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Annex B

LVIA Viewpoint Analysis

Landscape Proof of Evidence on behalf of

South Oxfordshire District Council

Prepared by Anne Priscott BaHons CMLI

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.

Land to the north of the Culham Campus Thame Lane, Clifton Hampden, OX14 3GY

Planning Application No. P24/S1498/FUL "Appeal Scheme"

Planning Inspectorate Appeal Reference: APP/Q3115/W/24/3358132

May 2025

B1 This Annex sets out my assessment of a selection of the LVIA viewpoints including those with Accurate Verifiable Representation (AVR) visualisations of the Proposed Development (**LVIA Appendix C** (**CD §**)).

B2 These represent the proposed scheme in the application that comprised 248 sound insulated lithium ion battery units housed within standard sized shipping containers and 31 larger noise insulated inverter houses to accommodate the inverters and transformers ("the **Appeal Scheme**").

B3 The main body of the appeal site is located immediately north of the Culham Campus (formerly Culham Science Centre (CSC)) and is currently managed as grazed farmland. The eastern part of the appeal site is located adjacent to an existing substation within the Campus site, south of Thame Lane.

B4 Most of the site lies within Green Belt and the northern areas are within the Grade 1 Registered Park and Garden (RPG) of Nuneham House.

B5 The appeal site also borders Nuneham Courtenay Conservation Area to the north.

B6 A restricted byway runs along Thame Lane on the southern boundary, which forms part of the long-distance Oxford Greenbelt Way, this continues as a footpath alongside the railway line west of the appeal site.

B7 There are attractive views over the site from this long-distance footpath to pastures, woodland and of parkland. The presence of two sets of pylon lines which cross/ bound the appeal site in views is highlighted in the application LVIA. In this Annex I describe how the presence of both attractive and detracting elements are observed by users of the public rights of way network in the context of, and where afforded views of the proposed appeal site development.

B8 A proposed permissive footpath runs through the site and linking to Thame Lane through the appeal site and into the parts of the parkland within the appellant's control. This would not link into the main body of the parkland as an east-west linking route as infered in the LVIA.

B9 LVIA viewpoints 14 and 15, captured from a single position on this route and are analysed. Viewpoints 16 and 17 are photographed from private viewing locations that are not publicly accessible and would not be publicly accessible through any permissive path forming part of the appeal scheme. However, they are within the RPG and in the future could become publicly accessible at the parkland landowner's discretion. This route is observed on my site visits as being well-used.

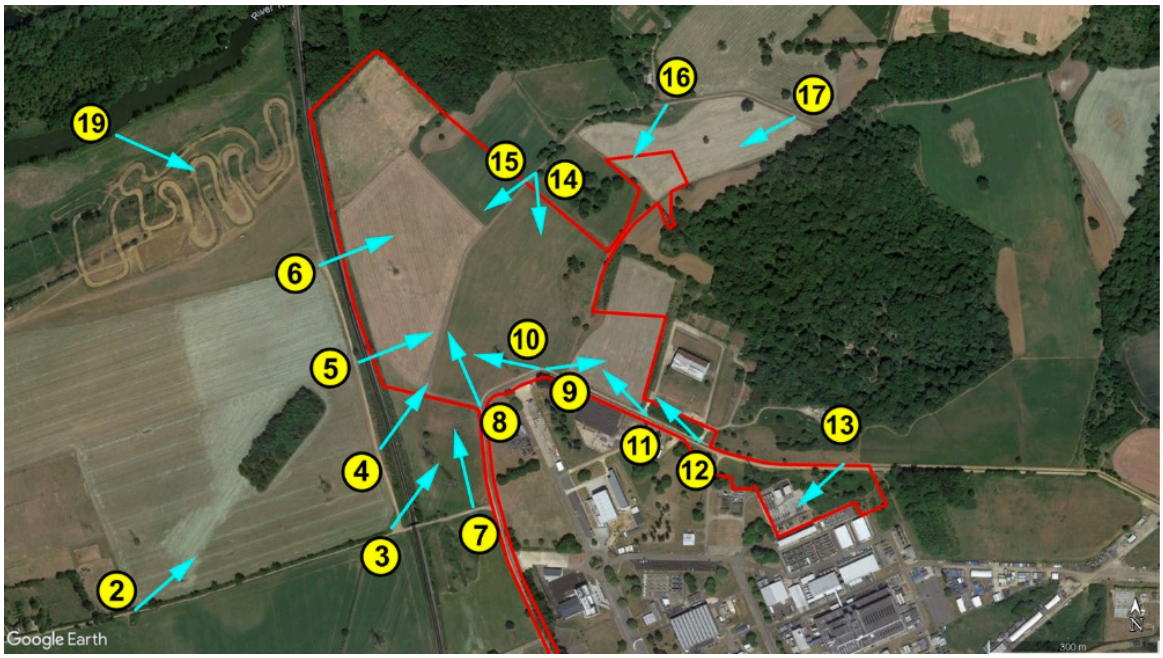
B10 Whilst the Appeal Site is located within the Green Belt, Culham Campus to the south and the adjacent land to the southeast and east have been removed from the Green Belt in the December 2020 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 (the "**Local Plan**")(**CD 3.4.1**). These sites are allocated in the Local Plan for employment and residential.

