

APPENDIX 4 VIEWPOINT ANALYSIS

Introduction

1. A viewpoint assessment has been carried out from a selection of key representative viewpoint locations to inform the assessment of the likely magnitude and significance of landscape and visual effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development.
2. 13no. viewpoints have been selected with the locations of the selected viewpoints shown on Figure 2. Details for each viewpoint are provided below. Panoramic photographs are provided to illustrate the existing view at each viewpoint location and the likely extent of the Proposed Development within the view (see Viewpoints 1-13). A summary of the viewpoint analysis is provided in Table 4 in the main LVA report.
3. This viewpoint analysis considers the nature of the predicted view and the scale of change. The wider extent of the effect (beyond the individual viewpoint considered), and its duration, are not captured in the viewpoint analysis (as a single viewpoint cannot capture extent or duration), and are considered in the main body of the assessment. Extent and duration are factors in the overall judgement on magnitude of change, therefore judgements on magnitude of change and overall level of effect and significance are also provided in the main assessment.
4. The method of assessment used for the viewpoint analysis, which is described in Appendix 1, accords with current best-practice guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management, 2013). Observations are made of the baseline landscape and visual characteristics at each of the representative viewpoints. Observations and professional judgement are applied to determine the scale of change attributable to the Proposed Development (**Large, Medium, Small and Negligible**) upon landscape character and visual amenity at each individual viewpoint in order to determine the scale of effect.
5. The visual assessment takes into account the screening effect of intervening landform, vegetation and built form and the potential for changes to those baseline features. It assumes excellent clear weather conditions; although the influence of different seasons, weather, sunlight and visibility conditions have been considered, where relevant.

VP	Location	Key features of existing view	Predicted Visual Change	Predicted Change to Landscape Character	Predicted Change to Designated Area
1	Helsby Hill Looking west towards the site from the peak of the hill	Elevated view from the summit of Helsby Hill gives panoramic views out across the estuarine environment and the large-scale infrastructure associated with it. At the base of the hill the residential edge of Helsby can be seen with the Helsby Community Sports Club facilities located beyond this, adjacent to a Tesco store. Beyond this, the M56 is visible with the oil refinery and other development associated with Ellesmere Port visible as a backdrop. To the right of this in the view there are numerous wind turbines between the estuary and the motorway. In the distance development can also be seen along the Mersey estuary on both sides of the river. The site is located within farmland to the immediate south of the motorway, with views towards the various field parcels distilled by strong field edge vegetation. The old ammunition stores that are scattered through the landscape within and around the site are also visible in the view. The farmland of the site sits within a much larger area of largely flat countryside stretching out between Chester in the west and Ellesmere Port in the north with views towards the Welsh Hills beyond this.	The Site consists of several existing field parcels sat within a wider expanse of farmland. Existing vegetation would break up the extent of the solar farm and provide some screening. However, where existing fields within the redline are visible from this location, the solar panels would also be visible. This would introduce another element of built form into the wider panoramic view but one that is visually distinct to surrounding built form. It would form another element of energy related infrastructure within the wider view. The construction period of the development would see the gradual build out of the site with activity focussed on different areas of the site throughout the construction period. The distance from the site and presence of M56 within the wider view would ensure that any construction traffic would not result in any notable change to the view.	The build out of the Site would result in a gradual transition from open farmland to solar farm. This change would be restricted to within the Site which forms part of a much larger area of mostly flat plain landscape of the Cheshire West and Chester Landscape Strategies (CWCLS) character area 9A: Cheshire Plain West - Dunham to Tarvin Plain. When viewed from Helsby Hill which sits within the CWCLS character area 2A: Helsby Hill Sandstone Ridge, the proposed development would not affect any of the key landscape characteristics with the exception of the panoramic views over the Mersey Estuary. While the proposed development would see a transition from farmland to solar farm, the presence of energy related infrastructure within the landscape, primarily the existing wind turbines and oil refinery, is already established within the wider view. Furthermore, the solar farm would be subservient to this larger scale infrastructure already present in the landscape.	The viewpoint is located within an area of special county value, of the special landscape qualities listed, from this location, the proposed development has the potential to alter the 'spectacular panoramic views from the ridge'. However, while the proposed development would sit within an area that is currently largely farmland, it would sit within a wider panoramic view that includes large scale energy infrastructure and the urban landscape along either side of much of the Mersey Estuary. The effect on the wider view would therefore be minimal.

