



National Grid

Cotswolds VIP Project **Landscape and Visual** **Appraisal**

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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National Grid

Cotswolds VIP Project

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

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Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	1	Chapter 7 Appraisal of Landscape Effects	30
		Effects upon Landscape Character During Construction	30
		Effects upon Landscape Character During Operation	30
		Landscape Effects Summary	31
Chapter 2 Scope and Methodology	2		
Scope	2	Chapter 8 Appraisal of Visual Effects	32
Chapter 3 Planning Policy and Legislation	4	Visual Effects During Construction	32
National Planning Policy Framework (2023)	4	Visual Effects During Operation	33
Local Planning Policy	4	Visual Effects Summary	34
Cotswolds National Landscapes statutory purpose as an AONB	6		
Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025	6	Chapter 9 Implications for the Cotswolds National Landscape	37
Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, June 2016	8		
Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statement, Landscape Led Development, April 2021	8	Chapter 10 Summary and Conclusions	41
Historic Landscape Characterisation, 2006	9		
Chapter 4 Consultation	10	Appendix A Appraisal Methodology	A-1
		Approach to Appraisal	A-1
Chapter 5 Existing Conditions (Baseline)	12	Method for Assessing Landscape Effects	A-2
The Site	12	Assessing Visual Effects	A-5
Surrounding Area	12		
Landscape Character	13	Appendix B Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Visualisation Methodology	B-1
Landscape Baseline	21	ZTV Mapping	B-1
Visual Baseline	22	Visualisations	B-1
Chapter 6 The Proposed Project	26	Appendix C Landscape Appraisal Tables	C-1
The Proposed Project	26		
Construction	27	Appendix D Visual Appraisal Tables	D-1
Operation	28		

Contents

Recreational Receptors	D-7	Table D.3: Scattered Community between Breakheart Plantation and West Down (part of Cleeve Common)	D-3
Road Receptors	D-24	Table D.4: Scattered Community between West Down (part of Cleeve Common) and Arle Grove	D-3
Appendix E			
Proposed Approach to Landscape and Visual Appraisal	E-1	Table D.5: Scattered Community between Arle Grove and Dowdeswell Wood	D-4
Appendix F			
Figures	F-1	Table D.6: Whittington and surrounding scattered community	D-5
Appendix G			
Visualisations	G-1	Table D.7: Upper and Lower Dowdeswell and surrounding scattered community	D-6
Table of Tables		Table D.8: Scattered community on the upper slopes of Ravensgate Hill	D-6
Table 4.1: Consultation Responses	10	Table D.9: Users of the Cotswold Way National Trail – Winchcombe to Cleeve Common	D-7
Table 5.1: Viewpoint Locations	23	Table D.10: Users of the Cotswold Way National Trail – Cleeve Common to Ham Road	D-8
Table 7.1: Summary of Landscape Effects	31	Table D.11: Users of the Cotswold Way National Trail – Ham Road to Dowdeswell Wood	D-9
Table 8.1: Summary of Visual Effects	34	Table D.12: Users of the Cotswold Way National Trail – Dowdeswell Wood to Ravensgate Hill	D-10
Table 9.1: Implications for the Special Qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape During Construction	37	Table D.13: Users of the Winchcombe Way long distance footpath – Winchcombe to Cleeve Hill Golf Course	D-10
Table 9.2: Implications for the Special Qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape During Operation	39	Table D.14: Users of Windrush Way long distance footpath	D-11
Table A.1: Indicators of landscape susceptibility	A-2	Table D.15: Users of Warden's Way	D-12
Table A.2: Susceptibility of Landscape Receptors	A-3	Table D.16: Users of public rights of way west of Winchcombe, including Winchcombe Way and Gloucestershire Way	D-13
Table A.3: Definitions of Landscape Value	A-3	Table D.17: Users of the Cheltenham Circular Footpath (ZCK61 and ZCK62 only)	D-13
Table A.4: Scale of Landscape Change	A-4	Table D.18: Users of Sabrina Way	D-14
Table A.5: Levels of Landscape Effect	A-5	Table D.19: Users of public right of way AWB63 located to the south-east of Postlip Mill complex	D-15
Table A.6: Susceptibility of Visual Receptors	A-6	Table D.20: Users of public right of way AWB24 located north and north-east of Postlip Mill complex	D-16
Table A.7: Definitions of Value Attached to Views	A-6	Table D.21: Users of public rights of way AWB22 and AWB23 to the south-west of Postlip Mill complex	D-16
Table A.8: Scale of Visual Change	A-7	Table D.22: Users of public right of way AWB31	D-17
Table A.9: Levels of Visual Effect	A-7	Table D.23: Users of Public Right of Way KWH19	D-18
Table C.1: LCA 2E: Winchcombe to Dover's Hill	C-1	Table D.24: Users of Public Rights of Way to the east, north and south-west of Lower Dowdeswell, including KD05, KD06, KD03, KD02 and KAN2	D-19
Table C.2: LCA 7C: Cotswolds High Wold Plateau	C-2	Table D.25: Users of elevated public rights of way north of the A436, including KD022, KD026, KD018, KD019, KD020 and KD021	D-19
Table C.3: LCA 1B Langley Hill	C-2	Table D.26: Users of Cleeve Common, including Common Land, public rights of way and golf course	D-20
Table C.4: LCA 2D Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe	C-3		
Table C.5: LCA 19D Vale of Evesham Fringe	C-4		
Table C.6: LCA VE 1A Teddington and Great Vale	C-5		
Table C.7: LCA SV 6B Vale of Gloucester	C-6		
Table D.1: Scattered Community north of Postlip	D-1		
Table D.2: Scattered Community south-east of Postlip	D-2		

Contents

Table D.27: Users of Longbarrow Bank open access land	D-21
Table D.28: Visitors to Sudeley Castle and Gardens	D-22
Table D.29: Visitors to Belas Knap Long Barrow	D-22
Table D.30: Visitors to the Kilkeny Nature Reserve and open access land	D-23
Table D.31: People travelling on the B4632	D-24
Table D.32: People travelling on Langley Road	D-24
Table D.33: People travelling on Sudeley Hill and Salt Way	D-25
Table D.34: People travelling on Corndean Lane	D-26
Table D.35: People travelling on the minor road south of Corndean Hall	D-26
Table D.36: People travelling on minor roads north-west of Whittington village	D-27
Table D.37: People travelling on Ham Road	D-28
Table D.38: People travelling on minor roads east of Whittington village	D-28
Table D.39: People travelling on the A40	D-29
Table D.40: People travelling on minor roads through and east of Lower and Upper Dowdeswell	D-30
Table D.41: People travelling on the A436	D-30

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by LUC on behalf of National Grid for the Cotswolds Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project. The purpose of the Proposed Project is to underground a section of 400kV overhead electricity transmission lines, to mitigate the visual impact of existing electricity infrastructure through part of the Cotswolds National Landscape (previously known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)). The Proposed Project is located immediately south of the B4632 and from Breakheart Plantation, runs in a south-westerly direction to the east of Cleeve Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), past Wontley, Drypool and Wood Farms, towards Dowdeswell Wood.

1.2 Landscape and visual appraisals are separate, although linked, processes. Appraisal of landscape effects considers effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right whereas appraisal of visual effects considers effects on visual amenity as experienced by people.

1.3 This appraisal considers the potential effects of the proposal on:

- the landscape as a resource in its own right (caused by changes to the constituent elements of the landscape, its specific aesthetic or perceptual qualities and the character of the landscape); and
- views and visual amenity as experienced by people (caused by changes in the appearance of the landscape).

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

Chapter 2

Scope and Methodology

Scope

Effects assessed in full

- 2.1** This appraisal considers physical changes to the landscape as well as changes in landscape character. It also considers changes to areas designated for their scenic or landscape qualities and visual impacts of the Proposed Project as perceived by people.
- 2.2** All potential landscape and visual effects have been examined; including those relating to construction and operation. Operational effects are assessed at year 0 in winter to cover worst case and year 15 in summer to give an indication of the likely effectiveness of mitigation, which includes mitigation planting.
- 2.3** Above-ground heritage assets are considered as far as the contribution they make to landscape character and the nature and quality of views from publicly accessible locations, but effects on heritage assets as receptors in their own right, including effects on their setting, are addressed in a separate Archaeological Statement.

Study Area

- 2.4** The initial study area for the appraisal was set at 5km distance from the Proposed Project. However, after review of screened zones of theoretical visibility (refer to Figures 5 and 6 and the methodology within Appendix B) and following site visits, the study area was reduced to 3km, as it was deemed that views of the Proposed Project beyond 3km will be unlikely to give rise to notable effects. Following consultation two viewpoints were identified beyond the 3km distance.
- 2.5** The extent of the study area has been based on the Proposed Project including the area of proposed underground cable corridor located in between the Winchcombe Cable Sealing End Compound (CSEC) and the Whittington CSEC, including the permanent access roads to each CSEC and the line of the existing overhead lines (OHL) and pylons to be removed.

Appraisal Methodology

- 2.6** The key steps in the methodology for assessing landscape and visual effects has been as follows:

- the landscape of the study area was analysed and landscape receptors identified;
- the area over which the Proposed Project will potentially be visible was established through creation of a screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV);
- the visual baseline was recorded in terms of the different groups of people who may experience views of the development and the nature of their existing views and visual amenity;
- viewpoints were selected (including representative viewpoints, specific viewpoints and illustrative viewpoints), in consultation with the Cotswolds National Landscape;
- likely effects on landscape and visual resources were identified; and
- the level of landscape and visual effects were 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).

2.7 The methodology used for the appraisal is set out in full within Appendix A.

Appraisal Guidance

2.8 This appraisal is conducted in accordance with the principles contained within the following documents:

- Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition ('GLVIA3');
- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals;
- Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH's) 2014 document, 'Visual Representations of Windfarms: Good Practice Guidance Version 2.1; and
- Natural England (2014). An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment.

Data Sources

2.9 The following data sources have informed the appraisal:

- National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023;
- Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031, December 2017;
- Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan to 2011-2031, June 2022;
- Cheltenham Plan, July 2020;

- Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031, August 2018;
- Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025, February 2023;
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, June 2016;
- Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statement, Landscape Led Development, April 2021;
- National Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England, 2012-2014, including National Character Areas 107 and 106;
- The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment, LDA on behalf of Cotswolds AONB Partnership, 2004;
- Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, LDA on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council, 2006;
- Historic Landscape Characterisation, Gloucestershire County Council, September 2006;
- Ordnance Survey (OS) Maps 1:25000 and 1:50000; and
- LiDAR Digital Surface Model data, 1m grid.

Field Survey

2.10 Field survey work was conducted over a number of days under differing weather conditions between August 2023 and March 2024, and records were made in the form of field notes and photographs.

2.11 Field survey work included visits to the site, viewpoints and designated landscapes, and travel around the study area to consider potential effects on landscape character and on views.

Assumptions and Limitations

2.12 The following assumptions and limitations have been considered when assessing the effects of the Proposed Project:

- It is assumed that annual tree and scrub height growth is between approximately 0.3-0.5m per year.

Creation of Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Visualisations

2.13 The methodology for the production of zones of theoretical visibility plans and visualisations are set out in Appendix B with plans in Appendix F and Visualisations in Appendix G.

Chapter 3

Planning Policy and Legislation

3.1 A desk-based review of relevant legislation and planning policy relating to the landscape and visual amenity has been undertaken. This included a review of national and local policy.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a general presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11) and guides the Local Planning Authorities in the production of Local Plans and in decision making.

3.3 In Section 14, the NPPF sets out its support for renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure, with subsequent paragraphs setting out how this can be achieved.

3.4 Paragraph 182 within Section 15 of the NPPF states:

‘Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.’

Local Planning Policy

3.5 The site spans over two separate local authority areas as shown on Figure 1, namely:

- Tewkesbury Borough Council; and
- Cotswold District Council.

Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031

3.6 The joint core strategy was adopted on December 2017, sets out a strategic planning framework for Gloucester City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and

Tewkesbury Borough Council and covers northern parts of the site.

3.7 Policy SD6 of the joint core strategy in relation to landscape, states:

- ‘1. Development will seek to protect landscape character for its own intrinsic beauty and for its benefit to economic, environmental and social well-being;*
- 2. Proposals will have regard to the local distinctiveness and historic character of the different landscapes in the JCS area, drawing, as appropriate, upon existing Landscape Character Assessments and the Landscape Character and Sensitivity Analysis. They will be required to demonstrate how the development will protect or enhance landscape character and avoid detrimental effects on types, patterns and features which make a significant contribution to the character, history and setting of a settlement or area;*
- 3. All applications for development will consider the landscape and visual sensitivity of the area in which they are to be located or which they may affect. Planning applications will be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment where, at the discretion of the Local Planning Authority, one is required. Proposals for appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures should also accompany applications.’*

3.8 Policy SD7 of the joint core strategy in relation to The Cotswolds AONB (now known as the Cotswolds National Landscape), states:

- ‘All development proposals in or within the setting of the Cotswolds AONB will be required to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance its landscape, scenic beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and other special qualities. Proposals will be required to be consistent with the policies set out in the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.’*

3.9 Policy INF5 of the joint core strategy in relation to renewable energy and low carbon energy development, states [is this us?]:

- ‘1. Proposals for the generation of energy from renewable resources, or low carbon energy development (with the exception of wind turbines), will be supported, provided the wider environmental, social or economic benefits of the installation would not be outweighed by a significant adverse impact on the local environment, taking into account the following factors:*
- i. The impact (or cumulative impact) of the scheme, including any associated transmission lines, buildings and access roads, on landscape character, local amenity, heritage assets or biodiversity;*

- ii. Any effect on a protected area such as The Cotswolds AONB or other designated areas such as the Green Belt;*

- iii. Any unacceptable adverse impacts on users and residents of the local area, including emissions, noise, odour and visual amenity;*

2. Proposals are more likely to be supported when they demonstrate:

- i. That they have been designed and sited so as to minimise any adverse impacts on the surrounding area...’*

Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan to 2011-2031

3.10 The Tewkesbury Local Plan was adopted on 8 June 2022 and sets out the vision for the borough, providing a strategy in line with the joint core strategy.

