



Northumberland County Council

**Construction of a publicly accessible landmark,
commissioned to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II
and the Commonwealth**

**Land at Cold Law, near Kirkwhelpington,
Northumberland**

Landscape and Visual Evidence
Rebuttal (J.3.3)

Prepared by David Stokoe CMLI

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Report for

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope

- 1.1.1.1 This rebuttal provides a response to some key issues raised in the Proof of Evidence by Ms. Southern in relation to landscape and visual matters (CD I.5). I have not provided a response to all of the issues raised in the proof, however, this should not be taken to imply that I am in agreement with the remaining evidence.
- 1.1.1.2 Within this rebuttal I have addressed the following matters:
- Northumberland Key Land Use Study Part D – Landscapes potentially Requiring Additional Protection (CD G.9);
 - Inspectors report – Proposed Wind Farm Developments at Steadings, Ray Fell and Green Rigg (CD L.9);
 - Viewpoints situated on the road network;
 - Sequential assessment; and
 - Additional visualisation materials.

1.2 Northumberland Key Land Use Study Part D – Landscapes potentially Requiring Additional Protection

- 1.2.1.1 Ms. Southern discusses the relevance of the *Northumberland Key Land Use Study Part D – Landscapes potentially Requiring Additional Protection* (CD G.9). The study is intended to provide a high-level overview of relative landscape value across Northumberland. It is based on an evaluation of the landscape character areas defined in the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment.
- 1.2.1.2 The study has determined that the landscape value of the host (8g) *Sweethope and Blackdown* LCA is assessed as a lower-middle ranked landscape. However, it should be noted that this assessment applies to the LCA as a whole and is not derived from site or project specific analysis. Importantly, the appellants original LVIA has assessed that the landscape of the entire 5km study area identified for the purposes of the current application - which includes large tracts of the (8g) *Sweethope and Blackdown* LCA - is of *High* sensitivity (landscape sensitivity being determined by a combination of value and susceptibility to the type of development proposed) (CD E.1 paragraph 4.2.2).
- 1.2.1.3 My findings are that this northern part of the LCA is of higher value and more susceptible (than elsewhere within the LCA) to the type of development proposed because of the distinctive landform present in this area, and the potential for a tall structure to detract from views of the distinctive north and west facing ridge line which is '*particularly sensitive*'¹. It should also be noted that the *Northumberland Key Land Use Study Part C – Sensitivity Assessment* recognises the importance of distinctive landform as a characteristic of this LCA in the statement that, '*Developments should be sited so as to avoid impinging upon the locally significant outcrop hills, such as Great Wanney Crag*'².
- 1.2.1.4 Ms. Southern references the criteria and scoring used within Part D to determine value but does not reflect that the LCA also scores in fact most highly (4/5) in respect of *Remoteness*; and the concern

¹ Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment Part B (Page 45, para. 5.122) (CD G7)

² Northumberland Key Land Use Study Part C – Sensitivity Assessment (Page 78, Mitigation issues) (CD G8)

and likelihood is that this quality would be eroded through introduction of the Proposed Development. Ms. Southern also states that;

'In the 'Views and Landmarks' section and also the 'Recreation' Section, LCA 8g currently scores 3/5 and would score higher if a landmark was added that encouraged public access to the scenic views along with new path networks path networks' (paragraph 6.1.29)

I disagree with the assertion that simply by adding a landmark which encouraged public access the value of the LCA in accordance with these criteria would be increased. My view is that this definitive conclusion is not based on sound project and site specific landscape analysis. The conclusion is based, moreover, on the assumption that the characteristics of the landmark are appropriate within this landscape. Landmarks can be natural or man made. Introduction of the proposed 'landmark' would be viewed in relation to the natural 'landmarks' such as Hepple Heugh, Hart Side and the Wanney Crag and would detract from an appreciation of these features. Introduction of an inappropriate landmark or landmark which was otherwise detrimental to landscape character would not increase the 'score' or otherwise enhance the value of the LCA.

1.3 Inspectors report – Proposed Wind Farm Developments at Steadings, Ray Fell and Green Rigg

1.3.1.1 Ms. Southern references the Inspector's report relating to the public inquiry which considered wind farm developments at Steadings, Ray Fell and Green Rigg and draws comparisons with the appeal site as follows;

'the appeal site, lies within the Outcrop Hills and Escarpment Landscape Character Type and partly within 8g Sweethope and Blackdown LCA - is less dramatic than areas further north, has significant areas of forestry, and no formal landscape designation. He also noted that the topography where the wind farm would be located is 'not particularly striking' and is seen in the context of commercial forestry, surrounding roads and the telecommunication masts at Ottercops. These observations apply with the same force, if not greater force given the addition of the turbines, to the appeal site' (paragraph 6.1.47(a)).

The inspector's report relates to a different development in a different part of the LCA and assumptions relating to this area should not necessarily be applied to the appeal site without robust justification. Ray Fell Wind Farm lies further to the east only partially within the (8g) Sweethope and Blackdown LCA in an area with less distinctive topography and where the influence of forestry plantations is stronger. The appeal site lies to the northern extent of the (8g) Sweethope and Blackdown LCA and is often perceived in the context of the more dramatic and distinctive north and west facing ridge line comprising the distinctive crags and escarpments of Hepple Heugh, Wanney Crag and Hart Side. I believe that the contextual landscape characterisation for the appeal site should be site and project specific and information derived in relation to other projects is of limited value in determining how this Proposed Development will be assimilated into the prevailing landscape.

