



# **NEILSTON GREENER GRID PARK (Ref: 21/0034/PP)**

## **APPENDIX 3 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL STATEMENT**

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## 1 Introduction

This Landscape and Visual Statement ('L&V Statement') has been prepared by TGP Landscape Architects Ltd, a firm of independent landscape consultants. It has been prepared in support of the Appeal by Statkraft UK Ltd ('the Appellant') in relation to the proposed Neilston Greener Grid Park, Renfrewshire (Ref: 21/0034/PP). The appeal follows the refusal of the Appellant's application by the local authority, Renfrewshire Council ('the Council') on 8 November 2021.

## 2 Scope and Structure of the L&V Statement

The purpose of this L&V Statement is to provide information in respect of landscape and visual issues of relevance to the Appeal. This includes consideration of the proposed Site location in relation to landscape character and visual amenity, as well as an update of the cumulative baseline that has occurred in the intervening time since the original planning application.

As part of this process, plans and visualisations have been prepared to illustrate the Proposed Development and presented in Appendix 3 Annex 1-7, (as described within the Planning Statement) within the latest cumulative context. This L&V Statement should be read in conjunction with these figures as listed below, as well as the other documents referred to in the Appeal Documentation list (see Appendix 1).

### Plans

- Figure 1 – Landscape Designations & Recreational Routes (APP1.6);
- Figure 2 - Local Baseline Context (APP1.7); and
- Composite Plan Drawing no. 3547-DR-P-0024 (APP1.17).

### Visualisations

- Annex 1 - Photomontage Viewpoint 1: B775 north (APP 1.8);
- Annex 2 - Photomontage Viewpoint 2: B775 south (APP 1.9);
- Annex 3 - Photomontage Viewpoint 3: Unclassified Road to the south west (APP 1.10);
- Annex 4 - Photomontage Viewpoint 4: Caplaw Road / B775 junction (APP 1.11);
- Annex 5 - Photomontage Viewpoint 5: Unclassified Road to the south east (APP 1.12);
- Annex 6 - Cumulative Photomontage 1: Unclassified Road to the south west (APP 1.13); and
- Annex 7 - Cumulative Photomontage 2: Caplaw Road / B775 junction (APP 1.14).

### 2.1 Reason for Refusal

The reason for refusal as described in the Decision Notice (Renfrewshire Council, 8 November 2021 APP2.2) refers to the following key landscape-related policies:

- LDP 2016;
  - Policy ENV1 – Green Belt, which aims to support planned growth where required, as well as maintaining the identity of settlements, protecting and enhancing the landscape setting of an area and protecting access opportunities to open space.
  - Policy I6 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments, which states that such developments will be supported in principle where they are appropriate in

terms of location, siting and design in terms of landscape character and visual amenity.

- LDP 2021 (Adopted);
  - Policy ENV1 – Green Belt, which supports essential infrastructure where it does not have an adverse impact on the character of the green belt.
  - Policy I4 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments, supports development in principle where appropriate in terms of location, siting and design, including individual or cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

The reason for refusal also makes reference to the New Development Supplementary Guidance, which seeks to ensure:

- *“No significant impact on the amenity of nearby residents”;*
- *“Significant visual intrusion within the landscape in terms of scale, location, design, etc. has been minimised”;*
- *“Individual or cumulative impact of the proposed development...will not lead to an unacceptable impact on the environment”;*
- *“Green belts are preserved and development does not significantly undermine their core role and function”.* This includes a commitment to ensure local landscape character within the Green Belt is maintained or enhanced;
- *“Landscaping and planting is to be integral to the development of a site”;* and
- *“Proposals will protect and enhance biodiversity, and/or make a contribution to the green network or landscape character.”*

## **2.2 Council’s Analysis of the Proposal**

The Council’s analysis of the Proposed Development (within the Planning Application: Report of Handling App2.1) provides additional comments in relation to the above. In many cases, these comments are consistent with the assessment presented within the Landscape and Visual Analysis submitted with the original planning application (prepared by Arcus, dated January 2021, hereafter referred to as the ‘2021 LVA’ App 3.4). Indeed, the Council’s Report of Handling did not contest any of the reported levels of effect described within the 2021 LVA.

