

National Grid

Melksham Shunt Reactor **Landscape & Visual** **Appraisal**

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National Grid

Melksham Shunt Reactor
Landscape & Visual Appraisal

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by LUC on behalf of National Grid in support of a planning application to extend Melksham Substation, from herein after referred to as the 'Proposed Project'.

1.2 The Proposed Project comprises a substation extension to accommodate a new shunt reactor, utilising plant equipment in accordance with existing assets and surrounded by a palisade fence with electric fence wire, up to 3.4m high. All equipment installed will be less than 12.1m in height. The Proposed Project will re-align the access road to the existing energy storage facilities located to the south of the application site (the site), which provides a connection to the highway network further to the north at Westlands Lane. Details of the Proposed Project are shown on drawing no. PDD-07487-LAY-0107.

1.3 The site is located to the immediate west of the existing Melksham substation to the east of Whitley and Shaw villages and to the north-west of Melksham. The location of the site and its context is shown on Figure 1 below.

1.4 The site consists of the 'main area', located to the west of the Melksham Substation and the 'site access' connecting the main area to Westlands Lane further to the north.

1.5 This LVA considers the potential effects of the Proposed Project upon the application site and its surrounding local context, including landscape features, landscape character and visual amenity.

1.6 The LVA includes the following chapters;

- Chapter 2 – Baseline Conditions;
- Chapter 3 – Proposed Development and Landscape Mitigation;
- Chapter 4 – Appraisal of Landscape and Visual Effects; and
- Chapter 5 – Conclusions.

1.7 The full methodology used for this LVA is included within Appendix A. Considering the scale and context of the site and surroundings together with the nature of the Proposed Project (to extend an existing substation) a 1km study area is considered appropriate.

1.8 The LVA has been undertaken by chartered Landscape Architects at LUC.

Figure 1: Site Location and Site Context



Chapter 2

Baseline Conditions

Site Context

2.1 The site adjoins the western extent of the existing Melksham Substation, located within the administration boundary of Wiltshire Council. The site and surrounding area is generally gently sloping, falling towards South Brook to the south and towards the River Avon further to the south-east. Whitley village is located approximately 0.4km to the west of the site at its closest point, with Shaw village located approximately 0.5km to the south-west of the site at its closest point. A number of high voltage overhead lines extend from Melksham Substation in all directions.

2.2 The main site area lies close to a number a land uses, including:

- Melksham substation to the east;
- Recently constructed battery storage facilities to the south;
- Whitley Golf Club to the west; and
- Agricultural land to the north.

2.3 The main site area is defined by the existing fence line to the substation and an overgrown hedgerow with some scattered mature trees. A recently constructed access track to the battery storage facilities crosses the site, which lies adjacent to a number of earth mounds which are overgrown with grass and weeds. The site access extends along the site access track linking to Westlands Lane to the north, in proximity to Westlands Farm, the track being currently used as access to the recently constructed battery storage facilities. Western parts of the main site area form part of the rough grassland adjacent to Whitley Golf Course tee and fairway.

2.4 There are a number of Public Rights of Way (PROW) close to the site, including MELW84 and MELW84 which cross the site boundary and provide a connection between Whitley and Beanacre. Other PROWs are shown on Figure 1.

Planning Policy

2.5 The Wilshire Core Strategy¹ was adopted in January 2015, which incorporates saved policies from other District Council Local Plans, the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation Development Plan Document and the South Wiltshire Core Strategy.

2.6 Policies of relevance for the note as listed below.

Core Policy 42 Standalone renewable energy installations

Proposals for standalone renewable energy schemes will be supported subject to satisfactory resolution of all site specific constraints. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate how impacts on the following factors have been satisfactorily assessed, including any cumulative effects, and taken into account:

- i. The landscape, particularly in and around AONBs
- ii. The Western Wiltshire Green Belt

¹ [Wiltshire Council \(2015\) Wiltshire Core Strategy](#) Accessed online June 2024

- iii. The New Forest National Park
- iv. Biodiversity
- v. The historic environment including the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site and its setting
- vi. Use of the local transport network
- vii. Residential amenity, including noise, odour, visual amenity and safety
- viii. Best and most versatile agricultural land.

Applicants will not be required to justify the overall need for renewable energy development, either in a national or local context.

Core Policy 51 Landscape

Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals should be informed by and sympathetic to the distinctive character areas identified in the relevant Landscape Character Assessment(s) and any other relevant assessments and studies. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate that the following aspects of landscape character have been conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures:

- i. The locally distinctive pattern and species composition of natural features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and waterbodies.
- ii. The locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings.
- iii. The separate identity of settlements and the transition between man-made and natural landscapes at the urban fringe.
- iv. Visually sensitive skylines, soils, geological and topographical features.
- v. Landscape features of cultural, historic and heritage value.
- vi. Important views and visual amenity.
- vii. Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.
- viii. Landscape functions including places to live, work, relax and recreate.
- ix. Special qualities of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the New Forest National Park, where great weight will be afforded to conserving and enhancing landscapes and scenic beauty.

Proposals for development within or affecting the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), New Forest National Park (NFNP) or Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site (WHS) shall demonstrate that they have taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in the relevant Management Plans for these areas. Proposals for development outside of an AONB that is sufficiently prominent (in terms of its siting or scale) to have an impact on the area's special qualities (as set out in the relevant management plan), must also demonstrate that it would not adversely affect its setting.

