of the developments proposed to be considered as part of cumulative impact assessment for the project. The scoping response from the LPA confirmed that there are no other energy from waste plants within the vicinity

of the proposed site and the 'significant recently approved developments in the vicinity of the proposed site' including:

-) DM/19/01834/VOC – B1 and B2 Industrial Development;
-) DM/15/02364/FPA – Solar Farm; and
-) DM/19/01987/OUT – Outline mixed use development comprising of community hospital (C2) and pharmacy (A1); sheltered care unit (C2); residential care unit (C2); gym and wellbeing centre (D2); hotel (C1); public house (A4); micro-brewery (B2/A4); and vets practice (D1).

7.4.35 These developments have been considered in relation to cumulative landscape and visual effects, see section 7.8.

Limitations

7.4.36 This assessment is based on views from publicly accessible locations, and where impacts to residential and other private views (for example commercial occupiers) are noted these have necessarily been estimated.

7.4.37 This assessment of visual effects is based on views from publicly accessible locations. Where views are described relating to residential and other receptors on private land (for example commercial occupiers, users of private recreation sites/sports clubs) then these are a best judgement of baseline and effects noted from nearby accessible locations together with desk based materials such as on line Google street view and aerial photography.

7.4.38 The viewpoints illustrated are representative of typical views experienced by a range of receptors in the area but cannot represent visibility from all locations and receptors.

7.4.39 ZTV mapping has limitations in that it is computer generated and follows certain specified parameters. The ZTV maps included in this assessment present a 'visible' or 'not visible' result and do not include any differentiation of the amount of development that would be visible. For example, the same 'visible' result is recorded where a substantial amount of the development is theoretically visible as for a smaller amount.

7.5 Baseline Conditions

Introduction to Baseline

7.5.1 This section provides information about the current condition in the local environment making reference to desk top and site survey. Desk top survey included the review of information such as on-line data from Durham Council's website and published documents.

Public Rights of Way

7.5.2 County Durham Council maintains a definitive map of Public Rights of Way (PRoW), these can be viewed on the council's website. The study area is generally accessible via public roads and footpaths in the urban areas to the east of the site. There are rural footpaths in the areas to the south beyond the town of Consett. Footpaths in this area include

-) Footpath FP 23 which extends south through Hownsgill Farm;
-) Footpath FP 49 which extends northwest from Hownsgill viaduct to the A692; and
-) Footpath FP 21 which meanders east from Hownsgill viaduct through Hown's Wood and Knitsley Wood.

7.5.3 The Consett and Sunderland Railway Path is approximately 50m north of the site a promoted route also forming part of the Sustrans Coast to Coast (C2C) long-distance path/cycleway which follows the route of a former railway line. This connects with the Lanchester Valley Railway Path approximately 600m to the southwest of the site.

Conservation Areas

7.5.4 The application site is not in or near to a conservation area. The nearest conservation areas are Shotley Bridge approximately 3km northwest of the site alongside the river and the urban areas of Bridgehill and Shotley Bridge and Blackhill in Consett approximately 1.5km to the north.

Statutory Designations

Landscape Designations

7.5.5 The site is not in a designated landscape. The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at its nearest boundary is approximately 2.5km to the southeast of the site.

Listed Buildings

7.5.6 There are no listed buildings on the application site, there are listed buildings in the study area, mainly in the town, those nearby include:

-) Hown Gill Viaduct Grade II* approximately 1km southwest;
-) An arch under the former railway line,(now the Consett and Sunderland Railway Path) Grade II, approximately 650m southwest; and
-) High Knitsley Farmhouse and barn Grade II and , approximately 1km southeast;

Scheduled Monuments

- 7.5.7 There are no scheduled monuments on the site. The 17th century Allensford blast furnace scheduled monument is in the study area approximately 2.5km northwest of the site.

Nature Conservation Designations

- 7.5.8 There are sites of nature conservation importance on the western edge of the study area these include Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and National Nature Reserves. There is a Local Nature Reserve (local designation) at Allensford Woods to the northwest of the site.

Baseline Landscape Character

- 7.5.9 This section presents information gathered during desk-based and field studies including any relevant published landscape character assessments.

National Character Areas

- 7.5.10 The application site is in the Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe National Character Area (NCA) 16 , as defined by Natural England in which it is described as “a transitional landscape between the North Pennines NCA to the west and the Tyne and Wear Lowlands NCA to the east. It is formed by a series of broad ridges, separated by river valleys, with a strong west–east grain. Some 3 per cent (2,252 ha) of the NCA lies within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”
- 7.5.11 It is further noted that “Settlement is denser in the north and the east, with larger towns such as Consett, Stanley and Bishop Auckland giving these sections a more urban feel. The area’s industrial history has left a strong mark on the landscape: historic coal mining and steel processing have a strong influence on settlement patterns, culture and infrastructure such as wagonways and railways. The area has a high proportion of ‘reclaimed sites’ restored after mining activity, and in some areas this has given the landscape a rather featureless, ‘manmade’ feel”.
- 7.5.12 The NCA description includes information about the landscape character of the area, key characteristics and strategic management objectives. Statements of Environmental

opportunities are noted for the NCA which are by their nature are high level and generally apply across the NCA and therefore may not be of specific relevance to the site. Of these SEO 4 is most relevance and states:

- J “SEO 4: Protect, restore and enhance ex-industrial and brownfield sites, particularly former coal mines, for their historic and wildlife value, and improve access and interpretation in order to celebrate local tradition and culture and increase understanding of the area’s industrial history and geodiversity.”

