



**APPEAL ON LAND AT ROOKERY FARM, GRANBOROUGH, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE,  
MK18 3NU**

**APPELLANT: EAST CLAYDON STORAGE LIMITED LPA  
Planning Application REF: 23/03875/APP**

**PINS REF: APP/J0405/W/25/3360815**

**STATEMENT ON LANDSCAPE MATTERS ON BEHALF OF  
THE APPELLANT BY**

**Christopher McDermott BSc BLD  
Director of Sightline Landscape**

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## 1. AUTHORS PARTICULARS AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. I am Christopher Nigel McDermott, a director of my own consultancy, Sightline Landscape Ltd, based in Bath, Somerset. I have a Batchelor of Science in Botany and a Batchelor of Landscape Design. I qualified as a Chartered Landscape Architect in 1989 and have been a member of the Landscape Institute until 2020. I have practiced continually throughout, previously working for a mix of large multi-disciplinary consultancies and smaller practices. I set up my own consultancy in 2013.
- 1.2. I am the landscape consultant for the Rookery Farm storage project and have worked on it since its inception. I have visited the Appeal Site on numerous occasions in winter and summer. I produced the Landscape and Visual chapter of the Environmental Statement for the Appeal Scheme and produced the detailed landscape design.
- 1.3. I am instructed on behalf of the Appellant, to prepare this statement to address comments raised in documents produced on behalf of Buckinghamshire County Council and by third parties.

## 2. MATTERS OF COMMON GROUND

- 2.1. A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been agreed with Buckinghamshire Council, and I deal only with the remaining matters of dispute.

## 3. MATTERS IN DISPUTE

- 3.1. The matters in dispute are summarised below:
  - i. The level of harm to the landscape character of the Site and surrounding area;
  - ii. The level of harm on the visual amenity of people using the Public Rights of Way in the area, and
  - iii. The level of cumulative effect in relation to other developments in the vicinity.

- 3.2. These are reflected in the Reason for Refusal:

“The proposal which is a large-scale energy development will be introduced into a strongly agricultural landscape and would be significantly incongruous. It will have, despite the proposed mitigation, significant adverse impact on visual amenity and on the landscape character at the site, local and landscape character area levels. Furthermore, the cumulative effects of the proposal with Tuckey Farm (consented permission) and the existing East Claydon sub-station

would lead to cumulative visual and landscape character effects which would be significantly adverse. Together this would change the existing predominantly pastoral landscape to one defined by energy development. The proposal is contrary to Policy C3, BE2 and NE4 of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2021 and RC2 and RC3 of the Granborough Neighbourhood Plan (GNP) 2022 and paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024.”

## 4. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 4.1 There is a difference of opinion on the effect of the Appeal Scheme on Landscape Character between I and Ryan Mills who has assessed the Appeal Scheme for Buckinghamshire Council. These are summarised in Table 1. I have provided justification as to why I have come to different assessments of effect. All the effects relate to the operational 40 Year life of the facility and so are Long Term but Temporary.
- 4.2 The Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment (AVLCA) states for the Hogshaw Claylands LCA under a section titled Landscape Character that *“The two pylon lines through the area are visually intrusive. There is an electricity grid sub-station just to the north of the area, within Claydon Valley LCA 5.6, which these lines join. The sub-station and other pylon lines are visually intrusive in the very north of the area. The area is quiet but not wild or remote”*.
- 4.3 And for the Claydon Valley LCA: *“Five pylon lines radiating out of the electricity sub-station northwest of Granborough are the most significant detracting feature of the area”*.
- 4.4 It is notable that electrical infrastructure is clearly visible in the photographs used in the AVLCA to illustrate landscape character for both the Hogshaw Claylands and the Claydon Valley with commentary that *“pylon lines have a negative visual impact in many views”*.
- 4.5 My site visits confirm the Council’s own published LCA, that electrical infrastructure is a notable feature of the Hogshaw Claylands and Claydon Valley, particularly where the Appeal Site lies near the boundary between the two with a lack of wildness or remoteness. It is also relevant that the AVLCA assesses the sensitivity for both LCA’s as Moderate. These factors have informed my assessment, whereas these appear not to have been recognised by BC.
- 4.6 I accept that there will be a Moderate – Major adverse effect on the landscape character of the two fields where the BESS and Customer Substation will be located since there will be the direct effect of replacing the arable fields to one of electrical infrastructure, and this will not change for the operational life of the facility. I, however, determine that the effects on the character of the wider landscape as a result of the Appeal Scheme will not be Significant for the reasons set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: Analysis of impact on landscape character by parties (based on Mr Ryan Mills assessment prepared for the LPA for the appeal).**

