

Technical note:

Queen Elizabeth Landmark, Cold Law: LVIA Review

1. Overview

This technical note provides a review of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) submitted in support of the new application (20/00698/FUL) for the proposed Queen Elizabeth II landmark sculpture, 'Ascendant', hereafter, referenced as the 'Proposed Development'. The LVIA has been completed by Southern Green, a firm of chartered landscape architects and we have been asked to consider this in light of Northumberland County Council's Strategic Planning Committee refusal of the previous application and the response from 'Keep the Wannies Wild Group' and the original review of the LVIA in response to the previous application by Stephenson Halliday. In undertaking this review it is important to recognise the limitations of LVIA and the requirement for this review to provide rigorous, transparent and objective analysis and additional guidance that can be tested and clearly demonstrated to both inform the applicant and Northumberland County Council's planning officers in respect of this second application and in the event of any subsequent appeal process.

1.1 Introduction

Scope

- 1.1.1 Wood PLC has been commissioned by Northumberland County Council to undertake a review of the landscape and visual issues associated with the Proposed Development of a landmark sculpture, 'Ascendant', situated at Cold Law within the Ray Estate, Northumberland. This review has been undertaken by chartered landscape architects at Wood PLC.

Location

- 1.1.2 The proposed development is situated adjacent to the C195 minor road which links Knowesgate on the A696 to the east with Ridsdale on the A68 to the West. The settlements of West and East Woodburn are situated approximately 3.2km to the north west. Northumberland National Park is situated approximately 4.8km to the north west at the closest point.
- 1.1.3 There are a number of wind farms in this area, including:
- Ray Wind Farm: 16 turbines at 125 m tall, 2 km to the northeast;
 - Green Rigg Wind Farm: 18 turbines at 100 m tall, 2.5 km to the south; and
 - Kirkheaton Wind Farm: 3 turbines at 68 m tall, 11.5 km to the southeast, beyond Great Bavington.

- 1.1.4 The wind farms are important as they have an existing influence of the landscape character of this area. The setting for the Proposed Development is one that is characterised by wind farms.
- 1.1.5 The wind farms also form existing features on the landscape and can be considered as positively or negatively by people viewing them in their landscape setting. As utilitarian features they are not required to have a 'setting', only that their impact on the surrounding landscape is minimised and judged acceptable in the planning context. As existing features they are often considered as negative detractors on landscape character and can detract from and negatively influence other monuments such as historical features and landmark sculptures. The application should be considered in terms of whether the location of the PD is placing the sculpture into a position where it would, unavoidably be negatively impacted by the surrounding windfarms and associated landscape character.
- 1.1.6 Another wind farm (Steadings Wind Farm 21 turbines in three separate groups near Great Bavington). This scheme was refused permission at a con-joined public inquiry where the Secretary for State granted permission for Ray and Green Rigg. Effects on the landscape and visual recourse, cumulative effects and landscape capacity were all tested at that inquiry. Given that the Proposed Development is related in form and design intention to a 'wind turbine blade' the evidence and debate on landscape capacity and cumulative effects at the con-joined public inquiry could be extremely relevant, particularly as it could be considered that the landscape capacity for further wind farm development (and perhaps related Proposed Development such as this) has been reached already? Further development such as the Proposed Development could therefore have a further, cumulative adverse effect.
- 1.1.7 There are also a number of telecommunications masts, to the north and northeast.
- 1.1.8 The existing 'setting' or sphere of influence on landscape character caused by the existing wind farms and the setting or 'sense of place' related to other existing local landscape features also has to be considered and respected.
- The 'setting' or sphere of influence on landscape character from the Ray and Green Rigg wind farms, noting that the Ray Wind Farm was reduced in scale as part of its design process to avoid impact on the Wanney Crag and the views north and sense of place associated with the crags.
 - It is not know at this stage if the design of the Green Rigg Wind Farm was similarly restricted by it's landscape setting, but its separation from the Wanney Crag by the forestry to the north was noted as a mitigating factor.
 - Finally the Wanney Crag themselves have to be recognised as an important local landmark / feature and place, visited by walkers and climbers. It is certainly a place that can be recognised in its own right and has a connection to local culture and history.