7.5.13 Key characteristics are noted for the NCA which include:

- J “A rolling upland landscape of broad, open ridges and valleys with a strong west–east grain.
- J A transitional landscape with pastoral farming on higher ground in the west giving way to arable and mixed farming in the valleys and to the east.
- J A landscape heavily influenced by the mining and steel industries, in particular to the north and east, with scattered mining and industrial settlements of terraced and estate housing occupying prominent sites linked by a network of main roads.
- J Open cast coal workings forming intrusive features in some areas, and restored open cast areas giving a manmade feel to parts of the landscape. Early restoration sites are often lacking in character, topography and natural and historic features, while later schemes are of more value for wildlife and amenity.
- J Numerous small plantations of conifers or mixed woodland, as blocks or shelterbelts, on hillsides; in places more extensive conifer woodlands on ridgetops and hillsides.
- J Wide, open, windswept ridges of regular, large fields bounded by drystone walls and fences and crossed by straight roads, with isolated farmsteads.
- J Broad valleys of arable and mixed farmland with low hedges, with hedgerow trees, strips of broadleaved woodland following rivers and streams, and conifer plantations on valley sides.
- J Narrow, steep-sided river valleys sheltering fragments of ancient woodland.
- J Scattered small country houses, set within parkland and well-wooded estates.”

Local Landscape Character

7.5.14 County Durham Council has published a detailed landscape character assessment for the

area and this information is available from a dedicated website 'Durham Landscape' which also provides interactive mapping, landscape strategy and guidelines.

7.5.15 The character assessment defines a hierarchy of landscape character areas, types and subtypes, the site is placed in:

-) County Character Area: West Durham Coalfield
-) Broad Landscape Type: Coalfield Upland Fringe
-) Broad Character Area: Northern Coalfield Uplands
-) Local Landscape Type: Disturbed land

7.5.16 Key characteristics and descriptions are provided in the assessment for the categories listed above. These are general across the area and types and relate primarily to areas beyond the settlements and urban edge where the site is located. Some are not typical of the site and its immediate surroundings, the more typical characteristics are picked out in the following sections rather than including the full lists.

7.5.17 Key characteristics for the County Character Area West Durham Coalfield include:

-) "A rolling low upland landscape of ridges and valleys with a strong east-west grain.
-) Soft and thinly bedded strata of Carboniferous sandstones, shales and coals give rise to gently rounded ridges with occasional steeper bluffs.
-) Open ridges of pastoral farmland with regular grids of dry stone walls or gappy thorn hedges are crossed by straight enclosure roads and lanes.
-) Valleys are broad with moderate slopes and occasional narrow floodplains. Agricultural land use is mixed with arable fields and improved pastures bounded by hawthorn hedges with scattered hedgerow oak and ash.
-) Ancient oak woods are found in narrow steep sided denes, and along the banks of rivers and streams.
-) Coniferous plantations are found on higher valley sides and ridges
-) Relics of the mining industry include disused railway lines and viaducts, old coke ovens and small spoil heaps.
-) The landscape is broad in scale, defined within the valleys by the enclosing ridgelines, with panoramic views from higher ridges across adjacent valleys.

-) A landscape heavily influenced by development with a semi-rural or urban fringe character in places.”

7.5.18 The character assessment goes on to subdivide the county character into broad character types and puts the site in the Coalfield Upland Fringe, which has its own set of key characteristics. Within this broad character type the assessment categorises broad character areas and places the site in the Northern Coalfield Uplands. Select key characteristics and descriptions are noted in the following paragraphs.

7.5.19 Key characteristics of the Coalfield Upland Fringe include:

-) “Broad ridges and shallow valley heads.
-) Few trees - scattered hedgerow oak, ash, rowan or birch.
-) Sparsely wooded - scattered conifer plantations and shelterbelts.
-) Scattered mining villages of stone and brick and occasional larger towns.
-) Occasional relics of the mining industry including small spoil heaps, coke ovens and waggonways.
-) Telecommunications masts and wind turbines prominent on some ridges
-) Extensive areas of restored opencast land – often open and relatively featureless.
-) A visually open landscape with commanding views across adjacent valleys to distant ridges.”

7.5.20 The assessment describes the Northern Coalfield Uplands as *“Densely settled ridges between the northern coalfield valleys. Large mining industrial towns and villages sprawl along the ridgelines connected by busy roads. Outside of the urban areas land use is largely pastoral. There are fragments of heathland at Chapman’s Well and Annfield Plain. Field systems are regular and uniform, many dating from parliamentary enclosures of the C18th, others from C20th opencast coal mining and land reclamation. Field boundaries are a mixture of dry stone walls and overgrown hedges and wire fences. The ridges in the north are generally open in character with few trees or woodlands. Those in the south and west are heavily wooded with frequent large conifer plantations. Telecommunications masts are notable features of the skyline.”*

Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

7.5.21 The Durham Landscape website contains information about the character areas identified in

the landscape character assessment and provides analysis of the assets and attributes, trends and pressures, strategic objectives and spatial strategies.

7.5.22 The broad strategy for the West Durham Coalfield character area is ‘to enhance the landscape where it has been degraded by mining or development while conserving what is most distinctive and valued about its character, including its rural identity, its upland fringe qualities and its strong cultural associations with the coal and steel industries.’ It goes on to note that a key part is the improvement of the countryside around towns and villages and 29 objectives are listed seeking to achieve the strategic aims. Some of these objectives include:

-) To improve the urban and urban fringe environment.
-) To increase woodland cover, particularly in those areas affected by opencast mining, on reclaimed land, and in the urban fringe.
-) To create accessible natural green space close to towns and villages.
-) To maintain and increase access to the countryside around towns and villages, and particularly circular neighbourhood walks and long distance paths.
-) To ensure that new development is in keeping with the character of its surroundings and contributes positively to the strategy for the area.
-) To encourage improvements to the environment of industrial sites and positive management of vacant industrial land.

