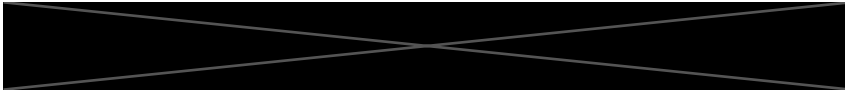


Landscape and Visual Appraisal



Prepared For: 


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Version 1.1

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1. Introduction

This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been produced by Andrew Cox on behalf of  to provide a summary of landscape and visual considerations to support a planning appeal for retrospective change of use from grazing land to residential garden and installation of ground level solar panels at Surrounded Coveys Lane High Wych Hertfordshire CM21 0LE (the 'Site').

Andrew is a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) with prior experience in undertaking Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for residential and other development proposals. Andrew undertook a site walkover and visual baseline survey including technical photography on 22nd October 2025.

This document is supported by the following illustrative materials:

- Figure 1: Landscape Character
- Figure 2: Landscape Designations
- Figure 3: Photography showing westerly views from the Site
- Figure 4: Type 1 Visualisations (7 no. sheets, Viewpoints 1 to 7)

1.1 Site Landscape Description

The Site is located within open land characterised by isolated farms and houses and an irregular pattern of agricultural land with discrete blocks of wood and narrow, winding lanes. As Illustrated in Figures 1 to 4 the Site sits on the west-facing valley flanks of Fiddlers' Brook. The sinuous watercourse flows north to south through agricultural fields to the west of the Site.

The Site has a broadly west and south facing outlook across a gentle valley landform comprising undulating farmland and overhead high voltage powerlines and pylon towers. The site is bound to the north and east by mature hedging and trees, which separate the Site from Covey's Lane public right of way.

The Fiddlers' Brook valley sides rise to an elevation of approx. 80 m above ordnance datum (AOD). The Site sits just below the 80m contour and the slightly higher ground to the east of the Site forms a minor gentle ridge due to lower lying land further east.

The Site is broadly rectangular and is bounded on three sides by dense native hedgerows. Approx. 200m of this hedgerow to the southern and western Site boundaries was planted by 2010.

To the immediate east of the site lies a grazing area. To the immediate north of this site lies built form and residential access set amongst canopy trees and other boundary vegetation.

1.2 The Proposed Development

Drawings and details of the proposed development are set out in East Herts planning application number 3/25/0401/FUL. The proposal is for retrospective change of use from grazing land to residential garden and installation of ground level solar panels.

1.3 Methodology

The LVA has been undertaken in accordance with the following documents:

- Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (2013), *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition (GLVIA3)*.¹
- Natural England (2014), *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*.²
- LI (2019), *Visual Representation of Development Proposals - Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 06/19*.³
- LI Technical Guidance Note 02/21 *Assessing landscape value outside national designations*⁴
- LI (2024), *Notes and Clarifications of Aspects of GLVIA3*.⁵

1.4 Level of effect for landscape and visual effects

The likely level of effect is dependent on all of the factors considered in the sensitivity and the magnitude of change. These factors are assimilated to assess whether or not the proposed development ought to be a material consideration. The variables considered in the evaluation of the sensitivity and the magnitude of change is reviewed holistically to inform professional judgement.

Degrees of Effect Matrix

	Sensitivity of Receptor			
		High	Medium	Low
Magnitude of Change	High	Major	Major	Moderate
	Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor
	Low	Moderate	Minor	Minor
	Negligible	Minor	Minor	Negligible

It is important to note that the matrix above is intended to act as a guide to the assessment rather than a formulaic approach. The level (relative significance) of the landscape and

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013), *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition (GLVIA3)*.

² Natural England (2014), *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*.

³ Landscape Institute (2019), *Visual Representation of Development Proposals – Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19*.

⁴ Landscape Institute (2021), *Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations*

⁵ Landscape Institute (2024), *Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 2024-01 Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of GLVIA3*

visual effects is determined by combining judgements regarding the sensitivity of the landscape or view, the magnitude of change, the duration of effect, and the reversibility of the effect. In LVA, any judgement about what constitutes a significant effect includes professional judgement, expressed by a competent and appropriately qualified assessor.

