

they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that the plants where possible should be grown locally. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of the erection of stock proof fencing rather than maintenance and management of hedgerows can be checked and the retention and maintenance of hedgerows be encouraged.”

- 4.12 The boundary of the adjacent ‘Ancient slope and valley farmlands’ LCT is located to the east of Rownall Road, in proximity to the site’s eastern boundary and so potential effects are also considered. The LCT is extensive and covers a large proportion of the western section of the Staffordshire Moorlands.
- 4.13 ‘Key Characteristics’ which relate to the site and context include *“Small scale mainly ancient irregular fields bounded by trees and hedgerows”* and *“Narrow winding lanes”*.
- 4.14 The site reflects the following ‘Incongruous landscape features’:
“Electricity pylons are intrusive features visible in the landscape. Replacement of hedgerows and drystone walls by replacement by fences that are often poorly constructed.”

Churnet Valley Landscape Character Assessment (2011)

- 4.15 The Churnet Valley Landscape Character Assessment provides a more detailed review of the LCTs outlined within the Staffordshire Moorlands Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment. It identified key characteristics within each division of the LCTS, which resulted in more localised ‘Sub Areas’. The assessment identifies the ‘Wetley Rocks’ sub-area within the Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands. It forms the area west of Wetley Rocks and Cheddleton, and the westernmost edge of the Churnet Valley.
- 4.16 The site and immediate context reflect only some Key Characteristics, including:
- *“...Small scale mainly ancient irregular fields bounded by trees and hedgerows*
 - *Roadsides often bounded by dry stone walls.*
 - *Extensive views from higher ground*
 - *Settlement of Wetley Rocks and fringes of Cheddleton*
- 4.17 The following description relates to the site and context:
“Vegetation
... Hedgerows mainly form field boundaries although these can be poorly maintained, left tall with frequent gaps. Infrequent small blocks of woodland include broadleaf and conifer plantations. Tree cover within the valleys softens the landscape and limits views...
Transport and Access
The busy A520 abuts the eastern boundary of this sub area connecting to a small network of minor roads. Minor roads can be narrow, incised and steep linking small farms. Public Rights of Way link through this landscape.”
- 4.18 The following ‘Landscape Planning Guidelines’ relate to the proposed landscape mitigation measures for the development:

“a.... Field boundaries should be retained, maintained and, in places, replaced to maintain the scale of the landscape. Stone walls or native hedgerows should be used as a means of enclosure dependent upon local character...”

b. The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional local buildings characteristic of this local area.

c. Planting, both trees and woodlands can be used effectively to reinforce the existing vegetation structure. This can be particularly successful where it is associated with the restoration of historic parkland landscapes. A reinforced vegetational structure can generally more readily absorb new development as well as screening the edges of existing settlements.

d. The planting of small woodlands, hedgerows with associated trees and tree groups can help to restore the vegetation cover and re-articulate the scale of the landscape following its gradual erosion due to lack of maintenance of the hedgerow pattern...”

Designations

- 4.19 Figure 4 illustrates the location of landscape designations within the context of the site. The site is located within the Staffordshire Moorlands green belt; however this is a planning consideration not a landscape designation. Further commentary regarding the green belt is included in Section 7 of this appraisal.
- 4.20 Approximately 330m to the east of the site is the Grade II listed building, the Stables of Rownall Hall, however this is visually separated from the site due to intervening residential and farm buildings along Rownall Road, mature trees and hedgerows along the road and intervening field boundaries.
- 4.21 Approximately 1.3km to the south west, Wetley Moor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a large area of lowland heathland, which is openly accessible under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Deep Hayes Country Park is located approximately 2.5km to the north east, and Churnett Valley SSSI approximately 3.3km to the south east. There is limited or no intervisibility between these areas and the site due to the intervening distance, landform and vegetation, therefore no effects are anticipated to occur as a result of the proposed development.

Topography

- 4.22 The following should be read in conjunction with Figure 5.