<b>Landscape Receptor</b>	<b>Appellant</b>		<b>LPA</b>	
	<b>Year 1 (Winter)</b>	<b>Year 10 (Summer)</b>	<b>Year 1 (Winter)</b>	<b>Year 10 (Summer)</b>
<b>The landscape of the whole site and its immediate surroundings</b>	Moderate Adverse	Minor Adverse	Major - Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse
<b>Level of effect</b>				
<b>Appellants justification</b>	Of the 26ha. of Appeal Site area south of East Claydon Brook only 7.4ha. will comprise electrical infrastructure compounds and tracks, the remainder will comprise soft landscape works (15ha.) and 3.9ha. will be retained agricultural land managed for biodiversity. 72% of the Appeal Site will be managed for the benefit of wildlife and landscape enhancement. And so, while the electrical infrastructure part of the Site will have an adverse effect on landscape character, the effect is less if the Site is taken as a whole where landscape works make a beneficial contribution.			
<b>LCA 5.2 Hogshaw Claylands</b>	Moderate Adverse	Neutral	Major-Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse
<b>Level of effect</b>				
<b>Appellants justification</b>	The Hogshaw Claylands LCA extends south as far as the base of Quainton Hill and the Aylesbury LCA study considers it to have Moderate sensitivity overall, but in my view, sensitivity declines at the northern end due to the influence of existing electrical infrastructure. This, combined with the fact that 72% of the Appeal Site will be enhanced with features which contribute positively to landscape character reduces the effect to Moderate Adverse. As the landscaping matures the BESS becomes absorbed into the landscape by the taller, visually more dominant trees which will also reduce the prominence of the existing electrical infrastructure. If these beneficial effects are balanced against the adverse effects of the proposed electrical infrastructure, I consider the net result on landscape character to be Neutral.			

Landscape Receptor	Appellant		LPA	
	Year 1 (Winter)	Year 10 (Summer)	Year 1 (Winter)	Year 10 (Summer)
<b>LCA 5.6 Claydon Valley</b>	Minor Adverse	Neutral	Moderate-Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
<b>Level of effect</b>				
<b>Appellants justification</b>	The Claydon valley LCA lies to the north and northeast of the Appeal Site. The Appeal Scheme will have no direct effect on this LCA other than the temporary haul road and excavation of the underground cable to the East Claydon Substation. It can only have a permanent effect on its setting. The northern section of the LCA lies within a valley and is screened from the Site by topography and the East Claydon substation, which lies on the southern boundary with the Hogshaw Claylands. Initially some electrical equipment, such as the Customer Substation, will be visible from the northeast part of the LCA and will be seen in the context of the existing East Claydon Substation, resulting in a Minor adverse effect on its setting. As the 15ha. of landscaping matures it will establish a more wooded backdrop to these parts of the Claydon valley LCA, resulting in a Neutral effect.			
<b>LCA 9.1, 9.2 Finmere Hill and Quainton Hill</b>	Minor Adverse	Neutral	Moderate Adverse	Minor Adverse
<b>Level of effect</b>				
<b>Appellants justification</b>	The Appeal Scheme will not have a direct effect on this LCA but will affect its setting, although as the Visualisations illustrate the electrical infrastructure will be a small component of a panoramic view. In time this will become balanced by the large tree covered BNG portion of the Site, which will lie between the hill and the BESS and existing East Claydon Substation resulting in a Neutral effect.			

4.7 The assertion of Neutral effects is based on my opinion that the proposed landscape works will enhance local landscape character above and beyond that required for mitigation. The AVLCA sets out Landscape Guidelines for the Hogshaw Claylands which include:

- Encourage the retention and strengthening of the historic hedgerow pattern by infilling gaps and establishing new hedgerow trees. Oaks are a feature of hedgerows in this area.
- Encourage the management of hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Promote the management and conservation of vegetation adjacent to the meandering watercourses including the pollarding of willow.