7.5.23 The spatial strategy for the North Pennines has been derived from an analysis of Local Landscape Types and informed by the objectives and strategy options identified for the West Durham Coalfield County Character Area. Each Landscape Description Unit (LDU) has been assigned with one of six strategies. The spatial strategy for the site is ‘enhance’, (local character type -disturbed land) and it is identified as a ‘landscape improvement area’.

7.6 General Landscape Overview

Landform and Drainage

- 7.6.1 Landform on the site is generally level and approximately 246m AOD, for a view of the site see Contextual Images see Figure 7.26.
- 7.6.2 There is a temporary earth bund adjacent to the to the northwest site boundary and woodland on mounded higher ground further beyond this. Land in the industrial area is generally flat, land levels increase to the northeast toward Templeton and residential areas adjacent to Howngill Park to the northeast.
- 7.6.3 Land to the southeast of Howngill Park is a plateau and sloping ground beyond this toward Knitsley Burn. The wider landscape comprises rolling landform associated with watercourses including the River Derwent and Knitsley Burn and Backgill Burn. Upland landscapes of the North Pennines are present on the edge of and beyond the study are to the west and northwest.

Landcover and Land Use

- 7.6.4 The application site currently consists level grassland. The site is part of the wider Howngill Park and an area proposed for future employment/business development and which has some existing development already built on neighbouring plots. There are residential areas at Templeton to the north and northeast of the site and Howngill Park. There is solar development adjacent to the existing bus depot at Howngill Park to the south east.
- 7.6.5 The C2C cycleway/Sunderland and Consett railway path is routed through woodland to the north west of the site and connects to the Lanchester Way National Cycle Network path running along the watercourse valley bottom to the southeast.
- 7.6.6 Land uses in the wider surroundings are mixed comprising various urban and rural features. Land to the west is generally agricultural and becomes upland/moorland further west into the North Pennines AONB. Land north and north west of the site are typically urban within the urban boundary of Consett.

Trees, Hedgerows and Vegetation

- 7.6.7 There are no hedges or trees on the site, although these are common features of the rural areas beyond the town and the urban fringes. Woodland blocks are typical following watercourses and in valley floors and are also frequently present on reclaimed and restored land such as that immediately adjacent to the site.

7.7 Identification and Evaluation of Key Impacts

7.7.1 This section provides a general description of the relevant aspects of the proposed development that could affect landscape character and visual amenity and provides evaluation commentary regarding those effects.

The Proposed Development

7.7.2 The proposed development is described at Chapter 5 of this ES and is illustrated on the accompanying drawings including a site plan and elevations which has been used for reference in undertaking this assessment.

7.7.3 The proposed development would broadly comprise two elements:

-) The Fuel Store which will receive and store the materials prior to processing and,
-) The Energy Plant which will combust the material to produce energy and heat.

7.7.4 The development will include buildings to house equipment and fuel materials. There would be associated external hard standing area around the buildings and ancillary development such as storage tanks, coolers, weighbridge, vehicle parking. The site would be enclosed by security fencing and gates.

7.7.5 The facility would include:

-) Buildings maximum height 22m at the ridge;
-) One emissions stack 50m in height;
-) A water storage tank at 25m in height;
-) Entrance and access road with security/gatehouse and weighbridge; and
-) Further ancillary development including external coolers, means of enclosure, hardstanding, offices and vehicle parking.

7.7.6 The development would be implemented in one construction phase which will take between 18-24 months to complete. Subject to the granting of planning permission the approximate anticipated start date would be during late 2021.

7.7.7 Construction vehicle activity/movements will be at their highest during the mobilisation and site levelling process at the beginning of the construction period taking around 6 weeks.

Potential for Landscape and Visual Effects

7.7.8 This section considers the effects of the proposed development on the local landscape and views, the extent of which is influenced by factors such as the existing attributes of the

receiving environment and the scale and nature of the proposed development. In this case it is anticipated that the proposed development, which is larger and of different architectural style than other development in the immediate local area will affect landscape character and views to a similar extent.

- 7.7.9 The site is within an urban fringe landscape which is typically defined by mixed land uses and features which are both urban and rural. This is true of the site and its immediate surroundings which contain urban settlement edges, industrial and commercial elements within the wider context of open fields and individual farm/properties and river valley to the south. The predominantly urban fringe character of the area and existing built development make the landscape generally less susceptible to changes also limiting the extent to which the development affects the landscape and views.

Landscape Receptors

- 7.7.10 Features which contribute to the character of the location and the site are identified in order to assess the potential impacts resulting from the proposed development. These would typically include natural features such as trees and hedges. Patterns in the landscape such as field arrangement, landform and land uses are also landscape receptors that could be affected by development.
- 7.7.11 Of particular note in this context is the 'upland' landform in the study area to the west and southwest, also that the areas surrounding the site form part of a restored landscape from former extractive and industrial activities such as quarrying and or mining or in this case at the site, a former steel works, which is consistent with the categorisations in local landscape character assessment. The adjoining semi mature mixed plantation woodland to the north of the site and extending along the Consett and Sunderland Railway Path is a prominent and itself a restored and enhanced landscape feature.

