

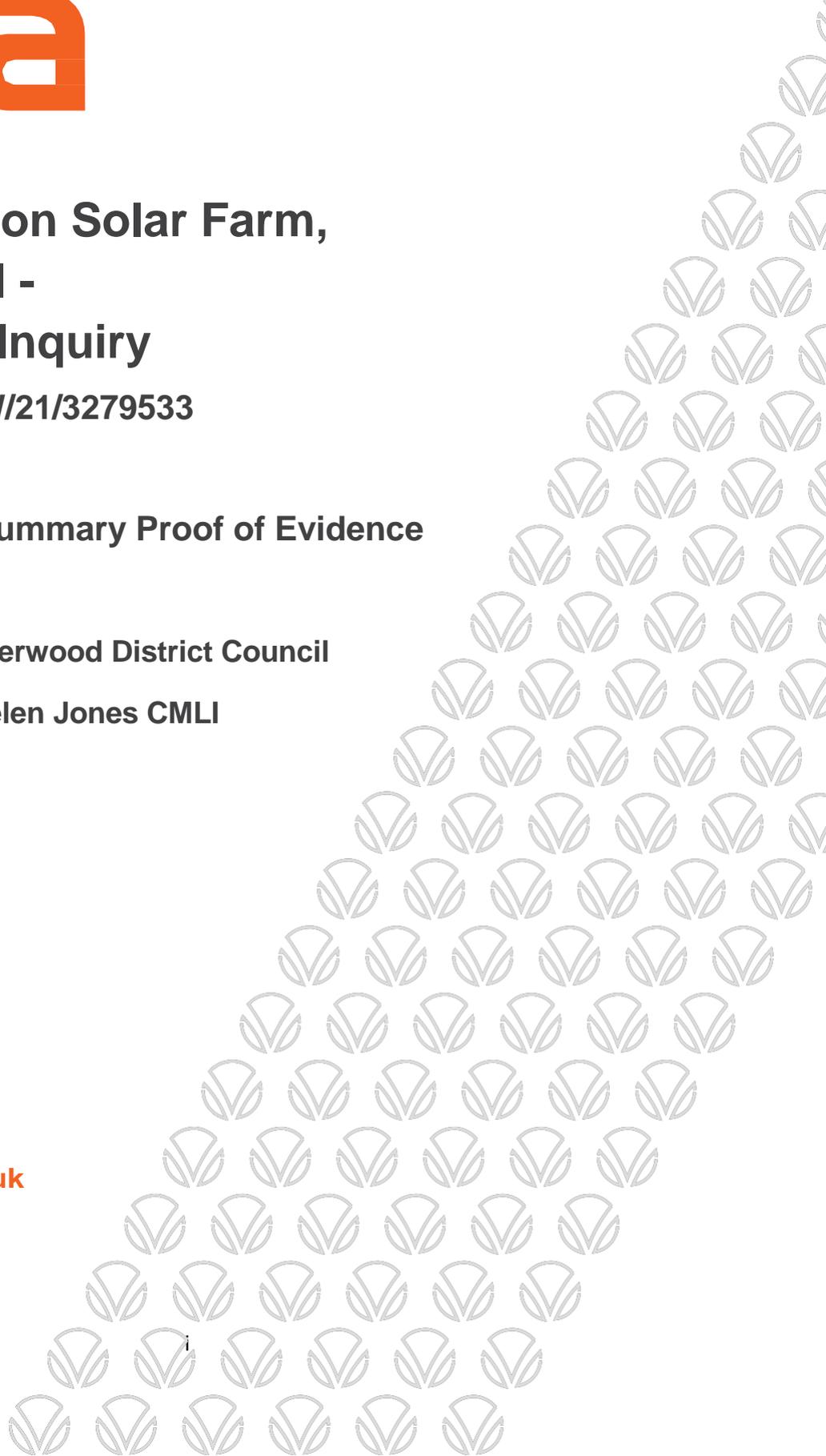


**Halloughton Solar Farm,  
Southwell -  
Planning Inquiry  
APP/B3030/W/21/3279533**

**Landscape Summary Proof of Evidence  
on behalf of  
Newark and Sherwood District Council  
Prepared by Helen Jones CMLI**

Date: October 2021

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# Summary Proof of Evidence

This proof of evidence relates to the following development proposal:

**LPA ref: 20/01242/FULM**

**Planning Inspectorate ref: APP/B3030/W/21/3279533**

## **Development proposal**

**Construction of a solar farm and battery stations together with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure at Land North of Halloughton, Southwell**

This document has been prepared by Helen Jones CMLI of VIA East Midlands working as independent Landscape Consultant on behalf of Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC)

October 2021

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Witness qualifications and experience