- Encourage the management of existing woodland and promote the establishment of new woodland particularly where it will reduce the visual impact of pylon lines.
- Improve the condition and extent of unimproved and semi-improved grassland wherever possible. Encourage good management practices.
- Improve the management of historic meadows and pastures.
- Close to watercourses promote the use of permanent pasture, with low stocking density and flooding regimes to promote biodiversity and landscape enhancement.
- Encourage the restoration and management of ponds and the area around them to provide a succession of habitats from open water through to mature trees.
- Where possible link ponds to adjacent hedgerows with grassland.
- Enhance connectivity of habitats.

The Appeal Scheme meets these guidelines.

- 4.8 Nevertheless, BC considers that the extensive landscape works will not be in keeping with local character. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) legislation requires developments to provide substantial areas of BNG to ensure that biodiversity is enhanced. The BNG landscape has been designed by Future Nature (a consultancy affiliated to the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust) to maximise benefit to wildlife. It results in a more intricate mosaic of habitats than the habitat poor arable farmland it replaces. The resulting landscape is more typical of a nature reserve. BC appears to be using this change in landscape character as a reason to refuse consent and to defend the decision at Appeal, despite many of the proposals meeting the landscape guidelines set out within the AVLCA..
- 4.9 The Appeal Scheme locates the BESS compound and Customer Substation within two fields which lie in the base of the valley, with very few clear views into them. While the boundary hedges are visible, the grassland is not very apparent. Aside from the boundary hedges these fields have very little visual influence on local landscape character. Hedgerow loss as a result of the Appeal Scheme would be minimal. In Paragraph 3.1.16 Ryan Mills states that *“While the Hogshaw Claylands LCA encompasses a wider area than the appeal site itself, the characteristics that would be directly affected; openness, pastoral land use, intact field patterns, and perceptual tranquillity are defining and valued elements of the LCA”*. The Appeal Scheme leaves the field pattern intact and because the fields containing the BESS are discreetly located and the majority of components are under 4m high, perceptual openness and tranquillity will be largely unaffected.
- 4.10 BC granted consent for the Tuckey Farm Solar Farm which covers 55ha. of the LCA with electrical infrastructure compared with 6.45ha. for the BESS, a far smaller area as Figure 2 illustrates. The BESS has over 10 times the output capacity compared to the solar, offering considerably more benefit for less land take and corresponding effect on the LCA's. This is recognised in Paragraphs 1.8 and 1.9 of the Officers Report which states:

*“The application has been assessed against the development plan as a whole and all relevant material considerations. The report identifies that the proposal would result in some harm to the landscape and therefore conflict with some policies within the development plan. However, having regard to all aspects of policy compliance and conflict, it is considered that the proposal accords with the Development Plan when read as a whole.*

*Even if it were concluded that the identified policy conflict regarding landscape harm means that the scheme does not fully comply with the Development Plan as a whole, there are substantial material considerations that strongly support approval and justify a departure from the Plan. These considerations include the significant benefits of decarbonising the grid, which helps address the climate emergency, reducing curtailment (see paragraphs 2.24 and 2.25), and providing energy security. These are highly significant factors that indicate the application should be approved”.*

- 4.11 If the planning system is to be consistent the greater benefit with reduced effect on landscape character compared with the solar farm must be part of the planning balance.
- 4.12 Comments have been made on the appropriateness of the landscape mitigation in relation to landscape character. Conduit Hill overlooks the Hogshaw Claylands (**Figure 1**) and it is clearly evident that woodlands and tall hedges are a feature of the LCA. Tree cover along watercourses is also a characteristic feature. We maintain our position that the mosaic of woodland, scrub, hedgerow and grassland, that the Appeal Scheme will deliver, maximises the biodiversity potential of the land, to a far higher degree than simple, larger woodland blocks, and is in keeping with local landscape character.