Core Policy 52 Green infrastructure

Development shall make provision for the retention and enhancement of Wiltshire's green infrastructure network, and shall ensure that suitable links to the network are provided and maintained. Where development is permitted developers will be required to:

- i. retain and enhance existing on site green infrastructure
- ii. make provision for accessible open spaces in accordance with the requirements of the adopted Wiltshire Open Space Standards
- iii. put measures in place to ensure appropriate long-term management of any green infrastructure directly related to the development

- iv. provide appropriate contributions towards the delivery of the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy
- v. identify and provide opportunities to enhance and improve linkages between the natural and historic landscapes of Wiltshire.

If damage or loss of existing green infrastructure is unavoidable, the creation of new or replacement green infrastructure equal to or above its current value and quality, that maintains the integrity and functionality of the green infrastructure network, will be required.

Proposals for major development should be accompanied by an audit of the existing green infrastructure within and around the site and a statement demonstrating how this will be retained and enhanced through the development process.

Development will not adversely affect the integrity and value of the green infrastructure network, prejudice the delivery of the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, or provide inadequate green infrastructure mitigation.

Green infrastructure projects and initiatives that contribute to the delivery of a high quality and highly valued multi-functional green infrastructure network in accordance with the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy will be supported. Contributions (financial or other) to support such projects and initiatives will be required where appropriate from developers.

Designations

2.7 There are no international or national landscape designations which cover the site or study area. There are a number of listed buildings within the local context, including Grade II* listed Christ Church located approximately 0.6km to the south-west. The effect upon listed buildings and their setting is not considered in this LVA.

Landscape Character

National Character

2.8 The site and study area are located centrally within National Character Area 117 - Avon Vales. The national level assessment gives a broad brush impression of a region and provides a useful contextual overview of the character of the wider landscape. However, the Proposed Project is not considered to have the potential to result in any perceptible effects on landscape character at this national scale and to remain proportionate to the small scale of the site in relation to the National Character Area, focus is placed upon the local landscape character.

2.9 The Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005)² describes, assesses, and evaluates the character of the landscape of Wiltshire. The assessment contains descriptions for generic landscape character types (LCT) and summary descriptions of unique landscape character areas (LCA).

2.10 The site is located within the southern part of LCT 16: Limestone Lowlands and adjoins LCT 12 Open Clay Vale. There is only one LCA within the LCT 16 Limestone Lowland, 16A: Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands.

2.11 The key characteristics for LCT 16: Limestone Lowlands are set out as follows:

- *'Gently undulating lowland farmland over underlying geology of predominantly mudstone and limestone with some pockets of clay.'*
- *A peaceful and rural landscape with subtle variations in character relating to the varied geology, topography and water courses.*
- *Mix of permanent pasture and arable farmland.*
- *Strong network of hedgerows with hedgerow trees.*
- *Dry stone walls field boundaries in some areas and around settlements.*

² [Land Use Consultants \(2005\) Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment – Final Report](#) Accessed online June 2024

- *Field pattern predominantly large geometric field typical of eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosure with small scale irregular fields of medieval pattern close to close to settlement.*
- *More open areas of higher ground to the west offer panoramic views over the type, elsewhere occasional woodland blocks, copses and frequent hedgerow trees give a greater sense of enclosure, with intermittent views.*
- *Numerous rivers forming shallow valleys, with the watercourses sometimes lined with willows.*
- *Settlements in the form of historic market towns, villages and scattered farmsteads distributed throughout the type linked by network of rural roads.*
- *Traditional buildings of local limestone buildings an outstanding feature.*
- *Presence of historic parkland and estates marked by stone estate walls, grand entrances and parkland trees and avenues.'*

2.12 The strength of character of LCT 16: Limestone Lowlands is judged as moderate, with it's condition identified as *'...generally good with intact hedgerows, traditional villages of vernacular stone dwellings, village greens and stone walls. In some sections of the areas there are elements in poorer condition such as gappy and flailed hedgerows, overgrown stone walls and encroaching horse pasture close to some of the larger settlement.'*

2.13 The broad management objectives for LCT 16: Limestone Lowlands are identified as:

- *'Conserve the network of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland copses and take opportunities for new planting where this will strengthen local character (for instance avoiding planting that will affect the open views in the high ground at the west of the area).*
- *Encourage conservation and rebuilding of dry stone wall field boundaries, particularly close to settlement.*
- *Conserve the remaining areas of ecological interest such as those with statutory designations, areas of ancient woodland, veteran hedgerow trees and chalk grassland.*
- *Maintain the subtle variations that occur throughout the landscape, encouraging local distinctiveness for instance in the variation in field boundaries from hedgerows to stone walls.*
- *Encourage management and restoration of the historic parkland landscapes that are characteristic of the area.*
- *Retain the distinctive character of the villages; ensuring any change respects the traditional stone built character and vernacular form.*
- *Resist urbanisation of the country lanes through addition of road markings and concrete kerbs or lamp posts or excessive signage that detracts from the rural character of the area.'*

Visual Baseline

2.14 Due to the low lying nature of the site and visual enclosure afforded by the network of vegetation, as well as by the existing Melksham Substation itself, outward views are limited in nature.

2.15 Key visual receptors have been identified through a combination of desktop review and field survey. The following receptors have been identified:

- Recreation users of Whitley Golf Course (refer to Viewpoint 1);
- Users of PROW (refer to Viewpoints 1-3, 5 and 7); and
- Recreation users of Whitley Cricket Club (refer to Viewpoint 4).
- Residential receptors within Whitley and Shaw and surrounding farmsteads;
- Visitors to Christ Church, Shaw (refer to Viewpoint 6); and

- Local road users.

2.16 A number of representative viewpoints have been selected to illustrate the change in views which would be experienced by the different receptors across the study area, as described in Table 2.1 and set out in Appendix B. The location of viewpoints are shown on Figure 2 below.