North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 7.7.12 The north east edge boundary of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is approximately 2.6km to the west of the site, noted to be '*one of the most remote and unspoilt places in England*' (AONB Partnership website). The North Pennines AONB Partnership is an alliance of statutory agencies, local authorities and voluntary or community organisations which are responsible for co-ordinating the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. the North Pennines. The AONB Partnership has a duty to prepare a management plan for the AONB which guides work, management principles and objectives for the AONB and covers the time period between 2019 and 2024.

- 7.7.13 This statutory plan *'focuses on landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural heritage which combine to create a sense of place; it also addresses issues around how people can better explore, enjoy and understand the landscape and in doing so support a nature- and culture-based economy. It is a plan for the area, not a work plan for the AONB team, and many organisations, individuals and communities can have a role in implementing it.'*
- 7.7.14 The site is outside the AONB boundary although its 'setting' could be affected ('setting' refers to areas outside the AONB where development and other activities may affect land within it) for example, effects of development on views into and out of the AONB.

Visual Receptors

- 7.7.15 Visual receptors identified in the study area in no particular order include:
-) Residents of nearby houses;
 -) Users of public highways (roads and footpaths);
 -) Users of local footpaths and long-distance paths (e.g. Consett and Sunderland Railway Path, Sustrans coast to coast cycleway);
 -) Receptors/visitors in the North Pennines AONB; and
 -) Workers at farms and other business in the surrounding areas.

Representative Viewpoints

- 7.7.16 Representative viewpoints have been used to assess the impacts and resultant effects on a range of views towards the site. Viewpoints are illustrated photographically with the locations at Figures 7.6-7.24. In the photographs existing features and the approximate location of the site in the views are identified together with landmarks and any other points of interest in the surrounding area.
- 7.7.17 Following site survey and consultation with the LPA, the selection of viewpoints was refined from those preliminary locations identified at an earlier. Photographs for context have been included to illustrate the nature of the landscape in the study area and general nature of views.

Summary of Baseline Views

- 7.7.18 Views of the site from within the urban areas to the northwest are not possible due to the built-up nature. The viewpoints chosen are representative of locations/receptors in close proximity to the site such as from nearby housing, roads and the Consett and Sunderland railway path. Views from the Consett and Sunderland railway path in the section north of Hownsgill viaduct are typically enclosed by dense tree and shrub cover on either side of the

path. There are occasional breaks in the tree cover and localised high spots from where it is possible to see out into the adjoining areas and toward distant hills on the horizon. Views of the adjacent land are glimpsed through breaks in the trees and at through the shrubby understorey. Trees and shrubs are mostly deciduous and therefore there will be more breaks in cover and more opportunity for glimpses during the winter.

- 7.7.19 Nearby houses include those at Templetown and Knitsley Road, approximately 500m from the site. Views toward the site typically include many features which interrupt views such as buildings, road signage, lighting, street trees/planting, means of enclosure to neighbouring properties and block of existing tree planting at the northeast edge of Hownsgill Park.
- 7.7.20 Views toward the site from more distant locations and high ground to the northwest such as the A68 are panoramic, limited to parts of the road on higher ground and complex in that there are many varied features present. It is not possible to see the site as it is screened by the adjacent woodland (north of the site).
- 7.7.21 Views from the south are typically restricted by the local topography including the adjacent plateau and sloping ground toward Knitsley Burn. Views from locations further from the site are more open, are wide and panoramic in nature. These views tend to comprise agricultural land in the foreground and the rolling landform and northeast valley side of Knitsley Burn in the background. The site appears in the view against a backdrop of the southwestern edge of Consett (Delves) and development continuing beyond this to the northeast. The site is typically a small part of a wide-reaching views containing many varied elements. Views contain existing prominent and detracting features such individual wind turbines.
- 7.7.22 There are significant blocks of woodland in views and settlements/development appears between these blocks on the sloping rolling landform. The horizon is formed by a combination of development and woodland with occasional vertical features forming landmarks such as transmitter tower at Pontop , church spires.
- 7.7.23 Views from the west are restricted and are largely screened or heavily filtered by woodland along the Sunderland and Consett railway path. Views directly into the site are generally not possible from the path. From other more distant locations view are typically wide and panoramic. The site is not visible as it is screened by the rolling landform and the adjacent woodland to the northwest. The wind turbine to the south of the site is visible extending above trees and landform, although this is distant and forms an occasional glimpse or detractor when in motion.

7.7.24 Views from the east are mostly screened by the raised plateau landform, it is prominent as it appears 'man made' and part of a restored land to the southeast of the site. Viewpoint 7 shows the outline of the plateau on the skyline and preventing views of the land immediately north of this. The existing wind turbine to the south of the site is visible as is another near to Howns Farm further south. Views are mostly rural with occasional urbanising features and development. Views from more distant locations as in other directions are typically panoramic and the site is typically screened by undulating landform and woodland.

7.8 Assessment of Effects

7.8.1 This section of the report considers the different stages of the development within the identified timescales. These include construction and operational effects.

Construction Effects

7.8.2 Works involved during the construction period would include temporary and permanent works to build the new facility. It is anticipated that effects would generally be visual. It is acknowledged that there would be a substantial alteration to the currently undeveloped condition of the site although this is limited by the urban fringe character of the location and the existing adjacent developments at Hownsghill Park.

7.8.3 Construction effects will affect the whole site commencing with site clearance/levelling, establishing access roads and temporary compound, site office and the like. Temporary works such as stockpiled soils, site compound and units will be removed on completion and during demobilisation.