B11 Land to the south of the site, between the railway and CSC site is allocated for employment use (STRAT 8). LVIA Viewpoint 7 has been captured from the boundary of this area with the appeal site.

B12 The land to the west of the railway line is allocated for housing under STRAT 9. LVIA Viewpoints 2, 3-6 and 19 have also been captured from the boundary of this area with the appeal site.

B13 Part of the Appeal Site in the north is located within the Grade I Nuneham Courtenay Registered Park and Garden (RPG).

Figure B1: Viewpoint Location Plan extracted from LVIA Appendix A, part 2 pdf page 2)[1]



B14 The viewpoints are considered to represent the range and direction of views afforded, and a number of these are now considered. Screen shots are included from the Appeal scheme visualisations for ease of cross reference purposes only.

[1] Viewpoints 1, 18 & 20 are shown on LVIA Appendix A, Part 2, Figure 16 on pdf page 3

LVIA Viewpoint 4 View from the Oxford Green Belt Way (PRoW 183/5/10) which runs along the west side of the railway

Figure B2: Baseline Viewpoint 4 Vignette

B15 Looking east from the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way towards the site c. 60m distant, and landform c 66m broadly level with the proposed development. The current (baseline) panoramic view shows layers of trees and hedges forming a relatively shallow horizon with a wooded skyline. The railway line is in cutting and in the foreground of the view, beyond the adjacent wire fence. In winter, bare leaf conditions, the railway corridor is seen with minimal vegetation, and in summer there is a thin strip of intermittent vegetation on the upper slopes of the railway sidings in cut and adjacent to the fence. This does not amount to a hedge.

B16 The landscape scale is recognised as being broad-scale and framed by woodland and parkland planting. The lines of pylons running through the landscape are readily observed, but when walking this route are less of a detraction than suggested by the static view and by LVIA author. To the south-east of the appeal site the edge of the more industrial landscape around and forming the Culham Campus is evident, with metal fencing and the presence of campus-style tree planting which contrast with the prevailing rural landscape and parkland character. The railway line being in cut emphasises the importance of the continuity of open views across this vista.

B17 If consented with the **Appeal Scheme** proposals, the proposed BESS container aspect of the development would extend across a 60-degree wide proportion of this view. The grid connection part would extend farther to the south-east.

B18 The 4m high perimeter would dominate the foreground of the view for at least 5 years and the enclosure created by the appeal proposals would reduce the rurality and the open character that is key to the appreciation of the Parkland, Parkland setting and Green Belt in views from this location. The appeal scheme montage indicates that by year 10 most of the BESS storage container parts of the scheme would be fully screened. This is somewhat greater than would be anticipated using the growth models agreed with the LPA officers. The development post-planting at c year 15 would still be visible on the viewer-side of the fence when looking north-east. The connection element of the scheme is substantial and in combination with the tower would add to the magnitude of change of view.

Figure B3: Appeal Scheme Montage Vignette (Year 10)

B19 The LVIA assessed that the receptor value is high, susceptibility low due to the presence of the Campus and electrical infrastructure and overall sensitivity medium. The LVIA author concluded that at **year 1 with mitigation** the visual effect would be **Moderate – Major adverse winter and summer**. The assessor notes that mitigation includes: Landforming (bund no linger part of the appeal scheme), acoustic fence, tree, scrub and hedge planting along the western and southern boundaries.