Table 2.1 Representative Viewpoints

No.	Viewpoint Name	Grid Coordinates	Receptor Represented
1	Public right of way (MELW84) adjacent to Whitley Golf Club	389127E 166204N	Representative of views by users of the PROW and by users of the golf course.
2	Public right of way (MELW85) close to BESS access track	389360E 166292N	Representative of views by users of the PROW
3	Public right of way (MELW85) adjacent to Melksham Substation	389467E 166286N	Representative of views by users of the PROW
4	Outfield of Whitley Cricket Club	388909E 166149N	Representative of views by users of the PROW and by users of the cricket pitch.
5	Public right of way (MELW85) close to Corsham Road	388926E 166512N	Representative of views by users of the PROW
6	Graveyard of Christ Church, Shaw	388917E 165750N	Representative of views by visitors to the church
7	Bridleway (MELW87A) adjacent to Westlands Farm	389322E 166790N	Representative of views by users of the PROW

Figure 2: Viewpoint Location Plan



Chapter 3

Proposed Development and Landscape Mitigation

The Proposed Project

3.1 The LVA considers landscape and visual effects of all elements of the Proposed Project, which will comprise:

- A new shunt reactor with associated equipment up to a height of 12.1m;
- A new palisade fence with electrical fence wire, up to 3.4m high, to replace previous secure boundary;
- New hard surfacing within the substation compound; and
- A re-aligned access track to the battery storage facilities.

Construction

3.2 It is assumed that access to undertake construction work will either be through the secure substation compound or via the access track to the battery storage facilities.

3.3 Construction works will require the removal of vegetation aligning the existing edge of the compound, as well as removal of earth bunds and any vegetation aligning the golf course.

Operation

3.4 Upon completion, all development proposals will be in place as set out above and will include landscape mitigation proposals as set out below.

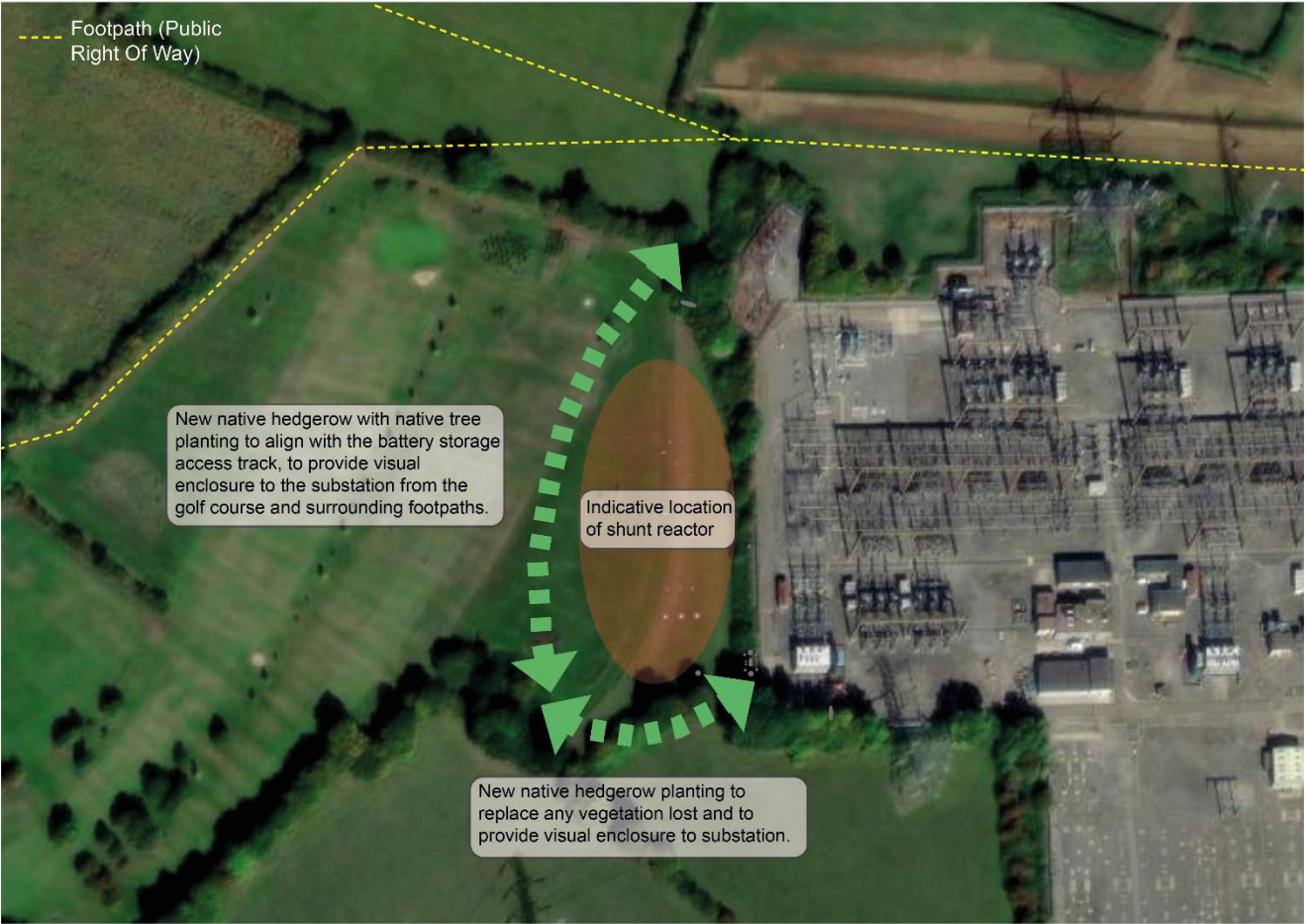
Landscape Mitigation Proposals

3.5 The principal aims of the landscape and visual mitigation are summarised as follows and indicatively shown on Figure 3 below:

- To filter views towards the Proposed Project and existing Melksham Substation from golf course and footpath users, through the provision of a new native hedgerow incorporating native trees where feasible, along the western and southern boundaries;
- To provide species rich grassland along the diverted access track to the battery storage facilities, to enhance local biodiversity;
- To restore all land used for construction purposes to its former use; and
- To provide long term management of proposed vegetation to enable the landscape character of the area is restored and to ensure visual mitigation establishes.