In summary, there is agreement upon the screening influence of surrounding tree cover to the north east of the Site, and the visual containment provided by the existing substation to the northwest. The presence of existing electricity infrastructure within the locality is also acknowledged, as is the potential for mitigation measures to soften the appearance of the development.

The key landscape and visual related comments from the Report of Handling that are subject to detailed consideration and response within this L&V Statement are summarised below:

*“The Local Development Plan states that infrastructure must be appropriate in terms of location, siting, and design, having regard to individual and cumulative significant effects on landscape character and the local environment. Some components within the proposed development are of significant scale, and the applicant’s own landscape assessment concludes that the visual impact is in the ‘major’ category from certain viewpoints.”*

*“It is considered that the proposed development will be detrimental to the landscape character in this area by virtue of its prominence on the southern side of Gleniffer Road, the scale and visual appearance of the component infrastructure both on an individual and cumulative basis...In view of the above, the proposal is not considered to comply with the Supplementary Guidance on Green Belt Development”.*

*“There are open views of the site from the south west, and the development will be prominent within the landscape given the scale of some of the component infrastructure... The development will remain prominent as the vantage points move closer to the site (vehicles travelling towards Paisley along Gleniffer Road) and will be most prominent from the Gleniffer Road frontage.”*

*“With respect to cumulative impact of additional infrastructure, it is considered that this can be best absorbed within the landscape by coalescing development on the northern side of the road. The proposed development will significantly alter the existing character of the land on the southern side of the road”.*

### **2.3 Representations from Consultees and 3rd Parties**

No objections have been raised from consultees. No letters of representation have been received.

### **2.4 Report Structure**

This L&V Statement considers the points raised within the reason for refusal as listed above, and is structured as follows:

- Landscape and Visual Baseline Update;
- Viewpoint Analysis;
- Effects on Landscape Character;
- Effects on the Green Belt;
- Effects on Visual Amenity;
- Cumulative Context; and
- Conclusion.

## **3 Landscape and Visual Baseline Update**

With reference to Figure 1: Landscape Context, landscape and visual receptors in the vicinity of the Proposed Development remain predominantly unchanged since the 2021 LVA. However, there has been an update to the cumulative situation.

Subsequent to the completion of the 2021 LVA, an additional electricity-related development has been considered in this statement, this comprises a Grid Stability Facility on land to the southwest of the existing Neilston Substation, its location is illustrated on Appendix 3 Figure 2: Local Infrastructure. the Council has resolved to grant planning permission for (planning ref: 20/0793/PP). It is understood that the issue of the planning permission is waiting for the conclusion of a Section 75 Agreement.

## 4 Viewpoint Analysis

### 4.1 Visual Material

With reference to the composite Site Masterplan that accompanies this Appeal (see Arcus drawing no. 3547-DR-P-0024 App1.17), the Proposed Development includes integrated landscape mitigation proposals in the form of native hedgerow, scrub and tree planting around the Site boundary in combination with areas of species-rich grassland. These embedded mitigation measures were described within the 2021 LVA and refined through consultation with SPEN and NatureScot.

To clarify the potential screening influence of such planting, the photomontages accompanying this L&V Statement illustrate the gradual establishment of this proposed planting over time. To this end, the visualisations show the existing view (the 'Baseline View'), Proposed Development upon completion with no planting ('View at Year 0'), after an initial period of establishment ('View at Year 5'), and at a point that hedgerow / scrub planting has reached a level of maturity ('View at Year 15').

The visualisations also take cognisance of new equipment specification as described in Section 4.2 of Statement of Appeal with RS Buildings (Synchronous compensator housing) now reduced in height from up to 10m to up to 6m and the removal of a fire wall. This represents another focus of design mitigation that was not described in detail within the 2021 LVA. Given the nature of the Proposed Development, much of the infrastructure would be housed. The external colour(s) of this housing, and that of the perimeter fence, would be subject to agreement with the Council. For the purposes of the visualisations that accompany this L&V Statement, a green colour has been used. A different shade has been used for the RS Buildings (Synchronous compensator housing) as a means of providing greater differentiation with other built form within the Site, and thereby aid analysis of the proposals.