B20 The LVIA assessed that at **year 10** with mitigation the visual effect would be assessed that overall, visual effects for footpath users on the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way will be **minor adverse in both winter and summer**.

B21 The LVIA assessed that at **year 20** with mitigation the visual effect would be **minor beneficial in winter and summer**.

B22 I have assessed that the at **year 1 with mitigation** the magnitude of change here would be high, and the users of the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way long-distance footpath and future residents of the STRAT 9 allocation are of high sensitivity, bringing about a **substantial (or major) adverse** effect.

B23 With mitigation at **15 years** post-development the magnitude would remain **high**. The mitigation would only have a minimal effect on the assimilation of the development into the landscape. Many elements of the proposed mitigation would be at odds with both the rural landscape character, the openness of the Green Belt character (perceptually, visually and spatially) and the parkland character (as articulated in detail by Ms Sasha Berezina in her proof of evidence).

B24 The discordant patterns and impact on openness are articulated in detail in my main proof of evidence. The mitigation planting would eventually screen the appeal scheme and visually distract from the dramatic open sweep of grassland up to the parkland and wooded skyline. Landform and parkland edge character would no longer be seen as the main visible characteristics of this view when seen from the Oxfordshire Green Belt way in this part of the landscape.

B25 The proposed STRAT 9 housing development views are represented by this viewpoint.

LVIA Viewpoint 6: The Oxford Green Belt Way (PRoW 183/5/10) as it passes west of the Site

Figure B4: Baseline Viewpoint 6 Vignette

B26 Looking east from the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way towards the site 50m distant, and landform dropping slightly to c 64m and the view becoming less open due to the adjacent level railway embankments leading towards the Brunell river bridge. The viewer is now broadly eye-level with the land of the proposed development.

B27 The current (baseline) panoramic view shows layers of trees and hedges forming a relatively shallow horizon with a wooded skyline. The railway line is in cutting and in the foreground of the view, beyond the adjacent wire fence. In winter, bare leaf conditions, the railway corridor is seen with minimal vegetation, and in summer there is a thin strip of intermittent vegetation on the upper slopes of the railway sidings in cut and adjacent to the fence. This does not amount to a hedge.

B28 The landscape scale is recognised as being broad-scale and framed by skyline woodland. The lines of pylons running through the landscape are readily observed, but when walking this route are less of a detraction than suggested by the LVIA author or recorded in this static view. To the south-east of the appeal site the edge of the more industrial landscape around and forming the Culham Campus is evident, with metal security fencing and the presence of campus-style tree planting that contrast with the rural landscape and parkland character.

B29 If consented with the **Appeal Scheme** proposals, the proposed development would extend across a wide proportion of this view. The 4m high perimeter would dominate the foreground of the view.

B30 The full set of buildings would be seen on the relative to the viewer who is slightly lower in the landscape in this view, raised landscape platform with the 4m high fencing dominating the view during construction and at year 1. Movement of vehicles and lighting would be evident across a broad angle of view during construction. The tops of woodland and trees on the skyline would be seen behind the proposed containers and fence at this elevation however on travelling further north and downhill from this viewing position towards the Thames valley, the whole of the skyline would be taken up by the proposed development. The mitigation planting would eventually screen the appeal scheme and the skyline. Landform and parkland edge character would no longer be viewed from the Oxfordshire Green Belt way in this part of the landscape. These discordant patterns and impact on openness are articulated in detail in my main proof of evidence.

B31 The proposed STRAT 9 housing development views are represented by this viewpoint.

Figure B5: Viewpoint 6 Appeal Scheme Year 10 Montage Vignette

B32 The LVIA assessed that the receptor value is high, susceptibility medium and overall sensitivity medium-high. The LVIA author concluded that at **year 1 with mitigation** the visual effect would be **Moderate adverse winter and summer**. On the basis of the LVIA methodology (**CD 1.1.18**) this means the magnitude of change is assumed to be medium-low. Medium to low magnitude of change is articulated in the LVIA methodology as being between a development typically being seen in views for the long or medium term where

a small-moderate proportion of the view is affected. There may be screening/ high degree of filtering or background which minimise the scale of change from the present situation.

B33 The assessor notes that mitigation includes: Landforming (bund no linger part of the appeal scheme), tree, scrub and hedge planting along the western and southern boundaries.