7.8.4 During the construction period vehicle movements and activity will be more intensive at the beginning than other times in order to undertake mobilisation and ground works. Activities will be visible from the surrounding area typically from roads and footpaths in the immediate surroundings. In general visibility of construction activities will be limited as these will take place at ground level which will be screened by existing vegetation (woodland to the north) existing built development and the undulating landform in the wider study area. Views toward the site from the north beyond the nearest roads (e.g. are typically screened by the urban area of Consett).

7.8.5 As construction progresses the building and stack under construction as the tallest elements of the development will be increasingly visible from locations more extensively from the surrounding area. These features will tend to be partially visible extending higher than trees and adjacent buildings. With the exception of the stack under construction and associated machinery such as cranes and temporary support structures/scaffold, effects are judged to be no worse during construction than at year one as summarised in the following sections for the operational phase. The stack under construction is likely to be eye catching or detracting in some views due to movement of plant and height of structures on the skyline.

Effects During Operation

7.8.6 Effects resulting from the proposed development during operation are assessed as the opening year (year 1) following completion. It is expected that all construction works would

have been concluded and permanent features, buildings any earthmoving and planting would have been undertaken on the site.

- 7.8.7 There will be some minor changes to the character of the area due to the additional of new buildings and the stack, which will increase the perception of this location as developed for industrial/business. There are similar style buildings in the locally, for example those existing on the industrial estate although it is acknowledged that the proposed buildings are taller in height. There are no stacks of a similar height and architecture in the local area but as previously described there are vertical elements in the surroundings which are of similar scale or taller including the turbine to the south of the site and overhead lines.

Landscape Effects During Operation

- 7.8.8 As noted above, potential effects on landscape could manifest through changes to landform which is principally flat, land use/cover, trees and hedges and the general increase in built form on the edge of Consett giving rise to a perceived urbanised character (although this is principally visual).
- 7.8.9 There are no natural features of note on the site that could be affected by the development. There is scope to include new planting as part of an integrated approach to ecology and landscape management on the site which would be a positive change.
- 7.8.10 The proposals include clearance and earthworks to create a level area for construction of the new building and external spaces. Any changes to levels on the site will be minor and will not be perceived beyond the site, the resultant effect will be neutral.

Overall Landscape Character

- 7.8.11 The character of the area is heavily influenced by the town of Consett and other settlements/existing development in the surrounding area together with remnants of the areas industrial past. There are important landscapes to the west and southwest of Consett forming part of the North Pennines AONB. The potential sensitivity to change of the landscape in the transitional land beyond the AONB boundary is acknowledged. However, the proposed development is distant, it is in an established industrial area and within a landscape that has historically been influenced by industrial development, which together limit potential for significant landscape effects. The character of the site in this location is defined by the rolling land associated with the River Derwent and other watercourses which is part of the wider Upper Derwent Coalfields National Character Area (NCA) and local

landscape character areas/types noted at section 7.5. The landscape in this area is considered to be of low sensitivity to the proposed change.

Visual Effects During Operation

- 7.8.12 The assessment of visual effects considers how changes brought about by the proposed development would manifest and alter views from baseline conditions. The assessment is based on the anticipated changes in views from the representative viewpoints and are described at Appendix 7.2 and at Figures 7.6-24. This section provides a general summary of effects on views grouped by broad geographic location and compass direction.
- 7.8.13 In general, views towards the site from a north and north westerly direction are screened by the urban area of Consett and landform. Beyond the internal access road to Howngill Park from where the site is seen openly, the principal views toward the site are from close proximity or more distantly to the south and southwest, beyond watercourse valley floors approximately >2.5km. The proposed tallest elements of the development including the stack at 50m in height will be seen from locations extensively throughout the study area and beyond. It is accepted that these will remain visible (forming residual effects of the proposed development) in the future and that it is impractical to aim to screen such structures entirely and therefore the choice of appropriate location for the development and inherent mitigation play important roles.

Views from the North and Northwest

- 7.8.14 Receptors to the north include those represented by viewpoint no's 1, 2 and 12. Views from the northwest, upper northern slopes of the River Derwent are illustrated by no's 13 and 14. As noted above views of the site are not possible from within the urban areas. The viewpoints are representative of locations/receptors in close proximity to the site such as from nearby housing, roads and the Consett and Sunderland railway path.
- 7.8.15 Views from the Consett and Sunderland railway path in the section north of Howngill viaduct are typically enclosed by dense tree and shrub. The development will be seen extending higher than surrounding tree cover and where there are occasional breaks in the tree cover through branches of the trees and the shrubby understorey at lower level. Trees and shrubs are mostly deciduous and therefore there will be more breaks in cover and more opportunity for glimpses of the proposed development through trees in the winter.
- 7.8.16 Views toward the site from nearby houses are possible and will comprise the development in close proximity to and between a variety of existing urban features. It is not possible to

see directly into the site from the houses, ground level and low-level features on the development site will not be visible. The upper parts of the buildings and stack will be visible and form a notable part of future views extending above neighbouring buildings and tree canopies (see photomontage for viewpoint 2). Effects on these views is moderate adverse, assuming a worst case.

- 7.8.17 Views toward the site from more distant locations such as the A68 are panoramic, limited to parts of the road on higher ground and complex in that there are many varied features present. It is not possible to see the site as it is screened by the adjacent woodland (north of the site). It will be possible to glimpse the stack which will extend higher than the woodland. The development will not form a significant part of future views the overall effect from such locations minor adverse at worst.