- 1.1.1 My name is Helen Jones. I am a landscape architect and Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (C.M.L.I).
- 1.1.2 I hold a Post Graduate MA in Landscape Design (MALD) from the University of Manchester (1987).
- 1.1.3 I am a Landscape Architect and have been employed by Nottinghamshire County Council since 1987, and by Via East Midlands since 2016 as a Landscape Architect and a member of the multi-disciplinary Environmental Management and Design Team. I regularly provide advice on the landscape and visual aspects of planning applications to Nottinghamshire County Council Development Planning Policy Team and Nottinghamshire County Council Development Planning Team including on the new Nottinghamshire Mineral Local Plan.
- 1.1.4 I was commissioned by NSDC to provide impartial, expert evidence, based on my own professional judgement. My evidence is limited to the landscape and visual effects of the Appeal Scheme.
- 1.1.5 I have read the relevant parts of the planning application, including the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment by the Appellant (and the Addendum), the Planning Statement, the Design and Access Statement, the Biodiversity Management Plan and the relevant plans submitted illustrating the proposals, development parameters and site layout.
- 1.1.6 I have undertaken two thorough visits to the site and surroundings (August 2020 and September 2021)
- 1.1.7 My evidence supports the Council's reasons for refusal in the NSDC planning committee decision notice of 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (Core Document A45)

- 1.1.8 My main Proof of Evidence addresses the potential effects of the Appeal Scheme on landscape character and visual amenity. My intention is to provide the Inquiry with a proportionate and technically sound summary of the potential landscape and visual effects of the Appeal Scheme and explain where there are differences in my judgement to that of the Appellant.
- 1.1.9 In my main PoE I describe the site and its Landscape Character and Visual context, before going into more detail covering the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), effects on Landscape Character, the characteristics of specific LCA Policy Zones and the effects on Landscape elements. I then provide an evaluation of Visual Impacts referring to the Appellants selected Viewpoints, identifying those that both sides agree on, and going into more detail on those Viewpoints where there is dispute. I provide a short statement about the mitigation and enhancement proposals before providing a summary of the key Landscape Character and Visual Impact points, finishing with my conclusion of the main reasons why I do not feel the Appeal Scheme is appropriate at this site.

## 1.2 Landscape and Visual Effects

### Landscape Cover

- 1.2.1 In my Evidence I conclude that the Appeal Scheme would result in a long term moderate adverse scale of effect on land cover for the forty-year lifetime of the Scheme. This identified scale of effect on land cover is also a matter of agreement between parties (see para. 8.50 of the SoCG (C4)). The proposed 40-year life span of the scheme is well over a generation long, this Scheme would therefore radically change the historic sense and spatial perception of this landscape for a large portion of any individual's lifetime.

### Landscape Character

- 1.2.2 I also conclude in my evidence that the Appeal Scheme would result in a major adverse scale of effects on the local landscape character for the Mid Nottinghamshire Farmlands Policy Zones 37, 38 and 39 [PZ39 is omitted from the Revised Scheme] for the forty-year lifetime of the scheme which I conclude to be significant impacts [save for PZ39 for the Revised Scheme]. These identified scale of effects on landscape character are also matters of agreement between parties (see para. 8.51 of the SoCG).

- 1.2.3 All three Policy Zones have Landscapes in Good condition with Sensitivity ranging from High to Moderate. This is borne out in the harmonious configuration of landscape elements across the Appeal Scheme site that exhibits almost all of the key characteristics identified within the respective policy zones and significantly contributes to the historic sense and spatial perception of this landscape.
- 1.2.4 The conclusions of my Proof of Evidence is that the Appeal Scheme [and Revised Scheme] would result in long term significant adverse impacts on the landscape character and land cover of the area. The proposed 40-year life span of the scheme is well over a generation long and therefore the impacts of the Scheme should not be considered insignificant.
- 1.2.5 The majority of the fields within the site will change to industrial scale energy production, physically altering the land use and perception of this sensitive and historic landscape through the insertion of massed modern elements and infrastructure.
- 1.2.6 The scale of the development proposal is large and would result in over 100 hectares of landscape being covered by solar panels and associated infrastructure. While the fields will be able to be grazed by smaller livestock such as sheep this will be an incidental benefit of the scheme with the main purpose, production value, and perception of the land use being one of modern industrial energy production of a significant scale.
- 1.2.7 Furthermore, the necessary vegetative screening to screen security fencing, solar panels, battery containers and other infrastructure of the development proposal would not, in itself, be characteristic of the general existing hedge systems within this landscape character area. While this may well eventually successfully screen a majority of the views of the solar farm infrastructure, the perception of the landscape character as you walk through it will be changed, and physically reinforced by the incongruous outgrown hedge height, closing down views of the wider landscape and spatial perception. This would result in an uncharacteristic change in the visual perception of the area.

