Appendix 5.1. LVIA Full Methodology

Introduction

5.1.1. This appendix contains additional detail regarding the assessment methodology, supplementing the information provided within the LVIA text.

Baseline

5.1.2. The baseline study establishes the planning policy context, the scope of the assessment and the key receptors. It typically includes the following key activities:

- A desk study of relevant current national and local planning policy, in respect of landscape and visual matters, for the site and surrounding areas.
- Agreement of the main study area radius with the local planning authority. For this assessment, a study area of 3km was used as it was agreed with Cambridge City Council that localised vegetation, landform and built-infrastructure would limit visibility of the beyond 3km.
- A desk study of nationally and locally designated landscapes for the site and surrounding areas.
- A desk study of existing landscape character assessments and capacity and sensitivity studies for the site and surrounding areas.
- A desk study of historic landscape character assessments (where available) and other information sources required to gain an understanding of the contribution of heritage assets to the present-day landscape.
- Collation and evaluation of other indicators of local landscape value such as references in landscape character studies or parish plans, tourist information, local walking & cycling guides, references in art and literature.
- The identification of valued character types, landscape elements and features which may be affected by the proposal, including rare landscape types.
• Exchanging information with other consultants working on other assessment topics for the development as required to inform the assessment.

• Draft Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) studies to assist in identifying potential viewpoints and indicate the potential visibility of the proposed development, and therefore scope of receptors likely to be affected. The methodology used in the preparation of ZTV studies is described later within this Appendix.

• The identification of and agreement upon, through consultation, the scope of assessment for cumulative effects.

• The identification of and agreement upon, through consultation, the number and location of representative and specific viewpoints within the study area.

• The identification of the range of other visual receptors (e.g. people travelling along routes, or within open access land, settlements and residential properties) within the study area.

• Site visits to become familiar with the site and surrounding landscape; verify documented baseline; and to identify viewpoints and receptors.

• Input to the design process.

5.1.3. The information gathered during the baseline assessment is drawn together and summarised in the baseline section of the report and reasoned judgements are made as to which receptors are likely to be significantly affected. Only these receptors are then taken forward for the detailed assessment of effects, with others ‘scoped out’ (ref. GLVIA 3rd edition, 2013, para 3.19).

5.1.4. Correspondence with the planning authority and consultees regarding study area, methodology and viewpoints are included as Appendix 5.6.
Design

5.1.5. The Landscape Architect plays a leading role in the site design. The design and assessment stages are necessarily iterative, with stages overlapping in parts.

5.1.6. Details of any mitigation measures incorporated within the proposals to help reduce identified potential landscape and visual effects are set out in Section 5.5. of the LVIA.

Assessment

5.1.7. The assessment of effects includes further desk and site based work, covering the following key activities:

- The preparation of a ZTV based on the finalised design for the development.
- An assessment, based on both desk study and site visits, of the sensitivity of receptors to the proposed development.
- An assessment, based on both desk study and site visits, of the magnitude and significance of effects upon the landscape character, designated and recreational landscape and the existing visual environment arising from the proposed development.
- An informed professional judgement as to whether each identified effect is positive, neutral or adverse.
- A clear description of the effects identified, with supporting information setting out the rationale for judgements.
- Identification of which effects are judged to be significant based on the significance thresholds established in Section 5.3.
- The production of photomontages from a selection of the agreed viewpoints showing the anticipated view following construction of the proposed development.
Landscape Character Considerations

5.1.8. The European Landscape Convention (2000) provides the following definition:

“Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.”

5.1.9. And notes also in Article 2 that landscape includes “natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It includes land, inland water and marine areas.”

5.1.10. An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014) defines landscape character as:

“a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.”

5.1.11. The susceptibility of landscape character areas is judged based on both the attributes of the receiving environment and the characteristics of the proposed development as discussed under ‘susceptibility’ within the methodology section of the LVIA. Thus, the key characteristics of the landscape character types/areas are considered, along with scale, openness, topography; the absence of, or presence, nature and patterns of development, settlement, landcover, the contribution of heritage assets and historic landscape elements and patterns, and land uses in forming the character. The condition of the receiving landscape, i.e. the intactness of the existing character will also be relevant in determining susceptibility. The likelihood of material effects on the landscape character areas can be judged based on the scale and layout of the proposal and how this relates to the characteristics of the receiving landscape.