3.11 Policy LAN2 of the local plan in relation to landscape character, states:

- ‘All development must, through sensitive design, siting, and landscaping, be appropriate to, and integrated into, their existing landscape setting. In doing so, relevant landscape features and characteristics must be conserved and where possible enhanced, having regard to the Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment 2006 and the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment 2003. All proposals which have potential for significant landscape and visual effects should be accompanied and informed by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to identify the sensitivity of the landscape, and the magnitude and significance of landscape and visual effects resulting from the development, using a suitably robust methodology.’*

Cheltenham Plan

3.12 The Cheltenham Plan was adopted in July 2020 and sets out the vision for the area, providing a strategy in line with the joint core strategy. The Plan makes reference to policies SD6 and SD7 of the joint core strategy in relation to landscape matters.

Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031

3.13 The local plan was adopted on 3 August 2018.

3.14 Policy EN5 of the local plan in relation to the Cotswolds AONB, states:

- ‘1. In determining development proposals within the AONB or its setting, the conservation and enhancement*

of the natural beauty of the landscape, its character and special qualities will be given great weight.

2. Major development will not be permitted within the AONB unless it satisfies the exceptions set out in national Policy and Guidance.'

3.15 Policy EN7 of the local plan in relation to trees, hedgerows and woodlands, states:

'1. Where such natural assets are likely to be affected, development will not be permitted that fails to conserve and enhance:

a. trees of high landscape, amenity, ecological or historical value;

b. veteran trees;

c. hedgerows of high landscape, amenity, ecological or historical value; and/or

d. woodland of high landscape, amenity, ecological or historical value.

2. Where trees, woodland or hedgerows are proposed to be removed as part of development, compensatory planting will be required...'

Cotswolds National Landscape's statutory purpose as an AONB

3.16 The objective of AONB designation is to ensure that its statutory purpose is achieved as set out in Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000, i.e. the conservation and enhancement of an area's natural beauty. Section 85 of the CRoW Act previously placed responsibilities on relevant authorities (as referred to by the CRoW Act 2000) to 'have regard' to the purpose of a National Landscape (an AONB). The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) introduced a change in responsibilities which became effective from 26th December 2023, as follows: *'Any relevant authority exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'*. The 'seek to further' duty replaces the previous requirement for relevant authorities to 'have regard' to the purpose of an AONB (National Landscape).

3.17 The amended Section 85 duty requires all public bodies, statutory undertakers (such as water and electricity companies including National Grid) and holders of public office to seek to further the AONB purpose when conducting functions in relation to or affecting land within the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB). In implementing the recent amendment to the CRoW Act, the government has not yet provided guidance on how public bodies should exercise the

'seek to further' duty which replaces the previous duty to 'have regard' to the purpose of an AONB.

Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025

3.18 The management plan was adopted on 21 February 2023 and sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB) for the period 2023-2025. The management sets out fourteen outcomes and relevant policies to outline how the outcomes can be achieved.

3.19 The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB) are set out in their statement of Significance, which is set out below:

'The Cotswolds is a rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological and ecological features. The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape are:

- the unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material;*
- the Cotswold escarpment, including views from and to the National Landscape;*
- the high wolds – a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, 'big' skies and long-distance views;*
- river valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, with high-quality water;*
- distinctive dry stone walls;*
- flower-rich grasslands particularly limestone grasslands;*
- ancient broadleaved woodland particularly along the crest of the escarpment.*
- variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the National Landscape to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness;*
- the tranquillity of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution;*
- extensive dark sky areas;*
- distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity;*
- an accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and*

riding routes, including the Cotswold Way National Trail;

- significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks;*
- a vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olimpics, cheese rolling and woolsack races.'*

3.20 Policy CC6 of the management plan in relation to developing a consistent, coordinated and landscape-led approach, states:

'CC6.1. Stakeholders across the Cotswolds National Landscape should take a consistent and coordinated approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape, including its special qualities and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.'

3.21 In order to achieve Outcome 4 – landscape, policy CE1 of the management plan in relation to landscape states:

'CE1.1. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape, should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce the landscape character of the location, as described by the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines. There should be a presumption against the loss of key characteristics identified in the landscape character assessment.'

CE1.2. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape, should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views - including those into and out of the National landscape – and visual amenity are conserved and enhanced.'

CE1.3. Conserving and enhancing landscape character should be a key objective of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape...'

3.22 In relation to achieving Outcome 5 – local distinctiveness, Policy CE3 of the management plan, states:

'CE3.1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the local distinctiveness of the Cotswolds National Landscape

should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce this local distinctiveness. This should include:

- being compatible with the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change;*
- being designed and, where relevant, landscaped to respect local settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials and in accordance with design guidance prepared by local planning authorities;*
- using an appropriate colour of limestone to reflect local distinctiveness...'*

3.23 In relation to achieving Outcome 7 – dark skies, Policy CE5 of the management plan, states:

'CE5.1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to these dark skies, by seeking to avoid and where avoiding is not possible, minimise light pollution.'

CE5.2. Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the CNL should have regard to recognised standards and guidance, in particular, that published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals and the Commission for Dark Skies.'

CE5.3. Measures should be taken to increase the area of dark skies in the Cotswolds National Landscape by removing, and where removal is not possible, minimising existing sources of light pollution.'

CE5.4. Consideration will be given to seeking a formal dark sky designation for those parts of the Cotswolds National Landscape that are least affected by light pollution.'

3.24 In relation to Outcome 11 – development and transport, Policy CE10: Development and transport – principles of the management plan, states:

'CE10.1. Development and transport proposals in the CNL and its setting should have regard to – and help to deliver – the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL. In doing so, they should have regard to – and be compatible with the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and guidance produced by the Cotswolds National landscape Board, including the:

- Cotswolds National Landscape – Landscape Strategy and Guidelines*
- Cotswolds National Landscape – Landscape Character Assessment*
- Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan*

(iv) Cotswolds National landscape Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change

(v) Cotswolds National Landscape Board's Position Statements...

...CE10.5. The cumulative impacts of development proposals on the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape should be fully assessed.

CE10.6. A landscape-led approach should be applied to development and transport proposals in the CNL and its setting, proportionate to the type and scale of development being proposed, whereby proposals:

- a) address the natural beauty of the CNL as primary consideration at all stages of the development process (including design), from initial conception through to implementation
- b) address all of the factors that contribute to the natural beauty of the area
- c) address access to natural beauty including the character of the public rights of way network and its role within wider green infrastructure
- d) reflect and enhance the character of the local area
- e) avoid adverse effects where possible and, if adverse effects can't be avoided, minimise them and
- f) deliver substantially more beneficial effects than adverse effects for the natural beauty of the CNL.'

3.25 In relation to achieving Outcome 13 – access and recreation, Policy UE2 of the management plan, states:

'UE2.1. A safe, pleasant, accessible, clearly waymarked and well-connected Public Rights of Way network should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the Cotswolds National Landscape.

UE2.2. Improvements to rights of way must be undertaken in a way that minimises any adverse effects on the natural beauty of the National Landscape and on its special qualities. Innovative ways of providing named routes without introducing additional signage should be explored.

UE2.3. Open Access Land and other land including Country Parks, that is open to public access should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the Cotswolds National Landscape. Where appropriate, more land should be made available for public access...

Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, June 2016

3.26 The Landscape Strategy and Guidelines are set out in Chapter 5 of the LVA, under Landscape Character.

Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statement, Landscape Led Development, April 2021

3.27 The primary purpose of the position statement is to expand upon relevant policies in the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan, as well as to help local authorities, developers and other stakeholders to positively contribute to, fulfil the requirements of and emulate best practice in the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB). Position statements are supplementary and subsidiary to the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan.

3.28 The position statement states that 'a landscape-led approach to development is one in which development within the Cotswolds National Landscape and its setting is compatible with and, ideally, makes a positive contribution to the statutory purpose of AONB designation, which is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. A landscape-led approach, at this level, is promoted in Policy CC1 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023.'

3.29 The position statement goes on to state that relevant authorities must have regard to the purpose of the AONB designation in their decision-making. Consideration of landscape and visual impacts is a key consideration when taking a landscape-led approach, however, this approach should also consider all of the factors that contribute to the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape. The statement sets out recommendations for the development management stage of projects as follows:

- 'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) should be undertaken for all development that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs) should be undertaken for other development in the Cotswolds National Landscape and its setting that have the potential to cause adverse landscape and visual impacts.
- All LVIA and LVAs should be consistent with the guidance published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment.
- Where a LVIA or LVA identifies that a development in the Cotswolds National Landscape would have 'significant' or 'moderate-significant' effects, such

development should be deemed to constitute 'major development'...

- *...LVIA's and LVAs should not compare the scale of the proposed development with the scale of the Cotswolds National Landscape as a whole or with the scale of its component landscape character types...*
- *...The Cotswolds National Landscape should be accorded the highest 'value' in the LVSCS [landscape and visual sensitivity and capacity study] and LVIA / LVA assessments, albeit with some consideration being given to the degree to which the criteria and factors used to support the case for AONB designation are represented in the specific study area.*
- *The area of landscape that needs to be covered in assessing landscape effects should include the site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape around it which the proposed development may influence in a significant manner.*
- *Great weight should be given to landscape and scenic beauty, in line with paragraph 172 of the NPPF.'*

3.30 The Proposed Project is deemed not to be EIA development, as set out in Chapter 4, therefore, elements of the above statement are not applicable to the LVA.

3.31 In relation to conserving and enhancing natural beauty, the position statement provides the following recommendations:

- Development proposals should (be required to) make a positive contribution to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape, over and above the baseline condition (i.e. delivering a net-benefit for natural beauty).
- Measures to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape (to deliver a net-benefit for natural beauty) should be integrated into the planning, design, implementation and management of a proposed development from the development's inception, particularly for major development.
- Where a net-benefit for natural beauty cannot be achieved on-site, consideration should be given to measures to enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape off-site.

Historic Landscape Characterisation, 2006

3.32 The purpose of the report is to characterise the present landscape in terms of the visible evidence of the human processes which have formed it through time in order to inform a wide range of planning, conservation and management-led initiatives and strategies. The study identified a series of 57

landscape types sharing a common combination of identified attributes.

3.33 The site and its relationship with the historic landscape types is shown within the Archaeological Statement.

3.34 Whilst the report is useful background to understanding and appreciating the historic land uses and their relevance, the historic landscape types are not referenced further within the LVA.

Chapter 4

Consultation

4.1 Early consultation was undertaken with the local authorities in relation to the site and wider study area, as well as with the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB). A report was sent to relevant parties in October 2023 titled 'Proposed Approach to Landscape and Visual Appraisal' which is replicated in Appendix E, with responses and follow up correspondence set out below:

Table 4.1: Consultation Responses

Consultee	Comment Summary	Response/Action
John Mills, Planning and Landscape Lead, Cotswolds National Landscape 2 November 2023	Reference specific documents including the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025, Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy & Guidelines, position statements, Gloucestershire Historic Landscape Character Assessment and NCA 107.	All documents have been referenced in the report.
	Requested a ZTV conveying visibility of existing pylons	ZTV provided up to 3km
	Requested a ZTV of undergrounding works, noting effects may be short-term adverse and there may be beneficial effects as a result of the removal of the pylons. At the very least, consideration should be given to how the route selection can help to minimise any potential landscape and visual effects during construction.	Email response provided explaining the temporary nature and phased approach, as well as the benefits of the Proposed Project.

Consultee	Comment Summary	Response/Action
	Acknowledgement that eight viewpoints are from the Cotswold Way, with consideration required as to how the visual receptors (i.e., walkers) move along the Cotswold Way and experience the visual effects at all eight viewpoints, rather than just at one viewpoint.	LVA considers the Cotswold Way as a receptor and the sequential effects along parts of the route, avoiding the assessment of fixed locations. Due to the length of the undergrounding within the study area, the Cotswold Way has been split into four sections.
	In addition to the LVA, National Grid should fully assess the potential impacts of the scheme on natural heritage (including biodiversity), cultural heritage (including historic environment) and tranquillity Including dark skies) as part of the wider assessment of the scheme.	Covered by others, with dark skies covered in Chapter 9.
	Scheme delivered to not result in deterioration of ancient and veteran trees, woodland, unimproved grassland and hedgerows.	Covered by others.
	The scheme should not just conserve the natural beauty, but enhance it, including through 20% biodiversity and key features of the landscape character types.	Biodiversity covered by others. Landscape features lost will be replaced, with opportunities for enhancement included, to reflect the guidelines for each landscape character type.
John Mills, Planning and Landscape Lead,	Requested a ZTV conveying visibility of existing pylons up to 5km to confirm any	Existing Pylon ZTV up to 5km provided.