The visualisations are presented in Appendix 3, Annex 1-7.

### 4.2 Viewpoint Analysis

Viewpoint analysis is described below based on the five key viewpoint locations considered within the 2021 LVA. The viewpoint locations are illustrated in Figure 1 and encompass publicly accessible vantage points at varying distances and directions from the Site. The visualisations are based on photography undertaken in January 2022, during winter conditions / periods of leaf-fall and therefore illustrate the most open views that would be experienced of the Proposed Development.

The levels of effect at these viewpoints as described in the 2021 LVA are not disputed by the Council, hence are not repeated here. Instead, the following text presents additional narrative to describe the changing appearance of the Proposed Development in accordance with the gradual establishment of mitigation planting.

#### Viewpoint 1 – B775 (north)

*Baseline View:* This viewpoint illustrates the view experienced by road users on the

B775 travelling south west (of medium sensitivity), and walkers on part of the Core Path network (of high sensitivity). The existing view comprises the B775 road corridor, flanked by coniferous tree cover and roadside scrub. Existing built form incorporates overhead transmission lines and associated pylons, that punctuate the skyline.

*View at Year 0:* Upon the introduction of the Proposed Development, there would be views of the perimeter fence along the roadside. The infrastructure within the site would be partially visible, albeit subject to screening by intervening scrub and tree cover on the north eastern side of the Site. The Proposed Development would be experienced in the context of the existing overhead transmission lines and would not extend the spread of infrastructure across the wider landscape.

*View at Year 5:* The native hedge, scrub and tree planting along the Site boundary would begin to soften views of the Proposed Development, albeit the upper parts of the perimeter fence and Site infrastructure beyond would be visible.

*View at Year 15:* The establishment of native hedge / scrub planting along the Site boundary would result in almost complete screening of the perimeter fence. Views of built form within the Site would be limited to the upper-most parts of the tallest infrastructure, which would be fully screened during summer months. The establishment of tree planting along the Site boundary would also result in partial screening of existing overhead transmission lines within the view (including up to three existing pylons) and thereby disguise the spread of existing electrical infrastructure, in particular during summer months.

#### Viewpoint 2 – B775 (south)

*Baseline View:* This viewpoint illustrates the transient view experienced by road users on a local section of the B775 travelling in a north easterly direction (of medium sensitivity). The existing view is characterised by the B775 road corridor and adjacent field of open pasture, which is dissected by two separate overhead transmission lines. Longer distance views to the north east are foreshortened by the rising landform and coniferous tree cover, which form the horizon. The skyline is punctuated by a further overhead transmission line located beyond these trees. Other built form within the view comprises telecoms masts, which punctuate the skyline to the east

*View at Year 0:* Based on the introduction of the Proposed Development, there would be close proximity views of the perimeter fence and infrastructure within the Site. At this distance, the Proposed Development would represent a notable new feature within the view, albeit within the same angle of view as the existing infrastructure comprising pylons and telecoms masts.

*View at Year 5:* The native hedge, scrub and tree planting along the Site boundary would begin to soften views of the Proposed Development, albeit the upper parts of the perimeter fence and Site infrastructure beyond would remain visible.

*View at Year 15:* The establishment of native hedge / scrub planting along the Site boundary would result in almost complete screening of the perimeter fence. Views of built form within the Site would be reduced and limited to infrastructure within the more elevated northern parts of the Site. The establishment of tree planting along the Site boundary would also result in partial screening of existing overhead transmission lines and telecoms masts within the view, and thereby

disguise the spread of existing electrical infrastructure along the horizon. During summer months the screening influence of the planting would further restrict views of the Proposed Development and existing elements of infrastructure.

#### Viewpoint 3 – Unclassified Road (south west)

*Baseline View:* This viewpoint illustrates the transient view experienced by road users on the local road network to the south west of the Site (of medium sensitivity). The existing view comprises rolling landform with rough grassland, and localised parcels of tree cover. Electricity infrastructure forms a key component of the view, including the existing Neilston Substation and overhead transmission lines. There are also views of telecoms masts on the distant skyline to the east. The consented Grid Stability Facility will also be partially visible in the intervening landscape.