**Figure 1: View from Conduit Hill looking across the Hogshaw Claylands LCA towards the East Claydon Substation and the Appeal Site**



- 4.13 The landscape officer at the time of refusal considered that the proposed ponds are far larger than agricultural ponds and so will be incongruous. The ponds are designed to attenuate storm water runoff from the Proposed Development and so are sized to meet that functional drainage requirement. As such, they comply with policy and meet best practice. While they are shown on plan as large water bodies, they will in practice be shallow, damp grassy basins and will only fill with water during times of high rainfall. Such periodic seasonal flooding is characteristic of the LCA. We therefore disagree that proposed ponds are incongruous, and we maintain our position that these are in keeping with the LCA whilst meeting drainage requirements.
- 4.14 The visualisations presented in **Appendices 1 and 2** of this document illustrate the how the character of the Hogshaw Claylands and Claydon Valley is strongly influenced by existing electrical infrastructure and how the proposed landscaping will beneficially integrate it and the proposed infrastructure into the landscape, reinforcing the positive aspects of landscape character.

## 5. VISUAL AMENITY

- 5.1. There are differences in the assessment of the significance of effects on visual amenity between me and Ryan Mills who has assessed the development for the appeal on behalf of BC. They are, however, not substantially different and are summarised in **Table 2**.

**Table 2: Analysis of impact at viewpoints disagreed (or agreed as highlighted by green background tint) by parties (based on Ryan Mills assessment prepared for the LPA for the appeal).**

Visual Receptor		Year 1 Winter	Year 10 Summer
VP1 - PRoW west of Granborough (GRA 10/1)	Appellant's Conclusion	Moderate - Major adverse	Neutral <b>Not Significant</b>
	Council's Conclusion	Major adverse	Minor adverse <b>Not Significant</b>
VPs 2 & 3 PRoW west of Granborough (GRA 2/2)	Appellant's Conclusion	Moderate - adverse	Neutral <b>Not Significant</b>
	Council's Conclusion	Moderate - Major adverse	Minor adverse (Agreed) <b>Not significant</b>
VP4 PRoW west of Granborough (GRA 1/1)	Appellant's Conclusion	Moderate - Major adverse (Agreed)	Neutral <b>Not Significant</b>
	Council's Conclusion	Moderate – Major adverse (Agreed)	Minor adverse <b>Not Significant</b>
VPs 5 & 6 PRoW west of Granborough (GRA 2/)	Appellant's Conclusion	Moderate - Major adverse (Agreed)	Negligible adverse <b>Not Significant</b>
	Council's Conclusion	Moderate - Major (Agreed)	Minor adverse <b>Not Significant</b>
VP 7 PRoW east of East Claydon (ECL 4/2)	Appellant's Conclusion	Moderate adverse	Neutral <b>Not Significant</b>
	Council's Conclusion	Moderate – Major adverse	Minor adverse <b>Not Significant</b>
VPs 8, 9 PRoW east of East Claydon (ECL 4/1)	Appellant's Conclusion	Moderate adverse	Neutral <b>Not Significant</b>
	Council's Conclusion	Moderate adverse	Negligible adverse <b>Not Significant</b>
VP 14 PRoW south of site (GRA 1/2)	Appellant's Conclusion	Minor adverse	Neutral <b>Not Significant</b>
	Council's Conclusion	None	Neutral <b>Not Significant</b>
VP 17 PRoW adjacent to east site boundary (GRA 1/2)	Appellant's Conclusion	Moderate adverse (Agreed)	Neutral <b>Not Significant</b>
	Council's Conclusion	Moderate adverse (Agreed)	Negligible adverse <b>Not Significant</b>

- 5.2. After 10 Years in summer, both parties conclude (with small differences of opinion) that the effects on visual amenity reduce to Minor adverse, Negligible or Neutral. Both parties agree that after 10 Years in summer there will be no **Significant** adverse effect on visual amenity.

