09/07/2025

Ashfield District Council

Hamilton Solar Farm

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Part 1

March 2025

TLW

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 The Landscape Workshop has been commissioned to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in respect of a planning application for a new solar farm.

1.2 The application Site is located at postcode NG17 5LB and split into two parcels: Plot W at OS grid reference SK 51628 58739, altitude of 147m AOD and Plot E at OS grid reference SK 52144 58807, altitude of 150m AOD. The location of the Site, the parcels and its surrounding landscape context is shown at Figure 1 in the Appendix.

1.3 This assessment has been carried out by a chartered landscape architect and member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI).

1.4 The scope of this assessment is:

- To analyse and evaluate the existing qualities and character of the Site and its setting, examining the contribution it makes to the landscape character of the area and its relationship with the wider setting, including views from nearby Public Rights of Way and publicly accessible land;
- To identify key characteristics of the area, to inform design principles and guide the design of the proposed development;
- To report on the landscape and visual implications of developing the Site and the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the surroundings, including night-time views. Mitigation measures are designed to reduce or alleviate potentially adverse impacts and an assessment of their likely effectiveness is made.

1.5 This assessment should be read with the following documents:

- LVIA Part 2 Appendix March 2025

1.6 The following abbreviations have been used within the report:

- AOD Height Above Ordnance Datum
- NCA National Character Area profile - defined by Natural England
- LCA Landscape Character Area - Local

1.7 The following units of measurement and abbreviations have been used for describing measurements within the report:

- mm Millimetre

- m Metre
- km Kilometre
- Ha Hectare

2 Assessment Criteria

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This is a brief synopsis and an explanation of the assessment criteria used in this report. More detailed information regarding the methodology used in this assessment is shown in Assessment Methodology in the Appendix.

2.2 Guidelines and Legislative Framework

2.2.1 The landscape and visual assessments have been prepared guided by the 'Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA) and published by The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013), except where noted otherwise. The legislative framework for landscape assessment includes The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), The Hedgerow Regulations (1997) and the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) Regulations (2012) where appropriate.

2.3 Scope of Assessment

2.3.1 An evaluation of the landscape baseline informs the fabric, character and quality of the existing landscape resource. An assessment of the sensitivity of the existing landscape resource receptors is also made to inform the evaluation.

2.3.2 Landscape effects associated with a proposed development relate to changes in the fabric, character and quality of the landscape resource and how it is experienced. Assessment of effects on the landscape resource considers three different aspects:

- Elements – the individual elements that make up the landscape, especially prominent and eye catching features, including hills, cliffs, valleys, woods, trees and hedges, water, buildings and roads.
- Characteristics – combinations of elements that make a particular contribution to the area, including the patterns of topography and field boundaries and experiential characteristics such as tranquillity, wildness and cultural associations.
- Character – the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people. It reflects particular

combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates the particular sense of place and is identified through the process of characterisation which classifies maps and describes areas of similar character.

2.3.3 Effects on designated landscapes and other acknowledged special areas of interest are assessed where they occur.

2.3.4 The landscape baseline and the assessment of landscape effects contribute to the visual assessment.

2.3.5 Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity. They are recorded as views from publicly accessible areas and Public Rights of Way, including roads.

2.3.6 Effects on views from private viewpoints/residential properties are normally carried out through specific "residential amenity assessments" and have not been assessed in detail within this LVIA.

2.3.7 Landscape and visual effects are assessed by comparing the predicted effects of the scheme with the existing situation, as if the scheme were not constructed:

- At Year 1, with the scheme completed, and
- At Year 10, at maturation of the development and when proposed mitigation planting would be established.

2.4 Study Area

2.4.1 The study area has been determined arising from desk studies and subsequent field visits to provide a balanced and representative assessment of the baseline conditions within the setting of the Site.

2.4.2 The study area for assessing landscape character of this Site's locality has been determined to extend for a radius of approximately 2km from the Site.

2.5 Desk Studies and Surveys

2.5.1 The assessment of the effects has entailed desk and fieldwork studies. Desk studies have included references to the following documents which contain information on planning policy and existing local landscape character identifying key objectives for its management and development:

- *Natural England, National Character Area Profiles*

- *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024*
- *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*
- *Ashfield District Council Local Plan 2002*
- *Ashfield Local Plan 2023 -2040: Regulation 19*
- *Greater Nottingham Landscape Character Assessment 2009*
- *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (The CROW Act)*
- *Ordnance Survey maps and online aerial photography*
- *Magic Website - DEFRA geographic information*

2.5.2 The visual effects are analysed based on identified viewpoints. These are initially identified from desk study and then confirmed in the field by survey from roads and areas with public access including Public Rights of Way. The viewpoints are selected as representative views from publicly accessible land within the study area and not from every view, in accordance with published guidelines. They are represented in the LVIA as photographs taken at the selected representational viewpoints.

2.5.3 Photographs have been taken using a full frame DSLR camera set to a 50mm focal length, in accordance with guidelines published by the Landscape Institute. Photographs are no substitute for examination in the field and it is recommended that the study area and selected viewpoints are visited to fully understand the nature of the setting and scale of the proposals.

2.5.4 The site visit took place on 9th March 2025 on a sunny day with medium visibility.

2.6 Assessment of Effects

2.6.1 Effects, whether landscape or visual, can be beneficial or adverse. Landscape benefits may arise in the long term, for example, if the level of tree cover is increased, the landscape becomes more varied, or the quality is enhanced after completion of a development. Beneficial visual effects can occur if the quality of landscape fabric is enhanced or if screen planting masks or improves an existing, unattractive view. In the short term, the landscape and visual effects of any proposed development are more likely to be adverse, until the mitigation planting matures and becomes more effective.

2.6.2 The measure of landscape and visual effects will be influenced by the following:

- The sensitivity of the receptor (the landscape or person experiencing the change), and
- The magnitude of change that will occur or be experienced by the receptor.

2.6.3 The approach to evaluating the baseline sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors and the magnitude of change is described in the Assessment Methodology in the Appendix. In principle, the higher the negative effects and the more sensitive the landscape receptor, the greater any adverse effects would be. Assessment Methodology tables contain an explanation of the importance criteria applied to assess the effects of the proposed development, taking into

account the sensitivity of receptors or viewers and the magnitude of change.