Context – Landform

- 4.23 The topography of the site's surrounding context is gently undulating, with the site located on a low ridge of higher ground. To the east and west the landform falls with two valleys with watercourses at the bottom, which flow north east towards the River Churnet and Galdon Canal. To the north, the landform rises gently by approximately 40m to a localised hill close to Rownall Cottage Farm.

Site - Landform

- 4.24 The highest landform of the site is located along the northern edge of the access track / PRow Footpath ref 'Cheddleton 60', which reaches approximately 248m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) adjacent to Rownall Road. The track slopes gently downwards to the west, and at the location of

the proposed new access road the landform is approximately 243m AOD. The landform of the main part of the site which comprises of two field parcels, broadly slopes from east to west, with a small area of raised ground in the centre where a small clump of 5 trees are located along a field boundary. The highest landform within the main section of the site is at the south eastern corner at 245m AOD, and the lowest is at the south western corner at approximately 237m AOD.

Site and Immediate Context

- 4.25 An assessment of landscape character of the site and its immediate context has been conducted, providing a finer level of assessment than the published studies.
- 4.26 The site covers approximately 5.1ha and comprises two main agricultural field parcels along with a section of the adjacent field to the south and track / PRoW Footpath ref 'Cheddleton 60' accessed from Rownall Road. The land was used for sheep grazing at the time of the assessment. The track currently provides vehicular access to Newfields Farm and Cellarhead Grid Supply Point (substation), which is located immediately west of the site. There are two high voltage overhead electricity pylons within the site, with power lines passing broadly north west to south through the adjacent landscape. To the north, east and south of the site are agricultural fields largely used for pasture, with an agricultural barn adjacent to the north eastern corner of the site.
- 4.27 The site boundary consists mostly of post and wire fencing. There are also sections of post and rail fencing, with some mixed native hedgerows although these have large gaps in several places. There are also some scattered mature trees along the field boundaries, with a more consistent linear strip of trees along the northern edge of the access track / PRoW Footpath ref 'Cheddleton 60' within the site off Rownall Road. An existing belt of native woodland is located adjacent to the western boundary with the substation beyond. Gaps in this woodland allow for full views of the infrastructure within the substation, and the noise emitted from the substation and pylons are audible throughout the site and adjacent footpaths.

Landscape Value

- 4.28 In terms of "landscape value" it is appropriate to examine the role of the site and its immediate context in terms of the range of local factors set out in LI TGN 02-21 and summarised in the methodology. This considers the landscape in terms of a range of factors as set out below. As a starting point, landscape designations have been considered.
- 4.29 Landscape Designations: The site and its wider landscape context (including its Visual Envelope (VE) (Figure 8) are not subject to any national, local or other landscape designations. The site is located within the Staffordshire Moorlands green belt; however this is a planning policy consideration and is discussed within section 7 of this appraisal.
- 4.30 Natural Heritage: Features of natural heritage within the site are limited to ecological habitat in the form of the boundary hedgerows and a low number of hedgerow trees. An ecological Phase 1 survey has identified
- 4.31 Cultural Heritage: There are no heritage assets directly associated with the site or in close proximity. The Grade II Listed building, the 'Stables to Rownall Hall' lies approximately 320m to the east of the site, however Rownall Hall itself is now demolished. The stable building is visually separated from the site by the intervening buildings along Rownall Road, with hedgerows and trees

along intervening field boundaries and the road also obscuring views. There are no other listed buildings or heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the site.