- 5.3. I conclude Neutral for those views where the landscaping within the BNG areas will make a positive contribution to visual amenity in their own right, particularly by reducing the visual influence of the existing electrical infrastructure. essentially, I arrive at the same Minor adverse effect as Ryan Mills, but balance it with the visual benefit of the wider BNG landscaping.
- 5.4. Carly Tinker BA CMLI FRSA MIALE has reviewed the LVIA for East Claydon Parish Council, (although she has not visited the Site) and has produced a Landscape Statement in which she makes several comments.
- 5.5. Paragraph vi criticises the Appellants landscape assessment for considering mitigating landscaping as a visual benefit. In my opinion a distinction should be drawn between landscaping primarily to screen the proposed electrical infrastructure and the landscaping proposed within the wider BNG area, and I maintain that it is valid to consider the landscape treatment over the wider Site as conferring visual benefit since 72% of the Site will not be covered by electrical infrastructure. The extensive planting within the BNG land, including blocks of woodland, will also reduce the visibility of the existing transmission towers and lines, one of the guidelines within the AVLCA for the Hogshaw Claylands.
- 5.6. The statement also states that the magnitude of change should be High due to the total loss of some views and so the level of harm is underestimated (View 1 is cited). It is clear, however, that there are no total losses of views. In View 1 the foreground is unaffected, the BESS sits among the existing tree and hedge cover and the backdrop of rising farmland remains. Electrical components are an existing feature of the view and so the Appeal Scheme is not introducing entirely new elements in the view.
- 5.7. Paragraph xii states “*LVIA has not factored in the possibility that the proposed units and other vulnerable infrastructure may have to be raised to an above-ground level that is higher than assumed due to the future increase in flood levels over the duration of the operation*”. The electrical compounds have been positioned out of the 1:1000-year flood zones and this was factored in when generating the ZVI.
- 5.8. Paragraph xiv states that “*it is not considered best-practice in LVIA to rely on vegetation to screen views even in the shorter term, because it is not possible to predict or guarantee that existing / proposed screening vegetation would remain in place for the lifetime of the development (due to factors such as pests / diseases / pathogens, and changes in climate and / or management practices)*”. The Appeal Scheme benefits from a substantial amount of tree planting around all sides of the electrical infrastructure compounds and there is agreement that visual effects will be Minor adverse after 10 years in summer. The proposed landscaping will be managed to an agreed management plan. Thus, within a short time the Appeal Scheme will not need to rely on screening from trees and hedges on third party land.

- 5.9. The Statement states in paragraph xv *“that the requirement for such extensive and substantial screening acknowledges that this industrial development is inappropriate in this rural location”*. The location of the facility is largely driven by its proximity to the East Claydon Substation which lies within a rural environment and so, given that as the main driver for location, it is appropriate to provide extensive and substantial screening.
- 5.10. Paragraph xvi recommends that an Environmental Colour Assessment should be undertaken to determine the most appropriate colour rendering of the containers. Through a condition the choice of colours can be determined by undertaking an Environmental Colour Assessment and the colours agreed with BC.
- 5.11. During the determining of the application the Landscape Officer suggested that the visual impacts would be greater than assessed because the hedges should be periodically coppiced and laid in accordance with recommendations within the Hedgelink website, thereby opening up views of the electrical infrastructure.
- 5.12. While there might be some benefits in periodically coppicing and laying hedges, it is far from common practice in the Hogshaw Claylands and the majority of the UK. The hedges around the Site are substantial and in good condition and have been managed year after year in the same way, without the need for coppicing and laying. Nevertheless, the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) now references a coppicing regime. The landscape design provides for woodland or hedge planting behind the existing hedges and so if coppicing is undertaken after 10 years, the new planting will have established sufficiently to maintain a screen until the coppiced hedge has had time to regenerate.
- 5.13. We have recently worked with the Landscape Officer at East Devon to secure agreement on a LEMP associated with a consented BESS project of similar size near the Exeter National Grid Substation. We undertook a detailed hedgerow condition survey which informed a detailed forty-year hedge management plan. Coppicing or laying was not considered appropriate for all hedges and other techniques such as trimming only the top or a side on a three-year cycle have been agreed. Since the approval of the LEMP can be a condition a similar exercise could be undertaken for the Appeal Scheme.