Development description

- 1.1.9 The development comprises an artist designed 56m high Corten steel structure the shape of which, in part and in accordance with the artists design rationale takes inspiration from a turbine blade. The monument will be situated on the summit of Cold Law with the associated formation of a 'rock slot' requiring a linear excavation of the landform. A new car park will be constructed to accommodate visitors arriving via the C195 and a footpath will allow access to the monument
- 1.1.10 Cold Law is a relatively small hill in the context of the surrounding landscape which includes other higher hills / land, distracting and competing features (wind farms, masts) and is just within 2 km of a the Wanney Crag and Great Wanny Crag which are an existing local landscape feature and valued viewpoint.

Planning Background

- 1.1.11 A planning application, 19/00247/FUL, was submitted in January 2019 and originally recommended for approval by planning officers. Following consultation and a site visit by officers and members the Council's Strategic Planning Committee resolved to refuse the application on the basis that; *"The proposal results in development in the open countryside which fails to recognise the intrinsic character and nature of the countryside in this location and is therefore contrary to paragraph 170 of the NPPF and Policy NE1 of the Tynedale Local Development Framework Core Strategy"*.
- 1.1.12 Following refusal of the planning application an appeal was submitted to the planning inspectorate in January 2020. A decision on the appeal is awaited. Meanwhile the applicant has submitted a new planning application (20/00698/FUL) containing additional information to attempt to address the previous reasons for refusal. However, the LVIA that was submitted for the original application has not been changed for the new application.

Placing Landmark Sculpture in the Landscape

- 1.1.13 In respect of this application some key questions need to be answered and demonstrated.
- The first of this revolves around the need, purpose and objectives for the sculpture – are they properly explained?
 - What is the role of the sculpture and it's location / intended position in the landscape – sculpture cannot be placed 'anywhere' – it needs to resonate with its surroundings, there needs to be a properly explained 'marriage' of the sculpture and it location. Is this supposed to be a high point or summit (e.g. Padon Hill in the National Park) or a gateway / welcoming feature (e.g. the Angel of the North) or one with a particular line of site or connection to some other location (e.g. many mausoleums and historical memorial landmarks)?
 - What is the intended setting of the sculpture? The setting of a landmark sculpture could easily be expected to be 3-5 km. As with any other monument, once created can this setting be established and protected? In a sense is there 'room' or capacity for this feature, in order that it can be properly appreciated in true landscape and artistic terms?
 - What is the cultural connection – can this sculpture draw from local or wider historical and cultural connections?

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Limitations

- 1.1.14 In undertaking this commission, one has to recognise the purpose and limitations of LVIA. Normally LVIA is used to assess the landscape and visual impact of development that is usually considered to have an adverse effect. The tools of the LVIA evaluate the sensitivity (through consideration of value and susceptibility) of the receptor with magnitude or nature of change which in its simplest form is assessed in terms of the magnitude or scale of the PD, the geographical extent and the duration of the effects. LVIA often limits itself to these criteria to accord with guidance such as GLVIA 3 and what can result is a mechanical assessment, focused on sensitivity and magnitude, which can often require large scale, negative change in order to identify significant adverse effects. Crucially however the detailed methodology, scale and focus of the assessment needs to be adapted from the 'standard approach' to suite the scale and purpose of the Proposed Development. (Otherwise a LVIA used for wind farms might be deemed suitable to assess much smaller development or forms of development that require a more qualitative assessment and review of aspects such as design quality or perceptual effects related to aspects such as special landscape qualities or the landscape setting of particular features or areas).