3 Landscape Baseline Conditions

3.1 Landscape Character of the Study Area

3.1.1 Landscape character is what makes an area distinctive, gives it a sense of place, or makes it different from another landscape. Landscape character assessment can be carried out at a range of levels, from the national to local level. Published documents provide a structured framework and a good basis for describing and understanding the character of the Site and its context within the study area in a systematic manner.

3.2 National Character Area (NCA)

3.2.1 At the national level, Natural England has produced the National Character Area Profiles (NCA). NCA's divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, history and cultural and economic activity. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries.

3.2.2 The study area lies within National Character Area (NCA): 49 Sherwood. The characteristics most relevant to the application and study area have been extracted and provide a broad overview of a larger area within which the study area is located.

NCA 49: Sherwood

3.2.3 The Sherwood NCA extends north from Nottingham, principally coinciding with an outcrop of sandstone which forms a belt of gently rolling hills. Historically it was managed as woodland and remains a well wooded area. The oak and birch wood pasture in the heartland of Sherwood Forest and more recent pine plantations, contribute strongly to the sense of place. Large estate parklands, heathland, open arable land, and a strong mining heritage also characterise the area. The area contains the settlements of Mansfield, Worksop, Retford and Ollerton around its peripheries and sits on an aquifer that provides water to the area.

3.2.4 The key characteristics are:

- *A gently rolling landform of low rounded sandstone hills, which principally coincide with an outcrop of the Permo-Triassic Sherwood Sandstone Group. The sandstone gives rise to well drained, acidic, sandy soils.*
- *Magnesian limestone and marl are exposed to the west of the area and underlie the sandstone, forming the base of a major aquifer.*
- *Woodland is a distinctive feature of the area with a mosaic of broadleaved, mixed, and*

coniferous woodlands, including ancient oak wood pasture and parkland, and pine plantations.

- *Wooded horizons frame extensive areas of open arable farmland with large, geometric fields contained by low, often treeless, hawthorn hedges.*
- *The free draining geology and acidic soils support many areas of unenclosed lowland heathland and acid grassland often associated with the wood pasture areas, but also found on marginal agricultural land, on rail and roadsides and on restored colliery sites.*
- *Narrow river corridors, associated with marshy flats and flood meadows, drain the area and dry valleys are characteristic because of the permeable geology.*
- *The area, especially Sherwood Forest, is intrinsically linked to the internationally renowned legend of Robin Hood.*

3.3 Local Character Areas

Greater Nottingham Landscape Character Assessment

3.3.1 The Greater Nottingham Landscape Character Assessment (June 2009) places the development Site in the Country Character Area (CCA) Sherwood and more specifically in Special Policy Zone (SPZ) 47 Coxmoor Wooded Farmlands.

LCA 47 Coxmoor Wooded Farmlands

3.3.2 This Policy Zone consists of a gently undulating area rising to a high point of 165 metres at Hamilton Hill.

3.3.3 Land use in the can be divided into three main areas. To the south is the Coxmoor Golf course which consists of intensively managed greens and fairways surrounded by a mosaic of acid grassland with heather, bracken, gorse, and broom and Ash, Rowan and Oak trees. To the centre of the area is a belt of unimproved and improved permanent pasture with some patches of arable farming and a disused sand quarry. This area has recently been bisected by the Mansfield and Ashfield Regeneration Route (MARR). To the North of the PZ is Kingsmill Reservoir. Disused mineral railway lines also pass through the area.

3.3.4 The Mansfield and Ashfield Regeneration Route (MARR) refers to the A617 which has been upgraded since 2004 by Nottingham County Council as a key infrastructure route. This route provides links to the M1 and the wider area. It supported the Lindhurst scheme which is a 23-acre business development on the south side of Mansfield and around Berry Hill. As well as business space, this project aims to build around 1700 residential properties, a community park, shops and bus links. The MLAs pre-date this project and the MARR upgrades, so the landscape around the proposed development Site has changed significantly since they were first identified.

3.3.5 Key characteristics of the LCA are as follows:

- Gently undulating topography
- Golf course with intensively managed greens and fairways
- Heath land roughs on golf course with heather, bracken broom, and gorse
- Permanent unimproved and improved pasture to the centre of area
- Arable farmland to the centre
- Tall bushy mixed species hedgerows to centre
- Isolated farms and residential settlements
- Kingsmill Reservoir with fringe of riparian woodland
- Busy roads - MARR route
- Industrial and commercial development to north and west

3.4 Landscape Baseline of the Site

Geology, Landform and Drainage

3.4.1 The two plot that make the Site are situated on either side of a local hill - Hamilton Hill. The wider topography of the area is part of a broader undulating landscape that transitions from relatively higher areas to the south and west around Sutton in Ashfield and Kirkby-in-Ashfield to lower areas around Mansfield to the north east.

3.4.2 The site does not contain any significant water features, but its proximity to Kings Mill Reservoir to the north and the River Maun to the north east suggests local drainage patterns may be influenced by the reservoir and associated water management infrastructure.

Landscape and Ecology Features

3.4.3 The Site is largely open and consists of arable farmland with very limited tree cover. Hedgerows are present along some of the field boundaries, however are relatively sparse and fragmented in places. There are no significant woodland blocks within the Site, although some scattered trees are visible along field edges. A small area of grassland with scrubby vegetation exists on the central hill between the two plots, forming a distinctive, local characteristic.

3.4.4 The Site is heavily influenced by its proximity to infrastructure and industrial land uses. The northern boundary of the Site is defined by a major road (A617), which separates the Site from a large Business Park which comprises a large commercial and light industrial area featuring warehouses, parking areas and infrastructure. The residential areas of Mansfield and Sutton in Ashfield are located respectively to the north and west.

3.4.5 To the south the landscape transitions into a more rural setting with agricultural fields, scattered

farmsteads and hedgerows interspersed with pockets of woodland and urban development.

3.4.6 There is a small cluster of houses in between the plots and running along the southern edge of the Site. To the south west, a large solar farm has been recently established, contributing to the changing landscape character. Further south, the land rises into rolling hills, reinforcing the natural topographical transition from higher ground in the south to lower elevations in the north.

Settlement Pattern

3.4.7 The Site is positioned between Sutton in Ashfield and Mansfield, two settlements that have increasingly merged due to infill development along key transport corridors. The A38, A617, and A6075 provide direct connections between the towns, with facilities such as Kings Mill Hospital and superstores acting as unifying elements. The settlement pattern is now predominantly urban with industrial and commercial premises forming a dominant land-use characteristic.

