Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (October 2025 Update)

Introduction

1. This report responds to the matters raised by Midlothian Council concerning landscape and visual effects in their Elected Members Report, dated 13th June 2025. In particular, it provides feedback in response to the matters raised in the Recommendation section at paragraph 9.2 of the Elected Members Report, which stated as follows:

   'With regard to landscape and visual impacts, it is considered that, turbines T1, T2 and T3 appear as outliers in specific viewpoints. These turbines appear detached from the main group. More information requested in early 2024 has not thoroughly been responded to, including the request to remove T1, T2 and T3 to alleviate landscape and visual impacts. It is recommended that the applicant considers these turbines for removal from the development'

2. The analysis below is supported by the following accompanying elements:
   - Comparative Zone of the Theoretical Visibility Plan – Blade Tip
   - Comparative Zone of the Theoretical Visibility Plan – Hub Height
   - Wireline Visualisations illustrating the Proposed Development, minus T1, T2 and T3
   - Residential Properties Plan (for the scenario minus T1, T2 and T3)
   - Residential Properties Wireline Visualisations illustrating the Proposed Development, minus T1, T2 and T3

Consideration of a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed

Effects on Landscape Features

3. It was identified in the LVIA that the Proposed Development would not result in any significant effects on the existing grassland and moorland vegetation, shelterbelts, watercourses or drainage channels. In a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed there would be a minor reduction in the effect on the existing vegetation, as three of the turbines would not be constructed, with the effects remaining non-significant.

Effects on Landscape Character

4. It was identified in the LVIA that the Proposed Development would result in direct and significant effects on the part of the landscape character types within which it is located, namely LCT 266 Plateau Moorland – Lothians and LCT 269 Upland Fringes – Lothians.

5. Indirect and significant effects would then extend to approximately 3.7 km to the north-east and 7.5 km to the north-west within LCT 269 Upland Fringes – Lothians.

6. Indirect and significant effects would also extend to approximately 4.1 km to the north-east and 6.5 km to the south-east within LCT 91 Plateau Grassland – Borders, to approximately 7 km within LCT 104 Upland Fringe Rough Grassland, to approximately 8.5 km within LCT 270 Lowland River Valleys – Lothians, to approximately 6 km to the north-east within LCT 272 Lowland Hills and Ridges and 9.4 km to the north-west.

7. In a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed there would be one less turbine located within LCT 266 Plateau Moorland – Lothians and two less turbines located within LCT 269 Upland Fringes – Lothians. The physical footprint of direct significant effects would therefore reduce to a small degree.

8. There would also be slightly less visibility of turbines from the surrounding landscape, reducing the potential for indirect effects on landscape character to a small degree. In particular, this reduction would apply to the area of the landscape to the west and north-west of the Site, as T1, T2 and T3 are the turbines which lie at the western extent of the array. There would therefore be a reduction in the extent of indirect significant effects on both LCT 269 Upland Fringes – Lothians and LCT 104 Upland Fringe Rough Grassland. For LCT 269 Upland Fringes – Lothians, the significant effects would in this scenario reduce from approximately 7.5km to around 7km, and for LCT 104 Upland Fringe Rough Grassland, the significant effects would in this scenario reduce from approximately 7km to around 6km.

Effects on Visual Receptors

Assessment Viewpoints

9. It was identified in the LVIA that the Proposed Development would result in significant visual effects experienced at nine of the 22 representative viewpoints, during daylight hours and at eight viewpoints during the hours of darkness. In a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed there would be slightly less visibility of turbines from visual receptors in the surrounding landscape, reducing the potential for indirect effects on visual amenity to a small degree. In particular, this reduction would apply to visual receptors in the area of the landscape to the west and north-west of the Site, as T1, T2 and T3 are the turbines which lie at the western extent of the array.

10. Of the viewpoints where a significant effect was identified, it is Viewpoints 9 and 12 where the removal of T1, T2 and T3 would be most noticeable. This is illustrated in the supporting wireline visualisations. However, in each

case, whilst the visibility of turbines from each location would be reduced, a significant effect would remain.

Residential Properties

11. In terms of the effects on residential properties, it was identified in the LVIA that twelve of the 32 properties or property groups within 2.5 km of a proposed turbine would experience a significant visual effect from either a part of their house, garden or principal access route as a result of the Proposed Development.