1.1.15

In this case the S&G LVIA-, it is not that that the standard LVIA undertaken is at fault (rather it appears to be adequate and broadly accords to guidance, were its focus a more common subject for LVIA) but that the objective, detail methodology and scope / brief for the LVIA has not been developed to assess, examine and consider the particular design and effects of the PD. In particular the LVIA should consider the following aspects:

- The design statement covering the objectives, strategy and purpose of the Proposed Development in landscape and artistic terms;
- The required landscape setting for such a landmark sculpture in comparison to the proposed location, considering if the proposed location is suitable and whether it would disadvantage the appreciation of the Proposed Development in terms of its artistic and landscape quality.
- Sequential assessment – how would this Proposed Development be experienced and visited? I suspect that in many of the key views the sculpture would appear either 'truncated' / foreshortened or diminished by the surrounding topographical setting / location and or adversely impinged upon, detracted from, 'confused' / backdropped / overlapped or diminished by adjacent wind farm development to the unacceptable detriment of what sounds like a very important and landmark piece of sculpture? Can the Proposed Development at its proposed location perform its intended function to a satisfactory degree?
- The baseline identification and assessment of the key landscape characteristics, landscape qualities, scenic views and valued sense of place of particular locations (namely the Wanney Crags) that are locally important to the local / intended setting and study area of the PD.
- The aspect of cumulative effects and landscape capacity, drawing on previous evidence and associated reports set out for the Ray, Green Rigg and Steading wind farms which, given the lack of change to this landscape since the associated decisions will still have some relevance to the existing landscape today.

2. Review of Southern and Green LVIA

2.1.1

A review of the LVIA undertaken by Southern Green (SG) on behalf of the developer has been undertaken which considers the scope, methodology and assessment findings in respect of this new application. The results of this review are provided in **Table 2.1** below.

2.1.2

Whilst all the comments provided are relevant they have been categorised in terms of 'Major' and 'Minor'. Major comments highlight fundamental omissions or differences of opinion whilst Minor comments generally relate to discrepancies in methodology or smaller differences of opinion which may not fundamentally affect the overall assessment conclusions.

Table 2.1 Southern Green LVIA Review

LVIA Reference	Topic	Comment	Applicant Action
1.0 Introduction			
1.1.2	Viewpoint selection	<i>Minor</i> Viewpoints appear to have been selected with an emphasis on informing potential effects on the historic environment.	To note.
1.3.1	Scale of the proposed development	<i>Major</i>	Further explanation required relating to the design

LVIA Reference	Topic	Comment	Applicant Action
		It is not clear why it is considered necessary for the height of the sculpture to match that of the nearby Hepple Heugh at 336m AOD.	rationale for the overall scale of the sculpture.
Methodology and criteria			
2.1.9	Zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV)	<i>Minor</i> It is stated that ZTV's were produced to cover a distance of 3.5km. However, figures 6a and 6b illustrate ZTV's to 5km. Otherwise the procedures used to produce the ZTV's appear to be sound.	To note.
2.1.10 – 2.1.13	Viewpoint selection	<i>Major</i> The LVIA at this stage refers to sequential views but does not illustrate or appear to discuss sequential effects.	Request additional assessment relating to understand sequential effects..
2.1.14	Visual assessment scope	<i>Major</i> The LVIA states that, ' <i>The visual assessment considers the site and its surroundings from a range of receptors</i> ', however, the visual assessment is viewpoint based and doesn't consider visual receptors more widely. For example, there are several viewpoints located on the C195 and the visual effects are described and assessed for each of these viewpoints. However, the sequential visual experience for road users along the route as a whole is not discussed. Use of standard LVIA methodology (suitable for assessing utility development) has been used to assess a piece of sculpture.	To note.
2.1.7 – 2.1.27	Viewpoint photography and illustrations	The methodology used is generally considered to be appropriate.	Note the recommendations for printing and viewing images at the appropriate size to achieve the most appropriate illustration of actual visibility. Also note the limitations of using imagery to assess visual effects.
2.1.29	Mitigation	<i>Major</i> The LVIA does not discuss alternative designs or sites.	To Note.
2.1.36 – 2.1.38	Visual receptor sensitivity	<i>Minor</i> The LVIA states that ' <i>visual receptors are classified according to their sensitivity</i> ', however, sensitivity is firstly determined by combining susceptibility and value. Sensitivity assessments within the LVIA are often confused as a result of this approach. In some instances a sensitivity level is assigned to a receptor prior to determining susceptibility/value which then results in a	To clarify.