Consultee	Comment Summary	Response/Action
Cotswolds National Landscape 27 November 2023	additional viewpoints.	
	Requested a ZTV of undergrounding works.	Email response provided explaining the temporary nature and phased approach, as well as the benefits of the project.
Cotswold District Council	--	No response received.
Tewkesbury Borough Council	--	No response received.
Cheltenham Borough Council	--	No response received.
Gloucestershire County Council 19 October 2023	Confirmed that the project is for the district level councils to comment upon and forwarded to officers.	No action required.

4.2 A screening opinion request was submitted to relevant local authorities on 18th December 2023. It was confirmed by screening opinions issued by Tewkesbury Borough Council and Cotswolds District Council that an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required.

Chapter 5

Existing Conditions (Baseline)

The Site

5.1 The extent of the site is shown on Figure 1, consisting of an area of elevated land with a section of 400kV OHL with associated pylons crossing it. The northern part of the site rises steeply from the valley associated with the River Isbourne (to the south-west of Winchcombe), up through the steep sided slopes and woodland at Breakheart Plantation. The site then follows elevated, open and gently undulating, typically large scale agricultural land to the south-east of Cleeve Common, before crossing steep sided wooded valleys, namely Puckham Woods. Further to the south, the site crosses undulating farmland defined by native hedgerows with scattered trees, ending south of Ham Road to the north of Upper Colgate Farm. The site is criss-crossed by numerous public rights of way, including the Cotswold Way National Trail and Winchcombe Way long distance path.

Surrounding Area

5.2 The 3km study area is generally made up of predominantly elevated arable farmland and a pattern of large-scale regular fields extending across the area enclosed by a network of hedgerows, dry stone walls and post and wire fences. A pattern of geometric woodlands, coniferous shelterbelts and copses are found within or on the fringes of the valleys, where they provide a sense of enclosure and a backdrop to wide panoramas.

5.3 To the west, the land falls steeply towards Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve, with the towns and villages situated on low lying and relatively level landscape. The town of Winchcombe lies to the north-east of the site, situated within the River Isbourne valley, with B-roads and railway line between Gloucestershire and Warwickshire occupying lower lying land further to the north. The A40 and A436 pass close to the southern site boundary which provide transport routes between Cheltenham and Oxford, with numerous minor roads providing links to smaller villages scattered within the agricultural landscape.

5.4 Cleeve Common is located to the north-west of the site, occupying steep ground used for recreational uses, including by the Cleeve Hill Golf Club. Belas Knap long barrow scheduled monument lies to the west of the site. A number of long distance footpaths cross the landscape within the study area.

5.5 The site passes close to ancient woodlands, including Dowdeswell Wood to the south-east. The site also passes close to ecological and historical designations.

Landscape Character

5.6 This section provides a description of landscape character (including constituent landscape elements) drawing on published studies where relevant.

5.7 Landscape character is defined as the ‘*distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another*’¹. Landscape character type/area boundaries generally represent transitional zones. Where the Proposed Project study area is located close to the boundary between character areas, the ‘key characteristics’ of adjacent areas have also been considered.

5.8 Landscape Character Assessments are a method of identifying and describing variations in the character of the landscape, and ‘*seek to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive*’². They can be carried out at a number of scales, from national (National Character Areas), to regional and local (Landscape Character Types or Areas).

5.9 The principal sources of information related to the landscape character of the study area are:

- National Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England, 2012-2014;
- The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment, LDA on behalf of Cotswolds AONB Partnership, 2004; and
- Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, LDA on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council, 2006.

National Character

5.10 The site lies within National Character Area (NCA) 107: Cotswolds as shown on Figure 3. The key characteristics of relevance to the site and study area are as follows:

- *‘Defined by its underlying geology: a dramatic limestone scarp rising above adjacent lowlands with steep combs, and outliers illustrating the slow erosion of escarpments. The limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.*
- *Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while permanent pasture prevails on the steep slopes of*

the scarp and river valleys with pockets of internationally important limestone grassland.

- *Drystone walls define the pattern of fields of the high wold and dip slope. On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.*
- *Ancient beech hangers line stretches of the upper slopes of the scarp, while oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.*
- *Large areas of common land, important for unimproved calcareous grassland, are characteristic of the scarp...along the crest of the scarp to Cleeve Hill.*
- *The majority of the principal rivers flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames with the exception of rivers in the west which flow into the River Avon and then the Severn Estuary.*
- *Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.*
- *Locally quarried limestone brings a harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned...*
- *Prominent natural and built features in the landscape include...Cleeve Hill....’*

5.11 Western and northern parts of the study area are located within NCA 106: Severn and Avon Vales. The key characteristics of the NCA of relevance to the study area are as follows:

- *‘A diverse range of flat and gently undulating landscapes strongly influenced and united by the Severn and Avon rivers which meet at Tewkesbury.*
- *Prominent oolitic limestone outliers of the Cotswold Hills break up the low-lying landscape in the south-east of the area at Bredon Hill, Robinswood Hill, Churchdown Hill and Dumbleton Hill.*
- *Woodland is sparsely distributed across this landscape but a well wooded impression is provided by frequent hedgerow trees, parkland and surviving traditional orchards. Remnants of formerly extensive Chases and*

¹ An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014) Christine Tudor, Natural England

² Natural England (2014). An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Christine Tudor, Natural England.

Royal Forests, centred around Malvern, Feckenham and Ombersley still survive.

- *Small pasture fields and commons are prevalent in the west with a regular pattern of parliamentary enclosure in the east. Fields on the floodplains are divided by ditches (called rhines south of Gloucester) fringed by willow pollards and alders.*
- *Pasture and stock rearing predominate on the floodplain and on steeper slopes, with a mixture of livestock rearing, arable, market gardening and hop growing elsewhere.*
- *Unimproved neutral grassland (lowland meadow priority habitat) survives around Feckenham Forest and Malvern Chase. Along the main rivers, floodplain grazing marsh is prevalent. Fragments of unimproved calcareous grassland and acidic grasslands are also found.*
- *The River Severn flows broadly and deeply between fairly high banks, north to south, while the Warwickshire River Avon meanders over a wide flood plain between Stratford, Evesham and Tewkesbury. The main rivers regularly flood at times of peak rainfall.*
- *Many ancient market towns and large villages are located along the rivers, their cathedrals and churches standing as prominent features in the relatively flat landscape.'*

Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment

5.12 The site and study area are crossed by a number of landscape character types (LCT) as defined by The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment, 2004, which are shown on Figure 3. Those within the site include:

- LCT 1: Escarpment Outlier;
- LCT 2: Escarpment;
- LCT 7: High Wold; and
- LCT 19: Unwooded Vale.

5.13 Each LCT is further broken down into landscape character areas (LCA), with those within the site or within the study area are listed below:

- LCA 1B: Langley Hill;
- LCA 2D: Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe.
- LCA 2E: Winchcombe to Dover's Hill;
- LCA 7C: Cotswolds High Wold Plateau; and
- LCA 19D: Vale of Evesham Fringe.

Landscape Character Types

5.14 The relevant key characteristics of LCT 1: Escarpment Outlier, are as follows:

- *Distinctive hills detached from the main Cotswolds escarpment and rising above the neighbouring vale;*
- *varied and sometimes steeply sloping topography;*
- *dramatic panoramic views from upper slopes possible over the Severn Vale to the Welsh borders and eastwards to the Cotswolds Escarpment;*
- *areas of rough grassland and scrub occur on some sections of the upper slopes and areas of steep landform;*
- *woodlands and belts of trees often occupy steeper slopes of the outliers and border the gullies of brooks draining radially into the vale;*
- *areas of woodland and hedgerows form interlocking patterns;*
- *lower, gentler slopes cloaked in improved pastures and arable farmland, divided up by a network of hedgerows and some dry stone walls;*
- *sparsely settled;*
- *hilltops often the site of prehistoric hillforts or other defensive enclosures; and*
- *hills criss crossed by footpaths often surrounded by dense vegetation link the hill tops to the vale villages.*

5.15 The relevant key characteristics of LCT 2: Escarpment, are as follows:

- *Steep exposed and elevated west facing scarp slope, partly cloaked in semi natural broadleaved woodland;*
- *generally poor soils and steep sloping relief of the escarpment not suited to arable farming, and primarily used for pasture or woodland;*
- *limited areas of Registered Common Land on upper scarp slopes merging into the more extensive areas on the High Wold;*
- *distinct sense of elevation with dramatic panoramic views over the Severn Vale to the Forest of Dean and beyond into Wales, the Malverns and the Shropshire Hills;*
- *continuity of escarpment face interrupted by a series of major valleys and embayments;*
- *gentler landform on lower slopes below the spring line;*
- *calcareous grasslands located on steeper scarp slopes;*

- *summit of the scarp slope marked by dramatic linear beech hangers;*
- *rock outcrops often mark the site of former quarries, except within the southern section of the escarpment;*
- *woodlands, hedgerows, scrub and isolated trees give the impression of a well treed landscape;*
- *small scale settlement generally confined to lower, shallower slopes of the escarpment, in sheltered locations, and adjacent to spring lines;*
- *many large towns and cities located at varying distances from, or in the vicinity of the foot of the escarpment;*
- *roads and tracks surrounded by dense vegetation and occupying holloways;*
- *numerous prehistoric sites, and more recent monuments and follies, are located on promontories and elevated sections of the escarpment; and*
- *intermittent historic parks and designed landscapes provide distinctive features on escarpment.*

5.16 The relevant key characteristics of LCT 7: High Wold, are as follows:

- *Broad, elevated, gently undulating plateau area dissected by a network of dry valleys with distinctive convex profile valley sides;*
- *expansive long distance views across the open plateau, and to distant hills beyond the Severn Vale;*
- *elevated areas of plateau surrounded by deeply incised valleys;*
- *predominantly arable land use with some improved pasture/grass leys, and very limited permanent pasture mainly confined to valley bottoms;*
- *large scale, regular fields mainly enclosed by dry stone walls, together with hedgerows with very occasional hedgerow trees, and post and wire fencing;*
- *small to moderate size geometric farm woodlands, many comprising small coniferous and broadleaved plantations and shelterbelts, and plantations bordering roads;*
- *settlement limited to small stone built villages and hamlets, generally within valleys, and isolated farmsteads and individual dwellings;*
- *network of mainly linear roads following ridge tops, and linking settlements;*
- *evidence of long period of occupation of the land;*

- *seasonal rotation of arable cropping patterns and improved grassland interrupts otherwise homogenous and simple land cover;*
- *remnants of once more extensive commons survive on the fringes of the escarpment;*
- *occasional active and disused limestone quarries located across the High Wold; and*
- *use of locally quarried stone for both walls and houses, frequently constructed in distinctive local vernacular.*

5.17 The relevant key characteristics of LCT 19: Unwooded Vale, are as follows:

- *Soft rolling landscape on the lower slopes of escarpment forming a transitional area between the adjacent escarpment and vale area, and with intermittent ridges and valleys in southern part of vale;*
- *stretches of the Cotswolds escarpment, as well as the escarpment outliers, provide a dramatic backdrop to many views across the vale;*
- *wide, open, sparsely settled agrarian landscape;*
- *small areas of wet meadow and narrow floodplain bordering numerous streams and rivers;*
- *well maintained hedgerows, some of great antiquity;*
- *numerous mature field and hedgerow oaks, riverside trees and small woodlands;*
- *quiet winding lanes link isolated farms and hamlets;*
- *remnants of ancient open fields and moated sites;*
- *varied mix of brick, timber and stone for buildings, and slate and thatch roofing, with Oolitic Limestone still prevalent within the vale villages in closer proximity to the Cotswolds Escarpment; and*
- *adjacent steep escarpment landform and associated woodlands generally limit views.*

Landscape Character Areas

5.18 LCA 1B: Langley Hill is described in more detail within the landscape character assessment, with key statements abbreviated below:

'Langley Hill is located to the west of Winchcombe and effectively defines the limits of the town....

The hill rises in gentle, even slopes to its summit at 274 m AOD and.... form a steeper landform and are cloaked in broadleaved woodland and limited areas of calcareous grassland. The hill's lower slopes are formed from mudstone and siltstone and the gentle slopes are characterised by arable farming and improved pastures.

The landscape is divided up into moderately sized irregular fields by hawthorn hedges and it is likely that, prior to enclosure, the hill was largely open and communally grazed by the local villagers although remnants of ridge and furrow on lower slopes mark the limits of the open common fields. Hedges are generally overgrown and gappy and give the landscape a neglected appearance. This is emphasised by areas of rough grassland and scrub encroachment in a number of fields on the upper slopes.

Small compact farms occupy sheltered positions on the mid slopes of the hill and are reached by narrow tracks. The hill is encircled by roads. However, public access to the summit is only possible by traversing footpaths such as the Wychavon Way.'