## 6. CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

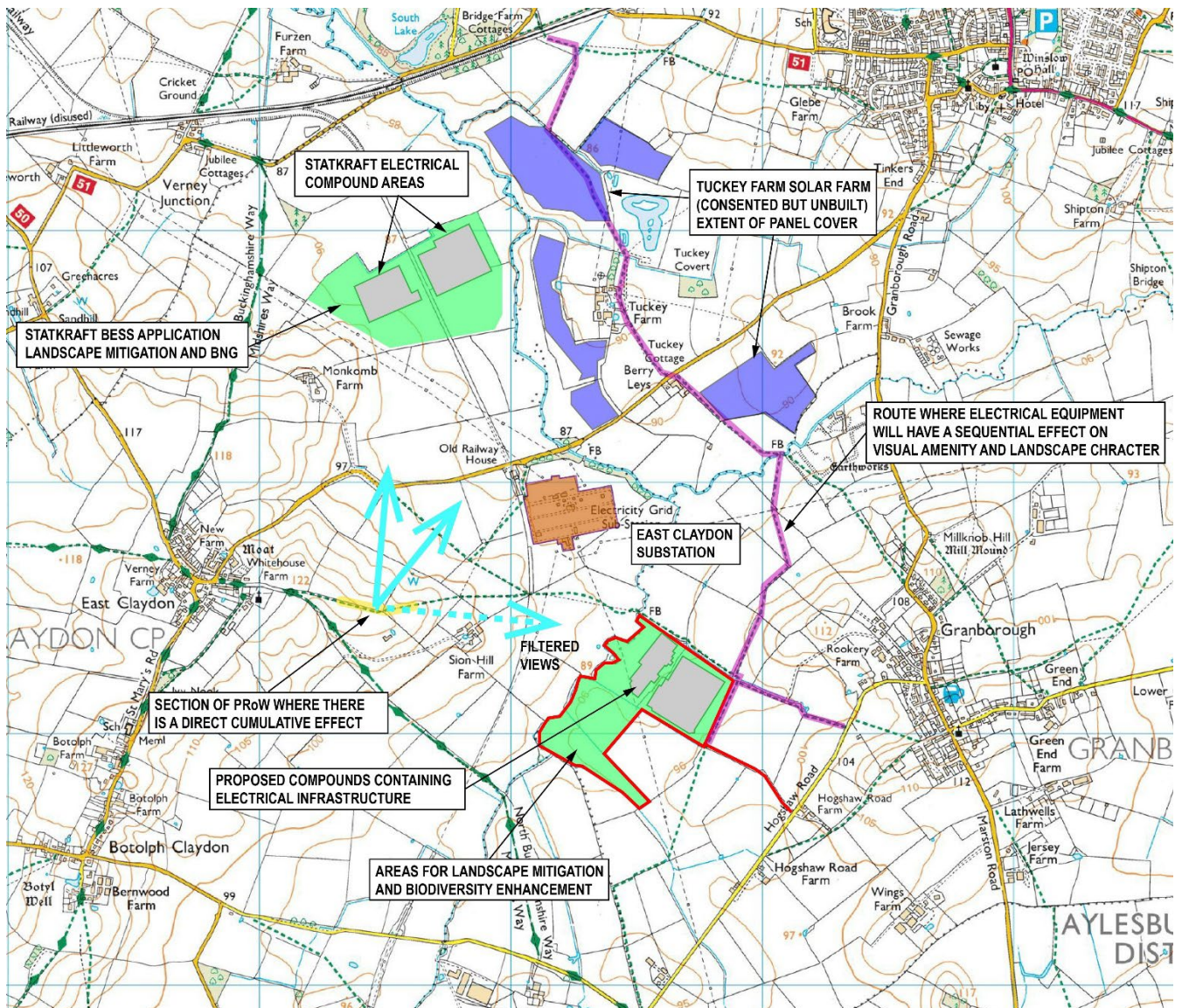
- 6.1. The reason for refusal states that *“Furthermore, the cumulative effects of the proposal with Tuckey Farm (consented permission) and the existing East Claydon sub-station would lead to cumulative visual and landscape character effects which would be significantly adverse”*.
- 6.2. In my opinion the East Claydon Substation is part of the baseline landscape condition, it is for example referenced within the Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment for both the Hogshaw Claylands and Claydon Valley,

as discussed in Section 4, and so should not be considered under cumulative effect.