LVIA Reference	Topic	Comment	Applicant Action
		<p>different value. The example below relates to viewpoint 4:</p> <p><i>'4.3.20 This viewpoint represents the users of the minor rural road that lies to the south west boundary of the site. There are no existing footpaths or cycleways at this location. <u>Due to the location on a roadside, the sensitivity of this receptor would be medium.</u> Due to the nature of the receptor as a road user, and therefore being focused partly on the functional use of the road, susceptibility is considered to be <u>medium</u>. The duration of the view is medium. The value of the view is considered to be <u>high</u> due to the open long views towards hills and the National Park beyond, and there is a lack of existing development in the view. <u>The resulting sensitivity is considered to be high.</u>'</i></p> <p>In this case the LVIA describes the <u>sensitivity of the receptor as medium</u>, susceptibility as <i>medium</i>, value as high and concludes by describing the <u>sensitivity as high</u> which contradicts the original medium value.</p>	
	Cumulative assessment	<p><i>Major</i></p> <p>The scope of the LVIA does not consider cumulative effects. Specifically, it would be helpful to understand landscape and visual effects in association with the Wind Farms listed earlier in the review.</p>	Further assessment required to consider cumulative effects.
3.0 Baseline conditions			
3.1.8	Land under The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)	<p><i>Minor</i></p> <p>Effects on users of land classified as CROW (open access land) do not seem to be considered in the assessment.</p>	To note.
3.3.1	Site description and context	<p><i>Major</i></p> <p>The LVIA states that the '<i>landmark site is proposed at the summit of a localised distinctive hillock known as Cold Law</i>', however, it should be noted that the development site comprises the full landform and adjoining areas.</p> <p>It is questionable whether the site could be described as a landmark site. The location is compromised by turbines, forestry and topography that would adversely affect the function of the sculpture.</p> <p>The rationale for choosing the site and alternatives is not fully explained.</p>	Provide justification relating to site selection, consideration of alternatives and design rationale.
3.4.8	Viewpoint selection	<p><i>Minor</i></p> <p>Emphasis placed on views from scheduled monuments and listed buildings. Point also addressed in section 2.1.10 -2.1.13.</p>	To note.

LVIA Reference	Topic	Comment	Applicant Action
3.4.9	Photomontages	<i>Major</i> The LVIA states that photomontages 'were prepared for viewpoints where effects were predicted to be most prominent or requested by consultees'. However, photomontages have not been prepared for viewpoints 1 or 2 were the proposed development will be perceived in close range views.	Consider providing additional visualisations.
4.0 Assessment of Predicted Effects			
Landscape effects			
4.2.2	Landscape sensitivity	The LVIA uses a single sensitivity rating, 'high' across the study area. In reality the sensitivity of the range of landscape receptors across the study area should be assessed. Including the host and adjoining LCA's. In this respect the LVIA does not follow the guidance set out earlier in the report relating to assessing landscape sensitivity by determining susceptibility and value.	To note.
4.2.3	Effects during construction and at completion - Direct landscape effects	<i>Major</i> The LVIA refers to, 'a slight direct erosion of landscape features in the removal of some surface vegetation existing on site, however the development is of a very limited scale therefore the change will be of low magnitude in the context of the local and wider landscape character areas.' It is considered that this assessment in not an accurate reflection of the direct landscape effects which would be experienced as a consequence of the proposed development. There would be significant adverse landscape effects experienced within the site area both during construction and on completion during the 'operational phase'. During construction, vehicular movements and activity, soil stripping and excavation of rock will combine to introduce adverse effects. The permanent presence of a new site access, car parking areas, footpaths, landform change and the introduction of a large scale monument will introduce fundamental change of a magnitude greater than 'low'. Although referenced in the section heading, the LVIA does not consider construction phase landscape effects.	To note.
4.2.9	Comparison with local hill forts	The LVIA draws comparison with hill forts and 'other constructions at high points' and presents this as a potential argument in support of the proposal. However, it is considered that the scale and location of the proposed development is not comparable	To note.