The level (relative significance) of effect is described as Major, Moderate, Minor, or Negligible. No Effect may also be recorded as appropriate where there are no effects.

2. Planning Policy

This chapter provides a summary of relevant national and local planning policy relevant to the Site.

2.1 National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

At the heart of the *National Planning Policy Framework*⁶ (NPPF) February 2025 is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. There are three overarching objectives of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental). Of particular relevance to this assessment is the environmental objective, *‘to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.’*

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that *“planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments ... b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping ... c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.”*

In section 15, ‘*Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*’, paragraph 187 sets out that:

‘Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); [and]

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;’

National Planning Practice Guidance

The NPPF is accompanied by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) available online. Those elements of PPG addressing matters in the scope of this landscape and visual appraisal and relevant to the Proposed Development are detailed below, and the guidance has been considered when designing and assessing the Proposed Development.

⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2023), *National Planning Policy Framework*. (Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>, accessed 10th November 2025).

Design

PPG emphasises the importance of good quality design as an integral part of sustainable development. PPG on design advises on the key points to consider on design, which include:

- Ensuring development can deliver a wide range of planning objectives.
- Enhance the quality of buildings and spaces, by considering, amongst other things, form, and function; efficiency and effectiveness and their impact on well-being.
- Address the need for different uses sympathetically.

Natural Environment

PPG reinforces the NPPF's commitment to recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supports the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding local distinctiveness and the use of Natural England's guidance on landscape character assessment.

2.2 Local Planning Policy and Guidance

East Herts District Plan

The East Herts District Plan (EHDP) 2018 provides policy direction. Relevant policies include Policy GBR2 (Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt), HOU12 (Design and Appearance), DES2 (Landscape Character), and DES4 (Design of Development). These require development to, inter alia, conserve, enhance or strengthen the character and distinctive features of the district's landscape.

The East Herts District Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document

The East Herts Council Landscape Character Assessment (EHDLCA) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2007 is referenced in the EHDP. Refer to Chapter 3 of this LVA for further detail of the published landscape character for the Site.

3. Landscape Baseline

3.1 Published Landscape Character Assessments

A brief summary of the published landscape character assessments in the context of the Site is detailed below.

National Character

The Site and study area shown on Figure 1 lies in National Character Area (NCA) 86 - South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland.

The NCA 86 profile gives the following as a general description for the area:

“The South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area covers the four counties of Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It stretches from Bury St Edmunds in the north-west to Ipswich in the north-east, roughly following the line of the A14 trunk road through the Gipping Valley. It then embraces the Colchester hinterland before encompassing the urban areas of Braintree and Chelmsford in the south and stretching to Bishop’s Stortford and Stevenage in the west.”

Relevant key characteristics of the NCA include:

- *An undulating chalky boulder clay plateau is dissected by numerous river valleys, giving a topography of gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrower upper parts.*
- *Fragments of chalk give many of the soils a calcareous character, which also influences the character of the semi-natural vegetation cover.*
- *South-east-flowing streams and rivers drain the clay plateau. Watercourses wind slowly across flood plains, supporting wet, fen-type habitats; grazing marsh; and blocks of cricket-bat willows, poplars and old willow pollards. Navigation locks are present on some rivers.*
- *Lowland wood pasture and ancient woodlands support the dormouse and a rich diversity of flowering plants on the clay plateau. Large, often ancient hedgerows link woods and copses, forming wooded skylines.*
- *The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving. Field margins support corn bunting, cornflower and brown hare.*
- *Roman sites, medieval monasteries and castles and ancient woodlands contribute to a rich archaeology. Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates and Second World War airfields dot the landscape, forming historical resources.*
- *There is a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, parishes and small settlements around ‘tyes’ (commons) or strip greens and isolated hamlets. The NCA features a concentration of isolated moated farmsteads and numerous well-preserved medieval towns and large villages.*
- *Larger 20th-century development has taken place to the south and east around Chelmsford, Ipswich and the new towns of Harlow and Stevenage.*