Transport and Public Rights of Way

3.4.8 The Site is well-connected via major road infrastructure, particularly the A617, which runs along its northern edge. Hamilton Road to the north also contributes to accessibility within the local area. While the Site is in close proximity to major transport routes, the presence of pedestrian or recreational access routes immediately around the Site is limited.

Built Heritage

3.4.9 Hamilton Hill is a Scheduled Monument. The Railway Viaduct, a grade II listed building is located to the north, adjacent to the Reservoire. The wider area contains a mix of historic and modern developments, with listed buildings and other heritage assets in both Sutton in Ashfield and Mansfield contributing to the overall character.

3.5 Landscape Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity to Change

3.5.1 An assessment of landscape designations is the starting point in understanding landscape value, as well as undesignated landscapes and individual elements/components such as trees, buildings or hedgerows.

3.5.2 An explanation of the categories is included in the Appendix Method Statement.

NCA 49: Sherwood

3.5.3 The landscape value of NCA 49: Sherwood is assessed as medium. While it does not inlcude areas designated as National Parks or National Landscapes, it holds significant ecological, historical, and cultural importance. The area contains Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve, internationally recognised for its ancient wood pasture and veteran trees, alongside designated

sites such as Birklands and Bilhaugh Special Area of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and Local Nature Reserves. The landscape has strong cultural associations with Robin Hood, large estate parklands, and remnants of its coal mining heritage. Although some parts have been altered by agriculture, urban expansion and past industrial activity, the overall character remains distinctive, with a mix of broadleaved and coniferous woodland, heathland, and historic parklands. Urban areas such as Mansfield, Worksop, and Ollerton are located around the peripheries, influencing the landscape through settlement expansion, infrastructure, and transport corridors.

3.5.4 The landscape susceptibility to change is assessed as medium. The woodland and heathland areas, particularly those with ancient trees and veteran oaks, are highly sensitive to physical change and would struggle to accommodate development without significant effects. Some areas, including former industrial sites, farmland, and sections of conifer plantations, have greater capacity to absorb change due to previous modifications. Urban edges and transport corridors are already influenced by development, making them more capable of accommodating change, but expansion into more open or wooded areas would impact the overall character. The rolling landform and woodland structure provide some screening, but large-scale changes, particularly those affecting skylines, historic parkland, or rural settings, would be more disruptive.

3.5.5 The landscape sensitivity to change is considered medium. With a medium landscape value and medium susceptibility, the area can accommodate some change, particularly in already modified sections such as urban fringes. However, developments that affect ancient woodland, parkland, or cultural heritage assets would be more disruptive. Urban expansion and infrastructure projects could erode tranquillity and visual cohesion if not carefully managed, while changes in agricultural practices, woodland management, and the restoration of natural habitats could enhance the landscape.

LCA 47 Coxmoor Wooded Farmland

3.5.6 The landscape value of LCA 47 Coxmoor Wooded Farmlands is considered medium. The area presents a mix of managed and semi-natural landscapes, with notable features such as Coxmoor Golf Course, Kingsmill Reservoir, and remnants of heathland, acid grassland, and woodland. These elements contribute to biodiversity and ecological value, with parts of the area designated as SINCs. However, the presence of industrial and commercial development to the north and west, as well as the impact of the Mansfield and Ashfield Regeneration Route (MARR), has altered the landscape character. While the central pasture areas retain elements of traditional farmland, development pressures have introduced fragmentation. The overall landscape maintains coherence but has been modified by infrastructure expansion and land-use change.

3.5.7 The susceptibility of the landscape to change is medium. The gently undulating topography

and established landscape features, such as woodland patches, hedgerows, and the reservoir, provide some resilience to change. However, the remaining heathland and acid grassland areas, particularly within the golf course, are sensitive to further alteration. The presence of the MARR route, industrial and commercial development to the north and west, and past quarrying activity have already altered parts of the landscape, creating an environment where further development can be integrated without significantly affecting the overall character. Some sections, such as the disused sand quarry and areas of improved pasture, may have a greater capacity to accommodate change with appropriate mitigation.

3.5.8 The overall landscape sensitivity is medium. The area has already experienced significant change due to infrastructure development, industrial expansion, and past quarrying activity, which has influenced its character and reduced its vulnerability to further change. While elements such as woodland, heathland, and pasture contribute to the sense of place, they exist alongside more developed and modified areas that can accommodate further change.

The Site and immediate surroundings

3.5.9 The landscape value of the Site is considered to be medium. While it retains some rural characteristics, including arable farmland and hedgerows, it is heavily influenced by surrounding infrastructure and industrial land uses. The presence of the A617, adjacent industrial and commercial developments and the proximity to large-scale warehouse facilities have introduced a more urbanised character. The southern boundary has a semi-rural quality, with smaller agricultural fields, scattered farmsteads, and hedgerows, but this transitions into a more developed setting towards the north and west. The presence of Hamilton Hill as a Scheduled Monument adds a degree of cultural and historical significance, but overall, the landscape has been significantly altered and does not hold high scenic or ecological value.

3.5.10 The landscape susceptibility to change is considered to be low. The Site has an open character with limited tree cover or significant ecological features, making it more capable of accommodating change without the loss of valued landscape elements. The existing urban influences, particularly the major road network and surrounding industrial areas, further reduce its sensitivity to new development. The nearby presence of Hamilton Hill as a Scheduled Monument is noted; however, the existing topography shields this feature from adjacent development.

3.5.11 The Site's sensitivity is therefore considered to be low.

4 Visual Baseline Conditions

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A summary of the Site's visibility in the local landscape is set out below. The viewpoints are represented by photographs which are included within the Appendix and described in the text.

4.1.2 Viewpoint locations are located on Appendix - Figure 3 - Viewpoint Locations.

4.1.3 The viewpoints were checked and photographs taken on 9th March 2025, on a day with medium visibility representing winter views.

4.1.4 The Visual Baseline includes an assessment of the sensitivity of the visual receptors (the people viewing) to change. Typical criteria used in making judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors is given in the Visual Assessment Methodology in the Appendix document.

4.1.5 Baseline studies and field visits have identified key locations of relevance to this assessment:

- King's Mill Reservoir footpath
- Bridleway BW21
- Public right of way FP65
- Public right of way FP134
- Cauldwell Road
- Hamilton Road
- Coxmoor Road
- Skegby Lane
- A617

4.1.6 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment is a stage beyond LVIA and focuses exclusively on private views and private visual amenity. With respect to visual impact, the focus of LVIA (and GLVIA 3 guidelines) is on public views and public visual amenity. Hence assessment of views from residential and private properties is not undertaken as part of the LVIA.

