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Research - Conserve - Campaign

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Ben Duffy
South Oxfordshire District Council
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Ref : P24/S1498/FUL - The development of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), comprising a 500 megawatt (MW) battery storage facility with associated infrastructure, access and landscaping, with a connection into the Culham Jet National Grid substation.(A hard copy of the Environmental Statement can be viewed at South Oxfordshire District Council, Abbey House Abbey Close Abingdon OX14 3JE; Land to the north of the Culham Science Centre, Thame Lane near Clifton Hampden.

Thank you for consulting the Gardens Trust (GT), a Statutory Consultee with regard to proposed development affecting Nuneham Courtenay, a Grade I registered park and garden (RPG) listed by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks and Gardens. We have liaised with our colleagues in the Oxfordshire Gardens Trust (OGT) and their local knowledge informs this joint response.

Nuneham Courtenay is a country house surrounded by an C18 landscape park and pleasure grounds laid out in three phases. The first in the 1760s - the first Earl Harcourt's classical landscape to offset his Greek 'temple' (church); the second, William Mason's picturesque landscape of 1777 for the second Earl (Mason having laid out a famous flower garden here in 1771); and finally the parkland laid out by Lancelot Brown 1779-82 (supervised by the second Earl and Mason), when he also laid out Brown's Walk in the pleasure grounds. A pinetum and other work was carried out by W S Gilpin, 1832.

We have considered the online documentation and strongly object to this proposal which will cause substantial and permanent harm to the Grade I listed RPG and its setting. In addition, your officers must consider the proposal in a broader context than just the proximity of the existing science park to the south of the RPG. The separate proposal for a solar farm (P24/S1336/FUL) to the north of the RPG together with the existing permission for another extensive solar farm at Nineveh Farm outside Nuneham Courtenay will have a cumulative effect on the surrounding landscape. The open agricultural fields which contribute so much to the visual impact of the setting will be seriously diminished.

The BESS storage facility will have a damaging effect during both the commissioning and deconstruction phases. In addition, the mitigation measures proposed : the additional planting, the raised bund, the ponds and the accoustic fencing will all increase rather than minimize the damage to the historic character of this sensitive designed landscape. The impact of the rows of battery storage units and associated infrastructure over a period of

40 years will destroy the landscape setting over a lengthy period of time and the 14m high transmission tower and its compound will remain as a permanent intervention within a RPG and conservation area which are both recognized as being of the highest national importance.

This is a highly damaging proposal and we urge your officers to refuse it.

Yours sincerely,

Margie Hoffnung
Conservation Officer