LVIA Reference	Topic	Comment	Applicant Action
		<p>with the specific role and smaller scale structures such as hill forts.</p> <p>The LVIA states that the 'key characteristics of the national and local landscape character areas would not be harmed'. A key characteristic of the host LCT, 8: Outcrop Hills and Escarpments includes: <i>Flat-topped elongated ridges and rounded sandstone hills</i>. These characteristics are evident within the study area, particularly, the flat-topped elongated ridges; the vertical nature of the proposed development would contrast strongly with this characteristic.</p>	
4.2.10	Summary of effects on landscape character	<p><i>Major</i></p> <p>Although the widespread visibility of the landmark across the National Character Area 2: Sandstone Hills would introduce a locally characterising influence the LVIA is probably correct to assign a negligible level of effect to this area as a whole.</p> <p>The LVIA considers that the level of effect relating to the Outcrop Hills and Escarpments LCT would be <i>moderate/minor</i> but does not assess effects on the (8g) Sweethope and Blackdown LCA. It is considered that there would be localised significant effects on this LCA as a result of the characterising influence of the landmark which would be widely visible across the LCA.</p>	Further assessment required.
4.2.8 – 4.2.10	General commentary and effects on adjoining landscape character areas	<p><i>Major</i></p> <p>The LVIA does not consider indirect effects on adjoining LCA's within the study area. Figure 5 illustrates that the (11b) Buteland and Colt Crag and the (20b) Bellingham and Woodburn Valley LCA's are situated in close proximity to the site boundary. Figure 6b illustrates extensive theoretical visibility across these character areas and there is clearly potential for these LCA's to be influenced by the proposed development. It would be helpful if the LVIA described the nature of these effects, particularly, in relation to key characteristics of the respective LCA's.</p> <p>Construction phase effects are not considered.</p>	Further assessment required to understand the full range of landscape effects.
Visual effects			
General	Visual receptor	<p><i>Major</i></p> <p>Refer to earlier comments at 2.1.36 – 2.1.38 Visual receptor sensitivity appears to be assessed twice.</p> <p>Construction phase effects are not assessed.</p>	<p>Clarify approach to sensitivity assessments.</p> <p>Assess construction phase effects.</p>

LVIA Reference	Topic	Comment	Applicant Action
		<p>Where effects are moderate they may be considered significant in the judgement of the professional assessor and clear explanation should be provided to explain why the effects are considered significant or not.</p> <p>Consistent repetition of the phrase, <i>'however is likely to be perceived as a positive addition by many receptors'</i> in viewpoint assessment could lead to the interpretation that the LVIA lacks balance. Appreciation of landmark sculpture is subjective; for some people the proposed development will be perceived as positive (beneficial), for others it will be negative (adverse) or neutral. It is appropriate for the LVIA to raise these issues but it should be done in a balanced manner.</p>	<p>Clarify which moderate effects are considered significant and which are not within the assessment.</p> <p>To note.</p>
4.3.7 – 4.3.8	Viewpoint 1 Magnitude/Level of effect	<p>The proposed development would be perceived as a large scale structure in the landscape and introduce fundamental change in these short range views. Magnitude of change would be high and effects would be significant. A photomontage from viewpoint 1 or 2 would be beneficial to demonstrate the scale of the structure in the landscape.</p>	It is recommended that a photomontage from this location should be requested.
4.3.12 – 4.3.13	Viewpoint 2	<p><i>Major</i> The proposed development will be perceived as a large scale structure in the landscape and introduce fundamental change in these short range views. Magnitude of change would be high and effects would be significant. A photomontage from viewpoint 1 or 2 would be essential to demonstrate the scale of the structure in the landscape.</p>	It is recommended that a photomontage from this location should be requested.
4.3.24 – 4.3.26	Viewpoints 5 and 6	<p><i>Minor</i> Common description and assessment for 2 different viewpoints is not appropriate and does not further understanding of landscape and visual effects.</p>	Remove Viewpoint 5 from assessment.
4.3.28	Viewpoint 7	<p><i>Minor</i> Sensitivity of the receptor should probably be higher; Medium – High as a consequence of the presence of the listed building, nature of the route which will be used by residents and recreational users as well as providing quarry access. Overall visual effects would be significant as perceived from this viewpoint.</p>	Consider re-assessment.
4.3.32	Viewpoint 8 Extent of visibility from minor road	<p><i>Minor</i> The LVIA states that, <i>'There are very limited locations along this route where any view can be gained to the site.'</i> However, the pertinent issue is the visibility of the proposed development rather than ground level views</p>	To note.