4.1.7 The visual effects on properties around the Site would vary according to their distance, orientation, angle of view, garden boundaries and structures, vegetation and fenestration. Although assessment of the visual impact of the development on individual dwellings does not

form part of this report, some assumptions can be made from nearby viewpoints and where possible this has been considered and noted within the individual viewpoint analysis.

4.2 Visual Baseline, Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity to Change

4.2.1 Viewpoint 1 is photographed from Bridleway BW21 at an altitude of 152 m, looking south west towards the Site, which is not visible in the view. The photograph shows a narrow, winding lane bordered by a combination of dwellings, hedgerows, and mature vegetation. On the left side, a two-storey residential building with a brick facade is partially visible, set behind a low stone wall with overgrown vegetation. On the right, a dense hedge and a wooden utility pole frame the road, with a brick wall and metal bollards marking the entrance to a private driveway or footway. In the background, the road continues through an enclosed corridor of trees and hedgerows, with additional built structures partially visible beyond the vegetation. The terrain is gently undulating, with the landscape beyond the immediate foreground consisting of mixed deciduous and evergreen trees. The visual amenity is characteristic of a small lane with a combination of built and natural elements, providing a semi-enclosed setting with glimpses of the wider landscape beyond. The associated value is therefore medium, as the bridleway contributes to local recreational use, but the view is not widely recognised or designated for its scenic quality. Receptors would include bridleway users, whose attention is generally focused on the surrounding landscape as part of their activity. The susceptibility to change is high, as users of public rights of way typically have a strong engagement with their surroundings. Receptors are considered to have a high sensitivity to change.

4.2.2 Viewpoint 2 is photographed from the King's Mill Reservoir footpath at an altitude of 133 m AOD, looking south towards the Site, which is not visible in the view. The photograph shows a large body of water in the foreground, with scattered vegetation along the shoreline. In the middle ground, the opposite bank of the reservoir is lined with a mix of deciduous trees and built structures, including a boathouse with a pitched roof and an adjacent car park. Further to the left, industrial or commercial buildings are partially visible, integrated into the treeline. The background consists of gently rising land covered with a mix of trees, open grassland, and low-lying development. The visual amenity is defined by the open expanse of water, with a mix of natural and built elements forming the wider setting. The associated value is therefore medium, as the reservoir is a recognised recreational area but is not designated for its scenic quality at a national level. Receptors would include recreational users, such as walkers and water-based activity participants, whose engagement with the landscape forms part of their experience. The susceptibility to change is high, as these users are likely to have a strong visual appreciation of their surroundings. Receptors are considered to have a high sensitivity to change.

4.2.3 Viewpoint 3 is photographed from the King's Mill Reservoir footpath at an altitude of 133 m AOD, looking south towards the Site, which is not visible in the view.. The photograph shows a section

of the reservoir in the foreground, with a concrete embankment on the left where individuals are present. The water contains scattered waterfowl, and the reservoir extends towards the middle ground, where it is bordered by a mix of deciduous trees and shrubs. A small footbridge is visible to the left, leading towards a vegetated area with hedgerows and trees. In the background, the land rises gently with additional tree cover and some built structures partially visible beyond the treeline. The visual amenity is characterised by an open water setting with natural and built elements, forming part of a recreational landscape. The associated value is therefore medium, as the reservoir is a recognised local recreational asset but does not have a national-level designation for scenic quality. Receptors would include recreational users, such as walkers and visitors engaging with the water environment. Their engagement with the landscape forms an important part of their experience. The susceptibility to change is high, as these users are likely to have a strong visual appreciation of their surroundings. Receptors are considered to have a high sensitivity to change.

4.2.4 Viewpoint 4 is photographed from public right of way FP134 at an altitude of 151 m AOD, looking east towards the Site, which is not visible in the view. The photograph shows an open grassed area in the foreground, forming part of a parkland setting. A surfaced footpath runs along the left side of the image, bordered by mature deciduous trees, some of which have bare branches, suggesting a seasonal variation in tree cover. The middle ground consists of scattered trees and areas of maintained grassland, with gentle undulations in the terrain. In the background, the land continues to slope downwards, with a mixture of woodland and open areas visible beyond. The visual amenity is defined by an open parkland landscape with mature tree cover and a sense of depth created by the sloping landform. The associated value is therefore medium, as the parkland provides an important recreational resource but is not designated for its scenic or heritage significance at a national level. Receptors would include park users, such as walkers and recreational visitors, who are likely to have a general appreciation of the landscape as part of their visit. The susceptibility to change is high, as the setting contributes to the overall recreational experience. Receptors are considered to have a high sensitivity to change.

4.2.5 Viewpoint 5 is photographed from Cauldwell Road at an altitude of 156 m AOD, looking north towards the Site, where plot W is fully visible in the view. The viewpoint depicts a ploughed field with a hedgerow and patches of bracken along the roadside. In the middle ground, a series of industrial buildings with flat roofs and light-coloured facades are visible, forming part of the business park north of Hamilton Road. The background features a rising landform with extensive residential development (Mansfield. A taller structure is visible on the ridgeline, likely a communications mast. The visual amenity is defined by a combination of agricultural, industrial, and residential elements, creating a transitional landscape between rural and urban areas. The associated value is therefore low, as the view does not contain notable scenic or designated heritage features. Receptors would include motorists and residents, with motorists primarily focused on the road ahead and residents having variable levels of engagement with the view.

The susceptibility to change is medium, as residential receptors may have oblique or intermittent views, while motorists' attention is generally directed elsewhere. Receptors are considered to have a low sensitivity to change.

4.2.6 Viewpoint 6 is photographed from Hamilton Road at an altitude of 141 m AOD, looking south towards the Site, where plot W is fully visible in the view. The photograph shows an expansive ploughed agricultural field in the foreground, bordered by a low, neatly trimmed hedgerow to the left and a more irregular, partially overgrown hedgerow with a wooden fence post on the right. The middle ground features a large industrial or agricultural building with a pitched roof, partially screened by a line of small trees and shrubs. In the background, additional tree cover and low-rise buildings are visible, with a gentle rise in landform. The visual amenity is characterised by an agricultural landscape with industrial influences, creating a mixed setting of open farmland and built development. The associated value is therefore low, as the view is not designated or recognised for its scenic or cultural importance. Receptors would include motorists, whose attention is predominantly focused on the road ahead rather than the wider landscape. The susceptibility to change is low, as views are incidental to their primary activity. Receptors are considered to have a low sensitivity to change.