5.19 LCA 2D: Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe is described in more detail within the landscape character assessment, with key statements abbreviated below:

This stretch of the escarpment forms a dramatic backdrop to the towns of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Bishop's Cleeve and limits their eastward expansion...

...Woodland cover is less extensive than in the neighbouring Winchcombe to Broadway character area and is limited to narrow bands of broadleaved woodland at the scarp summit. There are fewer ancient woodlands also, indicating more extensive clearance possibly as a result of the pressure exerted on woodlands in this location by the large urban population of Cheltenham. An exception is Dowdeswell Wood, a large area of ancient woodland associated with parkland at Dowdeswell Court, and the large woodland complexes at Witcombe between Cooper's Hill and Birdlip. Land use is characterised by large unenclosed areas of rough grassland on upper slopes and improved pasture in moderately sized hedged enclosures bordering the vale...

As elsewhere on the escarpment, numerous important archaeological sites border the upper slopes, the most notable being those on Crickley Hill, Cleeve Common and Nottingham Hill...Despite the close proximity of large urban centres, settlement on the escarpment slopes is sparse and limited to scattered linear settlements bordering the many roads that link Cheltenham to villages on the High Wold, and Oxford further to the east.'

5.20 LCA 2E: Winchcombe to Dover's Hill is described in more detail within the landscape character assessment, with key statements abbreviated below:

'The escarpment between Winchcombe and Dover's Hill is broad and relatively high, rising from approximately 100 m AOD to over 200 m AOD in places...

Woodlands cloak much of the landscape, ancient broadleaved woods being the most dominant. Many are sizeable and stretch along the escarpment top, down to the mid and lower slopes, often along the line of brooks and gullies. Between these woodlands on the upper slopes, large unenclosed expanses of rough grassland predominate. On lower slopes, improved pastures, bounded by overgrown hedges reinforced with post and wire fencing is the most dominant land use. Calcareous grassland is not extensive...Orchards are also conspicuous on the lower slopes. Orchards were at one time more numerous here and in the vale below.

The upper escarpment slopes / High Wold transition are marked by numerous archaeological sites including Belas Knap...

...The escarpment is sparsely settled...'

5.21 LCA 7C: Cotswolds High Wold Plateau is described in more detail within the landscape character assessment, with key statements abbreviated below:

'The Cotswolds High Wold plateau comprises the largest section of the High Wold extending immediately east of the head of the Miserden Valley near Birdlip north eastwards across the plateau to above Chipping Campden and west of Stow-on-the-Wold. The area embraces all the characteristics of the High Wold. Here, the influence of the underlying geology is particularly strongly expressed, from the dramatic, gently undulating, and expansive upland plateau landform, dissected by dry valleys, and light stony soil, through to the harmonious relationship between the network of limestone walls and buildings with their surroundings. The sense of scale and openness is particularly apparent, as well as the effects of an intensive managed agricultural landscape.

Arable farming predominates although improved pastures grazed by cattle and sheep are also in evidence. Fields on the plateau tend to be large and geometric in shape; many are enclosed by dry stone walls and hedgerows, although hedge loss and dereliction of stretches of walls gives the landscape a neglected appearance in places. Indeed in many areas, weakened boundaries are reinforced with post and wire fencing. Silage bales wrapped in black plastic, and large industrial style sheds close to enclosure period farmhouses, are also a sign of modern agricultural practices and the intensification of agriculture on the High Wold.

Despite the predominantly managed character of the plateau, remnants of former agricultural practices still remain. Cleeve Common is a notable feature of the landscape and is recorded as common land as far back as the Saxon period although it may have been continuously grazed and open from as far back as the Neolithic period. The common represents the largest single area of unimproved limestone grassland in the AONB and has been designated as a SSSI for its botanical and geological importance...

...As is characteristic of the High Wold, woodland cover is not extensive and restricted to small deciduous plantations, walled corner copses and shelterbelts close to farms. Many were obviously planted at the time of the enclosures and are an integral part of the landscape. However, a significant number are modern coniferous plantations and offer little to landscape character...

Within the managed agricultural landscape small areas of rough grassland are apparent, sometimes made more visible by beech plantations. These 'islands' mark the site of upstanding Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age round barrows and are a significant feature of the Cotswolds High Wold. These sites are scattered across the landscape but are most often located on sites that overlook neighbouring valleys or the escarpment. Many have been eroded and degraded; fine examples such as Belas Knap (Beacon Hill), however, are well-preserved and particularly evocative features. Other prehistoric sites, notably hillforts and boundary ditches such as those on Cleeve Common, are important remnants of the pre-enclosure landscape.

Settlement of the Cotswolds High Wold Plateau is sparse. Enclosure age farmsteads are located throughout the landscape, often some distance from villages and hamlets, and generally located within the shelter offered by valleys draining the plateau such as Notgrove, Shipton and Sevenhampton. A number of deserted medieval villages are also located on the plateau...

...Telecommunication masts dominate some sections of the High Wold close to the escarpment edge. The cluster of towers south of Cleeve Hill is particularly prominent, and similarly at Shab Hill north-east of Birdlip. The tall structures affect the perceived scale of the escarpment. Pylon lines are also intrusive features across this part of the High Wold, notably on the plateau to the east and south of Cheltenham.'

5.22 LCA 19D: Vale of Evesham Fringe is described in more detail within the landscape character assessment, with key statements abbreviated below:

'The Vale of Evesham is a broad landscape type that extends from the western slopes of Oxenton Hill in the south, along the northern stretch of the Cotswold escarpment towards Stratford-upon-Avon. Only small areas are located within the AONB...

...The landscape is typical of the vale and the gently undulating landform is cloaked in a patchwork of fields, boundaries being formed by neat, well-maintained hedgerows. Soils derived from the underlying geology are often heavy and wet. However, drainage and improvement allows mixed arable and pasture farming to prosper. Dairy farming is particularly conspicuous and cattle sheds are often large and visually obtrusive features of this relatively flat landscape. Less productive wet pastures are often located on the alluvial beds that lie adjacent to the many streams and rivers that flow northwards to the Avon. The principal river is the Isbourne that flows off the Winchcombe embayment.

Tree cover is typically limited to small deciduous woodlands and supplemented by occasional hedgerow, riverside and field trees. However, larger woodlands may be found fringing parkland such as those around Sudeley Castle, Stanway House and Toddington Manor. Orchards, prevalent elsewhere in the Vale of Evesham, are not numerous in the AONB indicating that many were removed and converted to farmland.

Broadway and Winchcombe are the largest towns in the landscape. The latter dominates the local skyline, along with Sudeley Castle, and occupies the head of the dramatic embayment overlooked by the Belas Knap long barrow. The road pattern is rural, and narrow winding lanes, bounded by hedgerows, grass verges and drainage ditches link numerous small villages and hamlets marking the base of the escarpment and the outliers. Farmhouses tend to be located at the end of short lanes off the main road network...

The dramatic slopes of the wooded escarpment and outliers form a distinctive backdrop to these landscapes and offer many excellent vantage points from which to observe its vast scale and unified landscape character.'

Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, 2006

5.23 The site lies outside the assessment area of the Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, however, it does cover some parts of the study area.

Unwooded Vale LCT

5.24 To the north of the site land to the north of Winchcombe lies within an area defined as 'The Vale of Evesham Fringe'

and within the Unwooded Vale LCT. The key characteristics of the LCT of relevance to the study area are as follows:

- *An irregularly, sometimes broadly undulating landscape that become more gentle in places, appearing almost flat;*
- *Medium to large scale hedged fields with a combination of both regular and irregular field pattern;*
- *Contrasting land uses with a combination of both arable and pastoral fields, with a dominance of improved pastures on heavier clays and arable farmland on free draining soils;*
- *Woodland cover is sparse and generally restricted to small copses. Where hedgerow trees are present, this can create the local impression of a well treed landscape;*
- *Surrounding escarpment and outliers form a backdrop to many views across the Vale;*
- *Relatively sparsely settled agrarian landscape with rural villages and scattered farms and dwellings;*
- *Varied mixed of building materials including brick, timber and stone, and slate and thatch roofing;*
- *Quiet lanes connecting settlements; and*
- *Area drained by a network of small streams flowing off the Cotswolds Escarpment.*

5.25 The Unwooded Vale LCT is then further broken down into landscape character areas, with study area being located within LCA VE 1A: Teddington and Great Vale. The land use within the LCA is described as:

‘...diverse, combining both arable and pastoral fields with pockets of calcareous grassland, often creating a mosaic of textures and colours. Whilst fields are generally medium in scale, examples of larger and small scale enclosures are also evident.’

5.26 Woodlands within LCA VE 1A: Teddington and Great Vale are described as very scarce, with field boundaries described as follows:

‘Overall, low, regularly trimmed hedgerows predominate as the main field boundary, often gappy in places and reinforced with post and wire fences, although there are numerous examples of overgrown hedges that appear as tree lines within the landscape. Elsewhere, only remnant hedgerows provide boundary lines, dominated by post and wire fences with isolated areas of scrubby vegetation. Ditches and streams are also frequent along field boundaries, with trees often aligning watercourses. An intermittent pattern of hedgerow trees is present,

although some hedgerows are devoid of trees resulting in a more open character.’

5.27 Winchcombe settlement is located within the LCA VE 1A: Teddington and Great Vale, described as commanding a spectacular setting overlooked by surrounding elevated land. The LCA is also described as having a range of recreational formal and informal recreational interests, including the Gloucestershire Way and the Wychavon Way, as well as Sudeley Castle.

Settled Unwooded Vale LCT

5.28 To the west of the site land lies within an area defined as the ‘Severn Vale’ and within the Settled Unwooded Vale LCT. The key characteristics of the LCT of relevance to the study area are as follows:

- *Soft, gently undulating to flat landscape, but with intermittent locally elevated areas that project above the otherwise flatter landform;*
- *Area drained by a series of east west aligned tributaries of the Severn, including the Cam, Frome and Chelt, and the Stratford Avon flowing into the Severn from the north;*
- *Mixed arable and pastoral land use enclosed by hedgerow network, in places forming a strong landscape pattern;*
- *Limited woodland cover with mature hedgerow trees and occasional orchards;*
- *Rural areas bordered by large urban and suburban areas and interspersed with commercial and industrial premises;*
- *Varied mix of buildings materials including brick, timber and stone, and slate and thatch roofing;*
- *Proliferation of modern ‘suburban’ buildings styles and materials;*
- *Major transport corridors pass through the Vale, frequently aligned north south, beyond which is a network of local roads and lanes linking villages and hamlets; and*
- *Widespread network of pylons and transmission lines.*

5.29 The Settled Unwooded Vale LCT is then further broken down into landscape character areas, with study area being located within LCA SV 6B: Vale of Gloucester. The landscape within the LCA is described as follows:

‘The undulating landform encloses views in some areas whilst in other areas there are distant views beyond the vale landscape towards the Vale Hillocks, the Cotswolds

Escarpment the Escarpment Outliers and distant views towards The Malverns.'

5.30 Woodlands are not characteristic within LCA SV 6B: Vale of Gloucester, with the land use and vegetation pattern of the LCA described as follows:

'There is a diverse mixture of land uses in the Vale of Gloucester which combine to create a colourful and textured landscape. Agricultural land use in the vale includes both arable cultivation and pasture in a patchwork of fields that are large to medium in scale and predominantly regular in shape. Grazing sheep and cattle are common features in the landscape...Horse grazing is frequently found on the outskirts of villages and farms...In the wider vale landscape, low hedgerows with scattered hedgerow trees form the common boundary treatment. While these hedgerows are generally well maintained, some are becoming either gappy or overgrown, and in other areas the hedgerow network is beginning to break down, with evidence of field amalgamation and hedgerow trees and scrubby vegetation marking the lines of former field boundaries.'

5.31 Views towards pylons are common in LCA SV 6B: Vale of Gloucester, with the influence of settlements being strong in areas, contrasting with areas feeling deeply rural in places.

Urban LCT

5.32 The urban area of Cheltenham is located to the west of the site. The Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment has excluded urban areas from the study area, which was agreed with Gloucester County Council, therefore, the LCT is not considered further in the LVA.

Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, June 2016

5.33 The Landscape Strategy and Guidelines presents a range of landscape strategies and guidelines for the 19 landscape character types to help manage change in a sustainable and positive way. The Proposed Project crosses three landscape character types, namely:

- LCT 2: Escarpment;
- LCT 7: High Wold; and
- LCT 19: Unwooded Vale.

5.34 Although LCT 1: Escarpment Outlier is within the study area, the Proposed Project does not fall within this LCT and therefore, its landscape strategies and guidelines have not been set out below.

LCT 2: Escarpment

5.35 The generic landscape sensitivity of LCT 2 is described as follows:

'The escarpment is a distinctive and dramatic landscape. The combination of its elevation, and the steep slopes rising from the lowlands, make it a highly visible feature and is therefore very sensitive to change, particularly where this would introduce built elements within the otherwise agricultural landscapes, or interrupt the balance of rough grassland, species rich calcareous grassland and broadleaved woodland on the upper escarpment slopes.'

The undulating lower escarpment slopes, at the junction of the vale, are visually less prominent than the upper escarpment slopes and generally more widely settled.'