- 6.3. Subsequent to the appeal being made, a planning application for BESS to the north of the East Claydon Substation has been made by Statkraft UK (Ref. 25/01297/APP, validated at the end of April) and for robustness is assessed along with the Tuckey Farm Solar Farm.
- 6.4. It remains our position that once the landscape mitigation has established, the Appeal Scheme will be largely screened by trees and hedges in summer and will appear as a block of woodland within the landscape. In winter, it will only be possible to glimpse the batteries and inverter houses through bare branches and only from close viewpoints. Therefore, we maintain our conclusion that the proposed electrical equipment will not have a significant cumulative effect on visual amenity.
- 6.5. The relationship of the Tuckey Farm Solar Farm and Statkraft UK BESS to the Appeal Scheme is shown in Figure 2. They lie within the adjacent Claydon Valley LCA. It is evident that, as with the Appeal Scheme, the electrical compounds within the Statkraft UK scheme are set within extensive areas of landscaping, which is a mix of screening and BNG, limiting the potential for a cumulative visual effect.
- 6.6. The Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) presented in the Statkraft UK application shows that it will not be directly inter-visible with the Appeal Scheme and this corresponds with Sightlines ZVI analysis. Figure 2 illustrates how the East Claydon Substation lies between the Appeal Scheme and the Statkraft UK scheme, and the majority of the Tuckey farm Solar Farm lies in a side valley north of the East Claydon Road. Only the small part of the solar farm that lies south of the East Claydon Road will be theoretically inter-visible with the Appeal Site, although this will decline as the mitigation associated with both schemes become effective.
- 6.7. A short section of PRoW ECL 4/2 which climbs the side of the valley by Sion Hill Farm affords view towards the Appeal Scheme (but views are filtered by the farm and trees along the brook, Viewpoint 8). If the viewer looks to the east, the East Claydon Substation is clearly visible and to the northeast the Statkraft UK BESS and the Tuckey Farm Solar Farm will be visible in the adjoining valley. Therefore, there will be an indirect cumulative effect on users of a short section of this PRoW (the location is shown on Figure 2). This is the only significant cumulative effect on visual amenity at a single location, but the Appeal Scheme will be least visible of the schemes and so its contribution to the cumulative effect is considered to be Minor adverse.



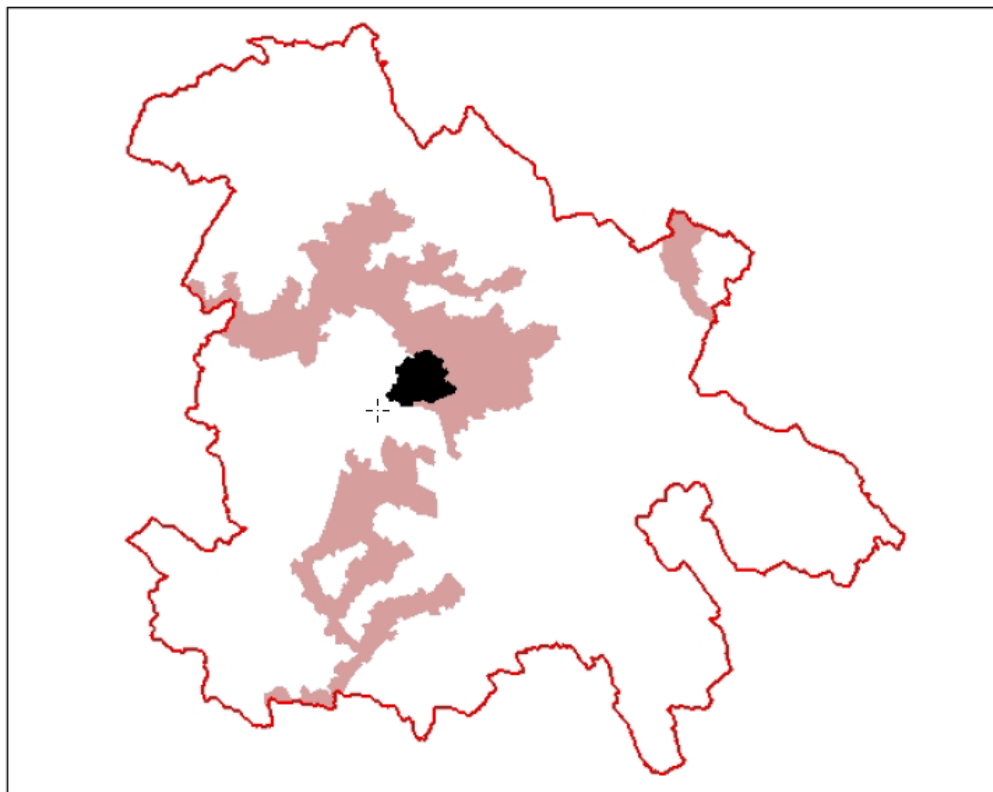
**Figure 2: Plan showing the relationship of the Appeal Scheme to the Tuckey Farm Solar Farm and the Statkraft BESS**