*View at Year 0:* The Proposed Development would be visible on the sloping landscape in the middle distance, in the same angle of view as existing overhead lines (with separate lines located to the front, and back of the Site), as well as the consented Grid Stability Facility. The Proposed Development would be experienced below the horizon and would be back-clothed by tree cover to the north. The Proposed Development would augment the existing and consented infrastructure within the view, without widening its spread across wider parts of the landscape.

*View at Year 5:* At this distance, the native hedge, scrub and tree planting along the Site boundary would exert limited influence on the view.

*View at Year 15:* The establishment of native hedge, scrub and tree planting along the Site boundaries would soften the edges of the Proposed Development. The infrastructure within the site would remain visible, albeit at distance, within the context of existing and consented electrical infrastructure.

#### Viewpoint 4 – Caplaw Road, B775 Junction

*Baseline View:* This viewpoint illustrates the transient view experienced by road users on the local road network / B775 to the south west of the Site (of medium sensitivity). The existing view comprises the B775 road corridor, flanked by areas of pastoral grassland that are dissected by overhead transmission lines. Other built form within the view incorporates the existing Neilston Substation to the north, and telecoms masts that break the skyline to the north east. There will also be views of the consented Grid Stability Facility to the north west.

*View at Year 0:* The Proposed Development would be visible on the sloping landscape in the distance where it would be experienced below the horizon, and back-clothed by tree cover to the north. The Proposed Development would represent a new element within the local landscape, within the same angle of view as existing overhead lines (comprising two separate lines in the foreground and a third overhead line beyond the Site). The Proposed Development would augment the existing and consented infrastructure within the view, without widening its spread across wider parts of the landscape.

*View at Year 5:* At this distance, the native hedge, scrub and tree planting along the Site boundary would exert limited influence on the view.

*View at Year 15:* The establishment of native hedge, scrub and tree planting along the Site

boundaries would soften the edges of the Proposed Development and provide partial screening of built form within the lower-lying southwestern parts of the Site. The infrastructure within other parts of the Site would remain visible, albeit at distance, within the context of existing and consented electrical infrastructure.

#### Viewpoint 5 – Unclassified Road (South East)

*Baseline View:* This viewpoint illustrates the transient view experienced by road users on the local road network to the south east of the Site (of medium sensitivity). The existing view comprises the sloping landform with ground cover of rough grassland and scattered parcels of tree cover. Electricity infrastructure forms a key component of the view, including the existing Neilston Substation and overhead transmission lines. There are also views of telecoms masts on the distant skyline to the north. The consented Grid Stability Facility will also be partially visible in the landscape to the west.

*View at Year 0:* Views of the Proposed Development would be limited by the intervening landform, and primarily restricted to the boundary fence and taller elements of infrastructure within the more elevated parts of the Site. The Proposed Development would represent a relatively discreet new element within the local landscape, within the same angle of view as existing overhead lines and Neilston Substation. As such, the Proposed Development would exert limited influence on the existing view, and would be contained within the spread of existing infrastructure.

*View at Year 5:* The native hedge, scrub and tree planting along the Site boundary would begin to soften views of the Proposed Development, albeit the upper parts of the tallest infrastructure would be visible.

*View at Year 15:* The establishment of native hedge, scrub and tree planting along the Site boundary would result in the complete screening of the perimeter fence, and all but the upper- most parts of the tallest infrastructure within the Site. The establishment of tree planting would also result in partial screening of the existing Neilston Substation, thereby softening its influence upon the view. The screening influence of boundary planting would be further increased during summer months.

## **5 Effects on Landscape Character**

The Council's reason for refusal makes specific reference to the "*significant detrimental impact on local landscape character*" in relation to the Proposed Development.

Any sizeable development will result in notable effects on local landscape character to some extent, however, it does not follow that such effects are necessarily unacceptable.