5.36 LCT 2 has several local forces for change, with 2.5 relating to 'the introduction of vertical elements such as...electricity pylons...on and adjacent to the escarpment'. The potential landscape implications for LCT 2 of the introduction of 'vertical elements such as...electricity pylons' are listed as follows:

- Introduction of visually intrusive 'urban' or industrial features to the dramatic escarpment
- Loss of open character and 'natural' appearance
- Introduction of unnatural movement and loss of tranquillity
- Intrusion on the setting of scheduled monuments, listed buildings and designed landscapes
- Breaking up of escarpment skyline
- Impact on views to, from and along the escarpment

5.37 The landscape strategies and guidelines for LCT 2 in relation to the introduction of 'vertical elements such as...electricity pylons' on and adjacent to the escarpment are as follows:

- 'Conserve the open, remote character by objecting to the development of vertical elements on the skyline or where these would adversely affect views along the escarpment or from the neighbouring vales and Cotswolds LCTs
- Ensure the development of vertical elements in neighbouring areas beyond the AONB do not adversely affect views to, from and along the escarpment and across the adjacent LCTs
- Ensure alternative options have been fully considered
- Minimise impact by locating new communication masts on existing structures or by using existing masts

- Set masts against trees
- Bury cables underground and seek opportunities to bury existing cabling
- Avoid use of visually prominent urban security fencing and CCTV masts.
- Consider other renewable energy and communication technologies
- Ensure full assessment of heritage setting impacts and appropriate measures undertaken
- Seek to minimise size and number of road signs'

LCT 7: High Wold

5.38 The generic landscape sensitivity of LCT 7 is described as follows:

'Despite its predominantly agricultural character, the wide, elevated, gently undulating plateau landscape retains a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity contributing to its high sensitivity. Wide panoramic views, a high degree of inter-visibility, and limited woodland cover also add to the sensitivity of the High Wold landscape to development, particularly tall vertical elements, such as telecommunication masts and wind turbines and to woodland creation and shelterbelt planting.'

The High Wold contains a large number of prehistoric monuments including funerary monuments dating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age and defensive enclosures dating to the Iron Age. These are an important component of the landscape and highly sensitive to developments that may affect their landscape setting and material remains.'

5.39 LCT 7 has several local forces for change, with 7.9 relating to 'the introduction of vertical elements such as...electricity pylons...particularly on prominent hill top, valley rim and escarpment edge locations'. The potential landscape implications for LCT 7 of the introduction of 'vertical elements such as...electricity pylons' are listed as follows:

- 'Introduction of visually intrusive 'urban' or industrial features to the rural open and expansive high wold landscape
- Introduction of unnatural movement and loss of tranquillity and sense of remoteness.
- Introduction lit elements to a characteristically dark landscape
- Intrusion on the setting of scheduled monuments, listed buildings and designed landscapes

- Breaking up of the skyline
- Loss of open character'

5.40 The landscape strategies and guidelines for LCT 7 in relation to the introduction of 'vertical elements such as...electricity pylons' particularly on prominent hill top, valley rim and escarpment edge locations are as follows:

- 'Conserve the open, remote character by objecting to the development of vertical elements on the skyline or where these would adversely affect views across and to the High Wold
- Ensure the development of vertical elements in neighbouring LCTs and areas beyond the AONB do not adversely affect views to, from and across the High Wold.
- Ensure alternative options have been fully considered
- Minimise impact by locating new communication masts on existing structures or by using existing masts.
- Set masts etc against trees
- Bury cables underground and seek opportunities to bury existing overhead cables.
- Avoid use of visually prominent urban security fencing and CCTV masts.
- Consider other renewable energy or communication technologies
- Ensure full assessment of heritage setting impacts and appropriate measures undertaken
- Seek to minimise the size and number of road signs'

LCT 19: Unwooded Vale

5.41 The generic landscape sensitivity of LCT 19 is described as follows:

'The sparsely settled and deeply rural Unwooded Vale landscape type is highly sensitive to change, particularly in agricultural areas not currently associated with development. Despite this, even in rural areas the screening effects of landform, farm woodlands, hedgerows and shelterbelts provide a framework in which some opportunities for small-scale development exist.'

Vale landscapes bordering upland areas with wide vantage points such as the Escarpment and Escarpment Outliers landscape types are particularly sensitive to the effects of large scale built development such as agricultural sheds and light industrial units as these are difficult to screen from elevated vantage points. These landscapes are also highly sensitive to development that

may disturb the strong field patterns created by hedgerows as these are best perceived from higher ground.'

5.42 LCT 19 has several local forces for change, with 19.5 relating to 'the introduction of vertical elements such as...electricity pylons...particularly in locations that impact long views and panoramas'. The potential landscape implications for LCT 19 of the introduction of 'vertical elements such as...electricity pylons' are listed as follows:

- *'Introduction of visually intrusive 'urban' or industrial features to the open character of the Unwooded Vale and views across it from the neighbouring scarp landscapes and between areas of the AONB*
- *Introduction of unnatural movement and loss of tranquillity and sense of remoteness.*
- *Introduction lit elements to a characteristically dark landscape*
- *Intrusion on the setting of scheduled monuments, listed buildings and designed landscapes*
- *Breaking up of the skyline*
- *Loss of open character'*

5.43 The landscape strategies and guidelines for LCT 19 in relation to the introduction of 'vertical elements such as...electricity pylons' particularly in locations that impact long views and panoramas are as follows:

- *'Conserve the open, agricultural character of the Unwooded Vale by objecting to the development of vertical elements where these would adversely affect views*
- *Ensure the development of vertical elements in neighbouring LCTs and areas beyond the AONB do not adversely affect views to and from the Unwooded Vale*
- *Ensure alternative options have been fully considered*
- *Minimise impact by locating new communication masts on existing structures or by using existing masts.*
- *Set masts etc against trees*
- *Bury cables underground and seek opportunities to bury existing overhead cables.*
- *Avoid use of visually prominent urban security fencing and CCTV masts.*
- *Consider other renewable energy and communications technologies*
- *Ensure full assessment of heritage setting impacts and appropriate measures undertaken*

- *Seek to minimise the size and number of road signs*
- *Undertake road clutter audits*
- *Double up road signs where possible and remove unnecessary road signs'*

Landscape Baseline

5.44 This section identifies the published landscape character areas that will be assessed, including reasons for their selection.

Landscape Value

5.45 GLVIA3 indicates that information contributing to understanding value might include information about areas recognised by statute (such as National Parks and AONBs), local planning documents which may show extent of and policies for local landscape designations, information on the status of individual or groups of features (such as Conservation Areas, listed buildings, Tree Preservation Orders, important hedgerows, historic landscapes or historic sites), art and literature which may indicate value attached to certain areas and material on landscapes of local or community interest such as local green spaces, village greens or allotments.

5.46 In this case the site falls within the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB), which indicates the high value of this landscape. Special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB within the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025 are set out in Section 3 of the LVA.

Potential Landscape Receptors

5.47 Although the NCAs, Cotswold AONB LCTs and Gloucestershire LCTs provide a useful context, the LCA's from the AONB and Gloucestershire landscape character assessments provide a more suitable scale framework to assess effects on landscape character for the purposes of this LVA. To avoid double counting or duplicated assessments for the same landscapes, this LVA does not consider the National Character Areas or County Landscape Types further within the report.

5.48 The Proposed Project will have direct effects upon the following LCAs from The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment, 2004 and therefore these have been considered further in this appraisal:

- LCA 2E: Winchcombe to Dover's Hill;
- LCA 7C: Cotswolds High Wold Plateau; and
- LCA 19D: Vale of Evesham Fringe.

5.49 Indirect effects are predicted upon the following LCAs from The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character

Assessment, 2004 and they have therefore also been considered further in this appraisal:

- LCA 1B: Langley Hill; and
- LCA 2D: Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe.

5.50 Indirect effects are predicted upon the following LCAs from the Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, 2006 and have therefore, been considered further in this appraisal:

- LCA VE 1A: Teddington and Great Vale; and
- LCA SV 6B: Vale of Gloucester.

Visual Baseline

5.51 This section identifies the visual receptors that are to be assessed and the viewpoints that are to be used to assess effects on receptors, including reasons for their selection.

Potential Visual Receptors

5.52 Potential visual receptors have been identified taking into consideration the visibility of the existing overhead line, as defined by the screened ZTV of existing pylons (refer to Figure 5) and observations made on site and also by the screened ZTV associated with the proposed CSECs (refer to Figure 6).

5.53 Visual receptors associated with the Proposed Project as a whole are listed below.

Community Receptors

5.54 The following community receptors are considered further in the appraisal:

- Scattered Community north of Postlip;
- Scattered Community south-east of Postlip;
- Scattered Community between Breakheart Plantation and West Down (part of Cleeve Common);
- Scattered Community between West Down (part of Cleeve Common) and Arle Grove;
- Scattered Community between Arle Grove and Dowdeswell;
- Whittington and surrounding scattered community;
- Upper and Lower Dowdeswell and surrounding scattered community; and
- Scattered community on the upper slopes of Ravensgate Hill.

5.55 There are a number of settlements and groups of properties from which views of existing pylons are afforded. However, views are not likely to be affected by elements of the

Proposed Project other than the removal of pylons. Although beneficial effects are likely to occur as a result of the pylon removal, these residential receptors have not been appraised in detail, however, the Proposed Project will benefit the visual amenity of parts of the local community including the following residential receptors:

- Residents within Winchcombe to the north-east;
- Residents within Cheltenham to the west;
- Residents within Andover to the south-east;
- Residents within Greet to the north-east;
- Residents within Brockhampton to the east;
- Residents within Sevenhampton to the east; and
- Residents within western parts of Bishop's Cleeve to the north-west.

Recreational Receptors

5.56 The recreational receptors considered further in the appraisal all lie within the Cotswold National Landscape (an AONB), and include people engaged in outdoor recreation as follows:

- Users of the Cotswold Way National Trail;
- Users of the Winchcombe Way long distance path;
- Users of the Windrush Way long distance path;
- Users of the Wardens Way long distance path;
- Users of public rights of way west of Winchcombe, including Winchcombe Way long distance path and Gloucestershire Way long distance path
- Users of the Cheltenham Circular Footpath (ZCK61 and ZCK62 only);
- Users of Sabrina Way (National Bridleroute Network) which includes restricted byways ASM140 and ASM103;
- Users of public right of way AWB63 located to the south-east of Postlip Mill complex;
- Users of public right of way AWB24 located north and north-east of Postlip Mill complex;
- Users of public right of way AWB31;
- Users of public rights of way AWB22 and AWB23 to the south-west of the Postlip Mill complex;
- Users of bridleways KSE1 and KWH3;
- Users of public right of way KWH19;

- Users of public rights of way to the east, north and south-west of Lower Dowdeswell, including KD05, KD06, KD03, KD02 and KAN2;
- Users of elevated public rights of way north of the A436, including KD022, KD026, KD018, KD019, KD020 and KD021;
- Users of Cleeve Common, including areas of Common Land, public rights of way and golf course;
- Users of open access land at Longbarrow Bank;
- Visitors to Sudeley Castle and Gardens, publicly accessible Registered Park and Garden and visitor attraction;
- Visitors to Belas Knap Long Barrow, an English Heritage visitor attraction; and
- Visitors to the Kilkenny Nature Reserve.

5.57 It is assumed that, although Dowdeswell Woods Nature Reserve, Arle Grove Nature Reserve and Whittington Woods Nature Reserve are in proximity to the Proposed Project, their location within woodland will filter views of those users looking towards the site. Therefore, with limited to views towards the Proposed Project, they have not been considered further within the appraisal.

5.58 Although public rights of way ZCK14 and ZCK20 are located close to the site, a combination of falling topography and intervening vegetation and built form limit views towards the Proposed Project. Therefore, users of these routes have not been considered further in this appraisal.

Road Receptors

5.59 The following road receptors are considered further in the appraisal as follows:

- People travelling on the B4632;
- People travelling on Langley Road;
- People travelling on Sudeley Hill and Salt Way;
- People travelling on Cordean Lane;
- People travelling on the minor road south of Cordean Hall;
- People travelling on minor roads north-west of Whittington village;
- People travelling on Ham Road;
- People travelling on minor roads east of Whittington village;
- People travelling on the A40;

- People travelling on minor roads through and east of Lower and Upper Dowdeswell; and
- People travelling on the A436.

Selection of Representative Viewpoints

5.60 Viewpoints were selected to represent views from publicly accessible areas for the receptors identified above. They have been used to inform the assessment of visual effects on the potential receptors identified.

5.61 The selection of viewpoints was informed by consultation, field work and desk based research, including consideration of access and recreation across the local area, vantage points and the distribution of settlements. These viewpoints are representative of the range of views, viewing experiences and types of viewers which may potentially be affected by the project.

5.62 A total of 25 viewpoints were selected in consultation with officers at the Cotswolds National Landscape. Details of each viewpoint are provided in the table below:

Table 5.1: Viewpoint Locations

No.	Viewpoint Name	Grid Coords	Receptor represented
1	Bridleway (AWB16) near Langley Hill Farm	400784, 228597	Representative of views experienced by users of elevated public rights of way to the west of Winchcombe and experienced by scattered farmsteads and residential properties on elevated land.
2	B4632	400832, 227422	Representative of views experienced by drivers along the B4632, users of the public right of way and those accessing Hollingsworth & Vose paper mill.
3	Public right of way (AWB63)	401091, 226967	Representative of views experienced by users of the local footpath network and by those accessing residential properties.
4	Public right of way (AWB31)	401327, 226878	Representative of views experienced by users of the local footpath network.