3.6 All plant species should be native, with species to potentially include tree species such as field maple, oak, rowan and small-leaved lime and hedgerow/shrub/scrub species such as hazel, hawthorn, wild privet, blackthorn, dog-rose and wayfaring tree.

Figure 3: Indicative Locations for Landscape Proposals



Chapter 4

Appraisal of Landscape and Visual Effects

4.1 The methodology for the LVA is set out at Appendix A. Landscape and visual effects are considered during construction and during operation, at Year 0 and Year 15. All levels of effect are considered to be adverse unless otherwise stated.

Effects upon Landscape Character

Effects upon LCT 16: Limestone Lowlands

4.2 The site falls within LCT 16: Limestone Lowlands, close to the south-eastern edge of the LCT, where the LCT extends to Chippenham and north of the M4, north of Malmesbury. The Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment identifies that LCT 16: Limestone Lowlands is deemed to be in good condition and has a moderate strength of character, however, is influenced by adjacent land uses and existing infrastructure including the existing Melksham Substation and associated high voltage overhead lines, reducing its susceptibility to change in the locality. The LCT is of community value. On balance, the overall sensitivity of LCT 16: Limestone Lowlands is considered to be medium.

4.3 The landscape character of the site and study area has the potential to be influenced to some degree by the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would extend the electrical infrastructure into a landscape which is already heavily influenced by existing infrastructure. The geographical changes to landscape character would be localised in nature due to the enclosure provided by surrounding vegetation and by the adjacent substation. On balance, the level of effect during construction is deemed to be moderate to minor, which would reduce to minor in the longer term, once landscape mitigation proposals will have matured.

Effects upon Visual Amenity

Sensitivity

4.4 Residential receptors, users of PROWs, users of the golf course and visitors to Christ Church are considered to be of high visual sensitivity to the Proposed Project. Users of the local minor road network and users of the local cricket club are considered to be of medium sensitivity.

Visual Effects

Effects upon Users of Whitley Golf Course

4.5 Due to the proximity of users of two holes of the Whitley Golf Course, there would be clear and uninterrupted views towards both construction activity and the completed Proposed Project, at Year 1. Therefore, a moderate to major level of effect is predicted, whereby views from the golf course towards electrical infrastructure would be foreshortened and appear adjacent to the fairway and tee. However, it is worth noting that users of the golf course already have views toward the Melksham Substation as well as towards numerous pylons which connect existing high voltage overhead lines into the substation.

4.6 With the benefit of maturing planting along the edges of the extended substation, views by users of the golf course would be filtered to some degree, however, some glimpses are likely to remain. A moderate to minor level of effect is predicted in the longer term.

4.7 Golfers using other holes within the golf course would be separated by vegetation aligning the golf course, field boundaries and surrounding Melksham Substation, as well as by the battery storage facilities. Therefore, a negligible level of effect is predicted during all phases of development.

Effects upon Public Right of Way (MELW84)

4.8 Over a limited stretch (approximately 160m) of the PROW, where the route lies adjacent to the golf course, visual effects on footpath users would reflect those using the golf course, albeit further from the Proposed Project. A moderate to major level of effect is therefore predicted during construction and at Year 1 of completion, with a moderate to minor level of effect predicted in the longer term.

4.9 Elsewhere along the PROW, users would have views filtered by the network of field boundary vegetation and therefore, a negligible level of effect is predicted in the longer term.

Effects upon other public rights of way

4.10 Those users of PROW to the north and north-west of the site (MELW85, MELW87A, MELW87 and MELW86) would have direct views filtered by the network of field boundary vegetation with any glimpses seen in context of the existing substation. A negligible level of effect is predicted in the longer term.

4.11 Those users of PROW to the east, south and south-west the site would have no view of the Proposed Project due to the network of intervening vegetation and intervening electrical infrastructure.

Effects upon users of Whitley Cricket Club

4.12 Users of the cricket ground to the west of the site would have direct views filtered by the network of field boundary vegetation and vegetation aligning the golf course with any glimpses seen in context of the existing substation beyond. A negligible level of effect is predicted in the longer term.

Effects upon Residents within Whitley and Shaw

4.13 Due to the network of intervening vegetation along field boundaries, within gardens and surrounding the golf course and battery storage facilities, as well as the distance of the settlements from the Proposed Project, a negligible level of effect is predicted in the longer term.

Other effects upon other Residents

4.14 For the same reasons as set out above, the level of effect upon other residents within the vicinity of the Proposed Project would be no greater than negligible.

Effects upon Christ Church, Shaw

4.15 Due to the distance from the site and the intervening pattern of vegetation, including along South Brook and surround the battery storage facility, no visual effects are predicted upon visitors to Christ Church in Shaw.

Effects upon Local Road Users

4.16 The local roads including Bath Road (A635), Corsham Road (B3353) and Westlands Lane, are generally lined with mature field boundary vegetation, or have development along their edges which serves to restrict views by road users towards the site. Some limited fleeting glimpses are predicted where breaks in vegetation occur, however, these are likely to be seen in conjunction with the existing substation. Therefore, a negligible level of effect is predicted in the longer term.