As reported in the 2021 LVA, the Proposed Development would be located within the Rugged



Upland Farmland Landscape Character Type (LCT), as defined within NatureScot's National Landscape Character Assessment (2019). The key characteristics of this LCT are as follows:

- *“Rugged landform comprising rocky bluffs and shallow troughs.*
- *Reservoirs in flooded troughs.*
- *Dominance of pastoral farming.*
- *Frequent tree cover often emphasising landform, for example concentrated on bluffs and outcrops.*
- *Settlement limited to farms and villages.”*

Although not listed within the key characteristics of the LCT as a whole, the LCT description goes on to state that urban influences include *“electricity infrastructure and masts, particularly around Gleniffer Braes”*.

Based on field analysis (and illustrated in Viewpoints 1-5) it is assessed that the local context surrounding the Proposed Development is substantially influenced by existing electricity infrastructure. This includes the existing Neilston Substation and associated pylons and overhead power lines (OHLs) extending outwards from this, which form a 'wire-scape' in the vicinity of the Site by virtue of their scale and density / concentration in this area. This includes two separate OHLs that extend in a south easterly direction across the Site, as well as a further OHL to the immediate north of the Site, with additional OHLs extending to the south / west (as illustrated in Figure 1). As such, the Proposed Development Site and immediate surrounding context is considered to form a subtype of this LCT – namely the 'Rugged Upland Farmland with Infrastructure' LCT.

This subtype is considered to encompass parts of the LCT centred on the existing Neilston Substation and the surrounding 400 – 500m, increasing to approximately 900m – 1km across the more open land towards the south.

The 2021 LVA reported that the main effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character would be focused within the Site itself and that effects on the wider LCT would be *“Negligible”*. The addition of the Proposed Development, and the resultant key effects upon landscape character would be well within the geographical extents of this LCT subtype. As such, the Proposed Development would augment the pre-existing characteristics of this local subtype, comprising farmland and electricity infrastructure, without notably increasing its geographic footprint. There would be very limited influence on the character of the wider Rugged Upland Farmland LCT.

## **6 Effects on the Green Belt**

The Council's reason for refusal makes specific reference to the Proposed Development being contrary to policies ENV1 of the Local Development Plan 2016, and ENV1 of the Adopted Local Development Plan 2021, which relate to potential impacts on the Green Belt.

With reference to the local plan and supplementary guidance, the key aims for the Green Belt

comprise preserving the core role and function. This includes protection of:

- Landscape character; and
- Access opportunities to open space.

## **6.1 Green Belt Review**

The *Renfrewshire LDP, Proposed Plan, Green Belt Review, 2019* prepared by Ironside Farrar on behalf of Renfrewshire Council presents a strategic review of the Green Belt around settlements within Renfrewshire.

The review presents an assessment of individual Green Belt parcels within the study area and defines their overall strength on a three-point scale ranging from Category 'A' to 'C'. Category A Green Belt is described as being "*strong*" with no significant weakness in relation to policy objectives. At the other end of the scale, Category C Green Belt is described as having significant weaknesses in one or more criterion.

The Proposed Development would be located at sufficient distance from any settlement that it is located outwith any area of Green Belt directly considered in the Ironside Farrar Review. It is located 400m to the south of the 'Paisley PA1' parcel, which represents the closest area of Green Belt that is considered in the review. This parcel is classified as Category A, with reference to the landscape character of rolling farmland with golf courses and woodland, the clearly defined boundaries of the area, and the green network contribution afforded by the presence of Core Paths and open access within Gleniffer Braes Country Park.

## **6.2 Analysis of Local Green Belt**

Should the same rationale be applied to the area of Green Belt where the Proposed Development would be located, it is assessed that the resultant Green Belt would be defined as Category B at most. This is based on the reduced condition of the local landscape character, and the reduced opportunities for public recreation / access.

In terms of landscape character, the existing infrastructure in the vicinity of the Site has resulted in the creation of a LCT subtype (as described in Section 5 of this L&V Statement). This LCT subtype is considered to be of lower susceptibility to infrastructure development as a consequence. The addition of the Proposed Development would result in limited change to the existing landscape character of the locality, hence would exert limited influence upon this particular Green Belt criterion.