12. In a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed there would be a change to the extent of the area lying within 2.5 km of a proposed turbine, as the physical footprint of the development would be reduced. In particular, this would relate to the to the area of the landscape to the west and north-west of the Site, as T1, T2 and T3 are the turbines which lie at the western extent of the array. In total there would be 9no. properties which would no longer be located within 2.5km, as illustrated on the Residential Properties Plan (for the scenario minus T1, T2 and T3). On review of the Residential Properties Wireline Visualisations illustrating the Proposed Development, minus T1, T2 and T3, there would however be no change to the number of properties which would experience a significant visual effect, notwithstanding that for some of the properties the extent of the visibility of turbines would now be reduced.

Settlements

13. In relation to settlements, the LVIA found that North Middleton and Gorebridge would experience a significant visual effect during daylight hours and Gorebridge would also experience a significant visual effect during dark sky hours. In a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed there would be a minor reduction in the visibility of the Proposed Development from these settlements, but no change to the overall assessment of effects.

Core Paths

14. The assessment of routes in the LVIA found that receptors would experience significant visual effects from core paths located within 5 km, from core paths located between 5 and 7.5 km to the north-west of the Proposed Development and from parts of NCNR1. In a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed, the visibility of the Proposed Development would reduce to a degree to the north-west, such that significant effects would reduce from 7.5km to approximately 7km. There are however few Core Paths in this area from which this change would be experienced.

Roads

15. The assessment of roads in the LVIA found that receptors would experience significant effects from parts of the B7007, the B6367 and the B6372. In a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed, the visibility of the Proposed Development would reduce to a degree from these routes, primarily from the B6372 where it runs to the north-west of the turbines. Here, a significant effect was identified from users travelling eastbound for a 4.4 km section between Howgate and Upper Side. From this section the overall horizontal extent of the array would be reduced, however, the extent of the significant effect would remain.

Effects on Designated Landscapes

16. In terms of effects on Special Landscape Areas, the LVIA found that the Gladhouse Reservoir & Moorfoot Scarp SLA, the South Esk & Carrington Farmlands SLA, a limited part of the Tyne Valley SLA and a very limited part of The Pentland Hills SLA would experience significant effects but that the effects would not undermine the key characteristics of the SLA to such an extent that they would be compromised. In a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed, the visibility of the Proposed Development would reduce to a degree from the SLAs, but the identified significant effects would remain.

Cumulative Effects

17. Regarding cumulative effects, the LVIA found that there would be the potential for cumulative landscape character effects to arise within part of LCT 90 Dissected Plateau Moorland and that although there would be increased visibility of turbines within part of LCT 269 Upland Fringes – Lothians, there would be no additional significant cumulative effects as significant effects were already identified in that part of the landscape in the main assessment.

18. The cumulative assessment in the LVIA was based on a 'cut-off' date for information concerning cumulative sites of 10th of August 2023. Since that time a review of other potential new cumulative sites has been undertaken and no new sites have been identified that would have potential to give rise to any significant landscape or effects that were not already identified in the LVIA. This would also apply to a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed.

Consideration of whether turbines T1, T2 and T3 appear as outliers

19. It is noted that in their discussion of turbines T1, T2 and T3, the Elected Members Report suggests that these turbines would appear '*as outliers in specific viewpoints*' and that they would '*appear detached from the main group*'.

20. In addition to the consideration of the change in landscape and visual effects that would arise were these turbines to be deleted, specific regard

has therefore also been given to this matter. Wireline Visualisations illustrating the Proposed Development, minus T1, T2 and T3 have also been prepared to aid this analysis.

21. For several of the viewpoints, turbines T1, T2 and T3 would not actually be seen as the turbines at the edge of the array. For example, in Viewpoints 3 and 9, turbine T4 is seen to the right of turbine T3, whilst in Viewpoint 16, T7 is seen to the right of turbine T1. For several of the other viewpoints, such as Viewpoint 12, T1, T2 and T3 appear as a group at the edge of the array, but spaced evenly in a similar manner to the other turbines in the layout including T5-T7 and T8-T10.

22. This matter was also addressed in the previous AI which set out as follows: *'It is acknowledged that these turbines are located towards the edge of the array in certain views, but it is not considered that they form inappropriate outliers to the rest of the turbines, such that further design work should have been undertaken'*. This remains the findings following this further consideration.

Summary and Conclusions

23. In a scenario where T1, T2 and T3 were removed there would be some reduction in the landscape and visual effects that were identified in the LVIA, however these would be relatively limited. This reduction in effects would need to be considered in the wider planning balance alongside the reduction in any other environmental effects, plus the reduction in energy generation that would arise.