- 4.32 Landscape Condition: 3 x category U trees identified within the Arboricultural Assessment (FPCR), the hedgerows binding the field boundaries within the site are mature but in decline, with large gaps and replacement with post and wire fencing. The grassland within the site is heavily grazed. While set within a rural landscape context, the adjacent sub-station and pylons within the site and adjacent landscape, heavily influence the perception of the site's landscape.
- 4.33 Associations: The site is not known to have any particular associations with people e.g. artists or writers, or historic events that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.
- 4.34 Distinctiveness: Some elements of the Staffordshire Moorlands 'Ancient Plateau Farmlands' LCT are reflected within the site and are typical of the local surrounding area which already includes a sub-station. The site generally reflects the more detracting elements described within the assessment.
- 4.35 Recreational Value: The main field parcels of the site are in private ownership and do not have any direct public access and therefore has limited recreation value. The southern section of the site forming the proposed vehicular access from Rownall Road is also PRoW Footpath ref 'Cheddleton 60'. The site also forms part of views experienced by users passing along PRoW ref 'Cheddleton 53' to the north, 'Cheddleton 47' to the south and west, and from some other footpaths slightly further from the site.
- 4.36 Perceptual (Scenic): There are some scenic elements in terms of mature trees and hedgerows, however the pylons within the site and the adjacent substation are dominant in views from most of the site and surrounding landscape. There are some distant views to the surrounding landscape, however the overhead power lines run broadly north to south are a detracting part of these views.
- 4.37 Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity): The use of the field for grazing offers an element of tranquillity, however it is not wild and there is noise disturbance from the substation and pylons within the site and surrounding landscape, which detracts from the perception of the site.
- 4.38 Functional aspects: The site doesn't form any particular landscape function as in part of a flood plain, nor form part of a strategic Green Infrastructure feature or setting to a designated landscape. The current function of the site is for grazing.
- 4.39 In conclusion and having appraised the above factors it is judged that the site and the immediate landscape is of **Medium** landscape value.

Visual Baseline

- 4.40 A visual appraisal has been undertaken for the site. This has explored the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area and sought to establish the approximate visibility of the site from surrounding locations and receptors. A series of photo viewpoints have been selected which support this analysis.
- 4.41 Photographs have been taken to illustrate a view from a specific vantage point, or to demonstrate a representative view for those receptors that are moving through the landscape, e.g. rights of way users. The photographs may demonstrate varying degrees of visibility and include both short and long range views. The photographs were taken on the 2nd and 5th of December 2021, and seasonal differences have been taken into account when determining the visual effects on these receptors.

- 4.42 'Photo Viewpoints', as referred to in this report are 'Type 1 Visualisations' or 'Annotated Viewpoint Photographs', as referred to in the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note on 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals' (TGN 06/19).

Photo Viewpoints

- 4.43 An assessment of the likely visual effects of the proposed development upon surrounding receptors is detailed in the subsequent section. Figure 7 details the location of the Photo Viewpoints and Figures 8-16 illustrate the photo viewpoints. They are briefly described below.

Viewpoint 1

- 4.44 This photograph is taken from the existing access track PRow Footpath ref 'Cheddleton 60' within the site, at the junction with Rownall Road. It represents views experienced by people walking along the footpath and those accessing the substation and Newfields Farm. The view north west towards the main parcels of the site are obscured by trees along the route, however partial views are possible with the existing high voltage electrical pylons visible through the trees. The Public Right of Way is intended to provide vehicular access to the site from Rownall Road.

Viewpoint 2 (Potential Type 3 / Montage)

- 4.45 PRow Footpath ref 'CH47' extends north from the access track/ Footpath ref 'Cheddleton 60', and this viewpoint is taken within the field from the route approximately 200m from the site boundary. Here, the view is open and the rising landform and wide gaps in the site's southern boundary hedgerow allow for full views of the main field parcels of the site. The existing high voltage power line pylons within the site and extending across the agricultural fields to the north are prominent in the view. a small agricultural building adjacent to the site's north eastern boundary is visible. however established trees along field boundaries obscure views to the north and east.

Viewpoint 3 (3i / 3ii)

- 4.46 This view point is taken immediately adjacent to the site's south western boundary, from PRow Footpath ref 'CH47' before the route enters the woodland to the west of the site. The rising landform of the site to the north and east offers full views into the main field parcels, but also encloses views from the route. The land proposed to form the vehicular access road beyond the hedgerow to the east is not visible due to the landform and existing trees and field boundary hedgerow. The existing high voltage power line pylons within the site are prominent in the view.