## Visual Effects

1.2.8 With regard to visual effects, it is agreed at paragraph 8.52 of the SoCG that the Appeal Scheme would result in some adverse visual effects during the Construction Stage, Year 1 and Year 10 of the development. In my main Proof I explain that having regard to the conclusions of the Appellant's submitted LVIA and Addendum (A13A, A13B) there is common ground on the majority of Viewpoints.

1.2.9 In my Evidence I explain that I am in agreement with the Appellant's assessment of the visual effects of the Appeal Scheme for the following Viewpoints:

| Viewpoint Reference | Scale of Visual Effect |                |                     |
|---------------------|------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
|                     | Construction           | Year 1         | Year 10             |
| 4                   | Major-Moderate         | Major-Moderate | Moderate-Negligible |
| 5                   | Moderate               | Negligible     | Negligible          |
| 6                   | Negligible             | Negligible     | Negligible          |
| 7                   | Negligible             | Negligible     | Negligible          |
| 8                   | Moderate               | Minor          | Minor               |
| 9                   | Minor                  | Minor          | Negligible          |
| 10                  | Moderate               | Moderate       | Negligible          |
| 11                  | Minor                  | Minor          | Negligible          |
| 12                  | Major                  | Moderate       | Negligible          |
| 13                  | Moderate               | Moderate       | Negligible          |
| 14                  | Major                  | Major          | Moderate-negligible |
| 15                  | Major                  | Major          | Major               |
| 16                  | Moderate               | Moderate       | Negligible          |
| 17                  | Negligible             | Negligible     | Negligible          |
| 18                  | Negligible             | Negligible     | Negligible          |
| Heritage A          | Negligible             | Negligible     | Negligible          |
| Heritage B          | Moderate-Negligible    | Low-Negligible | Negligible          |
| Heritage C          | Negligible             | Negligible     | Negligible          |

1.2.10 I also explain that I disagree with the Appellant’s assessment of the visual effects of the Appeal Scheme for the following Viewpoints:

| Viewpoint Reference | Assessment | Scale of Visual Effect |                |            |
|---------------------|------------|------------------------|----------------|------------|
|                     |            | Construction           | Year 1         | Year 10    |
| 1                   | Appellant  | Moderate               | Moderate       | Negligible |
|                     | Council    | Major-Moderate         | Major-Moderate | Negligible |
| 2                   | Appellant  | Moderate               | Moderate       | Negligible |
|                     | Council    | Major-Moderate         | Major-Moderate | Negligible |
| 3                   | Appellant  | Moderate               | Negligible     | Negligible |
|                     | Council    | Major-Moderate         | Moderate       | Negligible |

1.2.11 In my Evidence I discuss the following Viewpoints in greater detail: Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 14 and 15. I conclude that as a result of the Appeal Scheme the majority of these Viewpoints are likely to have Major or Moderate adverse visual impacts during the Construction phase and Year 1. Whilst the majority of these are expected to decrease to a Negligible level of visual impact by year 10 (when the screening vegetation has had sufficient time to establish), this would be expected for a solar farm installation where elements are generally not above 3 metres in height.

1.2.12 Nevertheless, in my main Proof of Evidence I explain that there would be significant adverse effects on Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 12, 14 and 15 as a result of the Refused Scheme (A23D) and significant adverse effects on Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 14 and 15 as a result of the Revised Scheme (A47). These Viewpoints relate to well used public rights of way (PRoW Bridleway 209/74/1, PRoW Footpath 209/42/1, PRoW Footpath 209/43/1 and Cotmoor Byway – PRoW Halloughton Byway 9 – 186/9/1).

1.2.13 Whilst the Revised Scheme (A47) could reduce the most significant adverse visual effects on Viewpoint 12, I explain that significant effects would nevertheless remain for Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 14 and 15.

1.2.14 Furthermore, I explain that whilst the maturing mitigation planting proposed would assist in screening the Appeal Scheme in time, there would remain a significant change in views of the wider landscape, both from within and without the site. This is as a result of the solar farm infrastructure itself and the extent of uncharacteristic landscape management proposed which would result in a change to taller outgrown hedgerows and the addition of the southernmost 15 metre wide belt of native tree species. This mitigation planting itself would close down or block middle distance views at certain Viewpoints (particularly Viewpoints 4, 10, 14 and 15) creating an effective change in the experience/perception of this sensitive, landscape where time depth is apparent.

## 2. Conclusion

### 2.1 The proposal

- 2.1.1 Overall I conclude that having regard to the impact of the Appeal Scheme, both the Refused and Revised Schemes would fail to conserve and enhance the areas landscape character and visual amenity and consequently would be harmful to the character, appearance and visual perception of the area.