In terms of public access, this is focused across the landscape to the north of the Site, within Gleniffer Braes Country Park. Based on the screening influence of the landform and intervening tree cover, potential views of the Proposed Development across Gleniffer Braes Country Park, Paisley Golf Club and the Core Path network would be extremely limited. As such, the Proposed Development would exert very limited influence upon the primary areas of public access across the surrounding Green Belt, which represents a second key Green Belt criterion. In summary, it is considered that the key criteria of the local Green Belt would not be notably affected by the Proposed Development. Furthermore, there would be no unacceptable adverse effects on the

wider areas of Green Belt. There would be no discernible effect on the Category A parcel of Green Belt on the edge of Paisley due to the spatial separation of the Proposed Development and the lack of ZTV coverage.

## **7 Effects on Visual Amenity**

The Council's decision notice makes reference to the "*significant visual intrusion*" of the Proposed Development, with reference to its scale, location, and design. The Council makes specific reference to the views experienced by road users on Gleniffer Road (the B775), particularly for those travelling north east towards Paisley, as well as the level of effect at certain viewpoints. These views are considered below.

### **7.0 Road Users on Gleniffer Road**

With reference to the 2021 LVA, it is acknowledged that there would be close proximity views of the Proposed development from the 380m section of this road that passes directly past the site (restricted beyond this by tree planting to the north of the Site, and scrub to the south). These are illustrated in Viewpoints 1 and 2. However, these views would be experienced transiently along this 60mph transport corridor. Field surveys verify that traffic moves at speed along this route. There is no footway at the road side or cycle lane to promote active travel at slower speeds.

Assuming a typical speed of 50 – 60 mph, the duration of views of the Proposed Development experienced by road users along this 380m section would be in the region of 14 – 17 seconds. For the full duration of these views, the Proposed Development would be experienced in the context of existing infrastructure, comprising overhead lines.

It is acknowledged that there would also be longer distance views of the Proposed Development from more distant south western sections of this route (see Viewpoint 4). However, these views would be limited to road users travelling north-east towards Paisley only (the Site would be behind the direction of travel for those travelling in the opposite direction). Within such views, the Proposed Development would be experienced in the context of wider existing infrastructure (within the LCT subtype described in Section 5 of this L&V Statement) and in a visually discreet location below the skyline, beyond existing pylons in the intervening landscape. As a result, the influence of the Proposed Development on these views would be reduced.

With reference to the spread of existing infrastructure in the local area, it is considered extremely unlikely that road users on this section of Gleniffer Road undertake their journey with any recreational or scenic interests in mind. Instead, it is a fast-moving transport corridor with transient views of the Proposed Development, thereby the sensitivity of road users is considered to be medium at most.

In addition to the above, the 2021 LVA also makes reference to the gradual establishment of mitigation planting, including hedgerow and tree planting along the Site boundary. As this planting matures it would soften the appearance of the Proposed Development and provide partial screening of the proposed infrastructure beyond, resulting in a reduction in the level of effect over time. This is supported by the 'Year 15' visualisations that accompany this L&V Statement, which

illustrate the Proposed Development incorporating integrated mitigation measures.

In summary, the overall effect experienced by road users on Gleniffer Road would be tempered by the existing characteristics of the local landscape, as well as the very short duration of close proximity / transient views towards the Proposed Development. The potential effects would be further limited by the gradual establishment of integrated mitigation measures (hedgerow and tree planting) that would provide partial screening of the Proposed Development in the medium to long term.

### **7.1 Levels of Effect at Viewpoints**

The Council's Report of Handling states that *"some components within the proposed development are of significant scale, and the applicant's own landscape assessment concludes that the visual impact is in the 'major' category from certain viewpoints."*

There are two main points to note in relation to this, which focus on the selection of viewpoint locations, and the analysis of effects at viewpoints.

The selection of viewpoints is influenced by the extent of potential visibility. In the case of the Proposed Development, this excludes the publicly accessible areas to the north of the Site, such as the Core Path network within Gleniffer Braes Country Park, and Paisley Golf Club. Instead, the screening influence of the landform and existing tree cover focused viewpoints to the immediate vicinity of the Site, as well as more distant locations within the more open landscape to the south west.