- *Traditional timber-frame, often elaborate buildings with exposed timbers, colour-washed render, pargeting and steeply pitched roofs with pegtiles or long straw thatch. Sometimes they have been refronted with Georgian red brick or Victorian cream-coloured bricks ('Suffolk whites'). Clay lump is often used in cottages and farm buildings.*
- *Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows. Transport infrastructure includes the A14, A12, M11 and Stansted Airport.*
- *A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area's archetypal lowland English countryside.*

County Landscape Character Assessment – Landscape Type

The East Herts District Landscape Character Assessment (EHDLCA) (2024)⁷ identifies the Site as lying within Area 84: High Wych Slopes. Landscape Character Area. The document gives the following as a general description for the High Wych Slopes:

“A south-facing slope of mixed farming within a small irregular field pattern, usually ditched rather than hedged. An area of transition, showing increasing urban influence in the southern part and with links to the parkland area to the west. Around High Wych there are wide stretches of open farmland with old houses nestling in small coppices. The flint church is surrounded by the school, ancient houses and thatched cottages.”

Relevant key characteristics for the High Wych Slopes LCA are as follows:

- *Isolated farms and houses.*
- *Small-scale open farmed landscape.*
- *Gently undulating south-facing slope.*
- *Discrete blocks of woodland.*
- *Tight network of narrow, winding, sunken lanes, usually ditched.*

The EHDLCA (p175) states that the High Wych Slopes *“is not a tranquil area, with commuter through-routes and the constant noise of traffic.”*

The EHDLCA evaluate the High Wych Slopes LCA as being of **poor** condition with **moderate** strength of character resulting in and **improve and restore** strategy for managing change.

Page 176 of the EHDLCA provides the following relevant strategy and guidelines for managing change in the High Wych Slopes LCA:

- *Encourage landowners to safeguard existing hedges, increase hedged field boundaries, create permanent grass strips around field margins and prevent spray drift, using financial incentives as available.*
- *Discourage the use of non-native species for woodland and hedgerow planting.*
- *Encourage the use of native species of local provenance for all new planting.*

⁷ East Herts Council Development Plans Team (2007) *Landscape Character Assessment for the East Herts District* Supplementary Planning Document

- *Encourage a reversion of arable to pasture and the management of new and existing grasslands to maximise their biodiversity potential, using low-density stock grazing where possible.*

3.2 Statutory Designations

Ancient Woodlands

There are no Ancient Woodlands within the Study Area.

Green Belt Google Chrome

The Site is located approximately 150m to the east of the Green Belt.

Scheduled Monuments

There are no Scheduled Monuments within the Study Area.

Listed Buildings and Sites

As illustrated on Figure 2, Grade II listed buildings and sites are concentrated in the Study Area. The closest of these to the Site is Chandlers Cottage (List Entry Number: 1220410) Farm House represented by Viewpoint 7.

Registered Parks and Gardens

There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within the Study Area.

Conservation Areas (CA)

There are no CAs within the Study Area.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

As illustrated on Figure 2, There are no Public Rights of Way crossing, within or following the boundaries of the Site. There is a dense network of Public Rights of Way within the Study Area. The closest PRoWs to the Site are footpath 9 adjacent to the southeast corner of the Site and Covey's Lane (restricted byway 34) approx. 30m north of the Site.

4. Landscape and Visual Baseline

4.1 Landscape Character

A site survey was undertaken to assess the landscape character of the Site and its immediate surroundings and to consider the extent to which this is consistent with the findings of the desktop assessment. The survey was undertaken on a day with good visibility.

The Site and its immediate context are reasonably representative of the published landscape character for High Wych Slopes LCA. The most relevant aspects of the published characteristics are the isolated farms and houses, discrete blocks of woodland, the small-scale open farmed landscape and the gently undulating south-facing slope, all of which are present locally to the Site.