4.2.7 Viewpoint 7 is photographed from the A617 at an altitude of 140 m AOD, looking west towards the Site, where glimpses of plot E are possible in the view. The photograph shows a multi-lane road in the foreground. A grass verge separates the carriageway from an embankment, which is covered with mixed deciduous vegetation, including small trees and shrubs. A wooden post-and-rail fence runs parallel to the road at the top of the embankment, partially obscured by the vegetation. The background is dominated by the vegetated embankment, with no significant built development visible. The visual amenity is defined by a transport corridor with limited visual interest, enclosed by roadside vegetation. The associated value is therefore low, as the view is not designated or recognised for its scenic or cultural importance. Receptors would include motorists, whose primary focus is on the road ahead, with only incidental views of the surrounding landscape. The susceptibility to change is low, as the view is not a key aspect of the driving experience. Receptors are considered to have a low sensitivity to change.

4.2.8 Viewpoint 8 is photographed from Cauldwell Road at an altitude of 147 m AOD, looking north-east towards the Site, where plot E is partially visible in the view. The photograph shows a road in the foreground, bordered by a grass verge and an untrimmed hedgerow with deciduous shrubs and bracken. The middle ground consists of an expansive, gently sloping agricultural landscape with open fields, separated by hedgerows and occasional trees. Some built structures are visible in the background, along with a higher landform covered in a mix of grassland and trees. The topography is gently undulating, contributing to the open character of the landscape. The visual amenity is defined by an open agricultural landscape where nevertheless glimpsed views of surrounding infrastructure are possible and the noise from the A617 reduces tranquility. The

sense of connectivity to the wider countryside is reduced along Cauldwell Road. The associated value is therefore medium, as it contributes to the wider countryside setting but does not have any formal designation for its scenic or heritage significance. Receptors would include motorists, whose primary focus is on the road ahead, with only passing or incidental views of the landscape. The susceptibility to change is low, as the view is not a primary part of their journey experience. However, several residential receptors are also present in the vicinity. Receptors are therefore considered to have a combined medium sensitivity to change.

4.2.9 Viewpoint 9A is photographed from Cauldwell Road at an altitude of 152 m AOD, looking west towards the Site, where glimpses of plot W are visible in the view. The photograph shows a narrow roadside verge in the foreground, with a mixture of deciduous trees, shrubs, and bramble undergrowth partially enclosing the view. A trimmed hedgerow runs parallel to the road, separating the foreground from the middle ground, where a large industrial or agricultural building with a pitched roof is visible. Utility poles and fencing are present, indicating infrastructure associated with the built environment. In the background is a flat, open agricultural field, with additional structures also visible beyond. The visual amenity is defined by a combination of rural and industrial elements, with a partially enclosed foreground transitioning into an open setting with large-scale buildings. The associated value is therefore low, as the view does not contain notable scenic qualities or designated heritage features. Receptors would include motorists, whose primary focus is on the road ahead, with only passing views of the landscape as well as local residents. The susceptibility to change is therefore medium. Receptors are considered to have a medium sensitivity to change.

4.2.10 Viewpoint 9B is photographed from Cauldwell Road at an altitude of 150 m AOD, looking east towards the Site, where glimpses of plot E are visible in the view. The photograph shows a foreground of dense, unmaintained vegetation, including brambles, shrubs, and deciduous trees with bare branches. A trimmed hedgerow runs horizontally across the image, separating the immediate foreground from the middle ground. Beyond the hedgerow, open ploughed agricultural fields extend towards the horizon, with a few scattered trees breaking the skyline. In the background, industrial buildings with light-coloured roofs are partially visible through gaps in the vegetation. The visual amenity is defined by a mix of natural and agricultural elements, with distant built structures partially screened by vegetation. The associated value is therefore low, as the view does not contain designated or culturally significant features. Receptors would include motorists, whose primary focus is on the road ahead, with only passing views of the landscape as well as local residents. The susceptibility to change is therefore medium. Receptors are considered to have a medium sensitivity to change.

4.2.11 Viewpoint 10 is photographed from Coxmoor Road at an altitude of 157 m AOD, looking north towards the Site, which is not visible in the view. The photograph shows a two-lane road in the foreground, flanked by trimmed hedgerows on both sides. The middle ground consists

of agricultural fields and areas of open grassland with a gentle undulating landform. The background features the urban area of Mansfield, with clusters of residential and commercial buildings extending across the horizon. Industrial or warehouse-type structures are also visible in the distance. The visual amenity is defined by a mix of rural and urban elements, with open fields in the foreground transitioning to built development in the background. The associated value is therefore low, as the view is not designated for its scenic quality and includes urban infrastructure. Receptors would include motorists, whose primary focus is on the road ahead, with only incidental views of the surrounding landscape. The susceptibility to change is low, as the view is not a key aspect of their journey experience. Receptors are considered to have a low sensitivity to change.

4.2.12 Viewpoint 11 is photographed from public right of way FP85 at an altitude of 173 m AOD, looking north-east towards the Site, which is not visible in the view. The photograph shows a well-trodden footpath in the foreground, cutting through an area of rough grassland with scattered deciduous trees and shrubs. The middle ground contains a mix of woodland and industrial development, with large warehouse-style buildings that have flat, light-coloured roofs. Beyond this, a residential area (Mansfield) with pitched rooftops is visible, set within a gently rolling landscape. The background consists of open countryside with a mixture of agricultural land and hedgerows, extending towards the horizon. The visual amenity is defined by a mix of natural and developed elements, with an elevated vantage point offering extensive views over the landscape. The associated value is therefore medium, as the view provides a sense of openness and connection to the surrounding countryside but is not designated for its scenic or heritage significance. Receptors would include recreational users, such as walkers, whose experience is closely linked to the surrounding landscape. The susceptibility to change is high, as their engagement with the view is an integral part of their activity. Receptors are considered to have a high sensitivity to change.

