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**Our Ref: CEC4114 Melton Solar Array**  
**Your Ref: 22/00537/FUL**

**21 September 2023**

Gareth Elliott – Planning Development Officer,  
**Melton Borough Council**  
Parkside, Station Approach,  
Burton Street, Melton Mowbray,  
Leics, LE13 1GH

Dear Gareth

**RE: Independent landscape review of an application for a solar array at Muston Lane, Easthorpe, Leicestershire**

I am writing to you to provide an initial review of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the above development, further to my email of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

I have reviewed all material relating to landscape and visual matters which is available on the Melton Idox system, and it is my opinion that there are omissions within the submitted LVIA which need to be addressed before I submit my detailed final review. I consider that the current LVIA has not undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the cumulative landscape and visual effects of the 49.9MW solar array in conjunction with the 4 other consented solar arrays which lie within application's 5km study area.

To enable me to provide you with an independent detailed review of the submitted LVIA and its findings, I feel it is important my final assessment includes any additional documents which may be submitted by the applicant relating to cumulative landscape and visual impact. For this reason, I have therefore prepared this initial review which highlights where I consider there to be omissions within the current LVIA (details are included in Appendix A of this letter).

I will undertake a site visit and prepare the detailed review of the submitted landscape and visual assessment documents after the applicant has submitted an addendum to the LVIA in the form of a Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CLVIA).

I would like to draw your attention to the LVIA under para 2.7.1 where it states that the cumulative sites considered are shown on 'Figure 1.2 – Cumulative Site Plan'. However this Figure does not appear to be available to download from the Melton Borough Council's Idox system.

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It is not clear from the submitted LVIA whether there are further solar arrays beyond the 5km study area which should be considered as part of a Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CLVIA). Clarification is requested as to whether:

- a. the area of scope for the CLVIA was discussed with Melton Brough Council before the application was submitted
- b. there are other solar arrays within the landscape beyond the 5km study area which should be considered as part of a CLVIA.

As per my email of 14<sup>th</sup> September I would be grateful if you would also confirm that you are happy that to review additional cumulative assessment material submitted by the applicant will be additional to the accepted quote, will be charged at an hourly rate, and will be in the region of £480+VAT.

As I will also now need to wait for the additional information to be submitted by the applicant, I will not be able to meet the agreed completion date of 7<sup>th</sup> October. Completion of my final landscape review would be within 3 weeks of receiving the additional cumulative impact assessment information from the applicant.

I hope this is acceptable

Yours sincerely



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## Appendix A - Further Information Requested

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is considered that the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment does not comprehensively assess the cumulative impact of the proposed development in conjunction with the other 4 consented solar arrays within the 5km study area.
- 1.2 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) defines cumulative landscape and visual effects as those which:
- ‘result from the additional changes to the landscape or visual amenity caused by the proposed development in conjunction with other developments (associated with or separate to it) or actions that occurred in the past, present or are likely to occur in the foreseeable future.’*
- 1.3 There are 4 further consented solar arrays within the 5km study area:
- Jericho Lane , Barkestone Le Vale - 49.9MW Solar Farm, approx 3.8km west of the site, Melton Borough Council (ref 20/01182/FUL)
  - Land south of the A1 Foston By-Pass, Foston - 49.9MW Solar Farm, approx 4.9km north-east of the site, South Kesteven Council (ref S20/1433)
  - Lodge Farm, Longhedge Lane, Orston - 12.4 MW Solar Farm, approx 4.5km north-west of the site, Rushcliffe Borough Council (ref 13/01609/FUL)
  - Land South Of The Railway Line & East Of Station Road, Elton - 10MW Solar Farm, approx 4.5km north-west of site Rushcliffe Borough Council (ref 14/01739/FUL)
- 1.4 The LVIA under para 2.7.1 states that the cumulative sites considered are shown on Figure 1.2 – Cumulative Site Plan. However this Figure is not available to download from the Melton Borough Council’s Idox system.
- 1.5 It is not clear from the submitted LVIA whether there are further solar arrays beyond the 5km study area which should be considered as part of a Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CLVIA). Clarification is requested as to whether
- c. the area of scope for the CLVIA was discussed with Melton Brough Council before the application was submitted
  - d. there are other solar arrays within the landscape beyond the 5km study area.

### 2. Further consideration of cumulative landscape effects

- 2.1 The other 4 solar arrays are not mentioned in ‘Section 2.3 – Landscape Baseline Assessment’ under ‘Built Infrastructure’ where it describes the existing residential and agricultural built form, the A52 and the railway line.
- 2.2 The 4 consented solar arrays are also not mentioned in ‘Section 2.8 - Summary - Baseline Conditions’ under para 2.8.3 to 2.8.5 of the LVIA.