The description of 'major' category effects within the 2021 LVA relates to Viewpoints 1 and 2, which are located <50 m from the Site boundary. For any sizable development, notable changes to existing views would be common at such close proximity. The reported level of effect at these viewpoints does not therefore imply that such effects are necessarily unacceptable. Furthermore, the 2021 LVA goes on to describe how these effects would reduce over time as the mitigation planting along the Site boundary gradually establishes. The medium to long term magnitude of change at these viewpoints is therefore described as Moderate to Minor within the 2021 LVA.

With reference to the visualisations that accompany this L&V Statement, the Proposed Development would be experienced within the context of existing infrastructure, including pylons / overhead lines, and telecom masts that punctuate the skyline in several places. In direct contrast to the existing pylons, the components of the Proposed Development would be of much smaller vertical scale and would be experienced in a more visually discreet setting below the skyline, back-clothed by tree cover. The 'Year 15' visualisations illustrate how the mitigation planting along the Site boundaries would soften the appearance of the Proposed Development overtime, including those views experienced at Viewpoints 1 and 2.

## **7.2 Levels of Effect Experienced by Other Visual Receptors**

Although not specifically listed in the Council's reason for refusal, the 2021 LVA also described notable effects (Moderate-Major level of effect) at two residential properties comprising Caplaw Farm and East Caplaw Farm, which are located south of the Site. In the case of the latter, the reported effects are based on views from wider parts of the curtilage (potential views of the Proposed Development from within the property would be fully screened by outbuildings). In both instances, the assessment reports that effects would reduce over time as mitigation planting gradually establishes within the Site, resulting in partial screening / softening of the development boundary.

No other notable visual effects were identified in the 2021 LVA, or raised as points of concern by the Council in their Decision Notice.

## **8 Cumulative Context**

The Council's decision notice touches upon the location of the Proposed Development, with specific reference to its cumulative relationship with existing infrastructure. It states that *"the majority of the existing components (with the exception of the network of pylons) are located on the northern side of Gleniffer Road...With respect to cumulative impact of additional infrastructure... this can be best absorbed within the landscape by coalescing development on the northern side of the road."*

### **8.1 Site Location**

The Site is located in close proximity to existing electricity infrastructure, comprising Neilston Substation. This close geographical relationship with the existing substation is essential in terms of grid efficiency. In addition, the Site is located in a landscape that is substantially influenced by existing OHLs, which extend outwards from the substation across the Site itself, and across the landscape to the immediate north, and south / west. The locations of these components are illustrated in Figure 2.

The existing OHL network comprises large scale towers, which are well in excess of the height of the proposed infrastructure within the Proposed Development. Furthermore, as described in Section 5 of this L&V Statement, the network of pylons contributes to a local landscape character subtype in the vicinity of the Site, centred on the existing Neilston Substation and the surrounding 400m – 1km. This area includes the landscape on the northern and southern sides of Gleniffer Braes Road.

The Proposed Development would exert its primary influence over the same local landscape area, (which is already substantially characterised by existing electrical infrastructure) and thereby avoids the spread of infrastructure into wider parts of the surrounding landscape. The containing effect of surrounding landform that rises to the east, tree cover to the north, and existing development to the west, would prevent the geographic spread of potential cumulative effects across wider parts of the surrounding landscape.

In terms of potential alternative development sites located on the northern side of the road, these were discounted as follows:

- Land on the south western side of Neilston Substation; developable land on this side of the substation is constrained by areas of Ancient Woodland in combination with other electrical infrastructure. As such there are no sites of sufficient size in the vicinity of the existing substation.
- Land on the north eastern or north western sides of the Neilston Substation; any development in this area would result in direct effects upon the Gleniffer Braes Country Park, and exert increased influence across publically accessible parts of the Green Belt, including the Core Path network (comprising Core Paths GB/22, GB/23 and GB/24). This would also encroach upon the 'Category A' Green Belt identified on the southern boundary of Paisley within the Ironside Farrar Green Belt Review.