2 Helsby Road adjacent to Cheshire Lookout Camp Site Looking west through gate entrance	The view along Helsby Road is generally well contained by roadside vegetation, however at various points, gaps in the vegetation and gateways provide glimpsed views such as this one out to the west. While the rest of the panoramic is well contained by vegetation the view to the west looks across the edge of Helsby towards Ellesmere Port and the flat landscape adjacent to the Mersey Estuary. Large scale infrastructure such as the refinery dominate the view in the direction of Ellesmere Port with the landscape to the left of this largely flat open plain which is predominantly used for farming. The lower elevation than VP1 results in the field edge vegetation providing a greater level of screening than from more elevated points, with the appearance of well wooded farmland. Views towards the site include some of the old ammunition stores as well as some visibility of the field parcels between the field edge vegetation, there is a line of large pylons running across the view in the direction of the Site.
The angle of view towards the plain is more acute from this location resulting in a greater degree of screening provided by the existing field edge vegetation. Despite this there would still be some visibility of the proposed development when viewed from here. However, it would form a small part of the wider view across the estuarine landscape and sit subservient to the existing larger scale infrastructure already visible in the view. It would also be largely screened by the existing vegetation in the view with only small parts of the development visible from this location with the development visually distinct from surrounding built form.	Viewpoint sits within CWCLS character area 3A: - Helsby to Tarporley Sandstone Ridge which has limited visibility in the direction of the proposed development. The intermediate height of the landscape limits views towards individual field parcels of the adjacent plain. There would be no direct impact on any of the identified key characteristics of the character area other than that of the view from it. From this location the proposed development would be largely screened by the existing vegetation, even through wintertime, and would sit subservient to larger existing infrastructure and built form associated with the Mersey Estuary.
N/A	