The dense hedgerow network around the Site is locally characterising and it is noted that hedgerow restoration is included in the strategy and guidance for the High Wych Slopes LCA in the EHDLCAs (page 176). The enclosure of the Site through perimeter hedgerow has reinforced the small-scale landscape character.

4.2 Visual Baseline

The locations in the surrounding landscape from which views of the Site can be obtained are considered as the visual envelope. Viewpoints are chosen from publicly accessible locations within the visual envelope such as residential areas, public open spaces, public rights of way (PRoW) and the public highway (roads).

The sensitivity of visual receptors to alterations in the view and visual amenity is influenced by the activity they are undertaking and the degree to which their attention is directed toward the views and amenity at that location. Those most responsive to change are likely to include:

- residents within their homes;
- individuals, whether local or visiting, engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose focus or interest is often directed toward the landscape and specific views;
- visitors to heritage sites, or other attractions, where the surrounding views and amenity form an important part of the experience; and
- communities where views and amenity contribute to the landscape setting appreciated by residents in the locality.

Travelers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to experience a medium susceptibility to change. Journeys that involve published or well-known scenic routes are more susceptible and visual receptors least susceptible include people engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or rely upon appreciation of views and amenity of the landscape; people at their place of employment whose attention may be directed toward their work or activity, not on their surroundings.

Field study provided a refined understanding of the likely extent of visibility for the proposals and established an area of search of approximately 1km.

The Site's visibility is restricted by the undulating topography; dense hedgerows, field boundary vegetation, riparian vegetation along Fiddlers' Brook, woodland blocks and the presence of built form along Covey's Lane.

The only notable views of the Site interior are at long distance and from locations on the opposing side of the Fiddlers' Brook valley landform. From these locations there are partial glimpsed views of the Site interior set amongst a well vegetated backdrop. As illustrated in Viewpoint 7, **Figure 4.7** easterly views from these locations include major detracting elements: high voltage OHL and pylon towers dominate the view.

The screening effects of intervening landform, vegetation and built form are illustrated in Viewpoints 1 to 7 and are described in the following paragraphs.

To the immediate north of the Site screening is provided by woodland and built form associated with the Surrounded residential property and along Covey's Lane. Further north additional screening of the Site is provided through layers of vegetation, including belts either side of Covey's Lane, blocks of woodland at Allensgreen Wood and riparian vegetation along Fiddlers' Brook – refer to Viewpoint 1 and plate 1 below.