LVIA Reference	Topic	Comment	Applicant Action
		of the site and the ZTV (figure 6b) illustrates extensive theoretical visibility along the route.	
4.3.5	Viewpoint 8 Magnitude of change	<i>Minor</i> Reference to a ' <i>very narrow proportion of the view</i> ' in relation to magnitude of change. The nature of the proposed development is such that it is designed to be seen. The ' <i>slender form</i> ' contrasts with the horizontal landforms and its situation on the skyline draws the eye.	To note

3. Existing LVIA reviews

3.1.1 This section considers the two existing reviews of the SG LVIA by Stephenson Halliday (SH), a landscape planning consultancy and Keep the Wannies Wild Group (KTWW).

3.2 Stephenson Halliday LVIA review

3.2.1 The SH Review was commissioned by Northumberland County Council to review the original SG LVIA.

3.2.2 The SH Review concludes that the SG LVIA to be '*a robust assessment which reaches reasonable conclusions*'. However, the Wood Review has found that there are areas where there are differences of professional opinion. In relation to the SH Review key areas of agreement and areas of difference are set out below.

Area of agreement

Baseline conditions

- 2.3. Extent of study area;
 - ▶ The 5km study area is considered appropriate. Although the proposed development will be visible from some areas beyond 5km, including areas of the Northumberland National Park, it is not considered likely that significant landscape and visual effects would be experienced beyond this distance.

Landscape effects

- 2.8. General approach to mitigation and landscape design of ancillary infrastructure, layout and surface finishes;
 - ▶ The design rationale for the landscape based mitigation and approach to the selection of materials appears to be sound and appropriate to the rural, upland landscape.
- 2.10. Landscape sensitivity;
 - ▶ The assessment does not set out the sensitivity assessment by combining susceptibility and value criteria.

Visual effects

- 2.14. The approach to utilising landform to screen parked vehicles is considered to be appropriate.
- 2.15 and 2.16. Reservations relating to the viewpoint based approach to visual assessment. The SHR states that;
 - ▶ *'The visual assessment is a viewpoint based assessment, rather than a receptor based assessment.*
 - ▶ *What this means is that only specific points have been considered, rather than whole areas. For example, footpaths are represented by single viewpoints. There is no discussion as to whether these single points are representative of all of the footpath route, or what effects would be like from other parts of the route.'* It would be useful towards understanding of visual effects if a wider receptor based assessment had been undertaken.

Areas of difference / additional observations

Methodology

- 2.2. Sensitivity assessments within the LVIA do not always follow a clear narrative to arrive at a judgement relating to the sensitivity of visual receptors.
- 2.6. Construction phase effects;
 - ▶ The LVIA does not formally assess construction phase landscape or visual effects which has resulted in a lack of understanding of how the Proposed Development would be perceived during this period.

Landscape effects

- 2.13. Level of effect;
 - ▶ The landscape assessment is simplistic and does not acknowledge higher levels of effect for some landscape receptors in closer proximity to the proposed development.