B34 The LVIA assessed that at **year 10** with mitigation the visual effect would be assessed that overall, visual effects for footpath users on the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way will be **minor adverse in both winter and summer**.

B35 The LVIA assessed that at year 20 with mitigation the visual effect would be **minor beneficial in winter and summer**.

B36 I have assessed that the magnitude of change here would be high, equating to the LVIA Table 9 methodology whereby: *Typically this would be where a development would be obvious to the casual viewer, seen in close proximity with a large proportion of the view affected with little or no filtering or backgrounding and there would be agreat scale of change from the present situation for the long or medium-term*.

B37 The users of the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way long-distance footpath and future residents of the STRAT 9 allocation are of high sensitivity, bringing about a **substantial (major) adverse** effect. With mitigation at 15 years post-development the magnitude would remain high. The mitigation would only have a minimal effect on the assimilation of the development into the landscape.

LVIA Viewpoint 8: From the Oxford Green Belt Way (183/4/40) as it skirts the Culham Science Centre, south of the Site at its junction with footpath 183 1/60

Figure B6: Baseline Viewpoint 8 Vignette

B38 Looking east from the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way towards the adjacent site 60m the landform c 64m is level with the proposed development. The current (baseline) panoramic view shows layers of trees forming a relatively shallow horizon with a wooded skyline to the right of the view. The railway line is in cutting and to the left of the view, but just outside of the area captured by the viewpoint photograph. The adjacent Campus fencing and a pylon are in the foreground of the view, and the sub-station site to the right beyond the adjacent wire fence. The openness of the landscape character is very evident in this view. The proximity of the electricity infrastructure and the campus buildings are also evident to a path user walking the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way.

B39 The landscape scale is recognised as being large and the openness framed to the east by woodland and parkland planting and being open to the north. The lines of pylons running through the landscape are readily observed, but when walking this route are less of a detraction than suggested by the LVIA author or the static viewpoint. To the south-east of the appeal site the edge of the more industrial landscape around and forming the Culham Campus is evident, with metal fencing and the presence of campus-style tree planting that contrast with the rural landscape and parkland character.

B40 If consented with the **Appeal Scheme** proposals, the proposed development would extend across a wide proportion of this view.

B41 The full sweep of the storage containers would be seen in the near distance stretching across the width of the c 90-degree view ahead of the path user, becoming closer as a walker proceeds to the north. During construction movement of vehicles and lighting would be evident across a broad angle of view. The tops of trees would be seen behind the proposed development with the proposed scrub and tree planting only screening a proportion of the western side of the storage containers from this direction. The proposed development would compete visually with the wooded skyline. The loss of the openness of the Green Belt would be readily observed from this viewing position.

Figure B7: Viewpoint 8 Appeal Scheme Year 10 Montage Vignette

B42 The LVIA assessed that the receptor value is high, susceptibility low and overall sensitivity medium. The LVIA author concluded that at **year 1 with mitigation** the visual effect would be **Moderate – Major adverse winter and summer**. The assessor notes that mitigation includes: Native trees and scrub planting on the earthworks.

B43 The LVIA assessed that at **year 10** with mitigation the visual effect would be assessed that overall, visual effects for footpath users on the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way will be **Moderate - Major adverse**.

B44 The LVIA assessed that at year 20 with mitigation the visual effect would be **Moderate - Major adverse**.

B45 I have assessed that the magnitude of change here would be high, and the users of the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way long-distance footpath are of high sensitivity, bringing about a **substantial (major) adverse** effect. With mitigation at 15 years post-development the

magnitude would remain high. The mitigation would only have a minimal effect on the assimilation of the development into the landscape. The openness of the area would be lost over a broad area and the visual relationship between the open pasture / grassland rising up to the wooded skyline and parkland changed. The landscape would become enclosed. The industrial nature of the storage containers would be readily observed for the duration of the development form this view because the scrub and tree cover would only extend across part of the site boundary.

LVIA Viewpoints 14 and 15

B46 LVIA Viewpoints 14 and 15 are from the same location within the RPG boundary, Viewpoint 14 looks across the south-east quadrant, Viewpoint 15 across the south-west quadrant. The proposed development would extend across more than 90-degrees of horizontal view. The LVIA author has assessed them separately, but people stand or move through a position in the landscape and take in the panoramic scene, and therefore it is appropriate to assess this location as a single front-facing panoramic view.