Views from the South

- 7.8.18 Receptors in this direction include those represented by viewpoint no's 4, 5, 9 and 18.
- 7.8.19 These viewpoints represent a range of typical views at varying distances (including from public footpaths [056 22, 056 24],) to illustrate the wide and panoramic nature of baseline views. These comprise agricultural land in the foreground and the rolling landform and northeast valley side of Knitsley Burn in the background. The site and proposed development will appear in the view against a backdrop of the southwestern edge of Consett (Delves). The development will be a small part of a wide views containing many varied elements including existing prominent and detracting features such individual wind turbines.
- 7.8.20 The proposed stack and roofline of the buildings will be seen extending above tree canopies and between woodland blocks. The proposed stack will add to the existing vertical features which punctuate the landscape and occasionally appear on the skyline. The effect on views from the closest viewpoints as a worst case is minor adverse.

Views from the East

- 7.8.21 Receptors in this direction include those represented by viewpoint no's 6, 7, 8 and 19,
- 7.8.22 The development will be mostly screened by the raised plateau to the southeast of the site. The stack and roofline of the buildings will be visible extending above this landform. In time views of the development will be filtered by the proposed tree/woodland planting although there will be minor residual effects through the visibility of the stack and partial roofline of buildings. It is reasonably foreseeable that future development will take place on land to the south of the site on the industrial park and may also appear in future views in front of the

proposed development. Existing restored plateau landform has a man-made appearance and the proposed buildings and stack will be notable breaking on the skyline and the outline of the plateau.

Views from the West and Southwest

- 7.8.23 Receptors in this direction include those represented by viewpoint no's 3, 10, 11, 16 and 17.
- 7.8.24 Viewpoint 3 is closest to the site at approximately 690m near to Hown's Farm. Views are largely screened or heavily filtered by woodland along the Sunderland and Consett railway path. The development will be mostly screened by the existing woodland, the upper part of the proposed stack will be visible adjacent to the existing wind turbine and the roofline of the proposed buildings will be glimpsed in some views also extending above tree canopies.
- 7.8.25 From other viewpoints, views are typically wide and panoramic. The site is not visible, it is screened the rolling landform and the adjacent woodland to the northwest. In such views the development will be distant and views will be limited to glimpses of the upper part of the stack above trees and will not represent a notable change.

Summary of Effects on Views

- 7.8.26 The significance of visual effects experienced by receptors is varied in range from neutral to moderate adverse. The more notable adverse effects are expected to be experienced by receptors in the immediate locality, such as residents of nearby properties to the north/northeast and users of public footpaths and the C2C path.
- 7.8.27 Due to the nature of the rolling topography and watercourse valleys which tends to screen views from locations with approximately 2km, there are opportunities to experience open views toward the site from more distant locations. These views tend to be from higher ground on opposite valley sides and are panoramic. The site and proposed development will be visible in these views mainly the stack and roofline of buildings and will be prominent new features.
- 7.8.28 Views generally from locations in the surrounding area will comprise an increased amount of built form of industrial character and additional vertical elements on the skyline. These will be seen typically appearing in spaces between existing patches of trees and are of similar character to others found throughout the landscape for example on adjacent land at Hownsgill Park.
- 7.8.29 There is scope to provide some screening of the buildings by establishing perimeter woodland belts to the southwest and the eastern sides of the site. The proposed planting

will not fully screen the development but will be effective at eye level in close proximity and for softening the appearance of the development in longer distance views.

Cumulative Effects

7.8.30 As noted earlier in this chapter consideration has been given to the potential for significant cumulative effects to result from the proposed development and other consented projects (LPA planning references are provided in brackets) and including those listed below. Each of these projects forms part of the strategic Project Genesis Masterplan for this area to redevelop land at the former Consett steelworks and is in the vicinity of the site, all within approximately 200m.

1. B1 and B2 Industrial Development (DM/19/01834/VOC) approximately 200m northeast of the site at Howngill Park;
2. Solar Farm (DM/15/02364/FPA), approximately 100m southeast on 'plateau' restored landform adjacent to Howngill Park; and
3. Outline mixed use development (DM/19/01987/OUT), approximately 150m north, comprising:
 - o community hospital and pharmacy;
 - o sheltered care unit and residential care unit;
 - o gym and wellbeing centre;
 - o hotel;
 - o public house and micro-brewery; and
 - o vet's practice.

7.8.31 From the projects listed above there will be cumulative landscape and visual effects arising in conjunction with the proposed development. None is anticipated to be significant for reasons principally including the developed and or previously developed nature of the surrounding urban fringe environment, which limits landscape effects and the undulating topography together with extensive woodland in the locality, which tends to restrict visibility toward Howngill Park. It is assumed that suitable mitigation will be incorporated as part of the projects which will also limit/minimise effects to acceptable levels.

7.8.32 There is limited intervisibility between the proposed energy development and the mixed use development to the north due to the C2C path and woodland on land in between which provides screening. The proposed development the B1/B2 development at Howngill Park will be seen together although viewer would need to be in the industrial area or close by to see both developments openly. Effects will not be significant in the context of the

surrounding built up area and the general expectation that receptors would experience such views in this area. There is potential for the solar farm and parts of the energy development to be seen together in views from an easterly and south easterly direction.