Conclusions

- 3.5. The SH Review states that, *'it would be difficult to sustain an objection on landscape grounds at appeal, if the scheme were refused'*. However, the Wood Review has identified a number of concerns relating to the proposed development which could potentially justify an objection in relation to landscape and visual issues.

3.3 KTWW LVIA Critique

- 3.3.1 The critique has been undertaken by a geography graduate with a diploma in Town and Country Planning together with input by a landscape architect *'who is highly qualified and experienced in the LVIA process'*. It would be useful and add credibility if the landscape architect could be named or qualifications and experience explicitly stated.
- 3.3.2 As with the SH Review areas of agreement and differences in the findings of the critique are outlined below;

Areas of agreement

Consideration of alternatives

- 3. The critique questions the lack of opportunity to influence the design through consultation or to be informed in an iterative manner by the LVIA process in accordance with good practice;
 - ▶ This is considered to be a valid point, the proposal is presented as a *fait accompli*, the LVIA does not consider alternatives or changes to the design of the sculpture. It is understood that the commission was subject to a mini-competition with 3 proposals put forward for selection although it is not known to what extent the wider community were involved in the final selection.
- 8. The critique states that character is derived from cultural and perceptual aspects as well as visual characteristics;
 - ▶ This is an accurate understanding of landscape character. However, it should be noted that the LVIA has assessed landscape sensitivity as 'high' so the assertion that, 'The LVIA has not given appropriate weight to these factors in assessing the sensitivity of the landscape' is not correct. It may be more relevant to say that the LVIA has not given appropriate weight to how these aspects of landscape character will be affected in assessing the level of landscape effects.
- 13. Construction phase effects;
 - ▶ There are limitations or gaps in relation to the assessment of construction phase effects in the LVIA. This matter is covered in more detail in section 2 of this review.
- 14. Landscape effects;
 - ▶ This review agrees that the proposed development would result in a high magnitude of change resulting in direct landscape effects on the site area. These effects would be significant. This matter is covered in more detail in section 2 of this review.
- 15. Landscape character effects
 - ▶ There would be a range of effects on landscape character. There would be localised significant effects on the surrounding landscape as a consequence of the strong characterising presence of the large scale sculpture. Generally within the study area the level of effect would decrease with distance from the proposed development and different landscape receptors will experience different levels of effect depending on specific characteristics and levels of intervisibility. It is too simplistic to say that landscape effects would be minor – there will be a range of effects across the study area.
 - ▶ The comparison with local hill forts is tenuous; there are large differences in relation to scale and form. Comparisons with more recent landmark monuments are more relevant.
- 20. Recreational receptors;
 - ▶ The potential effects on some recreational receptors, such as users of open access land (CROW) do not appear to be fully considered in the LVIA.
- 21. Close range visualisations;
 - ▶ It is agreed that a photomontage from viewpoint 1 or 2 would help to convey the scale of the proposed development in shorter range views.

- ▶ A viewpoint has been used from adjacent the National Park boundary beyond the 5km study area, although there is no predicted visibility. It would be useful to have a longer range view, perhaps a popular hilltop or point on the Pennine Way, to help understand how the proposed development would be perceived from the National Park.
- 23. Stock use of the phrase *'is likely to be perceived as a positive addition by many receptors'*;
 - ▶ As stated in relation to point 17. Below, the approach to assessment should be consistently objective and balanced. Use of the phrase above without introducing a point of balance, (i.e. it could also be perceived as a negative addition) is not objective.

Areas of difference

- 11. Again the point is made that the landscape should be assessed as a high sensitivity receptor. As previously stated, the LVIA has assessed landscape sensitivity as high. It is considered that all 3 reports considered in this review present an overly simplistic approach to landscape character assessment. Within the study area there are a range of landscape receptors; landscape character types and areas, each landscape receptor should be considered separately in terms of susceptibility and value to determine sensitivity to enable meaningful landscape character assessment.
- 12. Proximity to the Northumberland National Park;
 - ▶ The proposed development is approximately 4.8km from the nearest point of the national park and the potential to adversely affect the special qualities of the park is limited.
- 18. Level of landscape effect;
 - ▶ As previously stated, the level of effect would not be consistently high and would vary across the study area.