Summary of Landscape and Visual Effects

4.17 Table 4.1 below summarises the landscape and visual effects as a result of the Proposed Project.

Table 4.1 Summary of Landscape and Visual Effects

Receptor	Sensitivity	Level of Effect		
		Construction	Operation – Year 0	Operation – Year 15
LCT 16: Limestone Lowlands	Medium	Moderate to Minor	Moderate to Minor	Minor
Users of Whitley Golf Course (adjacent)	High	Moderate to Major	Moderate to Major	Moderate to Minor
Users of Whitley Golf Course (all other locations)	High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
PROW MELW84 (160m stretch)	High	Moderate to Major	Moderate to Major	Moderate to Minor
PROW MELW84	High	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Other PROW	High	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Whitley Cricket Club	Medium	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Whitley and Shaw	High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Other Residents	High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Christ Church, Shaw	High	No effect	No effect	No effect
Local Road Users	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Chapter 5

Conclusions

5.1 Any notable adverse effects on landscape character as a result of the proposed development would be confined to the immediate surrounding local areas, which would reduce as a result of the proposed landscape mitigation.

5.2 Some localised adverse visual effects would occur to users of the golf course and to users of the local footpath network, however, these effects would be reduced to a degree by the proposed mitigation planting in the longer term. Elsewhere, views from other public rights of way, nearby settlements, the local roads and other local land uses would be no greater than negligible in the longer-term.

5.3 Visual effects on users of the golf course and local footpath network could be further reduced by consideration of additional planting within Whitley Golf Course. Additional planting would, over time, help to further filter and screen views and integrate the Proposed Project into the landscape.

5.4 Overall, the total extent of the landscape and visual effects would be localised and limited in nature.

Appendix A

LVA Methodology

A.1 This appendix sets out the methodology used for the LVA. The objectives of the LVA are to identify and assess the potential for landscape and visual effects arising as a result of the Proposed Project. The identification of landscape and visual effects is the result of applying professional judgement within an evidence-based appraisal process.

Approach to Appraisal

A.2 The methods and approach used to carry out the appraisal were informed by the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (Third Edition) (GLVIA3)³. LVA is distinct from LVIA in that it is not a requirement of the EIA Regulations. In reference to LVA, GLVIA3 states that:

'The principles and processes of LVIA can also be used to assist in the 'appraisal' of forms of land use change or development that fall outside the requirements of the EIA Directive and Regulations. Applying such an approach in these circumstances can be useful in helping to develop the design of different forms of development or other projects that may bring about change in the landscape and in visual amenity.'

A.3 Although an LVA describes effects, it is not required to determine 'significance', which is a term with specific meaning related to formal EIA processes. Instead, the LVA undertakes the following principal steps for assessing landscape and visual effects as follows:

- the landscape of the 1km study area has been analysed and landscape receptors identified;
- the visual baseline has been recorded in terms of the different groups of people who may experience views of the Proposed Project and the nature of their existing views and visual amenity;
- viewpoints have been selected (including representative viewpoints, specific viewpoints and illustrative viewpoints);
- likely levels of effects on landscape and visual resources have been identified; and
- the level of landscape and visual effects have been judged with reference to the sensitivity of the resource/receptor (its susceptibility and value) and magnitude of effect (a combination of the scale of effect, geographical extent and duration/reversibility).

Method for Assessing Landscape Effects

A.4 Judging the landscape effects requires consideration of the nature of the landscape receptors (sensitivity) and the nature of the effect on those receptors (magnitude).

Nature of Receptors (Sensitivity)

A.5 GLVIA3 states that the nature of landscape receptors, commonly referred to as their sensitivity, should be assessed in terms of the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of change proposed and the value attached to the receptor.

Susceptibility

A.6 In GLVIA3 susceptibility is defined as:

‘the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the Proposed Project without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies’ (GLVIA3 para 5.40).

A.7 This appraisal of susceptibility focuses on the landscape’s general ability to accommodate and remove large scale electricity infrastructure.

A.8 Table A.1 below sets out indicators of higher and lower susceptibility. These indicators have been used to judge susceptibility in this appraisal.

Table A.1 Indicators of landscape susceptibility

Factor	Indicators of lower landscape susceptibility		Indicators of higher landscape susceptibility
Indicators for assessing susceptibility to large scale electricity infrastructure.			
Landform	Smooth, regular and convex, or flat and uniform areas.		Distinctive, dramatic or rugged landform features such as scarps, or areas with strong topographical variety.
Land cover	Simple, uncluttered landscapes with sweeping lines and extensive areas of consistent ground cover such as brownfield sites or arable land		Complex, irregular or intimate landscape patterns, where naturalistic land cover and/or semi-natural habitats are more prominent.
Scale	Large scale landscape, which lacks ‘human-scale’ features		Small scale landscape with ‘human-scale’ landscape features.
Skyline	Landscapes that do not form a distinctive skyline or backdrop.		Open uninterrupted skylines which are a distinctive feature.
Prominent landscape features	Landscapes which have few visual foci.		Landscapes with strong visual features and focal points, such as distinctive landforms or man-made landmarks such as hilltop monuments.
Human influences	Landscapes characterised by overt man-made structures or land uses and/or the presence of road or rail infrastructure.		Landscapes that lack human influence (naturalistic landscape) or which are more traditional settled and farmed landscapes with a strong rural character.
Vertical infrastructure	Landscapes which are already affected by vertical built structures such as communication masts or other pylons and other man-made features.		Areas with no or limited vertical built structures, or areas which are affected by visual clutter.