4.2.13 Viewpoint 12 is photographed from Skegby Lane at an altitude of 166 m AOD, looking south towards the Site, where plot W is visible in the distance. In the middle ground, additional residential properties with similar pitched roofs are interspersed with trees. Beyond the housing, a body of water (King's Mill) is partially visible, framed by deciduous tree cover. The background consists of a gently rolling landscape with open fields, woodland, and scattered buildings extending towards the horizon. The visual amenity is defined by a mix of residential, natural, and open rural elements, with a wide view over the surrounding landscape. The associated value is therefore medium, as the viewpoint provides an elevated aspect with a sense of openness but is not designated for its scenic or heritage importance. Receptors would include motorists and residents, with residents having potential for prolonged views and motorists experiencing only passing visibility. The susceptibility to change is medium, as residential receptors may have a degree of sensitivity to alterations in the wider landscape, while motorists' views are incidental Receptors are considered to have a combined medium sensitivity to change.

5 Development Proposals

5.1 The Proposed Development

5.1.1 A series of drawings explain the layout of the proposed solar panels and associated infrastructure, and this LVIA should be read in conjunction with these plans.

5.1.2 Both plots would be secured by fencing of standard design supported by wooden posts of approx. 2m in height, with access gates as required. An access track to the north would lead to plot W. A transformer station, DNO and customer substation and store room would also be located to the northern edge of plot W. Plot E would incorporate an access track along the south eastern edge, where a transformer station would also be located.

5.1.3 The proposal would include a series of solar panels, 2,919m high at the back, spaced 2.5m apart and set at 25 degrees.The panels would be of fixed orientation and located in rows aligned east to west to represent a coherent and relatively simple layout.

5.1.4 The proposed development would use a limited palette of both colours and materials that would be typically self-finishing. The photovoltaic panels are designed to absorb the light rather than reflect it and their colour would appear recessive in the landscape.

6 Potential Impacts and Effects

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section identifies the potential physical changes, or impacts, to the landscape or visual resource as a result of the proposed development over various stages.

6.1.2 The identified impacts and their effects have been used to inform the landscape mitigation proposals.

6.2 Potential Impacts during Construction

6.2.1 During the construction phase, landscape and visual impacts would potentially arise from:

- Site set up.
- Construction of the access tracks and fencing, installation of the panels and associated development.
- General increased activity resulting from construction works and movement of equipment and plant.

6.2.2 In order to mitigate landscape impacts during construction the following measures would be required:

- Measures to ensure efficient programming and planned timing of works to minimise local disruption.
- Measures to ensure construction operations do not conflict with conservation interests such as the seasonal requirements of flora and fauna.
- Protection of existing vegetation to be retained in accordance with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations'.

6.3 Potential Impacts and Effects on Completion

6.3.1 It should be noted that the effects may be beneficial or adverse.

Landscape Impacts and Effects

- Changes to the setting and landscape character of the local area resulting from the introduction of changes to the built scale and form within the Character Areas.
- Introduction of a landscaped scheme comprising native seasonal planting including hedgerow and tree planting.
- Alterations to the ecological balance/value of the Site.

Visual Impacts and Effects

- Changes in the composition and quality of views from surrounding viewpoints, including Public Rights of Ways and roads.

7 Mitigation Measures

7.1 Design Considerations

7.1.1 The proposed mitigation measures aim to minimise or eliminate adverse effects of development and to provide the best solution for the benefit of the local landscape:

- Offsets from field boundary vegetation to avoid any impacts on the Root Protection Zones of retained vegetation (field boundary hedgerows and trees), and additional 1m offset from Category A trees. The relatively wide buffer also provides a generous maintenance zone and helps avoid any long-term management risks, which could result in the need for future tree works.

- Length of existing boundary hedgerows to the south and west to be managed to minimum 3m winter height and any gaps to be filled with a mix of hawthorn, hazel and field maple. Tree planting located within new hedgerow at 30m spacing.

- Length of existing boundary hedgerow to the north to be managed to minimum 4m winter height and any gaps to be filled with a mix of hawthorn, hazel and field maple. Tree planting

located within new hedgerow at 10m spacing (locations outside power cable).

- Native hedge planting, tree planting and shrub belt planting to northern and eastern boundaries.

7.1.2 Mitigation planting would be completed within the first available planting season following construction.

8 Assessment of Landscape Effects

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 For this assessment, it is assumed that Year 1 will be at completion of the Site layout development proposals and without maturity of the mitigation planting. It is assumed the mitigation planting will have sufficient maturity by Year 10 to provide effective mitigation for the development.

8.1.2 A description of the likely landscape and visual effects are set out below, identifying the sensitivity of the receptors, the magnitude of change and the resulting scale of effect.

8.1.3 The Landscape and Visual Assessment Methodology included in the Appendix provides an explanation and definition of criteria and classifications used.

8.2 The Landscape Effects

8.2.1 An assessment of the effect on each selected representative landscape receptor is set out below. Refer to Section 3 - Landscape Baseline Conditions for details and a description of each landscape type.

8.2.2 The following material considerations have guided the landscape assessment:

- Sensitivity of the landscape receptor to the type of change arising from the development proposal elements.
- The value attached to the receptor for example whether they be international, national, regional, local authority or local community.
- The magnitude of effect - the size and scale of the effect, the geographical extent of the area that will be affected and the duration of the effect and its reversibility.
- Whether the effect is adverse or beneficial.

8.2.3 Cumulative Landscape Effects are assessed in relation to each of the landscape receptors.

8.2.4 The National Character Area (NCA) is assessed individually below, followed by the Local Character Area.

8.3 National Character Area (NCA)

NCA 49: Sherwood

8.3.1 At the national scale, the Sherwood NCA encompasses a broad, varied landscape with extensive areas of woodland, heathland, and arable farmland, alongside historic features and urban influences.

8.3.2 The proposed solar farm development, while covering a relatively limited geographical extent within this broader NCA, introduces a new land use within an area already subject to significant landscape modifications. The introduction of solar panels, security fencing, and associated infrastructure would result in a minor alteration to the overall landscape fabric. However, given that the Sherwood NCA already incorporates a mosaic of land uses, including former colliery sites, industrial developments, and transport infrastructure, the solar farm would not constitute a fundamental departure from the existing landscape character.

8.3.3 The presence of nearby industrial estates and the adjacent A617 further reduce the degree of perceived change at the NCA scale. Mitigation measures, including reinforced hedgerow planting would enhance landscape integration over time. Given the medium sensitivity of the NCA and the very minor alteration to its overall character, the magnitude of change is assessed as negligible, leading to a neutral effect at Year 1 and Year 10.