3	Edge of Hapsford adjacent to A5117 Looking west across A5117	This view is taken from within the flat plain landscape and as such the landscape is much more enclosed with limited scope for longer views. A combination of field and roadside edge vegetation, along with small woodland copses prevents longer views to the south of the road. The A5117 is locally more elevated than the road which provides access into the village, this further constrains any potential views from the edge of the village. In addition, there is also relatively robust vegetation to provide some level of screening of the A5117 from many of the properties along the edge of the village. Existing electricity pylons can be seen in the distance crossing the view.	There is a robust band of existing vegetation that prevents all but very occasional glimpsed views towards the Site when viewed from this location. There would be very limited scope for visibility of the proposed development, but this is only likely to occur during winter periods. During the construction period construction traffic would access the Site largely from the A5117 but the access point is not visible from this location and the majority of the traffic is likely to approach from the M56 direction and not pass this location.	The viewpoint is located within the host CWCLS landscape character area – 9A: Dunham to Tarvin Plain. Due to the very limited scope for visibility of the proposed development from this location, there would be no notable change in the key characteristics of the character area identified from this location.	N/A
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4 Hapsford Lane Looking west	This view is taken from within the Cheshire plain and as such the view quickly become filtered by field edge vegetation. The lane it is taken from is not well trafficked but has several residences in close proximity to the viewpoint location. This viewpoint is taken from one of several gaps in roadside vegetation. From this location the estuary is screened from view with only the higher structures within the oil refinery and pylons clearly visible within an otherwise rural context. Field edge vegetation prevents longer views across the landscape with permeability through the vegetation only extending two to three fields back from the roadside.	The flat nature of the surrounding landscape combined with well vegetated road and field edges prevents any permeability through the landscape towards the Site. It is therefore unlikely that there would be any visibility back towards the proposed development despite the ZTV suggesting there may by a small amount towards the top part of the proposed solar panels. Given the lack of visibility of other site features such as the derelict ammunition stores, it is unlikely that even the top parts of the solar panels would be visible from here, even during winter.	As the proposed development would not be visible from here it would not interact with the character of the host CWCLS landscape character area - 9A: Dunham to Tarvin Plain from this location. Therefore, none of the characteristics of the character area would be affected by the proposed development at this location.	N/A
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5 Footpath 114/FP5/1 adjacent to Dunham-on-the-Hill Looking northwest	This view is taken from the footpath as it rises up slightly above the surrounding landscape to cross over the railway line. As such the view becomes slightly more open with a greater degree of permeability into the surrounding farmland. This farmland is well vegetated with views becoming filtered and fully screened at ground level in relatively close proximity. Within the wider view, the taller structures within the oil refinery dominates the horizon with large pylons also visible crossing the view. To the northeast Helsby Hill and the ridgeline stretching south from it are clearly visible in the view. To the south the residential properties at the edge of the village are in close proximity with the viewpoint located at a similar elevation to first floor windows within these properties.	The Site is relatively close to this viewpoint, at its closest point it is located approximately 250m to the northwest of the viewpoint. Despite this, the well vegetated landscape would largely screen any views towards the proposed development with only glimpsed views of some of the panels along the southeastern corner of the Site. These views are heavily filtered by existing vegetation, even during the winter. The extent of visibility would reduce further when the trees are in leaf resulting in little or no visibility of the proposed development from this location.	The landscape reflects many of the characteristics defined within CWCLS. The viewpoint sits within the host landscape character area (9A: Dunham to Tarvin Plain) with the sandstone ridge and oil refinery providing a backdrop to the surrounding plain. The vegetated nature of field boundaries is also characteristic of the area. While the solar farm would have the potential to diminish the rurality of the area, the limited visibility of the proposals from this location would restrict the likelihood from this point within the wider character area.	N/A
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6	A56 at edge of Dunham-on-the-Hill Looking northwest	This location sits at the edge of Dunham-on-the-Hill and, as the name suggests sits slightly elevated above the surrounding plain. This allows longer views out across the landscape with large industrial development including the oil refinery and large pylons prominent on the horizon. Despite this more elevated view, the field edge vegetation within the surrounding flat landscape prevents views into much of the surrounding farmland with the landscape having a wooded feel to it when viewed from here. The A56 is well vegetated on both sides screening much of the view to the northwest but with occasional gaps providing transient glimpsed views.	The Site sits within a well wooded section of the view where visibility of any fields is very limited. As such it is unlikely that the proposed development would be visible during summer months from this location and during winter any visibility would be heavily filtered by vegetation. The proposed development is located in the direction of the existing oil refinery when viewed from here but due to the very limited potential for visibility the extent of change would be extremely limited.	Located within host landscape character area, there may be glimpsed wintertime views of a small number of panels from this location however, they would sit below the vegetation line of the area in which they are located and are unlikely to be visible during summer months. While the solar farm would have the potential to diminish the rurality of the area, the extremely limited visibility of the proposals from this location would restrict the likelihood from this point within the wider character area.	N/A
7	Bridleway 197/BR3/1 close to Lowerhall Farm Looking west across plain	This view is located on the sandstone ridge that runs to the east of the Site. The elevated nature of the view allows wide panoramic views out to the west but with the focus of the view located further south than the Site. While there are views in the direction of the Site with the oil refinery beyond it, these sit at the periphery of the wider panoramic view. This change in direction compared with other representative views presents a more rural backdrop with less urban influence over the view and a weaker connection to the area around the Site	The acute angle of the view along with distance from the Site result in views towards fields within the Site being filtered by the surrounding field edge vegetation. It is therefore unlikely that there would be any visibility of the proposed development from this location even during wintertime. If any of the proposed development was visible from here, it would be at a scale and of a distance that no notable change would occur in the view as a result of the proposed development	Located within CWCLS character area 3A: Helsby to Tarporley Sandstone Fringe. While there are view in the direction of the Site, the likelihood of any visibility of the proposed development from this location is low. If panels are visible, they would be glimpsed views and from a distance where it would result in no notable change to any of the character areas characteristics.	N/A