- 6.8. There will also be a sequential cumulative effect to those combining a walk along GRA 2/1 and ECL 4/2, but only Minor adverse. Users combining a walk along PROW GRA 1/1, GRA 2/2, WIS 1/2 and WIS 1/1 will pass the Appeal Site (although aside from the substation the electrical infrastructure will be largely screened), the solar farm and the Statkraft UK Site, resulting in a direct sequential effect on visual amenity. This route is highlighted on Figure 2. Again, the Appeal Scheme will be the least visible and will have the least contribution to this cumulative effect, which I consider to be Minor adverse. The Statkraft UK ES concluded that there would be no Significant adverse cumulative effects on the Claydon Valley or Hogshaw Claylands Landscape Character Areas (the assessment included the Appeal Scheme), the only caveat was that if the Rosefield Solar Farm proceeded to planning there would be Major – Moderate adverse effects due to its extensive land coverage.

- 6.9. Ryan Mills refers to the effect of the Appeal Scheme on the Shallow Valleys Landscape Character Type (LCT), stating in his paragraph 6.2 that it “*would materially alter the character of the Shallow Valleys landscape from one that is predominantly pastoral to one increasingly defined by energy infrastructure*”. The Shallow Valleys LCT is a very large area comprising eleven LCA’s (as illustrated by Figure 3), the common theme being that they occupy shallow valleys, and the published description restates that the “*the greatest visual detractors are the seven pylons lines, particularly in the Claydon Valley, where they converge*”. The Appeal Site will cover a small part of the Hogshaw Claylands LCA and an even smaller part of the Shallow Valleys LCT and even if the cumulative effect with the Tuckey Farm Solar Farm is considered, suggesting that it would materially alter the landscape of the Shallow Valleys LCT to one increasingly defined by energy infrastructure is unrealistic. The Appeal Scheme also locates the electrical infrastructure within the part of the Shallow Valleys LCT that is most affected by electrical infrastructure, rather than in the more pristine and remote areas, which is preferable in minimising harm to the LCT.

**Figure 3 showing the Hogshaw Claylands LCA as a portion of the Shallow Valleys LCT** (The pink shading is the extent of the Shallow Valleys LCT and the black the extent of the Hogshaw Claylands LCA)



- 6.10. Section 4.2.1 of BC's SOC states that: *"when combined, these schemes would result in a transformation of a large area of the LCA from rural farmland to an energy infrastructure dominated landscape"*.
- 6.11. Again, this is substantially overstating the case, partly because of the comparatively small area covered by the proposed electrical infrastructure of the Appeal Scheme, and because the Tuckey Farm Solar Farm lies in an adjacent LCA.

## 7. COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY

- 7.1. Within the Appeal Scheme the compounds housing electrical equipment will inevitably have a Moderate – Major adverse effect on the landscape character on the fields in which they lie. Seventy two percent of the Site, however, will be enhanced to achieve a combination of visual amenity, BNG, landscape character enhancement and public access objectives. The landscape initiatives proposed comply with the Landscape Guidelines set out for the Hogshaw Claylands LCA in the AVLCA. Once the proposed planting has established the overall effect of the Appeal Scheme on the landscape character of the Site, the Hogshaw Claylands LCA, the Claydon Valley LCA, Finmere Hill and Quainton Hill I consider to be Neutral.
- 7.2. The Appeal Scheme will not result in any Significant adverse effects on visual amenity once the extensive proposed landscape works have established, typically within 10 – 15 Years. Buckinghamshire Council's landscape expert is largely in agreement with this conclusion. The Appeal Scheme offers the benefit of an extensive area of permissive open space through which 2.33km of permissive paths run, opening up access along the riparian corridor of Claydon Brook and linking with the wider Public Right of Way network.
- 7.3. There will be no Significant cumulative landscape and visual effects with the Tuckey Farm Solar Farm or the Statkraft UK BESS which, if built, will lie largely within an adjacent valley on the opposite side of the East Claydon Substation within a different landscape character area.
- 7.4. I conclude, therefore, that the Appeal Scheme is compliant with policies C3, BE2 and NE4 of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2021 and RC2 and RC3 of the Granborough Neighbourhood Plan (GNP) 2022 and paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 and so the reason for refusal is unsound.