Chapter 5
Existing Conditions (Baseline)

Cotswolds VIP Project
May 2024

No.	Viewpoint Name	Grid Coords	Receptor represented	No.	Viewpoint Name	Grid Coords	Receptor represented
5	Cotswold Way (AWB60) adjacent to Corndean Lane	401932, 226311	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the Cotswold Way National Trail.		Sabrina Way / Bridleway (ASM68)		and horse riders across Cleeve Common.
6	Cotswold Way (AWB21) close to Woodbine House driveway	400874, 226232	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the Cotswold Way National Trail.	13	Restricted Byway / Sabrina Way (ASM140)	399395, 223663	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the publicly accessible route.
7	Cleeve Hill Trig Point	398584, 226377	Representative of views experienced by visitors to Cleeve Common and its summit, as well as by walkers along the Cotswold Way National Trail.	14	Minor Road north-west of Whalley Farm	399849, 221516	Representative of views experienced by drivers along the minor road network.
8	Warden's Way (ASU4)	403939, 227246	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the Warden's Way and by residents within properties to the south-east of Winchcombe, including Sudeley Park Cottages and Sudeley Lodge.	15	Cotswold Way / Minor Road	399278, 221895	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the Cotswold Way National Trail and by drivers along the minor road network.
9	Sudeley Castle / Windrush Way	403066, 227535	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the Windrush Way and by those visiting Sudeley Castle.	16	Minor Road north-east of Whittington	402182, 221606	Representative of views experienced by drivers along the minor road network.
10	Belas Knap Long Barrow	402091, 225443	Representative of views experienced by visitors to the English Heritage visitor attraction and by walkers along the Cotswold Way and Winchcombe Way long distance path.	17	Ham Road / Public Right of Way (KWH19)	399312, 220994	Representative of views experienced by drivers along the minor road network and by walkers along the local footpath network.
11	Cleeve Common / Trig Point	399691, 224597	Representative of views experienced by walkers across Cleeve Common.	18	Cotswold Way / Ham Road (KWH21)	399037, 221038	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the Cotswold Way National Trail and by drivers along the minor road network.
12	Cleeve Common /	400908, 223719	Representative of views experienced by walkers	19	Cotswold Way (KWH21/KWH19)	399064, 220660	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the Cotswold Way National Trail and the local footpath network.
				20	Cotswold Way / Ravensgate Common	397831, 218403	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the Cotswold Way National Trail and by

No.	Viewpoint Name	Grid Coords	Receptor represented
			those visiting the common land.
21	Public Rights of Way (KDO26/K DO22)	399271, 218691	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the elevated local footpath network north of Gloucester Road (A436).
22	Kilkenny Viewpoint and Nature Reserve	400345, 218458	Representative of views experienced by visitors to the viewpoint and nature reserve.
23	Public Right of Way (KD06) close to Upper Dowdeswell	400826, 219770	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the local footpath network and by residents within Upper and Lower Dowdeswell.
24	A40 south of Shipton	403720, 217801	Representative of views experienced by drivers along the A40.
25	Byway (KSE9) east of Sevenhampton	404295, 221651	Representative of views experienced by walkers along the byway and local footpath network and by elevated scattered properties east of Sevenhampton.

Chapter 6

The Proposed Project

The Proposed Project

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

- The removal of a section of OHL, including the permanent removal of 16 pylons (18 pylons will be removed in total, however, two will be replaced under Permitted Development);
- Underground cabling of approximately 7km in length.
- Two new CSECs at each end (north and south) and associated replacement terminal pylons (as mentioned above), to connect the new underground cables to the remaining existing overhead line;
- Associated temporary works to facilitate construction, including temporary/permanent access junctions and roads, a temporary haul road, construction compounds, material storage and welfare facilities; and
- Ancillary off-site infrastructure (including installation of arcing horns and shunt reactor installation/connection).

6.2 The majority of the works will be undertaken using Permitted Development rights under Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), however, the CSECs require planning permission. The LVA considers works associated with both the Permitted Development and planning permissions.

6.3 The proposed works within the Winchcombe CSEC will comprise:

- Installation of a terminal pylon to connect the new underground cables to the remaining existing overhead line (note: the pylon is Permitted Development);
- CSEC infrastructure;
- Underground cabling from the Winchcombe CSEC towards the Whittington CSEC (note: this is Permitted Development);
- A permanent access road to the CSEC, including a bell-mouth and turning area;
- A hardstanding area where the overhead line meets with the new underground cables;

- A retaining wall;
- New screening comprising native trees, woodland and scrub planting; and
- Temporary bell-mouths with the B4632 and a classified road to facilitate construction.

6.4 The proposed works within the Whittington CSEC will comprise:

- CSEC infrastructure;
- Underground cabling from the Whittington CSEC towards the Winchcombe CSEC (note: this is Permitted Development);
- A permanent access road to the CSEC, including a bell-mouth with Ham Road and a turning area;
- A hardstanding area where the overhead line meets with the new underground cables;
- New screening comprising native trees, woodland and scrub planting; and
- Temporary bell-mouths on three classified roads to facilitate construction.

6.5 The LVA also considers temporary landscape and visual effects of construction works, including temporary construction compounds, haul roads, access tracks, trenching, cut and fill of land, temporary OHL diversion and removal of woodland, trees and hedgerows.

Construction

Sources of Construction Effects

6.6 Sources of construction effects as part of the planning consent include:

- Construction of a CSEC and associated permanent access to the south-east of Postlip Mills, including associated earthworks, laydown areas and bellmouth;

6.7 Sources of construction effects as part of permitted development include:

- Removal of 18no. existing pylons and associated conductors (overhead lines);
- Construction of a replacement 46.18m high terminal pylon to the south-east of Postlip Mills;
- Construction of a replacement 43.81m high pylon to the south of Ham Road;
- Temporary 5m wide haul road between the two CSEC, approximately 7.5km in length, incorporating temporary soil storage and drainage ditches. Where the haul road crosses existing roads, temporary give way road

markings and signage will be provided to ensure access along roads are maintained. The haul road will remain in situ for the duration of the construction period;

- Up to 1.42m deep cable trenches located either side of the central haul road, varying in width between 2.2m and 3.4m wide. Material from the excavation will be temporarily stored adjacent to the trenches and backfilled ensuring topsoil is located at the top of the trench backfill material;
- Temporary access route from the B4632 including a bell mouth junction with associated visibility splays. Adjacent to the entrance, temporary security cabins, welfare facilities and wheel washdown area will be located to the west of the access road. The 7.5m wide temporary access route will cross agricultural land following the edges of field boundaries and woodland, requiring use of existing crossings (to be confirmed at detailed design) over the River Isbourne and passing through an area of woodland before linking with the haul road;
- Temporary access route from the A40 requiring closure of an existing layby, with bell mouth junction and associated visibility splays. The 7.5m wide temporary access route will cross agricultural land following the edges of field boundaries. The route will cross minor roads in four separate locations which will require temporary give way road markings and to ensure access along roads are maintained. The access route will link with the haul road to the north-west of Arle Grove Nature Reserve;
- Temporary site compound and car park and laydown area adjacent to the temporary access route from the A40;
- A number of temporary laydown areas and proposed material storage areas adjacent to the cable route;
- Removal of two areas of woodland within the construction corridor of the cable route, including at Breakheart Plantation and in proximity to Warrens Farm;
- Removal of two areas of woodland to accommodate temporary access routes from both the A40 and B4632;
- Removal of trees and hedgerows, as well as some stone walls where the cable route and temporary access routes cross field boundaries, or where temporary visibility splays require the removal of vegetation or walls at junctions and crossing points of existing roads; and
- Temporary re-routing of public rights of way.

Construction Mitigation

6.8 Throughout the design process, the aim has been to minimise construction effects of the Proposed Project, which has included consideration of temporary landscape and visual effects upon residents, recreational users and those using the local road network. The design process has been iterative, seeking to minimise landscape and visual effects wherever possible.

6.9 Some of the ways in which landscape and visual construction effects have been minimised are set out below:

- The location of the proposed CSECs has been carefully considered in order to minimise landscape and visual effects, which will also reduce overall construction effects;
- The proposed cable route has been located in order to reduce the effects upon existing vegetation, avoiding many areas of woodland and minimising breaks in existing field boundary hedgerows wherever possible;
- The proposed underground cable route has sought to minimise the number of times it crosses public rights of way and alternative walking routes will be made available during construction where necessary. This includes the Cotswold Way National Trail, Winchcombe Way long distance path and Sabrina Way (National Bridleroute Network);
- The proposed underground cable route has been located at the one of the narrowest points where crossing open access land and common land between Cleeve Common and West Down. Access across this common land will be maintained during construction;
- The location of the proposed underground cable route through Breakheart Plantation has sought to minimise woodland removal where possible by avoiding better quality trees, taking opportunities to route in areas where trees have been found with signs of ash dieback and minimising the width of the corridor as far as practicable. Furthermore, the curvature of the construction corridor aims to reduce the potential for views through the woodland, and provide the perception that there is continued woodland cover, especially from more oblique views towards the hillside and in views from the south;
- The construction corridor has been narrowed where crossing woodland to the west of Warren Farm in order to retain as much existing woodland as possible;
- The laying of underground cables will be phased across the cable route. Therefore, although the haul road and temporary access routes will be in place for the entire construction period, construction activity associated with the cable laying will be limited and localised and

transient in nature as works will only be located in one place for a limited period of time; and

- All existing retained trees and hedgerows will be protected to the relevant British Standard through the construction period.

Operation

6.10 Upon completion, all development proposals will be in place as set out above. In summary, the permanent operational above ground components of the Proposed Project considered in this LVA include:

- The two CSECs with associated infrastructure and permanent access roads (part of the planning consent);
- Removal of 18no. existing pylons (permitted development);
- Two replacement terminal pylons (permitted development); and
- Link pillar boxes along the route of the underground cables (permitted development).

Operation Mitigation

6.11 Throughout the design process, the aim has been to minimise any adverse operation effects of the Proposed Project. The design process has been iterative, seeking to minimise landscape and visual effects wherever possible.

6.12 Some of the ways in which landscape and visual operation effects have been minimised are set out below:

- The material used for permanent access roads and within the CSECs will be dark and visually recessive in colour, to reduce their visual prominence;
- All buildings within CSECs will be dark and visually recessive in colour, to reduce their visual prominence; and
- Where practical, security fencing surrounding CSECs will be a dark recessive colour.

Landscape Mitigation Proposals

6.13 The project team have worked collaboratively as part of an iterative design and appraisal process to ensure that landscape features, landscape character, visual receptors and the special qualities of the National Landscape (AONB) have positively influenced the design and layout of the Proposed Project. This has resulted in embedded landscape and visual mitigation proposals that seek to minimise the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Project wherever possible and deliver long-term benefits. The principal aims of the embedded

landscape and visual mitigation are shown on Figures 7 to 12, and are summarised as follows:

- To filter views towards the proposed Winchcombe CSEC, particularly from the local public right of way network including PRoW (AWB63), through provision of new native tree lined hedgerows and areas of native woodland and scrub planting;
- To provide visual enclosure to the proposed Whittington CSEC particularly when viewed from the Cotswold Way National Trail to the west and more distant views from the south, through provision of new native woodland, tree, scrub and hedgerows around the periphery of the CSEC;
- To provide a mosaic of new native woodland and scrub planting along edges and across the gap between the existing retained woodland within Breakheart Plantation, to reduce the visual gap within the woodland further and provide a woodland edge habitat for the benefit of local wildlife;
- To infill the gap within Warrens Farm plantation with new native woodland and scrub planting to reduce the visual gap within the woodland and provide a woodland edge habitat for the benefit of local wildlife;
- To replace all trees and hedgerows lost as a result of the cable route and temporary works to ensure the landscape character is maintained or enhanced with additional planting where possible;
- To reinstate all dry stone walls lost as a result of the cable route to their original condition;
- To restore all land used for laydown, construction compounds, car parking and material storage to its former agricultural use; and
- To provide long term management of existing and proposed vegetation to enable the landscape character of the area is restored and to ensure visual mitigation establishes.

Chapter 7

Appraisal of Landscape Effects

7.1 Landscape effects are considered during construction and during operation, at Year 0 and Year 15. Relevant mitigation is set out in Chapter 6, with landscape appraisal tables set out in Appendix C.

Effects upon Landscape Character During Construction

7.2 During construction there will be temporary adverse effects on the landscape, mainly due to the undergrounding works which are required to facilitate the removal of pylons from the Cotswold National Landscape (an AONB).

7.3 Despite the temporary nature of the works there will be direct, short-term Moderate to Major adverse landscape effects upon LCA 7C: Cotswolds High Wold Plateau as a result of the Proposed Project, with effects being reversible, with the exception of tree removal within Warrens Farm plantation. The effects will arise, due the high sensitivity of LCA 7C and the extent of the works across the LCA and the open nature of the plateau. In addition, Moderate adverse, direct, short-term landscape effects will occur upon LCA 2E: Winchcombe to Dover's Hill due to construction activity within the LCA, with effects being reversible, with the exception of tree removal within Breakheart Plantation.