- 7.8.33 Effects resulting from the proposed energy development are mainly visual and relate to the appearance/introduction of the new buildings and the stack which will be seen extensively throughout the surroundings. Effects will be typically minor adverse or less from the majority of locations except those in closer proximity and where unrestricted/more open views are possible. The nature of the surrounding topography comprising rolling and undulating landform with substantial woodland tends to restrict visibility from locations that are close to the site to the south, southeast and south west because the viewer is on lower ground than the site and it is screened. This will be the case also in relation to the visibility of the other projects/sites and the proposed development.
- 7.8.34 Views from locations to the east/southeast of the site are likely to be affected by the proposed development and the proposed solar farm. The proposed solar farm will appear in front of the development on a raised plateau landform, see viewpoint 7. The proposed energy development will be visible, notable on the skyline beyond the solar farm and together will form prominent new features in views. The energy development will not result in additional significant effects and the proposed mitigation measures would soften the appearance in time.
- 7.8.35 From more distant locations the site and the cumulative development projects will be a small part of distant views appearing in association with similar structures and features. There will be more urbanising features and detractors in the views, the effects of which will not be significant together and can be minimised by suitable mitigation. Effects are anticipated to be minor adverse at worst.
- 7.8.36 Landscape effects are minimal and are generally as a result of a greater amount of built form in this location which is consistent with its setting.

7.9 Design Response and Mitigation

Mitigation Generally

7.9.1 Mitigation is required where there is a need to remove or reduce effects resulting from impacts associated with development. Mitigation can be 'built-in' to the project which is an ideal way to minimise environmental effects known as inherent or primary mitigation and includes methods such as careful siting, avoidance and retention of sensitive features. Secondary mitigation is in addition and is necessary to reduce unavoidable effects of the development. In some cases, secondary mitigation may not be needed if inherent mitigation is effective and sufficient.

Inherent Mitigation

7.9.2 The site has been selected by the application as a suitable location on an established industrial area. It is a location deemed appropriate for the provision of employment land uses as defined by the local authority development plan.

7.9.3 Aspects of the development which have been incorporated with the aim of limiting landscape and visual effects include:

-) Design of buildings and structures to functional minimum heights whilst satisfying other requirement such as for air quality;
-) Siting of taller structures to the rear of the site against a backdrop of higher ground and woodland for screening benefit;
-) Use of recessive colours and techniques such as graduated shading to the building cladding (e.g. light grey RAL 7038 or similar), see photomontages included for Viewpoints 2 and 5.

Secondary Mitigation

7.9.4 Secondary mitigation in the form of new soft landscaping would typically be focussed at the site perimeters where this can be effective for screening close views. In this location it would be effective and fitting with the nature of the wooded background. The internal parts of the site are constrained, planting will be focused on the site perimeters where there is sufficient space to provide substantial screening belts of new woodland planting and potential future opportunities for footpath connection to the C2C footpath to the north.

7.9.5 There are general amenity benefits in providing new planting on the site where space permits. Planting at the entrance to the site, on the site boundaries, around car parking and any amenity space for site workers would be beneficial and trees especially would provide

some long term softening of the appearance of buildings. Where possible new planting will include UK native species. Planting will be designed as part of an integrated approach with any required ecological enhancements and or mitigation.

7.10 Residual Effects

7.10.1 Residual landscape and visual effects are generally considered fifteen years after opening [Year 15] which would allow for any specific mitigation planting sufficient time to mature and achieve their intended effect.

7.10.2 It is considered that effects will diminish between years 1 and 15 due to the establishment of mitigation planting. There will be long term improvements to the amount of screening in views and a general increase in greenery through the inclusion of new tree planting at the site boundaries.

7.10.3 There is no proposed change in land use on the site between years 1 and 15, therefore no additional residual effects on landscape will occur. However, it is reasonably anticipated that other similar development will be brought forward and built on land (allocated in the local development plan) in the immediate surroundings at Howngill Industrial Park and that this will add to and consolidate the industrial character of this part of the town. The site and the surrounding area forming part of the Project Genesis Masterplan covering the area of the former steel works, will be subject to changes in the future, which is anticipated to take place within the 15 years noted in this report, also into the future and longer term beyond this. The proposed development at this site will likely be one of the changes in the locality to take place within the overall strategic plan for redevelopment of this part of Consett.

7.11 Summary and Conclusion

7.11.1 National and local level planning policy encourages sustainable development in suitable locations that do not have significant effects on the landscape. The proposed development supports this in that it is on a site currently allocated by the local authority in its development plan as potentially suitable for this type of development. The site is considered to be in a suitable sustainable location which has the capacity to accommodate the proposed development.

7.11.2 The existing character of the site is defined by its restored nature forming part of an area which is intended for future development. The overall character of the area is mixed and typical of urban fringes where there are varied land uses and features. Land to the south and south west beyond the urban fringe is more rural and more so toward the edge of the study area and beyond into the North Pennines AONB. However, the landscape is influenced by its industrial past and is interspersed with relic features and land restoration. In addition, there are various existing prominent modern developments present including industrial

buildings at Howngill Park, a solar farm to the south, settlement on high ground and wind turbines in the wider surroundings which affect the overall landscape character and sensitivity. The proposed development fits with this existing pattern of development in a suitable location adjacent to other similar development on the edge of a settlement.