Factor	Indicators of lower landscape susceptibility		Indicators of higher landscape susceptibility
Perceptual aspects and tranquillity	Vibrant / active landscape with over man-made features, and presence of visual and audible factors.		Remote and tranquil landscapes or areas that provide opportunities to experience a sense of relative wildness or perceived naturalness.

A.9 Judgements on susceptibility of receptors (which may include individual features or areas) are recorded as **high, medium or low** according to Table A.2.

Table A.2 Susceptibility of Landscape Receptors

Susceptibility	Definition
High	The landscape receptor is less able to accommodate electricity infrastructure without undue negative consequences for landscape character. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape offer limited opportunities for accommodating such features.
Medium	The landscape receptor has some ability to accommodate electricity infrastructure without undue negative consequences for landscape character. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape offer some opportunities for accommodating such features.
Low	The landscape receptor is more able to accommodate electricity infrastructure without undue negative consequences for landscape character. Attributes that make up the character of the landscape are more resilient to being changed by these features.

Value

A.10 Value of receptors is determined with reference to:

- A review of designations and the level of policy importance that they signify (such as landscapes designated at international, national, or local level); and
- Application of criteria that indicate value (such as landscape quality, scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interests, recreation value, perceptual aspects, associations e.g. with artists or writers).

A.11 Judgements on value are recorded as of national value, local value and community value according to Table A.3.

Table A.3 Definitions of Landscape Value

Value	Definition
National Value	Areas or features designated at a national level e.g. National Parks or National Landscapes, or important features of these with national policy level protection. and/ or Landscapes that have national significance against the value criteria set out in Para A10.
Regional/District Value	Areas or features designated at a county or local level e.g. local authority designated landscapes or important features of designated landscapes. and/ or

Value	Definition
	Landscapes that have Regional/ District-wide significance against the value criteria set out in Para A10.
Community Value	Areas or features that are not formally designated but are nevertheless locally valued by the local community. and/ or Landscapes that have local significance against the value criteria set out in Para A10.

A.12 It should be noted that whilst landscape designations at a national level are likely to be accorded the highest value, it does not necessarily follow that such landscapes all have a high susceptibility to all types of change. There may be a complex relationship between the value attached to a landscape and its susceptibility to change. Therefore, the rationale for judgements is clearly set out for each receptor based on the principles established in Tables A.1-A.3.

Nature of Effects (Magnitude)

A.13 The nature of the effect on each landscape receptor (magnitude) is reported in terms of its size and scale, geographical extent, duration and reversibility.

Size and Scale

A.14 For landscape character areas/types, the size/scale of change depends on the degree to which the character of the landscape is changed through removal of existing landscape components or addition of new ones. Of particular concern is how the changes affect the 'key characteristics' of the landscape.

A.15 In this appraisal size/scale is described as being imperceptible, small, medium or large, with reference to the definitions set out in Table A.4.

Table A.4 Scale of Landscape Change

Size/Scale	Definition
Large	Loss of landscape elements and features or addition of new ones which result in obvious changes to landscape characteristics and character.
Medium	Loss of landscape elements and features or addition of new ones which result in discernible and distinct changes to landscape characteristics and character.
Small	A perceptible but small change to landscape characteristics and character as a result of the loss of landscape elements and features or addition of new ones.
Imperceptible	A barely perceptible/imperceptible change to landscape character and characteristics.

Geographical Extent

A.16 Geographical extent is the extent over which the landscape effect will be felt and is often influenced by sense of enclosure. For the purposes of this appraisal, it is described as where changes are perceived only locally, with limited effects on wider landscape character (small extent), where changes are perceived across a wider area (medium extent) or where changes have a widespread influence on perception of the landscape, and perceived across a wide area (large extent). This is judged on both the length of the undergrounding and the distance the effect extends from the proposal.

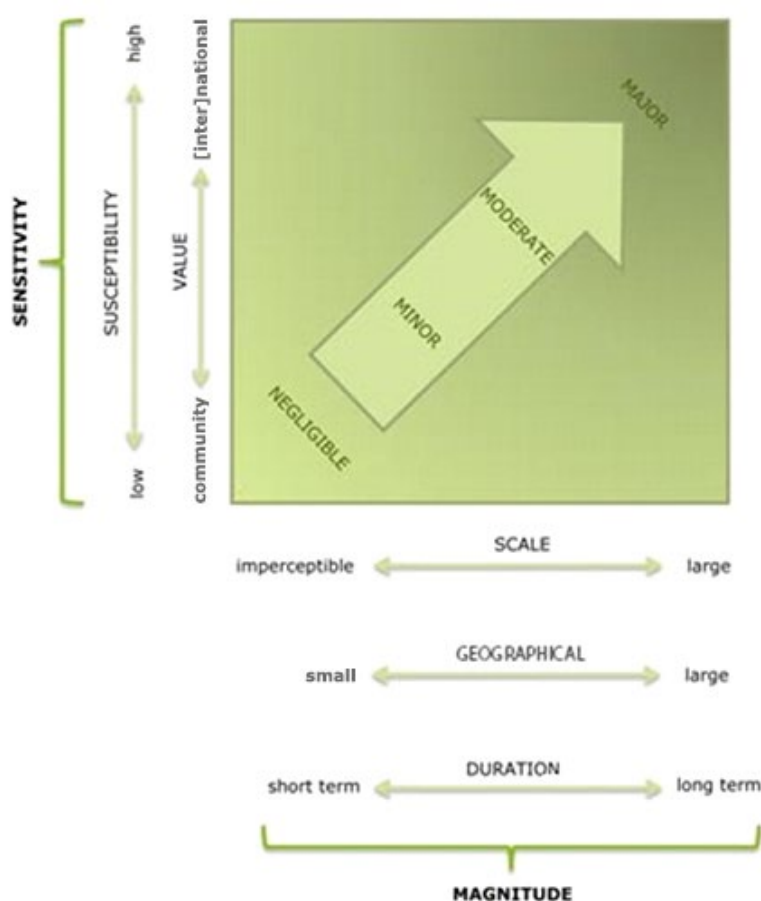
Duration

A.17 Duration is reported as short term (0-3 years), medium term (3-15 years) or long term (over 15 years). Longer term effects will result in higher overall effects.