7.4 There will be Minor adverse indirect effects upon LCA 1B: Langley Hill and LCA 2D: Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe due to the perception of construction activity from opposing valleys. Minor adverse direct effects upon the landscape character of LCA 19D: Vale of Evesham Fringe will also occur as a result of the construction of a permanent access road to the Winchcombe CSEC and also the perception of the construction of the CSEC and associated working areas.

7.5 It should be recognised that construction effects upon landscape character will be largely temporary and reversible and will affect limited parts of each LCA, with adverse landscape effects not extending further than the study area.

7.6 Construction effects upon landscape character within the study area but outside the National Landscape will be Negligible.

Effects upon Landscape Character During Operation

7.7 During operation, most of the landscape effects will be beneficial and will occur due to the removal of OHL and

associated pylons and reinstatement of land affected during construction, such as the cable swathe and temporary access roads. There will be some localised adverse impacts upon landscape character as a result of the introduction of the CSEC, permanent access tracks and two replacement pylons. However, these effects will be limited and localised when compared to both the effects of the existing pylons and the benefits of removing them.

7.8 Overall, effects upon landscape character at operation will be beneficial or neutral in nature, both directly and indirectly.

7.9 The greatest benefit to landscape character will be to LCA 7C: Cotswolds High Wold Plateau, where the existing pylons will be removed crossing the plateau, benefiting users of Cleeve Common, the Cotswold Way National Trail and numerous other recreational routes, as well as benefiting those visiting Belas Knap. The removal of pylons within this LCA will result in a Moderate to Major beneficial landscape effect at Year 0. With maturing planting, particularly surrounding the Whittington CSEC, this level of effect will increase to Major beneficial.

7.10 Within LCA 2E: Winchcombe to Dover's Hill there will be some Minor beneficial effects as a result of the removal of pylons, balanced against the removal of vegetation at Breakheart Plantation and the presence of the Winchcombe CSEC and replacement pylon. With the influence of maturing planting surrounding the CSEC and within Breakheart Plantation, a Moderate beneficial level of effect is predicted to the LCA at Year 15.

7.11 There will be indirect Minor benefits upon landscape character during operation at Year 0 as a result to all other LCAs within the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB). In the longer-term, these beneficial effects will increase to Moderate to Minor as a result of the proposed landscape mitigation surrounding CSECs, as well as the restoration of field boundary hedgerows. Those LCAs outside the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB) will experience neutral or beneficial effects in the long-term due to the distance of these areas from the site.

Landscape Effects Summary

7.12 Table 7.1 below summarises the landscape effects as a result of the Proposed Project, which are set out in full within Appendix C.

Table 7.1: Summary of Landscape Effects

Receptor	Phase	Level of Effect
	Construction	Moderate adverse

Receptor	Phase	Level of Effect
LCA 2E: Winchcombe to Dover's Hill	Operation: Year 0	Minor beneficial
	Operation: Year 15	Moderate beneficial
LCA 7C: Cotswolds High Wold Plateau	Construction	Moderate to Major adverse
	Operation: Year 0	Moderate to Major beneficial
	Operation: Year 15	Major beneficial
LCA 1B Langley Hill	Construction	Minor adverse
	Operation: Year 0	Minor beneficial
	Operation: Year 15	Moderate to Minor beneficial
LCA 2D Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe	Construction	Minor adverse
	Operation: Year 0	Minor beneficial
	Operation: Year 15	Moderate to Minor beneficial
LCA 19D Vale of Evesham Fringe	Construction	Minor adverse
	Operation: Year 0	Minor beneficial
	Operation: Year 15	Moderate to Minor beneficial
LCA VE 1A Teddington and Great Vale	Construction	Negligible adverse
	Operation: Year 0	Negligible neutral
	Operation: Year 15	Negligible neutral
LCA SV 6B Vale of Gloucester	Construction	Negligible adverse
	Operation: Year 0	Negligible beneficial
	Operation: Year 15	Negligible beneficial

Chapter 8

Appraisal of Visual Effects

8.1 Visual receptors are set out in the Section 5, including those which have not been considered as part of this LVA. The visual receptors are considered in each appraisal scenario including construction, operation at Year 0 and operation at Year 15. Relevant mitigation is set out in Chapter 6, with visual appraisal tables set out in Appendix D.

8.2 Locations of visual receptors are shown on Figure 4 within Appendix F, with visualisations in Appendix G.

Visual Effects During Construction

8.3 There will inevitably be some adverse visual effects during the construction period upon visual receptors due to the extent and proximity of construction activity to some of the nearby scattered community, recreational routes and roads. Although these adverse effects have been reduced wherever possible, as set out in Section 6, the temporary visual effects are summarised below.

Construction Effects upon Communities

8.4 Due to the proximity of works associated with the underground cable route and the removal of vegetation within Breakheart Plantation, temporary, short term and reversible Moderate to Major adverse visual effects will occur upon scattered communities to the south-east of Postlip and between Breakheart Plantation and West Down. Effects of the installation of underground cables will be limited to a degree due to the phased approach to excavation and laying of the cables.

8.5 Due to the proximity of construction works associated with the Whittington CSEC and underground cable route, the scattered community between Arle Grove and Dowdeswell would experience some temporary, short-term Moderate visual effects.

8.6 All other visual effects during construction from community receptors will be Moderate to Minor adverse or lower.

Construction Effects upon Recreational Receptors

8.7 Temporary Moderate and Moderate to Major adverse visual effects will occur along the Cotswold Way National Trail where the undergrounding of the cables is located adjacent to the route, as well as where it lies adjacent to construction of the Whittington CSEC. However, these adverse visual effects

will be limited to short lengths of the trail. Similar adverse effects would occur to limited lengths of the Winchcombe Way long distance path as a result of construction activity. Whilst adverse effects are predicted upon these routes, they represent a worst case scenario. The phased nature of the undergrounding of the cables will in fact limit the adverse effects to short periods of time.

8.8 Due to a number of routes needing to be temporarily diverted due to works associated with the undergrounding of the cables, temporary Moderate to Major adverse effects are predicted during construction for users of Sabrina Way.

8.9 A number of public rights of way will be affected by the temporary construction works and the construction of the Winchcombe CSEC, mainly due to the proximity of the users to construction activity. In a number of cases, these footpaths will need to be temporarily diverted particularly in relation to works associated with the undergrounding of the cables. Temporary Major or Moderate to Major effects are predicted upon people walking along public rights of way numbers AWB63 and AWB31. The phased nature of the undergrounding of the cables will in fact limit the adverse effects to short periods of time. In some cases, only short lengths of the public footpaths will be adversely affected by construction activity, with most of the route remaining unaffected, therefore, the extent of adverse effects upon these public rights of way will be limited and localised.

8.10 Due to the proposed temporary haul roads to the Winchcombe CSEC some local public rights of way will be adversely affected, resulting in a Moderate level of effect. Elevated public rights of way to the west of Winchcombe will have views towards construction activity on the opposing valley, therefore, a Moderate temporary adverse visual effect is predicted.

8.11 Although a Major adverse visual effect is predicted from Cleeve Common, this will be limited to south-eastern areas of the common, with areas further to the north-west only glimpsing construction activities.

8.12 Moderate to Major adverse effects to public right of way KWH19 will occur due to the proximity of the Whittington CSEC to the route.

8.13 All other visual effects during construction from recreational receptors will be Moderate to Minor or lower.

Construction Effects upon Road Receptors

8.14 Due to the undergrounding of the cables either side of the road and the removal of vegetation within Breakheart Plantation, Moderate to Major adverse visual effects will occur during construction to people traveling on the minor dead-end road south of Corndean Hall. However, the phased nature of

the undergrounding of the cables will limit the adverse effects of the cable undergrounding to short periods of time.

8.15 Due to the route of the underground cabling crossing select roads, including Ham Road and those to the north-west of Whittington village, vegetation and/or dry stone walls will be removed either side, allowing clear and unobstructed views towards construction activity, resulting in temporary Moderate to Major visual effects during construction.

8.16 All other visual effects during construction on road receptors will be Minor or less.

Visual Effects During Operation

8.17 During operation there will be notable visual benefits as a result of the removal of existing pylons crossing the landscape, particularly for local communities and the large number of recreational users within the Cotswolds National Landscape. There will be some localised adverse impacts upon visual receptors as a result of the introduction of the sealing end compounds, permanent access tracks and new pylons. This is particularly relevant to the public rights of way in proximity to the CSECs and new pylons. However, these adverse visual effects will be limited and localised, particularly when compared to beneficial effects associated with the removal of the existing pylons.

Operation Effects upon Communities

8.18 Due to the removal of the existing pylons, most communities are predicted to experience long-term visual benefits. Most notable benefits are to those properties closest to the existing pylons. In the longer-term, scattered communities south-east of Postlip and between Breakheart Plantation and West Down, will experience Moderate to Major visual benefits.

8.19 Some adverse visual effects will remain upon those communities closest to the proposed CSECs. However, over time, the proposed landscape mitigation surrounding the CSECs will filter direct views and all visual effects upon communities are predicted to be beneficial in the long-term.

Operation Effects upon Recreational Receptors

8.20 Due to the removal of the existing pylons, most recreational receptors are predicted to experience long-term benefits. Most notably, Moderate and Moderate to Major visual beneficial long term effects are predicted from Sabrina Way, Winchcombe Way and parts of the Cotswold Way National Trail. Long-term beneficial visual effects are also predicted to users of Cleeve Common, visitors to Belas Knap, as well as users of numerous recreational routes crossing the Cotswolds National Landscape. Overall, the Proposed Project provides

several visual benefits to users of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

8.21 There will be two Moderate to Major adverse visual effects at Year 0 from public rights of way, including AWB63 which lies adjacent to the Winchcombe CSEC and KWH19 which lies adjacent to the Whittington CSEC. Due to the proximity of these two routes, the adverse effects as a result of the proposed CSECs are unavoidable in the short-term. However, with the benefit of landscape mitigation surrounding each of the CSEC's, a Moderate to Minor adverse visual effect is predicted at Year 15. Similarly, due to the proximity of the Cotswold Way National Trail between Ham Road and Dowdeswell Wood will experience some long-term adverse effects, noting that this will only be along a limited stretch of the long distance route.

Operation Effects upon Road Receptors

8.22 Most visual effects upon people travelling along local roads during operation will be beneficial. However, some long-term Minor adverse visual effects will remain along limited parts of Ham Road due to the proximity to the Whittington CSEC.

Visual Effects Summary

8.23 Table 8.1 below summarises the visual effects as a result of the Proposed Project, which are set out in full within Appendix D.

Table 8.1: Summary of Visual Effects

Receptor	Level of Effect		
	Construction	Operation – Year 0	Operation – Year 15
Community Receptors			
Scattered Community north of Postlip	Moderate to Minor adverse	Minor adverse	Minor beneficial
Scattered Community south-east of Postlip	Moderate to Major adverse	Minor to Negligible beneficial	Minor to Negligible beneficial
Scattered Community between Breakheart Plantation and West Down (part of Cleeve Common)	Moderate to Major adverse	Moderate to Minor beneficial	Moderate to Major beneficial

Receptor	Level of Effect		
	Construction	Operation – Year 0	Operation – Year 15
Scattered Community between West Down (part of Cleeve Common) and Arle Grove	Moderate to Minor adverse	Moderate to Major beneficial	Moderate to Major beneficial
Scattered Community between Arle Grove and Dowdeswell	Moderate adverse	Minor to Negligible adverse	Minor to Negligible beneficial
Whittington and surrounding scattered community	Moderate to Minor adverse	Negligible beneficial	Minor beneficial
Upper and Lower Dowdeswell and surrounding scattered community	Minor adverse	Negligible beneficial	Negligible beneficial
Scattered community on the upper slopes of Ravensgate Hill	Moderate to Minor adverse	Minor neutral	Negligible beneficial
Recreational Receptors			
Users of the Cotswold Way National Trail – Winchcombe to Cleeve Common	Major adverse	Moderate to Minor beneficial	Moderate to Major beneficial
Users of the Cotswold Way National Trail – Cleeve Common to Ham Road	Moderate adverse	Moderate to Minor beneficial	Moderate beneficial
Users of the Cotswold Way National Trail – Ham Road to Dowdeswell Wood	Moderate to Major adverse	Moderate adverse	Moderate to Minor adverse

Receptor	Level of Effect		
	Construction	Operation – Year 0	Operation – Year 15
Users of the Cotswold Way National Trail – Dowdeswell Wood to Ravensgate Hill	Moderate to Minor adverse	Negligible beneficial	Minor beneficial
Users of the Winchcombe Way long distance footpath – Winchcombe to Cleeve Hill Golf Course	Major adverse	Moderate beneficial	Moderate to Major beneficial
Users of Windrush Way long distance footpath	Minor adverse	Negligible adverse	Minor beneficial
Users of Warden's Way	Minor adverse	Negligible adverse	Minor beneficial
Users of public rights of way west of Winchcombe, including Winchcombe Way and Gloucestershire Way	Moderate adverse	Minor adverse	Minor beneficial
Users of the Cheltenham Circular Footpath (ZCK61 and ZCK62 only)	Moderate to Minor adverse	Negligible beneficial	Minor beneficial
Users of Sabrina Way	Moderate to Major adverse	Moderate to Major beneficial	Moderate to Major beneficial
Users of public right of way AWB63 located to the south-east of Postlip Mill complex	Moderate to Major adverse	Moderate to Major adverse	Moderate to Minor adverse
Users of public right of way AWB24 located north and north-	Moderate to Minor adverse	Minor adverse	Negligible neutral