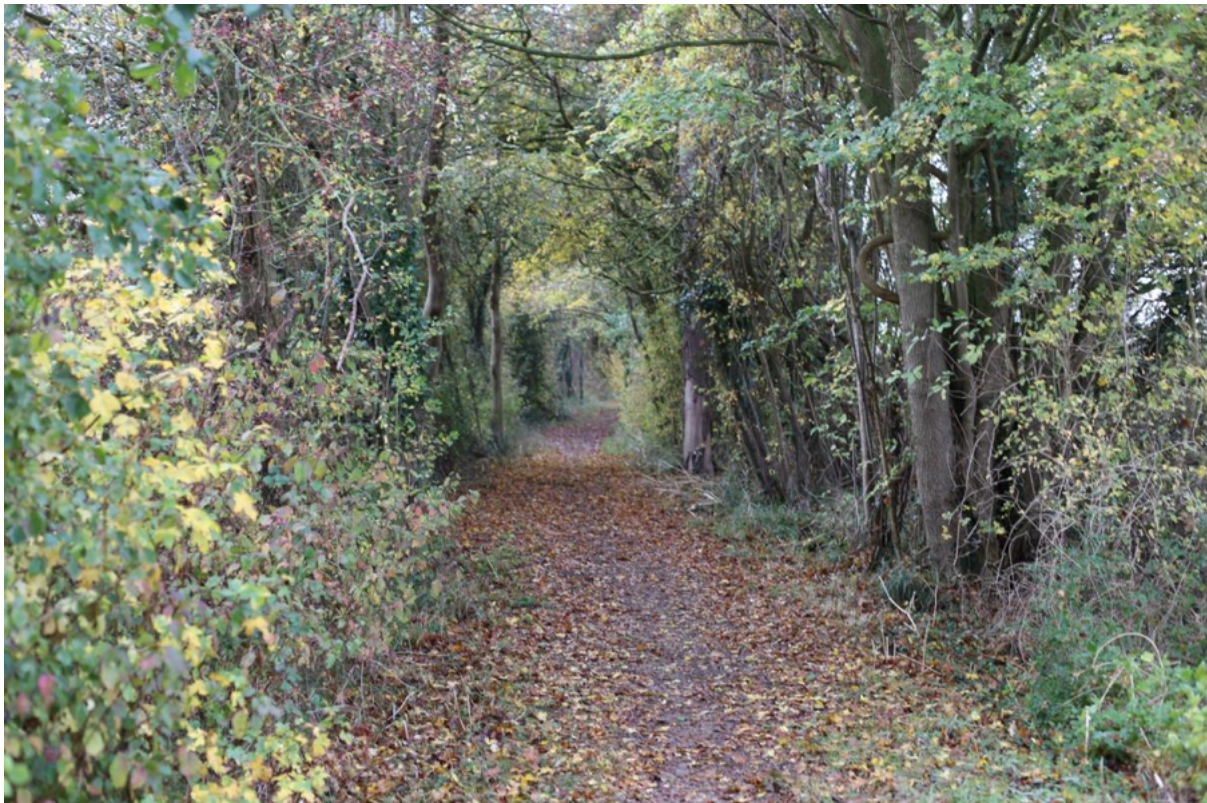


Plate 1. View south towards the Site from Covey's Lane showing vegetation belts either side of the recreational route. The Site is approximately 200 m from this view location.

Screening to the immediate east of the Site consists of built form, hedgerows and hedgerow trees at Cobies residential property and its grounds used for horse grazing with stables. Viewpoints 2 and 3 are representative of views from the east. At mid distance and to the northeast of Cobies there are tall dense hedgerows at Park Bayliss and these provide an additional layer of vegetation and visual insulation between this residential property and the Site.

At long distance there are no views of the Site due to the screening effects of landform and vegetation.

Screening to the south of the Site consists of the dense Site perimeter hedgerow and layers of field boundary vegetation including the gappy hedgerow shown in the foreground of Viewpoint 4. At mid to long distance there is additional screening of the Site from northerly views due to landform associated with a tributary to Fiddlers' Brook and the thin woodland belt immediately west of the Viewpoint 5 location.

To the immediate and midrange views west of the Site screening consists of the dense Site perimeter hedgerow and riparian vegetation to Fiddlers' Brook as shown in Figure 3. There are potentially partial, long distance, glimpsed and heavily filtered views of the Site from the southwest in winter as illustrated in Viewpoint 6.

To the northwest of the Site there is a localised area of visibility of the Site interior, goalposts and upper parts of the solar panels from locations on the opposing side of the Fiddlers' Brook valley landform. From these locations and as shown in Viewpoint 7 there are filtered, partial and glimpsed views of the eastern parts of the Site interior. The visual envelope includes approx. 350 m of Footpath 56 between Fiddlers' Brook and the agricultural building at Old Park and the distance of view to the Site is between approx. 640 and 890 m.

4.3 Visual Receptors and Viewpoint Descriptions

Viewpoint 1, Figure 4.1: Footpath 15 near the footbridge over Fiddlers' Brook. Approx. 450 m north of Site. There is no views of the Site interior or solar panels due to layers of intervening vegetation including dense hedgerow. Winter views of the Site are predicted to be partial, glimpsed, and heavily filtered.

Viewpoint 2, Figure 4.2: Covey's Lane public right of way, 145 m northeast of the Site. There is no view of the Site interior or solar panels due to built form and layers of intervening vegetation including dense hedgerow. Winter views of the Site are predicted to be screened/none.