LVIA Viewpoint 14: On the northeast boundary of the Site within the Registered Park and Garden looking southeast (not currently a publicly accessible viewpoint)

Figure B8: Baseline Viewpoint 14 Vignette

B47 Looking west from within the Grade 1 RPG and the Green Belt towards the site c 130m distant, and landform c 74m, higher than the site with the viewer looking down on the proposed development. The current (baseline) panoramic view shows layers of campus style trees to the south around Culham Campus and very long-range open views towards the west out from this “parkland reveal” across the Green Belt forming a relatively shallow horizon with a wooded skyline in the far distance. The railway line is in cutting and not readily observed. The pylons and overhead wires in the foreground of the view stretch out towards the south and west and do not impact substantially on the openness of the view or disrupt landscape character. They are a detractor but not masking other more highly valued landscape patterns.

B48 If consented with the **Appeal Scheme** proposals, the proposed development would extend across a wide proportion of this view (both VP14 & 15 arcs). The wooden post and rail perimeter fence, being characteristic of horse paddocking and not parkland, would be at odds with the local character and historical character of the parkland edge. The storage containers would dominate the foreground of the view despite mitigation and landscaping. The proposed permissive path would be urban in character again at odds with landscape character.

B49 The full suite of storage containers and the sub-station connection would be seen stretching out across the foreground into the middle-distance. Movement of vehicles and lighting would be evident across a broad angle of view during the construction stages.

Figure B9: Viewpoint 14 Appeal Scheme Year 10 Montage Vignette

B50 The LVIA assessed that the receptor value is high, susceptibility low and overall sensitivity medium. The LVIA author concluded that at **year 1 with mitigation** the visual effect would be **neutral**. The assessor notes that mitigation includes: Extensive landscaping to enhance the parkland and screen the existing and proposed development from view.

B51 The LVIA assessed that at **year 10** with mitigation the visual effect would be assessed that overall, visual effects for footpath users on the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way will be **neutral**.

B52 The LVIA assessed that at year 20 with mitigation the visual effect would be **neutral**.

B53 I have assessed that the magnitude of change here would be high, and the potential users of the footpath are of high sensitivity (high value, high susceptibility), bringing about a **substantial (major) adverse** effect with mitigation at 15 years post-development the

magnitude would remain high. The mitigation would create additional adverse effects and not aid the assimilation of the development into the landscape for the reasons set out above.

B54 The proposed development will be clearly noticeable, and the view would be fundamentally altered by its presence. The parkland character would be disrupted, the openness enclosed and the rurality of the landscape industrialised.

LVIA Viewpoint 15: From Viewpoint 14 within the Registered Park and Garden but looking southwest (not currently a publicly accessible viewpoint)

Figure B10: Baseline Viewpoint 15 Vignette

Figure B11: Viewpoint 15 Appeal Scheme year 10 Montage Vignette

B55 The LVIA assessed that the receptor value is high, susceptibility low and overall sensitivity medium. The LVIA author concluded that at **year 1 with mitigation** the visual effect of seeing only this part of the development would be **Moderate adverse winter and summer**. The assessor notes that mitigation includes: Extensive landscaping to enhance the parkland and screen the existing and proposed development from view.

B56 The LVIA assessed that at **year 10** with mitigation the visual effect would be assessed that overall, visual effects for footpath users on the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way will be **minor adverse in both winter and summer**.

B57 The LVIA assessed that at year 20 with mitigation the visual effect would be **minor beneficial summer and neutral[2] in winter**.

B58 I have assessed that, as for and including the changes seen from Viewpoint 14 which is a continuation of this arc of view, the magnitude of change here would be high, and the potential users of the footpath are of high sensitivity, bringing about a **substantial (major) adverse** effect. With mitigation at 15 years post-development the magnitude would remain high. The mitigation would create additional adverse effects and not aid the assimilation of the development into the landscape.

Anne Priscott

May 2025

[2] ES Vol 2, LVIA Appendix B Methods of assessment (**CD §**) Table 11 neutral effects are described as: Beneficial effects of a similar nature, on the same receptor, balance against adverse effects of a similar nature and so should not influence the decision-making process.