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- 2.3 Cumulative landscape effects are considered in the LVIA but only in the context of each landscape character area, and not holistically in the context of the study area, which is covered by a number of character areas both within the Melton Borough and adjacent administrative Council areas.
- 2.4 The LVIA under para 2.5.22 acknowledges that this development would create '*localised changes*' to the Vale of Belvoir landscape character, it does not describe the cumulative significance of this change in combination with those created by the other 4 solar arrays within the study area.

### 3. Further consideration of cumulative visual effects

- 3.1 The other 4 solar arrays are not mentioned in LVIA's '*2.3 – Visual Baseline Assessment*' para 2.4.20 to 2.4.30, nor are potential cumulative visual effects.
- 3.2 The landscape baseline under '*Section 2.7 – Cumulative and In Combination Effects*' does not mention the other 4 solar arrays.
- 3.3 Paragraph 2.4.28 describes the criteria used to select the viewpoints for the LVIA but no criteria are provided to determine the viewpoints for the cumulative visual assessment under '*Section 2.7 – Cumulative and In Combination Effects*.'
- 3.4 Cumulative visual effects are considered in the LVIA under Section 2.7, but only as potential '*combined views*' (where this development and one or more other solar arrays would be present in the same view). The LVIA does not assess other types of cumulative visual effect:
- Combined view (in succession) - where the viewer has to turn their head to see other developments from a single viewpoint
  - Sequential visual effects – where the viewer has to move to another viewpoint to see the same or different developments, this can be along a road, railway line or public right of way.
- 3.5 A number of the 15 selected viewpoints have the potential to assess successive cumulative visual effects, where the viewer has the potential to view multiple solar arrays if they turn their head whilst remaining in the same position. However the LVIA under 2.7.4 states that each viewpoint only looks in one direction.
- 3.6 The LVIA does not show a map of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) of this development, overlain by the ZTVs of the other 4 solar arrays to determine additional combined and sequential viewpoints to be assessed as part of the CLVIA. These cumulative viewpoints could include views on key long distance routes such as the Viking Trail, public rights of way, highways and the railway.

### 4. Significance of Cumulative Effects

- 4.1 The LVIA acknowledges that significant landscape and visual effects are not the same as cumulative significant effects and states under para 2.2.21 that, '*this means that the magnitude of change is also assessed in a different way as described in Appendix 2.1.*' However Appendix 2.1 – Landscape and Visual Assessment Methodology, does not contain any reference to cumulative impact assessment or to the different criteria used to determine significance.

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## 5. Further detail to be submitted

An addendum to the current LVIA looking at Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should include the following in accordance with GLVIA<sup>1</sup>:

- 5.1 **Cumulative Landscape Effects** - A description of the potential cumulative landscape effects of the 4 consented arrays, set aside the predicted landscape effects of this development to identify potential cumulative landscape effects which are likely to include effects on the:
- a. fabric of the landscape as a result of removal of or changes in individual elements or features of the landscape and all the introduction of new elements or features
  - b. aesthetic aspects of the landscape for example its scale, sense of enclosure, diversity, pattern and colour common and all on its perceptual or experiential attributes such as a sense of naturalness remoteness or tranquilly
  - c. overall character of the landscape as a result of changes in the landscape fabric and all in aesthetic or perceptual aspects leading to modifications of key characteristics and possible creation of new landscape character if the changes are substantial enough Consideration as to whether this application has the potential to tip the balance through its additional landscape effects.
- 5.2 Assessment criteria for determining the significance of cumulative landscape effects looking at the:
- a. susceptibility of the landscape to the proposed change,
  - b. value attached to the landscape
  - c. the size and scale of cumulative landscape effects identified
  - d. the extent of the geographical area covered by the cumulative landscape effects
  - e. the duration of cumulative landscape effects in terms of the approval periods for each of the other solar arrays, and the extent to which cumulative effects may be reversed.
- 5.3 **Cumulative Visual Effects** - A description of the added combined visual effects of this development with the visual effects of the other 4 solar arrays, looking at the:
- a. people likely to be affected at each position, their activity/reason for being at that viewpoint and the number of people likely to experience that view
  - b. the extent, nature and characteristics of the views and visual amenity enjoyed by those people at those positions.
- 5.4 Assessment criteria for determining the significance of cumulative visual effects looking at the:
- a. susceptibility of the viewer to changes in their view or visual amenity
  - b. value attached to the views they experience
  - c. the size and scale of cumulative visual effects they may experience
  - d. the geographical extent of the cumulative visual effects
  - e. the duration of cumulative visual effects in terms of the approval periods for each of the other solar arrays, and the extent to which cumulative visual effects may be reversed.

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<sup>1</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (2013)