Viewpoint 3, Figure 4.3: Footpath 9, 185 m east of the Site. There is no view of the Site interior or solar panels due to layering of intervening vegetation including dense hedgerows. Winter views of the Site are predicted to be partial, glimpsed and heavily filtered.

Viewpoint 4, Figure 4.4 :Footpath 9, 70m south of the Site. There are heavily filtered partial and glimpsed views of the Site interior. There is intervening vegetation including the dense Site perimeter hedgerow and the gappy field boundary vegetation in the foreground. There are no views of the western parts of the Site or solar panels due to the screening effects of landform and vegetation.

Viewpoint 5, Figure 4.5: Footpath 8, 350 m south of the Site. There are no views of the Site interior due to layers of intervening vegetation and the screening effects of undulating landform. Winter views of the Site are predicted to be screened/none.

Viewpoint 6, Figure 4.6: Right of way 47, 1 km west of the Site. There are layers of intervening vegetation and no views of Site interior or solar panels.

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Viewpoint 7, Figure 4.7 : Footpath 56, 890 m northwest of the Site. There are partial glimpsed views of the eastern parts of the Site interior set amongst a well vegetated backdrop. Easterly views from these locations include major detracting elements: high voltage OHL and pylon towers dominate the view. It is also noted that the eastern skyline is developed with built form breaking the skyline.

4.4 Visual Baseline Summary

The Site's visibility is restricted by the undulating topography; strong field boundary vegetation and wooded character and the presence of built form along Covey's Lane.

As demonstrated in the viewpoint and site photographs the visual envelope of the Site interior is extremely small and there are only rare, glimpsed views into the Site interior in autumn. In winter views may marginally open from where deciduous vegetation thins, but no mid or long-distance open panoramas occur.

5. Landscape and Visual Effects

5.1 Potential Landscape Effects

Landscape Value

Natural Heritage

The site and immediate context are not designated for their natural heritage.

Cultural Heritage

The site and immediate context are not designated for their cultural heritage.

Landscape Condition

The immediate landscape is in average condition due to hedgerow restoration.

Associations

There are no well-known specific associations with notable people, events or the arts.

Distinctiveness

The hedgerow restoration and presence of mature coniferous trees on the skyline provide a locally distinctive identity.

Recreational Value

The surrounding public footpaths provide some local recreational value.

Perceptual (Scenic) Quality

The local landscape exhibits low scenic quality due to presence of visually detracting pylons and OHL.

Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)

There is a very limited sense of tranquillity locally.

Function

The Site does not perform any clearly identifiable and valuable function.

Overall Landscape Value

The overall landscape value of the Site is considered medium.

Susceptibility to Change

Regarding the susceptibility of the landscape to the current Site use it is noted that the local landscape does demonstrate an ability to accommodate the changes without detriment to its overall character. This is due to the undulating landform and presence of dense hedgerows and other screening elements which generally prevent views into the Site. Also it is noted that the Site has a demonstrated ability to achieve hedgerow restoration which is included in the strategy and guidance for the High Wych Slopes LCA in the EHD LCA (page 176).

Balancing the above factors, the susceptibility of the local landscape to the current Site use is judged to be **low**.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects

The key factors relating to the magnitude of landscape effects of the proposals are as follows:

- The layout and design of the proposals provide a coherent development pattern and a positive response to local character and context in accordance with national and local policies.
- The well maintained dense hedgerows around the Site represent a reinforcement of the small scale landscape key characteristic.
- The proposals represent an overall beneficial change to landcover on the Site compared to agricultural or grazing use.

Landscape Effects

Landscape Fabric (the Site)

In terms of direct effects on the Site, approx. 0.95 ha of land has been affected by the change from grazing land to domestic grassland. The solar panels occupy approx. 0.077 ha and this represents approx. 7.5% of the Site.

The assessment of the overall magnitude of landscape change within the Site is considered **Low**. The judgement of effect is based on combining the sensitivity of the affected resource / receptor (**Medium**), and the magnitude of change (**Low**) caused by the proposals. The level of effect is considered **minor adverse**.