8.4 Local Character Area

LCA 47: Coxmoor Wooded Farmlands

8.4.1 The Coxmoor Wooded Farmlands LCA is defined by its gently undulating topography, agricultural land use, and interspersed woodland. The proposed development would introduce solar arrays, retaining the majority of the land cover but introducing built elements into this setting. While the field structure would remain, the introduction of solar panels would contrast with the traditional open farmland, reducing the perceived agricultural function of the landscape.

8.4.2 The LCA has already been subject to modification due to the presence of the MARR route, industrial and commercial developments and a nearby existing solar farm. While these features contribute to an evolving landscape character, the proposal would not introduce a new land use in the LCA but rather contribute to a minor intensification of this use. The presence of mature vegetation and strategic mitigation planting would help limit the broader landscape perception of change.

8.4.3 Given the medium sensitivity of the LCA and the low scale of alteration to its character, the magnitude of change is assessed as low, leading to a slight adverse effect at Year 1, reducing as mitigation planting matures to slight adverse at Year 10.

8.5 Local Site Context

8.5.1 At the site-specific level, the proposed development would result in the most noticeable change. The introduction of rows of photovoltaic panels, security fencing, and associated infrastructure would significantly alter the site's character. The open, arable fields currently contribute to a sense of openness which would be disrupted by the presence of structured, linear solar arrays.

8.5.2 In Year 1 the site would exhibit a stark contrast to its former agricultural use, with the introduction of built elements representing a change. However the Site is already influenced by adjacent industrial land uses and major transport infrastructure and the proposed change would not be entirely out of character.

8.5.3 The surrounding hedgerows, although present, would not initially provide substantial screening, making the development more apparent in the local setting. However, by Year 10, as hedgerow planting matures, the panels would become increasingly integrated into the site, reducing their prominence and enhancing the sense of enclosure.

8.5.4 Given the medium sensitivity of the site and the moderate changes in a localised area, the magnitude of change is assessed as medium, leading to a moderate adverse effect at Year 1, reducing to slight adverse at Year 10 as mitigation measures take effect.

9 Assessment of Visual Effects

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 An assessment of the effect on each selected representative viewpoint is set out below. Refer to Section 4 of this document - Visual Baseline Conditions for details and a description of the existing view from each viewpoint.

Refer to Appendix Figure 3 for viewpoint locations and Viewpoint Photographs.

9.1.2 The methodology in the Appendix provides an explanation and typical criteria used in the assessment.

9.2 The Visual Effects

9.2.1 In assessing the effect of the development on the visual amenity, the following factors have been taken into consideration:

- The greater the distance, the less detail is observable and the more difficult it is to distinguish the development from its background, diminishing potential impact.
- When a viewpoint is lower than the development, it is more likely to be viewed against the

sky, increasing the effect. When the viewpoint is more elevated than the development it is viewed against a backdrop, which may diminish the effect.

- The greater the proportion of the view occupied by the development the greater the effect. Colour and form can increase or diminish effect, by drawing the eye or providing camouflage.
- The degree to which the development is in character with the context, whether urban or rural.
- Features in the view such as landform or vegetation which frame, mask, filter or highlight the particular view of the development.
- Clarity of the air and the angle and direction of the sun at different times of day and year can affect visibility.
- Whether the effect is adverse or beneficial.

9.2.2 In views from Viewpoint 1, the Site is not visible due to the enclosed nature of the lane and the presence of built structures and vegetation. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a high sensitivity to change, due to the recreational value of the bridleway and the high susceptibility of users who engage with the landscape as part of their activity. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered negligible, as the development would not be visible. With matured mitigation planting, this will remain at negligible magnitude by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be neutral and by Year 10 neutral.

9.2.3 In views from Viewpoint 2, the Site is not visible due to intervening landform, vegetation, and built structures along the reservoir's edge. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a high sensitivity to change, due to the recreational and aesthetic value of the reservoir and the high susceptibility of users engaged in leisure activities. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered negligible, as the development would not be visible. With matured mitigation planting, this will remain at negligible magnitude by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be neutral and by Year 10 neutral.

9.2.4 In views from Viewpoint 3, the Site is not visible due to the embankment and tree cover along the reservoir edge. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a high sensitivity to change, due to the recreational and scenic value of the reservoir. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered negligible, as the development would not be visible. With matured mitigation planting, this will remain at negligible magnitude by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be neutral and by Year 10 neutral.

9.2.5 In views from Viewpoint 4, the Site is not visible due to the enclosed parkland setting with mature trees and sloping terrain. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a high sensitivity to change, due to the recreational and aesthetic value of the footpath and park. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered negligible, as the development would not be visible. With matured mitigation planting, this will remain at negligible magnitude by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be neutral and by Year 10 neutral.

9.2.6 In views from Viewpoint 5, parcel W of the Site is fully visible in the middle ground as an open ploughed field. Industrial buildings and infrastructure are also present in the view, contributing to a mixed agricultural-industrial character. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a low sensitivity to change, as motorists experience the view incidentally while residents may have a more prolonged engagement. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered medium, as the solar farm would introduce a noticeable change to the rural landscape. The proposed hedgerow enhancements would soften this impact, and by Year 10, the magnitude of change would reduce to low as vegetation establishes. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be slight adverse, reducing to neutral by Year 10.

9.2.7 In views from Viewpoint 6, parcel W is fully visible as an open agricultural field. The field is bordered by hedgerows, and a large industrial/agricultural building is visible in the middle ground, contributing to a mixed rural-industrial character. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a low sensitivity to change, as motorists primarily experience the view incidentally. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered medium, as the introduction of solar panels and associated infrastructure would represent a noticeable change within the view. However, proposed hedgerow enhancements and planting along the site boundary would gradually reduce visibility, bringing the magnitude of change down to low by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be slight adverse, reducing to neutral by Year 10.

9.2.8 In views from Viewpoint 7, glimpses of parcel E are possible beyond roadside vegetation. The view is dominated by the multi-lane road, with embankments and vegetation providing partial screening. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a low sensitivity to change, as motorists are primarily focused on the road ahead. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered low, as the development would be only partially visible. Proposed mitigation planting along the boundaries will further reduce visibility over time, lowering the magnitude to negligible by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be slight adverse and by Year 10 it would reduce to neutral.