General issues

- 17. The aesthetic appreciation of sculpture is subjective. The approach to assessment needs to be balanced and recognise that the proposed development could be perceived as beneficial by some and adverse by others.
- 24 -42. Viewpoint assessment. The comparison of the respective viewpoint assessments is somewhat problematic as a consequence of the following factors;
 - ▶ The range of viewpoints is primarily road based which may affect sensitivity assessments and therefore the level of visual effect. In other words, if more viewpoints had been selected for recreational routes which were in the open countryside rather than next to roads the sensitivity assessment may have been less influenced by the presence of built elements and infrastructure and should generally be higher.
 - ▶ There appears to be confusion in relation to the assessment of visual receptor sensitivity .
 - ▶ As a general note, the LVIA under represents, and the KTWW critique over represents, the levels of visual effects as perceived from the selected viewpoints.

4. Summary of findings

Methodology and scope

Viewpoint based assessment

- 4.1.1 The visual assessment is wholly viewpoint based so the appreciation of visual effects is fully reliant on visual analysis from these viewpoints, rather than the full range of visual receptors present in the study area, to inform the assessment.

Site location and design concept

- 4.1.2 The design rationale, exploration of alternative sites and ultimately the reasons for the choice of site and how the chosen design responds to the site and landscape context are not fully articulated. This is a crucial aspect of the project. The Wood Review considers that there are fundamental shortcomings in the choice of site for a sculpture of this nature including the low, subservient location in relation to other larger hills in the nearby landscape context and the frequent presence of wind turbines in the visual experience.
- 4.1.3 It is not clear why the sculpture needs to be the same height as Hepple Haugh. Some of the design concepts are unclear and may not translate well to real world views. It would be very helpful to see a photomontage from viewpoint 1 or 2 (or both) to help appreciate the scale of the development and how the design concept would be perceived in closer range views.

Cumulative assessment

- 4.1.4 The LVIA does not consider cumulative landscape and visual effects. It would be helpful if the visual relationship with nearby wind farms was explored and assessed.

Landscape assessment

Landscape sensitivity

- 4.1.5 The landscape of the study area is considered as whole in terms of the sensitivity assessment. This approach is considered to be too simplistic. A sensitivity assessment should be carried out for each landscape receptor considered in the LVIA.

Landscape effects

- 4.1.6 The level of landscape effects on the site area are under assessed in the LVIA. Inevitably there would be significant direct landscape effects on the site area as a consequence of introducing the proposed development.
- 4.1.7 The LVIA does not provide a full and comprehensive assessment of effects on landscape character. The landscape effects on key characteristics of LCT's/LCA's described in the baseline section are not carried through to the assessment. The level of effect for the Outcrop Hills and Escarpments LCT is assessed as *moderate/minor* but the effects on the host LCA; (8g) Sweethope and Blackdown or other LCA's within the study area are not specifically assessed.
- 4.1.8 Construction phase landscape effects are not fully considered.

Visual assessment

- 4.1.9 The viewpoint based visual assessment and road based viewpoints provide a relatively limited understanding of how the proposed development will influence the visual experience across the study area as a whole.
- 4.1.10 Visual effects, particularly in relation to some close range viewpoints, are understated. For example, it is considered that visual effects experienced by receptors at viewpoints 1 and 2 would be substantial and significant.
- 4.1.11 Construction phase visual effects are not assessed.

4.2 Conclusion

- 4.2.1 The Wood Review concludes that there are fundamental issues in relation to the site selection and design rationale of the monument in relation to the chosen site. This factor combined with the presence of wind turbines in many views would compromise the role of 'Ascendant' as a landmark sculpture. In addition, the review has found that some aspects of the SG LVIA do not provide sufficient detail to understand the full range of landscape and visual effects which would be introduced by the Proposed Development and experienced by people within the local area.

Issued by

David Stokoe

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