On this basis the location of the Proposed Development is fully justified with reference to its cumulative landscape context, and the lack of appropriate alternative sites in the vicinity of the existing Neilston Substation.

## **8.2 Cumulative Update**

This statement considers the combined effects with another grid stability facility as described in Section 3 (planning ref: 20/0793/PP) and illustrated on Figure 2 (Appendix 3). This development will further augment the LCT subtype described in Section 5 of this L&V Statement, and extend the characterising influence of electricity infrastructure slightly further to the south west. In accordance with integrated mitigation measures, views of this consented development from surrounding areas will gradually reduce over time as associated tree planting becomes more established.

The visualisations that accompany this L&V Statement illustrate the overall massing of this consented development in relevant viewpoints located to the south west. Within these views there would be cumulative visibility of the existing Neilston Substation, existing OHLs, consented grid facility, and the Proposed Development. In each case the Proposed Development would augment the presence of existing and consented power-related infrastructure in the locality, albeit would not extend the horizontal or vertical spread of development within the view.

## **9 Conclusion**

In summary, the Proposed Development would be located in an area of Green Belt within the Rugged Upland Farmland LCT. The Site location is driven by a necessity to be located as close as possible to the existing Neilston Substation, and influenced by the constraints inherent across alternative sites in the vicinity (based on size and / or sensitivity).

In addition to the existing Neilston Substation, other electrical infrastructure in the surrounding landscape context comprises several high voltage overhead power lines, telecoms masts, and a consented grid facility. Collectively, these elements exert a characterising influence on the local landscape, to the extent that it forms a distinct landscape character subtype of its own, the 'Rugged Upland Farmland with Infrastructure' subtype. The Proposed Development would be

located within this character subtype and would augment its pre-existing characteristics. It would not notably alter or increase the geographic footprint of this character subtype, or detract from the characteristics of the wider Rugged Upland Farmland LCT.

Potential views of the Proposed Development from Gleniffer Braes County Park, Paisley Golf Club and the Core Path network to the north of the Site (which represent the key areas of public access in the local area) would be screened by landform and intervening tree cover.

With reference to the limited influence of the Proposed Development upon local landscape character, in combination with its limited influence upon key areas of public access in the surrounding area, the potential impact of the Proposed Development on key criteria defining the Green Belt would be limited.

Notable visual effects would be very limited and localised in extent. These would comprise road users on a very localised section of Gleniffer Road, which would be experienced transiently for a short duration. In addition, views from one property (and the curtilage of one additional property) would be notable. In all these views, the Proposed Development would be experienced in the context of existing large-scale infrastructure, including pylons in the intervening landscape. The Proposed Development would typically be experienced below the skyline, back-clothed by tree cover and would be painted a recessive colour (to be agreed via planning condition). Mitigation planting around the Site boundary would reduce the effects over time.

In conclusion, with reference to policies ENV1 and I6 of the LDP 2016, policies ENV1 and I4 of the LDP 2021 (Adopted), and the associated New Development Supplementary Guidance; the Proposed Development (individually and cumulatively) would not materially affect the characteristics of the local landscape, or the key criteria defining the local area of Green Belt. Landscape and visual effects would be very localised and would reduce over time in accordance with establishment of mitigation measures.

Any sizeable development will result in some effects on local landscape character and existing views to some extent. However, in this case it is assessed that the Proposed Development could be accommodated at the Site with limited effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

## References

Decision Notice, November 2021, Renfrewshire Council

Local Development Plan 2016, Renfrewshire Council

Adopted Local Development Plan, 2021, Renfrewshire Council

New Development Supplementary Guidance, 2019, Renfrewshire Council

Renfrewshire LDP, Proposed Plan, Green Belt Review, 2019, Ironside Farrar on behalf of Renfrewshire Council

National Landscape Character Assessment, 2019, NatureScot

Neilston Greener Grid Park - Landscape and Visual Analysis, January 2021, Arcus

Neilston Greener Grid Park - Figure 1.14 Landscape Masterplan (drg no. 3547-DR-LAN-101), Arcus