9.2.9 In views from Viewpoint 8, parcel E is partially visible within a gently sloping agricultural landscape. The scene is framed by hedgerows and scattered trees, with some built structures in the background. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a medium sensitivity to change, as motorists experience the view only incidentally, however residential receptors are also present. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered medium, as the solar farm would introduce a noticeable change within a mixed agricultural and light-industrial setting. Proposed hedgerow enhancements would reduce visibility over time, bringing the magnitude down to low by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be moderate adverse, and by Year 10 it would reduce to slight adverse.

9.2.10 In views from Viewpoint 9A, glimpses of parcel W are visible through vegetation and hedgerows.

The foreground consists of a trimmed hedgerow and roadside verge, with a large industrial or agricultural building in the middle ground. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a medium sensitivity to change. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered low, as the development would be partially visible but would blend with existing infrastructure. Mitigation planting would further reduce visibility, lowering the magnitude to negligible by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be slight adverse, and by Year 10 it would reduce to neutral.

9.2.11 In views from Viewpoint 9B, glimpses of parcel E are visible through hedgerows and vegetation. The foreground consists of brambles and shrubs, with open ploughed fields extending beyond. Industrial buildings are partially visible in the background. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a medium sensitivity to change. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered low, as the development would introduce a minor visual change. Mitigation planting will further screen the panels over time, bringing the magnitude to negligible by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be slight adverse, reducing to neutral by Year 10.

9.2.12 In views from Viewpoint 10, the Site is not visible due to topography and intervening hedgerows. The foreground consists of trimmed hedgerows and agricultural fields, with urban development in the background. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a low sensitivity to change, as motorists experience the view in passing. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered negligible, as the development would not be visible. With matured mitigation planting, this will remain at negligible magnitude by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be neutral, and by Year 10 it would remain neutral.

9.2.13 In views from Viewpoint 11, the Site is not visible due to woodland and intervening landform. The foreground consists of rough grassland and scattered trees, with extensive views over the surrounding landscape. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a high sensitivity to change, as walkers actively engage with the landscape. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered negligible, as the development would not be visible. With matured mitigation planting, this will remain at negligible magnitude by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be neutral, and by Year 10 it would remain neutral.

9.2.14 In views from Viewpoint 12, parcel W is visible in the distance, with residential properties and woodland in the middle ground. The background consists of rolling agricultural land. Receptors in this location have been assessed as having a medium sensitivity to change, as residents may have prolonged exposure to the view, while motorists experience it in passing. The magnitude of effect at Year 1 is considered low, as the solar farm would introduce a noticeable but minor change within the wider landscape. Mitigation planting along site boundaries would help integrate the development, reducing the magnitude of change to low by Year 10. The measure of visual effect at Year 1 would be slight adverse, reducing to neutral by Year 10.

10 Policy Framework

10.1 Ashfield Local Plan Review 2002

- *Policy EV2 - Countryside*
- *Policy EV4 - Mature Landscape Area*

10.2 Ashfield Local Plan 2023 - 2040: Regulation 19

- *Policy EV2: Countryside*
- *Policy EV6: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows*
- *Policy EV10: Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character*

11 Summary and Conclusion

11.1 Site location

11.1.1 The application site is located at postcode NG17 5LB and consists of two parcels: Plot W at OS grid reference SK 51628 58739, at an altitude of 147m AOD, and Plot E at OS grid reference SK 52144 58807, at 150m AOD. The surrounding landscape includes a mix of agricultural land, industrial estates, and major transport routes, with the A617 running along the northern boundary. The area is characterised by slightly undulating topography, sparse tree cover, and fragmented hedgerows, with urban influences from nearby Mansfield and Sutton in Ashfield.

11.2 Development Proposals

11.2.1 The proposed solar farm will introduce photovoltaic panels set in rows with associated infrastructure, including security fencing, transformer stations, and access tracks. The panels will be aligned east to west, with mitigation measures including enhanced hedgerow planting to integrate the development into the landscape over time.

11.3 Landscape Effects Summary

11.3.1 At the national level, the site lies within National Character Area (NCA) 49: Sherwood, a gently rolling sandstone landscape with a mix of woodland, farmland, and urban influences. The introduction of solar panels and associated infrastructure will cause a minor alteration to the landscape fabric, but given the existing industrial and transport influences, the magnitude of change is negligible, leading to a neutral effect.

11.3.2 At the local level, the site falls within the Coxmoor Wooded Farmlands Local Character Area (LCA). The proposed development will introduce built elements into an agricultural setting,

however, due to the existing urban influences and industrial presence, the overall magnitude of change is low, resulting in a slight adverse effect at Year 1, which reduces as mitigation planting matures.

11.3.3 At the site level, the change is more pronounced due to the introduction of solar arrays and fencing. The magnitude of change is high, leading to a moderate adverse effect at Year 1, reducing to slight adverse by Year 10 as hedgerow planting matures and integrates the development into the setting.

11.4 Visual Effects Summary

11.4.1 From public rights of way, such as Bridleway BW21 and King's Mill Reservoir, the site is largely screened, resulting in a neutral effect.

11.4.2 From Cauldwell Road and Hamilton Road, the solar farm is visible, particularly in the early years. The magnitude of change is medium, with effects ranging from slight to moderate adverse at Year 1, reducing to neutral or slight adverse at Year 10 with planting mitigation.

11.4.3 From the A617, only glimpses of the site are visible due to embankments and vegetation, resulting in a slight adverse effect that diminishes over time.

11.4.4 From residential areas and elevated viewpoints such as Skegby Lane, the panels are visible in the distance, leading to a low to medium magnitude of change, with initial slight adverse effects reducing to neutral by Year 10.

11.5 Conclusion

11.5.1 The proposed solar farm will introduce a noticeable change at the site level but is in keeping with the evolving landscape, which includes industrial and infrastructure developments. The wider landscape effects at the NCA and LCA levels are minor due to the presence of existing urban influences. While there will be initial visual impacts from select viewpoints, the proposed mitigation, including hedgerow reinforcement, will significantly reduce the long-term effects. By Year 10, the development will be better integrated, leading to an overall slight adverse to neutral impact on both landscape character and visual amenity.

11.5.2 With the benefit of sensitive design and the integration of the proposed mitigation measures, although there would be a residual change to the current landscape character, it is not considered that overall the landscape and visual effect of the scheme would be detrimental to the landscape.

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