8	North Cheshire Way on Barrow Lane Looking northwest slightly elevated from surrounding plain	From this more elevated location there are relatively open views out to the west looking towards the Welsh Hills. The landscape is relatively flat in nature with a well wooded feel created by field edge vegetation. There are a lot of pylons within the view, as is the oil refinery, although perhaps less prominent than many of the other viewpoints. To the north east, the sandstone ridge that leads up to Helby Hill can be seen through existing vegetation. However, the intermediate landscape is screened by vegetation. The surrounding landscape is largely rural in nature with vegetation mostly screening any individual farmsteads and properties outside of the immediate context of the view.	The angle of view towards the location of the Site is relatively acute from this location. While the infrastructure associated with the oil refinery is visible in the view, the field structure of the area incorporating the Site is screened by the surrounding vegetation when viewed from here. It is therefore unlikely that there would be any visibility of the Proposed Development when viewed from here.	Viewpoint is located within CWCLS character area 9A: Dunham to Tarvin Plain. Due to the lack of visibility of the scheme from this location it is unlikely that any of the key characteristics of the character area would be affected from this location.	N/A
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9 Hob Lane close to Moss House Farm Looking north from the plain	The view is taken from within the plain and as such the surrounding landscape is flat in nature with vegetation creating a layered screen to the surrounding landscape with visibility extending to three of four fields distance from the viewpoint location. Larger scale infrastructure along the Mersey Estuary is largely screened from this location, with the exception of the taller parts of the oil refinery, with the surrounding landscape feeling largely rural in nature with perhaps a greater feeling of remoteness and isolation than other viewpoint locations. Further to the east there is also views across towards the wind turbines which are located on the southern side of the estuary.	Views towards the Site are heavily filtered by vegetation with limited scope to see any solar panels when viewed from here. While there is a chance of glimpsed wintertime views of small parts of the proposed development, during summer time it is likely that the proposed development would be fully screened from this location. Any potential change in the view would therefore be very limited in nature.	The viewpoint sits within the host landscape character area but with limited scope to alter the key characteristics of the character area from this location. There is potential for glimpsed views of the panels during wintertime to negatively affect the rural nature of the surrounding environment, but the scale of change is likely to be minimal.	N/A
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10 B5132 close to M56 bridge Looking east towards Helsby Hill	This view is taken from the slope up to the B5132 bridge over the M56 and as such is elevated above the surrounding landscape. From this location there are clear views back towards Helsby Hill and ridge line that extends to the south. The M56 is also visible running eastwards. The landscape to the north of the M56 quickly becomes more urban in nature. Views in the direction of the Site are filtered by field edge vegetation with the flat nature of the landscape preventing visibility into fields that are not within the immediate vicinity.	From this location there is very limited scope for panels within the proposed development to be visible. There is a small chance of very limited glimpsed views of the panels during winter months but the view in summer is likely to be fully screened from this location. The extent of change would therefore be minimal.	The viewpoint sits within the host landscape character area. From this location there is unlikely to be any notable change in the key characteristics as defined within the CWCLS. N/A
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11	B5132 close to Elton Green Looking southeast towards sandstone ridge	This view is taken from the roadside with the extent of visibility across the wider landscape very much dependant on the height of the roadside hedges. These, along with field edge vegetation beyond, filter views across the surrounding plain, limiting visibility of adjacent fields. The sandstone ridge to the east of the site can be seen in the view, as can some large pylons which cross the image in between the viewpoint location and the Site. The two derelict structures that are visible in the view sit on the same side of the motorway. Views of the M56 are largely screened although the junction sign is visible in the view. There is no direct visibility of the fields beyond the motorway from this point.	From this location direct views into the Site are screened by existing field and road edge vegetation. During winter months there is a chance that some of the solar panels along the M56 boundary may be visible through this vegetation however the extent of these views would be very limited, and they would sit within the existing vegetation that border the site. It is unlikely that there would be any visibility during summer months when the vegetation is in leaf.	The viewpoint sits within the host landscape character area. From this location there is unlikely to be any notable change in the key characteristics as defined within the CWCLS	N/A
12	Junction of Old Hall Lane and Parkland Drive	The viewpoint is located at the southern edge of a residential area in Elton and is taken from the roadside adjacent to properties who look out in the direction of the Site. The view to the wider area is contained by vegetation and landform in the direction of the Site and to the rear by residential development, creating a more enclosed landscape than elsewhere. There are large pylons running across the view.	Despite the ZTV suggesting visibility from this location there does not appear to be any opportunity for views towards the Site from this location.	The viewpoint sits within the host landscape character area. From this location there is unlikely to be any notable change in the key characteristics as defined within the CWCLS.	N/A

13 Footpath 123/FP3/1 close to Junction 14 of M56	This viewpoint is taken from a PRoW that runs from the A5117 adjacent to the motorway junction in a westerly direction. The PRoW is not well used and was not accessible from the road without climbing a gate. The field is arable in nature and borders the motorway to the south, with the vegetation along the motorway verge filtering views across towards the Site. The motorway sits partially in cutting at this point limiting the extent of visibility towards vehicles using it. There are some glimpsed views of the fields on the opposite side of the motorway through gaps in vegetation although these are limited in nature. The landscape that this PRoW runs through is separated from the surrounding landscape by both the A5117 and M56. To the rear of the view the oil refinery and a number of pylons are clearly visible in the view.	There is the chance of glimpsed views across the motorway towards the site through gaps in existing vegetation. These are very limited in nature but with a chance of seeing panels both during winter months and during the summer. These glimpsed views would be very much secondary in nature when compared with the influence of existing large infrastructure in the view such as the M56, pylons and oil refinery.	The viewpoint sits within the host landscape character area. From this location there is unlikely to be any notable change in the key characteristics as defined within the CWCLS N/A
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