Judging the Levels of Effect

A.18 The evaluations of the individual aspects set out above (susceptibility, value, size and scale, geographical extent, duration and reversibility) were considered together to provide an overall profile of each identified effect. An overview was then taken of the distribution of judgements for each aspect to make an informed professional appraisal of the overall level of each effect, drawing on guidance provided in GLVIA3. A numerical or formal weighting system was not applied. Instead, consideration of the relative importance of each aspect was made to feed into the overall decision.

A.19 Levels of effect were identified as negligible, minor, moderate or major moderate or major (or intermediate levels such as minor-moderate and moderate-major). The following diagram indicates how these various components are combined to inform the overall level of effect.



A.20 The main levels of effect may be defined as shown in Table A.5.

Table A.5 Levels of Landscape Effect

Level	Effect Description
Major	The Proposed Project will result in an obvious change in landscape characteristics and character, likely affecting a landscape with a moderate or high susceptibility to that type of change, and/ or affecting a nationally valued landscape. The effect is likely to be long term and affect a relatively large area.

Level	Effect Description
Major-Moderate	An intermediate category between the major and moderate levels.
Moderate	The Proposed Project will result in a noticeable change in landscape characteristics and character, likely affecting a landscape with a moderate susceptibility to that type of change. This level of effect may also occur for example when a smaller scale of effect acts on a more highly susceptible or widely valued landscape, or a larger scale of effect acting on lower susceptibility or more locally valued landscape. This level of effect may also occur when a large scale of effect occurs over a relatively short period or over a small area.
Moderate-Minor	An intermediate category between the moderate and minor levels.
Minor	The Proposed Project will result in a small change in landscape characteristics and character, likely affecting a low or medium susceptibility landscape or landscape valued at a community/ local level over a long term. This level of effect may also occur for example when a medium scale of effect is of short duration or confined to a small area.
Negligible	The Proposed Project will not result in a noticeable change in landscape characteristics/character.

Direction of Effect

A.21 The direction of effect (positive, negative, or neutral) is determined in relation to the degree to which the proposal fits with landscape character and the contribution to the landscape that the development makes. Effects are assumed to be adverse unless stated otherwise.

Assessing Visual Effects

A.22 Visual effects are experienced by people at different locations around the 1km study area. Visual receptors are the people who will be affected by changes in views of visual amenity at different places, and they are usually grouped by what they are doing at that place (residents, motorists, recreational users etc.).

A.23 Judging the significance of visual effects requires consideration of the nature of the visual receptors (sensitivity) and the nature of the effect on those receptors (magnitude).

Nature of Receptors (Sensitivity)

A.24 GLVIA3 states that the nature of visual receptors, commonly referred to as their sensitivity, should be assessed in terms of the susceptibility of the receptor to change in views/visual amenity and the value attached to particular views.

Susceptibility

A.25 The susceptibility of visual receptors to changes in views/visual amenity is a function of the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view and the extent to which their attention is focussed on views (GLVIA3, para 6.32). This is recorded as high, medium or low according to Table A.6.

Table A.6 Susceptibility of Visual Receptors

Susceptibility	Receptor Group
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High	Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents; people engaged in outdoor recreation (including users of public rights of way (PRoW) and National Cycle Routes whose interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape); visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views of surroundings are an important contributor to experience.
Medium	Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes.
Low	People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; people at their place of work whose attention is not on their surroundings.

Value

A.26 Recognition of the value of a view is determined with reference to:

- planning designations;
- recorded as important in relation to heritage assets (such as designed views recorded in citations of Registered Parks and Gardens or views recorded as of importance in Conservation Area Appraisals); and
- the value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearances in guidebooks or on tourist maps, provision of facilities for their enjoyment and references to them in literature and art.

A.27 Judgements on value of views are recorded as of national value, local value and community value according to Table A.7.

Table A.7 Definitions of Value Attached to Views

Size/Scale	Definition
National Value	Views identified in National Parks, National Landscapes or National landscape character assessments. Designed views recorded in citations for historic parks and gardens or views from historic landscape features (e.g. scheduled monuments). Views from National Trails, Long Distance Trails, Recreational Routes, National Cycle Network (NCN), used in guidebooks to the UK, or marked on OS maps (as a blue viewpoint symbol).
Local Value	Views identified in local designation documents or local authority landscape/townscape assessments. Views recorded as of importance in Conservation Area Appraisals. Views from the District's PRoW (that are not National Trails, 'Recreational Routes' or NCN).
Community Value	Views that are not documented as important in national or local documents but nevertheless are valued at a community level. This might include views from local green spaces, informal local footpaths or roads.

Nature of Effects (Magnitude)

A.28 The nature of the effect on visual receptors (magnitude) is reported in terms of its size and scale, geographical extent, and duration/reversibility.