5.1.12. The introduction of any development into a landscape adds a new feature which can affect the 'sense of place' in its near vicinity, but with distance, the existing characteristics reassert themselves.
5.1.13. The baseline is informed by desk study of published landscape character assessments and field survey. It is specifically noted within An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014) that:

“Our landscapes have evolved over time and they will continue to evolve – change is a constant but outcomes vary. The management of change is essential to ensure that we achieve sustainable outcomes – social, environmental and economic. Decision makers need to understand the baseline and the implications of their decisions for that baseline.”

5.1.14. At page 51 it describes the function of Key Characteristics in landscape assessment, as follows:

“Key characteristics are those combinations of elements which help to give an area its distinctive sense of place. If these characteristics change, or are lost, there would be significant consequences for the current character of the landscape. Key characteristics are particularly important in the development of planning and management policies. They are important for monitoring change and can provide a useful reference point against which landscape change can be assessed. They can be used as indicators to inform thinking about whether and how the landscape is changing and whether, or not, particular policies – for example – are effective and having the desired effect on landscape character.”

5.1.15. It follows from the above that in order to assess whether landscape character is significantly affected by a development, it should be determined how each of the key characteristics would be affected. The judgement of magnitude therefore reflects the degree to which the key characteristics and elements which form those characteristics will be altered by the proposals.

Viewpoints and Visual Receptors - considerations

5.1.16. A wide variety of visual receptors can reasonably be anticipated to be affected by the proposed development. Within the baseline assessment, the ZTV study and site visits will be used to determine which visual receptors are likely to be
significantly affected and therefore merit detailed assessment. In line with
guidance (GLVIA, 3rd Edition, 2013, paragraph 6.19); both representative and
specific viewpoints may be identified to inform the assessment. In general, the
majority of viewpoints will be representative – representing the visual receptors at
the distance and direction in which they are located and of the type(s) that would
be present at that location. The representative viewpoints have generally been
selected in locations where the significant effects would be anticipated; though
some may be selected outside of that zone – either to demonstrate the reduction of
effects with distance; or to specifically ensure the representation of a particularly
sensitive receptor.

**Residential Amenity**

5.1.17. Paragraph 6.17 of GLVIA, 3rd edition notes that:

“In some instances, it may also be appropriate to consider private viewpoints, mainly from
residential properties... Effects of development in private property are frequently dealt with
mainly through ‘residential amenity assessments’. These are separate from LVIA although
visual effects assessment may sometimes be carried out as part of a residential amenity
assessment, in which case this will supplement and form part of the LVIA for a project.
Some of the principles set out here for dealing with visual effects may help in such
assessments but there are specific requirements in residential amenity assessment”

5.1.18. When dealing with effects on residential properties, the outlook from a private
property is essentially a private matter. The difference between that private
interest and what should be protected in the public interest has been the subject of
particular focus at Public Inquiries in relation to wind farm cases and the lessons
learnt from Inspector’s decisions have informed how effects on views from
residential properties influence a planning decision. This is fully described and set
out in paragraphs 209-211 of the decision regarding Spring Farm Ridge wind farm
(APP/Z2830/A/11/2165035 – December 2014), which sets out the approach that in
considering effects on private residential amenity – whether effects are visually significant is not relevant – effects which fall below the threshold of being “so unpleasant, overwhelming and oppressive that this would become an unattractive place to live” (known as the Lavender Test) “would not feature in the planning balance, irrespective of how many dwellings were so affected”. The Inspector’s report also makes clear that this is a separate exercise to “weighing in the balance, as a component of the character and appearance issue, the effects on the locality generally that would derive from visual effects on resident receptors”, which is covered within the assessment of effects on settlements.

5.1.19. The Spring Farm Ridge Inspector’s decision is for a wind farm but makes it clear that “the level of impact or threshold at which the public interest would be so engaged should be no different for wind turbines than would be the threshold applicable to other types of development.” Wind farms are much taller developments than a residential development with a greater chance that they could have such an effect. For a residential development to cause effects of such a high magnitude to render a property an unattractive place in which to live it would have to be very close to the property and occupy a large proportion of views.

5.1.20. Residential properties closest to the site have been viewed on site and from aerial photography. Parts of the proposed development would be visible from some residential properties, but no properties would be affected to the degree that they would become an unattractive place in which to live. Therefore, a detailed residential amenity assessment has not been undertaken.