Given the presence of the dense perimeter hedgerow around the Site the overall landscape effect on the Site with mitigation is considered **minor neutral**.

Landscape Character

Within the approx. 1km study area the proposals have very slight and barely discernible adverse effects on landscape character due to their small scale and limited differences in appearance compared to the residential, grazing, agricultural and OHL present in the local Site context. As demonstrated in Chapter 4 of this LVA the appearance of the proposals is discernible from a tiny fraction of the landscape. For these reasons the assessment of the overall magnitude of change on landscape character is considered **Negligible**.

The judgement of effects on local landscape character combines the sensitivity of the affected resource / receptor (**Medium** sensitivity), and the magnitude of change (**Negligible**) caused by the proposals. The level of effect is considered **minor adverse**.

Given the presence of the dense perimeter hedgerow around the Site there are also beneficial effects on character due to reinforcement of the small scale landscape pattern and key characteristic of the High Wych Slopes LCA. The overall landscape effect on character with mitigation planting is therefore considered **minor neutral**.

Summary Assessment of Landscape Effects

Receptor	Without Mitigation	With Mitigation
Landscape Fabric Site	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral

Receptor	Without Mitigation	With Mitigation
Landscape Character	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral

5.2 Potential Visual Effects

The visual assessment process aims to determine from which points the Scheme can be seen in the surrounding landscape. Visual effects are changes to views of the landscape and the effect of those changes on people, including:

- The direct effects on the content and character of views through, inter-alia: obstruction, visual intrusion, alteration, and/or removal of existing elements.
- The overall effect, either deterioration or enhancement of visual amenity.

Visual effects are identified for different receptors (people) who will experience the view at their places of residence, during recreational activities, at work, or when travelling. The visual effects may include a change to an existing static view, sequential views, or wider visual amenity or the loss of individual landscape elements.

GLVIA3 (para 6.27), states that it is helpful to consider (but not restricted to) the following factors:

- Nature of the view (full, partial, or glimpsed);
- Proportion of the Scheme visible (full, most, part, or none);
- Distance of the viewpoint from the Scheme and whether it would be the focus of the view or only a small element;
- Whether the view is stationary, transient, or sequential; and
- The nature of the changes to the view.

Additionally, the seasonal effects of vegetation are considered, in particular the varying degree of screening and filtering of views.

People have different responses to views which are dependent upon context such as the:

- Location;
- Time of day;
- Season; and
- Degree of exposure to views.

Responses to views are also dependent upon the purpose of people being in a particular place such as:

- Recreation;
- Residence;
- Employment; and
- Passing through on roads, rail, or other forms of transport.

As people move through the landscape, certain activities or locations may be specifically associated with the experience and enjoyment of the landscape, such as:

- The use of paths such as core paths, footpaths, bridleways, byways open to all traffic (BOATs) and National Trails;
- National or local cycle routes; and
- Tourist or scenic routes, and associated viewpoints on land or water.

The significance of the visual effect has been assessed during construction, at completion (Year 1) of the scheme and once established (i.e. 15 years plus).

View Value

The value attached to views is judged based on the following factors:

- Recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations; and
- Indicators of the value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearances in guidebooks or on tourist maps, provision of facilities for their enjoyment and references to them in literature or art.

Visual Sensitivity

Determining visual sensitivity is the combination of susceptibility to change and value of a view. It is considered that a combination of high susceptibility to change and high value is likely to result in the highest sensitivity, whereas a low susceptibility and low value is likely to result in the lowest level.

The susceptibility of visual receptors to changes in the view and visual amenity is related to activity they are engaged in and the extent to which their attention is focused on the views and visual amenity at that location. As such, those receptors most sensitive to change are likely to include people engaged in outdoor activities where an appreciation of the landscape is the focus or residents in areas where the landscape setting contributes to the setting of the properties.

Conversely, those considered least sensitive to change include (but are not restricted to) people engaged in outdoor sports or recreation where there is no focus on the surrounding landscape/views and people at their place of work where the focus is on the work activity.