1.3.1.2 With regard to potential effects on landform, and specifically Great Wanney Crag Ms. Southern, references the inspector's report as follows;

'the view of the turbines from the Great Wanney Crag was considered by the Inspector not to be unduly harmful as the turbines would stand well away from it, with close affinity to the coniferous plantations and would occupy a small part of a much wider panoramic view. In this respect, I note the closest Ray Fell turbines lie a similar distance away from Great Wanney Crag as does the proposed landmark (around 1.8km), however the landmark is less than half the height and of course will not be

rotating. Accordingly, in my view, the Inspector's conclusions would apply with even greater force to the appeal scheme' (paragraph 6.1.47(b)).

- 1.3.1.3 Again, comparison with the findings of the inspector's report are of limited relevance. As previously stated, the Proposed Development would be situated at the northern edge of the (8g) *Sweethope and Blackdown* LCA and will frequently be perceived in relation to views of distinctive landform, including the Wanney Craggs, Hepple Heugh and Hart Side, as evidenced in many of the appellants viewpoint figures (CD I.5.1). It should also be noted that views from the Wanney Craggs (Figures A34 and A35) (CD I.5.5) towards the appeal site are orientated towards the north where the landmark sculpture would be perceived in relation to views of more distinctive landform whereas Ray Wind Farm is situated to the east in an area of less distinctive landform with a stronger influence of plantation forestry.
- 1.3.1.4 For these reasons I do not consider that the Inspector's (and Secretary of State's) conclusions are transferrable to the appeal proposal.

1.4 Viewpoints situated on the road network

- 1.4.1.1 In relation to the use of viewpoints situated on the road network Ms. Southern states that,
- 'The Wood review criticized the approach of including views from roads. However, I consider they are very relevant for the reasons set out below. I also note this was the position of the Inspector in the Ray Fell Wind Farm Appeal who considered views from the A696.'* (paragraph 7.1.16)
- However, the Wood review did not criticise the inclusion of views from roads, it is understood that it is normal accepted practice to assess the visual effects of road users as part of the LVIA process. The criticism actually relates to the overreliance on the use of viewpoints from the road network which is stated in the relevant section of the Wood review as follows;
- '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.'* (CD F.1 paragraph 4.1.9)
- In this respect the limitation of the original SGLVIA is that most of the viewpoints are situated on roads which excludes the assessment of visual effects for receptors across large tracts of the wider area including the PRow network (beyond its interface with roads) and open access land (CRow) beyond the road network.

1.5 Sequential assessment

- 1.5.1.1 With regard to representative viewpoints and sequential assessment it is stated in Ms. Southern's proof that;
- 'the subsequent Wood review criticises the use of representative viewpoints (even though it is a standard approach (GVLIA para 6.19)), and a lack of inclusion of sequential views. This is an unfair criticism. In this open landscape the views often change gradually unlike a more enclosed landscape where view sequences often change radically over a short distance. The viewpoints in the LVIA were selected with great care and I do not think that sequences of additional viewpoints would impart new information or be material to a decision. In other words, they would not add anything to the assessment, nor is there any evidence in the Wood review to suggest they would make a material difference.'* (paragraph 7.1.7)
- 1.5.1.2 There is no criticism of the use of representative viewpoints and the criticism applies instead to the over reliance on views from the road network and a lack of sequential assessment. Within the

Wood review I noted that the SGLVIA does not consider the sequential experience as per the following extract;

'The LVIA at this stage refers to sequential views but does not illustrate or appear to discuss sequential effects'. (CD F.1 Page 5, Table 2.1)

This is an important factor in relation to this development because views of the sculpture will frequently be experienced by people whilst using the local road or recreational path network. An assessment of the sequential visual effects of these different receptors is fundamental towards understanding how people will perceive the structure as they travel through the landscape. I consider that the lack of sequential assessment is a key omission for the reasons outlined above.

1.6 Viewpoint Assessment

- 1.6.1.1 To aid understanding of visual effects and identify the main areas of difference I have provided a summary of my understanding of predicted landscape and visual effects in my Landscape and Visual Evidence, **Appendix A** tables A1.1 and A1.2 (CD J.3.1). This assessment was carried out prior to the receipt of the latest visualisations prepared by the appellant (CD I.5.5).
- 1.6.1.2 I have since had the opportunity to review these new figures and believe my assessment in relation to viewpoint 15, Great Wanney Crag, as illustrated in Figures A34 and A35 - where I have assessed the magnitude of change as low resulting in **moderate / minor** magnitude of change - has underrepresented the level of visual effect. My assessment of low magnitude assumed that the structure would largely be perceived against the strong landform in the background of the view. However, upon reviewing the visualisation it is apparent that more of the structure would be perceived above the skyline rather than backdropped by landform resulting in a medium magnitude of change and a **substantial / moderate** level of effect.

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