Receptor	Level of Effect		
	Construction	Operation – Year 0	Operation – Year 15
east of Postlip Mill complex			
Users of public rights of way AWB22 and AWB23 to the south-west of Postlip Mill complex	Moderate adverse	Moderate to Minor beneficial	Moderate to Minor beneficial
Users of public right of way AWB31	Moderate to Major adverse	Minor beneficial	Minor beneficial
Users of Public Right of Way KWH19	Moderate to Major adverse	Moderate to Major adverse	Moderate to Minor adverse
Users of Public Rights of Way to the east, north and south-west of Lower Dowdeswell, including KD05, KD06, KD03, KD02 and KAN2	Minor adverse	Minor neutral	Minor neutral
Users of elevated public rights of way north of the A436, including KD022, KD026, KD018, KD019, KD020 and KD021	Minor adverse	Minor neutral	Minor neutral
Users of Cleeve Common, including Common Land, public rights of way and golf course	Major adverse	Moderate beneficial	Moderate to Major beneficial
Users of Longbarrow Bank open access land	Minor adverse	Minor beneficial	Minor beneficial
Visitors to Sudeley Castle and Gardens	Moderate to Minor adverse	Minor adverse	Minor beneficial

Receptor	Level of Effect		
	Construction	Operation – Year 0	Operation – Year 15
Visitors to Belas Knap Long Barrow	Minor adverse	Moderate to Minor beneficial	Moderate to Minor beneficial
Visitors to the Kilkenny Nature Reserve and open access land	Minor adverse	Negligible neutral	Negligible neutral
Road Receptors			
People travelling on the B4632	Minor adverse	Negligible beneficial	Negligible beneficial
People travelling on Langley Road	Minor adverse	Negligible beneficial	Minor beneficial
People travelling on Sudeley Hill and Salt Way	Minor adverse	Minor beneficial	Minor beneficial
People travelling on Corndean Lane	Minor adverse	Minor beneficial	Minor beneficial
People travelling on the minor road south of Corndean Hall	Moderate to Major adverse	Moderate to Minor adverse	Negligible beneficial
People travelling on minor roads north-west of Whittington village	Moderate to Major adverse	Negligible beneficial	Moderate beneficial
People travelling on Ham Road	Moderate to Major adverse	Moderate to Minor adverse	Minor adverse
People travelling on minor roads east of Whittington village	Negligible adverse	Minor beneficial	Minor beneficial
People travelling on the A40	Minor adverse	Minor beneficial	Minor beneficial

Receptor	Level of Effect		
	Construction	Operation – Year 0	Operation – Year 15
People travelling on minor roads through and east of Lower and Upper Dowdeswell	Minor adverse	Minor neutral	Minor neutral
People travelling on the A436	Minor adverse	Negligible beneficial	Negligible beneficial

Chapter 9

Implications for the Cotswolds National Landscape

9.1 The site lies wholly within the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB). The following tables consider how the Proposed Project may affect the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB).

Table 9.1: Implications for the Special Qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape During Construction

Special Qualities	How, and to what extent, construction may affect Special Qualities
The unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material	It is considered that construction activities will not affect this special quality, with the use of local building materials used where feasible.
The Cotswold escarpment, including views from and to the National Landscape	Construction activity has the potential to affect views within a localised area to and from the Cotswold escarpment, however, the majority of these effects will be temporary in nature and reversible and will affect a limited part of the wider designation. A limited part of woodland from Breakheart Plantation will be removed from a section of the escarpment to facilitate construction of underground cables. The underground cable route has been designed to minimise impacts on views and avoid trees of highest arboricultural and amenity value.
The high wolds – a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, ‘big’ skies and long-distance views	The route of the underground cabling has the potential to temporarily affect a limited part of the high wolds. The phased approach to underground cables will further limit the effects upon this special quality with most construction works located

Special Qualities	How, and to what extent, construction may affect Special Qualities
	at or below ground level. Effects will be temporary in nature and reversible.
River valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, with high-quality water	Construction activity will not affect this special quality.
Distinctive dry stone walls	The route of the underground cabling has the potential to temporarily remove a number of sections of dry stone walls, albeit within a limited part of the wider designation and only limited extents of walls where the route of underground cables cross limited sections of field boundaries. Effects will be temporary in nature and reversible as dry stone walls will be replaced upon completion of construction to their original condition.
Flower-rich grasslands particularly limestone grasslands	There is the potential for the loss of small areas of grassland as a result of the underground cables crossing the agricultural landscape. Effects will be limited and temporary in nature and will be reinstated upon completion. No grasslands on site are considered ancient or irreplaceable.
Ancient broadleaved woodland particularly along the crest of the escarpment	No ancient broadleaved woodland will be directly affected by construction works. Where in proximity to ancient woodland, necessary offsets and tree protection will be installed to ensure the woodland will not be affected in any way. Therefore, construction activity will not affect this special quality.
Variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the National Landscape to another which add a vital	Construction activity will not affect this special quality. Local materials will be used where feasible.

Special Qualities	How, and to what extent, construction may affect Special Qualities
element of local distinctiveness	
The tranquillity of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution	The sense of tranquillity and remoteness will be temporarily affected within the study area during the construction period, due to the excavation of trenches, as well as the presence of other construction activities, especially in proximity to the CSECs. Effects will be temporary in nature and reversible.
Extensive dark sky areas	Dark night skies will not be noticeably affected during the construction period, as night time working will be limited. Any construction lighting will be located and directed so as not to intrude into occupied residential properties, sensitive areas, sensitive ecology or constitute a road hazard. Localised temporary effects may occur at main construction compounds.
Distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity	Construction activity will not affect this special quality.
An accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswold Way National Trail	There will be some effects upon recreation within a localised area, which will include temporary diversions of public footpaths, including the Cotswold Way National Trail and south-eastern parts of Cleeve Common. However, all recreational routes will be kept open and useable during construction activity, with the phased approach to underground cables limiting the time period of footpath diversions. Effects will be temporary in nature and reversible.
Significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic	There will be some indirect effects upon views from

Special Qualities	How, and to what extent, construction may affect Special Qualities
associations dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks	Belas Knap as the route of underground cables crosses the landscape to the west. Similarly, some indirect effects will occur upon Sudeley Castle, though views will be more distant at over 1km away. The Archaeological Statement notes that prior to trial trenching, there is no evidence that archaeological features of the highest level of significance will be affected.
A vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olimpick Games, cheese rolling and woolsack races	Construction activity will not affect this special quality.

Table 9.2: Implications for the Special Qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape During Operation

Special Qualities	How, and to what extent, the Proposed Project may affect Special Qualities
The unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material	The Proposed Project will not affect this special quality.
The Cotswold escarpment, including views from and to the National Landscape	A limited part of the Breakheart Plantation will be permanently removed due to constraints associated with underground cables. However, the underground cable route has been designed to minimise impacts on views. Furthermore, woodland and scrub planting will be undertaken to reconnect the woodland. the Proposed Project will remove pylons from a section of the

Special Qualities	How, and to what extent, the Proposed Project may affect Special Qualities
	escarpment and where these previously cut through Breakheart Plantation. The Proposed Project will overall enhance views from and to the National Landscape, enhancing this special quality.
The high wolds – a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, 'big' skies and long-distance views	The Proposed Project will remove pylons from a part of the high wolds and therefore, will notably enhance this special quality.
River valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, with high-quality water	The Proposed Project will not affect this special quality.
Distinctive dry stone walls	All dry stone walls lost will be replaced to their original condition.
Flower-rich grasslands particularly limestone grasslands	All disturbed agricultural land will be restored to its original use. Areas of grassland will be restored. Additional areas of grassland will be established surrounding CSECs.
Ancient broadleaved woodland particularly along the crest of the escarpment	The Proposed Project will not affect this special quality.
Variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the National Landscape to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness	Local materials will be used where feasible.
The tranquillity of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution	The removal of pylons will greatly reduce visual clutter and modern infrastructure from the Cotswolds National Landscape. The addition of two CSECs to facilitate the removal of overhead lines will have a localised influence on tranquillity. On balance, it is considered that the Proposed Project

Special Qualities	How, and to what extent, the Proposed Project may affect Special Qualities
	will enhance this special quality.
Extensive dark sky areas	The Proposed Project will not affect this special quality with only task-specific low level lighting used when required in isolated locations at the CSECs. No permanent lighting is required.
Distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity	The Proposed Project will not affect this special quality.
An accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswold Way National Trail	The removal of pylons will enhance quiet recreation of rural recreation users including the Cotswold Way National Trail. The CSECs will not affect the accessibility to recreation. The project will enhance the experience of people engaged in recreation and have no effects on accessibility.
Significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks	The removal of the pylons will enhance the outlook from Belas Knap and Sudeley Castle. It is considered that there may be some localised benefits to this special quality. More details of these benefits are set out within the Archaeological Statement.
A vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olimpick, cheese rolling and woolsack races	The Proposed Project will not affect this special quality.

Summary of Implications for the Special Qualities During Construction

9.2 There are six special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape which will not be affected during construction of the Proposed Project. However, the remaining special qualities will be adversely affected over a temporary period, albeit within a limited and localised area of the designation and the majority of construction effects will be reversible.

9.3 The routeing of the underground cable has aimed to minimise the implications upon the special qualities of the national landscape, including minimising the number of public rights of way crossings, avoiding natural habitats of greatest value and crossing Cleeve Common at its narrowest point. A full list of construction mitigation is set out in Section 6.

Summary of Implications for the Special Qualities During Operation

9.4 As set out in Table 9.2, there are numerous special qualities which will be enhanced as a result of the removal of pylons crossing the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB).

Chapter 10

Summary and Conclusions

10.1 The overall effects of the Proposed Project would result in substantial improvement to landscape character and visual amenity within the Cotswold National Landscape (an AONB).

10.2 The existing overhead line has previously been identified as having a high level of adverse landscape and visual effects. The removal of this overhead line (including removal of 18no. pylons) and the subsequent restoration of this landscape would give rise to a number of notable beneficial landscape and visual enhancements, particularly within the open and expansive high wold plateau. Benefits to visual amenity include people using the Cotswolds Way National Trail and open access land at Cleeve Common and people visiting Belas Knap English Heritage site, amongst other tourist destinations and recreational routes.

10.3 Construction activities associated with the Proposed Project would typically have some short-term adverse effects on the character of the landscape and visual amenity of the high wold and associated escarpments of the Cotswolds National Landscape to the east of Cheltenham. These effects would arise due to a combination of construction activities, including those associated with the 400kV Cable (undergrounding and associated works and laydown areas) and proposed northern and Whittington CSECs. Some tree removal would be required to facilitate construction, most notably in Breakheart Plantation. With the exception of tree loss, construction effects would be short term, temporary and reversible. Tree removal would be minimised as much as possible and tree protection measures would be put in place to ensure that all trees to be retained are protected. Replacement tree, hedgerow and scrub planting would comprise a diverse and appropriate mix of species that would enhance and complement the landscape and ensure longevity of vegetation cover in the future. This would ensure that effects of construction would be mitigated as far as practicably possible in the medium to long term as planting matures.

10.4 The Proposed Project would sit within a highly valued area of landscape within the Cotswolds National Landscape to the east of Cheltenham. The landscape around the Winchcombe CSEC currently has some levels of human influence, most notably including the existing 400kV OHL, Postlip Mills and relatively busy B4632. The relatively well contained topography of the River Isbourne Valley, combined with existing woodland and tree cover and embedded

mitigation would limit the extent of the operational landscape and visual effects of the proposed Winchcombe CSEC. The landscape around the Whittington CSEC would be partially contained by topography and Dowdeswell Wood. The landscape around the Whittington CSEC also has some levels of human influence; most notably the existing 400kV OHL and also the busy A40 in the valley bottom of the River Chelt to the south. A combination of existing screening features together with embedded mitigation around the CSECs would help to limit the extent of operational landscape and visual effects. The replacement terminal pylon just outside the Winchcombe CSEC and the replacement pylon south of the Whittington CSEC would have no greater landscape effects than the pylons they would replace. The Winchcombe and Whittington CSEC elements of the Proposed Project would be viewed as much smaller features in the landscape than the overhead line section which they would replace. Although some tree cover would be permanently lost due to the 400kV Cable (Undergrounding) this would not have a notable effect on the character of the landscape. Over time the replacement of native trees and shrubs in a number of places would help to assimilate the structures into the landscape and screen them from many viewpoints.

10.5 The proposed Winchcombe CSEC would give rise to localised adverse effects on the visual amenity experienced by a limited part of the community to the south-east and people using the adjacent public right of way. The proposed Whittington CSEC would have a localised adverse effect on the visual amenity experienced by a short section of the Cotswold Way National Trail. These localised visual effects would reduce over time once landscape proposals around the CSECs mature; albeit some views would remain. The adverse effects would be balanced against the beneficial effects of overhead line removal.