Assessment of Daytime Visual Effects

To determine visual effects both the sensitivity of the visual receptor and the magnitude of change are considered. Field work, with the assistance of the desktop study has helped to identify the following receptors that have the potential to be affected by the development.

Principal effects on the following visual receptors are considered:

- Users of PROWs.
- Users of nearby roads.

Users of PROWs

The sensitivity of users of PROWs is considered to be **High**, as appreciation of the surrounding countryside is likely to be an important component of users' enjoyment of the routes and local landscape.

As illustrated in Viewpoint 7 users of footpath 56 between Fiddlers' Brook and Old Park would experience partial views of the Site interior at long distance. The level of visual effect here would be tempered by the detracting and dominant elements in these views: high voltage OHL and pylon towers.

As illustrated in Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 the local footpath network with the exception of footpath 56 is completely visually insulated from the Site and would therefore not experience views of the proposals.

For these reasons the magnitude of change to PRow users in the Study Area is considered **negligible** and the level of visual effect would be **minor adverse** without mitigation.

The dense hedgerow network around the Site helps to assimilate the proposals into the receiving landscape and has beneficial effects when compared with the alternatives which may include post and rail fencing to grazing areas. For this reason the overall effect is considered **minor neutral** with mitigation.

Users of Country Lanes

Users of rural minor roads are considered to have **Medium** sensitivity: lower speeds, reduced traffic densities, and the local character of these routes make receptors more likely to notice the surrounding landscape compared to main road users.

As illustrated in Viewpoint 3 there are no views into the Site from the local road network and the visual effect overall would therefore be **None**.

Summary

There are no existing full views into the Site. Partial and glimpsed views of the Site are limited to a very small number of locations locally and there would be no adverse effects to any visual receptor groups with mitigation.

Summary Assessment of Visual Effects

Visual Receptor	Without Mitigation	With Mitigation
Recreational routes	Minor adverse	Minor neutral
Country lane users	None	None

6. Conclusion

This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been produced by Andrew Cox on behalf of Mr Brennan to provide a summary of landscape and visual considerations to support a planning appeal for retrospective change of use from grazing land to residential garden and installation of ground level solar panels at Surrounded Coveys Lane High Wych Hertfordshire CM21 0LE. Andrew is a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) with prior experience in undertaking Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

A site walkover and visual baseline survey including technical photography was undertaken on 22nd October 2025. The Site is broadly rectangular and is bounded on all sides by dense vegetation. Approx. 200m of the Site perimeter hedgerow to the southern and western Site boundaries was planted by 2010.

The Site and Study Area are not designated landscapes. The landscape value of the Site is assessed as medium. It lies in the High Wych Slopes LCA which has a published *poor* condition and the published landscape strategy is *improve and restore*. The level of the direct landscape effects is considered minor adverse without mitigation and minor neutral with mitigation planting. Indirect effects on landscape character are also considered minor adverse without mitigation and minor neutral with mitigation planting.

The Site's visibility is restricted by undulating landform and vegetation including the dense Site perimeter hedgerow. There are no existing full views into the Site from publicly accessible locations, despite the dense network of public rights of way locally that includes footpath 9 in close proximity to the Site. The Site visual envelope is very small and there are only rare, glimpsed, partial and long distance views of the Site from a localised area around footpath 56 to the northwest of the Site. The level of visual effects on recreational routes is considered minor adverse without mitigation and minor neutral with mitigation planting.

There would be no visual effects on any other visual receptor group such as country lanes.

As demonstrated in this LVA and as far as practicable the proposals comply with policy and guidance including the NPPF, NPPG, EHDP and the EHDLC. In particular the proposals have been demonstrated to conserve, enhance and/or strengthen landscape character in accordance with Policy DES 2 Landscape Character, EHDP 2018.

In summary, the proposals will result in no adverse landscape and visual effects. The scheme also delivers long-term benefits through new green infrastructure. The scheme can therefore be accommodated in the local landscape without causing unacceptable landscape or visual harm.