Size and Scale

A.29 The size/scale of change depends on:

- the scale of the change in view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the Proposed Project;
- the degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture;
- the nature of the view of the Proposed Project, in terms of whether views will be full, partial or glimpses.

A.30 The appraisal of effects assumes winter conditions, this revealing greatest visibility with minimal screening by vegetation and deciduous trees.

A.31 In this appraisal size/scale is described as being imperceptible, small, medium or large, with reference to the definitions set out in Table A.8.

Table A.8 Scale of Visual Change

Size/Scale	Definition
Large	Large change in view, perhaps where the Proposed Project is in close proximity in a direct line of vision, or affecting a substantial part of the view, or providing contrast with the existing view.
Medium	Clearly perceptible change in view, perhaps where the Proposed Project is relatively close but at an oblique angle or further away in the direct line of vision, creating a noticeable change to baseline conditions.
Small	Small change in view, perhaps where the Proposed Project is at a distance or oblique angle, or where there is little change to baseline conditions.
Imperceptible	Change in view which is barely perceptible.

Geographical Extent

A.32 This records the extent to which the changes will be visible from each receptor e.g. whether there are only a few locations from where the Proposed Project can be glimpsed, or changes are experienced by few people (small extent), whether there are several locations where similar views can be gained, or changes are experienced by a moderate number of people (medium extent), or whether there are many locations where similar views can be gained, or changes are experienced by a large number of people (large extent).

Duration

A.33 The duration is reported as short term (0-3 years), medium term (3-15 years) or long term (over 15 years). Longer term effects will generally result in higher overall effects.

Judging the Levels of Effect

A.34 As for landscape effects, the evaluations of the individual aspects set out above (susceptibility, value, size and scale, geographical extent, duration and reversibility) were considered together to provide an overall profile of each identified effect. An overview was then taken of the distribution of judgements for each aspect to make an informed professional appraisal of the overall level of effect, drawing on guidance provided in GLVIA3.

A.35 A numerical or formal weighting system was not applied, instead consideration of the relative importance of each aspect was made to feed into the overall decision. Levels of effect were identified as negligible, minor, moderate or major (or intermediate levels such as minor-moderate and moderate-major).

A.36 The matrix diagram above indicates how these various components are combined to inform the overall level of effect.

A.37 The main levels of effect may be defined as shown in Table A.9.

Table A.9 Levels of Visual Effect

Level	Effect Description
Major	The Proposed Project will result in an obvious change in the view, likely affecting a visual receptor with a high susceptibility to that type of change, and/or affecting a valued view. The effect is likely to be long term and affect a relatively large part of the receptor or affect a large number of people.
Major-Moderate	An intermediate category between major and moderate levels.
Moderate	The Proposed Project will result in a noticeable change in the view, likely affecting a visual receptor with a moderate susceptibility to that type of change, or locally valued. This level of effect may also occur when a smaller scale of effect acts on a more widely valued view, or a larger scale of effect acting on a view valued at a more local level. This level of effect may also occur when a large scale of effect occurs over a relatively short period or over a small area.
Moderate-Minor	An intermediate category between moderate and minor levels.
Minor	The Proposed Project will result in a small change in a relatively lower value view, or one with lower susceptibility to change. This level of effect may also occur when a larger scale of effect is of short duration or affects a small part of the visual receptor/ affects few people.
Negligible	The Proposed Project will not result in a noticeable change in views.

Direction of effect

A.38 The direction of effect (beneficial, adverse or neutral) is determined in relation to the contribution to the view that the Proposed Project makes, even if it is in contrast to the existing character of the view. Effects are assumed to be adverse unless stated otherwise.

Appendix B

Representative Viewpoints



Viewpoint 1: Taken from a public right of way (MELW84) adjacent to Whitley Golf Club
OS Grid Reference: 389127E 166204N



Viewpoint 2: Taken from a public right of way (MELW85) close to BESS access track
OS Grid Reference: 389360E 166292N



Horizontal field of view:	90° (cylindrical projection)
Camera:	Nikon D780
Lens:	Nikkor AF-S 50mm 1:1.8G
Camera height:	1.7 m (above AOD)

Landscape Institute Type:	Type 1
Date of Photography:	17 June 2024



Viewpoint 3: Taken from a public right of way (MELW85) adjacent to Melksham Substation
OS Grid Reference: 389467E 166286N



Viewpoint 4: Taken from the outfield of Whitley Cricket Club
OS Grid Reference: 388909E 166149N



Horizontal field of view:	90° (cylindrical projection)
Camera:	Nikon D780
Lens:	Nikkor AF-S 50mm 1:1.8G
Camera height:	1.7 m (above AOD)

Landscape Institute Type:	Type 1
Date of Photography:	17 June 2024



Viewpoint 5: Taken from a public right of way (MELW85) close to Corsham Road
OS Grid Reference: 388926E 166512N



Viewpoint 6: Taken from the graveyard of Christ Church, Shaw
OS Grid Reference: 388917E 165750N



Horizontal field of view:	90° (cylindrical projection)
Camera:	Nikon D780
Lens:	Nikkor AF-S 50mm 1:1.8G
Camera height:	1.7 m (above AOD)

Landscape Institute Type:	Type 1
Date of Photography:	17 June 2024

National Grid Melksham Substation



Viewpoint 7: Taken from a bridleway (MELW87A) adjacent to Westlands Farm
OS Grid Reference: 389322E 166790N



Horizontal field of view:	90° (cylindrical projection)
Camera:	Nikon D780
Lens:	Nikkor AF-S 50mm 1:1.8G
Camera height:	1.7 m (above AOD)

Landscape Institute Type:	Type 1
Date of Photography:	17 June 2024

National Grid Melksham Substation