- 7.11.3 The LPA has anticipated expansion of the settlement edge for business use development similar.
- 7.11.4 The proposed development would not affect any important landscape features on the site or immediately adjacent. There are prominent natural landscape features in the local area which include semi mature trees to the northwest of the site. These will be unaffected by the proposed development and it is proposed that tree cover will be enhanced by planting on the development site as shown in Figure 7.25.
- 7.11.5 The extent of change in views is limited by the existing urban fringe character and nature of views in the locality, on the whole changes beyond the immediate surroundings are anticipated to be minor adverse. The provision of inherent design mitigation and soft landscaping to provide filtering of views and for general amenity will be beneficial in reducing residual effects.
- 7.11.6 Views generally from locations in the surrounding area will comprise an increased amount of built form of industrial character and tall vertical elements on the skyline. The site benefits from screening provided by existing raised ground and semi-mature woodland on land immediately adjacent alongside the Consett and Sunderland, which will continue to develop in future years to provide further screening. Built development is commonplace in views from locations through the study as is typical of this urban fringe location on the edge of Consett. Buildings typically appear amongst trees and woodland on sloping landform and is notable on high ground to the northeast and northwest of the site. There are various prominent and detracting features in most views from the surrounding area, these include existing development industrial type buildings at Howngill Park, individual wind turbines and settlements, overhead lines and supporting steel lattice towers crossing the landscape.
- 7.11.7 There will be long term residual visual effects as a result of the development pertaining to the appearance of the upper part/roofline of the proposed buildings and the stack, which will be visible from the majority of directions around the site and are not considered significant. These will mainly affect receptors/shorter distance views from locations in close proximity. There will be some minor residual effects on longer distance views such as those from high ground to the southwest/west but seen in the urban fringe setting comprising

varied prominent elements this is not significant and will reduce slightly in future years as a result of mitigation planting.

Table 7.3 below contains a summary of the likely impacts of the proposed development.

Phase	Nature of Effect	Significance of Impact	Magnitude of Impact	Duration	Mitigation	Residual	Level
Landscape Effects							
Construction	Localised levelling and modification of on site landform	Neutral	Negligible	Permanent	Inherent mitigation, reuse materials to form low perimeter bunds for screening	Neutral	Local
Operation	Change in land use and land cover on the site.	Minor	Medium	Permanent	Within an established employment area. Soft landscaping proposed.	Minor (Positive effect on tree cover in future years)	Local
Operation	Townscape/landscape character types	Neutral	Negligible	Permanent	Inherent design, enhancement of tree planting to site boundaries.	Neutral (Positive localised effect on tree cover in future years).	Local
Operation	Impacts to protected landscapes/setting - North Pennines AONB	Neutral	Negligible	Permanent	Inherent design/siting.	Neutral	Regional/ Local
Visual Effects -Representative Viewpoints							
Operation	VP1 Consett and Sunderland Railway Path	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting adjacent to semi mature woodland and in and established industrial area. New tree planting to site perimeters.	Minor adverse, potentially reducing in future years. Benefits from screening provided by (future maturing) woodland on adjacent land .	Local
Operation	VP2 Ovington Court	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting adjacent to semi mature woodland and in and established industrial area.	Minor adverse, potentially reducing in future years resulting from screening provided	Local

Phase	Nature of Effect	Significance of Impact	Magnitude of Impact	Duration	Mitigation	Residual	Level
						by (future maturing) tree planting on NE boundary of Hownsgill Park.	
Operation	VP3 Consett & Sunderland Railway Path	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting adjacent to semi mature woodland and in and established industrial area.	Minor adverse, potentially reducing in future years. Benefits from screening provided by (future maturing) woodland adjacent to C2C path.	Local
Operation	VP4 Knitsley Lane	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters.	Minor adverse.	Local
Operation	VP5 Footpath [056 22]	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting, colours/materials. New tree planting to site perimeters.	Minor adverse.	Local
Operation	VP6 Footpath [056 24]	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters.	Minor adverse	Local
Operation	VP7 Lanchester Valley Railway Path and Footpath [023 78]	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters.	Minor adverse/Neutral	Local
Operation	VP8 Footpath [069 41],	Neutral	Negligible	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters.	Neutral. Long term benefit from additional tree cover screening from mitigation planting	Local

Phase	Nature of Effect	Significance of Impact	Magnitude of Impact	Duration	Mitigation	Residual	Level
Operation	VP9 Millershill Lane	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters.	Minor adverse	Local
Operation	VP10 Whitehall Moss (location in N Pennines AONB)	Neutral	Negligible	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters	Neutral. Long term benefit from additional tree cover screening from mitigation planting	Local/Regional
Operation	VP11 Footpath [056 11], Castleside	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting adjacent to semi mature woodland	Minor adverse, potentially reducing in future years. Benefits from screening provided by (future maturing) woodland on adjacent land .	Local
Operation	VP12 Roundabout at Rotary Way/ A692	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting adjacent to semi mature woodland and in and established industrial area.	Minor adverse, potentially reducing in future years resulting from screening provided by (future maturing) tree planting on NE boundary of Hownsgill Park.	Local
Operation	VP13 A68 Mosswood (edge of N Pennines AONB)	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters	Minor Adverse	Local/Regional
Operation	VP14 South Snods	Neutral	Negligible	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters	Neutral	Local

Phase	Nature of Effect	Significance of Impact	Magnitude of Impact	Duration	Mitigation	Residual	Level
Operation	VP15 Minor Road, Shotleyfields	Neutral	Negligible	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters	Neutral	Local
Operation	VP16 Healeyfield Road (N Pennines AONB)	Neutral	Negligible	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters	Neutral	Local/Regional
Operation	VP17 Smiddy Shaw (N Pennines AONB)	Neutral	Negligible	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters	Neutral	Local/Regional
Operation	VP18 A68 east of Whitehall Moss	Minor Adverse	Low	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters	Neutral	Local
Operation	VP19 A691 Woodside Bank	Neutral	Negligible	Permanent/ life of the development	Inherent design/siting. New tree planting to site perimeters	Neutral	Local

References

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