Viewpoint 4a (Potential Type 3 / Montage)

- 4.47 PRow Footpath ref 'CH53' runs adjacent to the site's northern boundary and along an existing farm access track which accesses the agricultural building adjacent to the site. This viewpoint looks south west from the site's north western boundary from a field access gate into the site. The hedgerow and trees along the site's northern boundary filters views into the site, however the main field parcels are visible and the pylons within the site are dominant from this point. Views further south and east are obscured by the intervening landform, trees and field boundary hedgerows.

Viewpoint 4b (4bi / 4bii)

- 4.48 This viewpoint is taken from the site's north eastern boundary at an access gate into the main field parcels from PRoW Footpath ref 'CH53'. The route also forms the access track leading to the agricultural building adjacent to the site. The view south / west from this point is relatively enclosed by mature trees along the site's eastern field boundary, trees within the site and the high voltage pylons within the site. Noise disturbance and infrastructure from the pylons within the site and substation to the west is highly noticeable from this point, with views across the site and above the strip of woodland adjacent to the site's western boundary. Some glimpsed views of the landscape to the south are possible through intervening trees and above the landform of the site.

Viewpoint 4c (Potential Type 3 / Montage)

- 4.49 This viewpoint looks south west towards the site from Rownall Road, at the beginning of PRoW Footpath ref 'CH53' / the access track leaving to the agricultural building adjacent to the site. It is taken approximately 280m from the site boundary, and the view across the intervening field is open due to post and wire fencing along the track and within the field. The landform falls away from this point obscuring parts of the site, along with the established trees along the track and agricultural building. The pylons within the site and the substation are visible beyond the landform.

Viewpoint 5

- 4.50 PRoW Footpath refs 'CH42' and 'CH43' both extend broadly to the east from Rownall Road adjacent to Rownall Hall Farm. This viewpoint is taken from where these routes join with Rownall Road approximately 390m from the site boundary, representing the view for users of the routes and of people using Rownall Road. From this point, glimpsed views of trees and pylons within the site are possible above the rising landform and intervening hedgerows.

Viewpoint 6

- 4.51 PRoW Footpath refs 'CH58' and 'CH59' traverse the agricultural fields to the south of the site. Footpath ref 'CH58' connects to the proposed vehicular access track / PRoW Footpath 'FP60'. This viewpoint is taken from approximately 270m from the site boundary. Views into the main field parcels are filtered by vegetation along intervening field boundaries. Glimpsed views of the site and pylons are possible through gaps in the trees and over intervening hedgerow field boundaries.

Viewpoint 7

- 4.52 PRoW Footpath ref 'CH49' runs along a track off Rownall Road providing vehicular access to a number of residential properties and farms. This viewpoint looks north from a high point along the route adjacent to Mayfield House approximately 780m from the site boundary, and represents the view experienced by people walking along the route and those accessing properties. Distant, glimpsed views of the site are possible through gaps in intervening field boundary hedgerows from some points, however the site is largely obscured for most of the route.

Viewpoint 8

- 4.53 Werrington village is located on a ridge of higher landform to the south of the site. This viewpoint is taken from Armshead Road approximately 1.2 km from the site boundary and represents the view for residents and road users looking north towards the site. The falling landform allows for

some distant, partial views of the landscape, with pylons visible in the distance. Mature hedgerows and trees along the intervening field boundaries, and a localised hill in the landform, obscures the view towards the site.

Viewpoint 9

- 4.54 PRow Footpath ref 'CH19' runs east to west along the rising landform of the agricultural fields north of the site, from Thornyedge Road to Rownall Road. This viewpoint looks south from a high point approximately 770m from the site boundary, representing the view for users of the route. Partial views into the site are possible above intervening field hedgerow boundaries. Pylons within the site and adjacent fields are visible, with glimpsed views of the adjacent substation through the intervening vegetation.

Viewpoint 10

- 4.55 Wetley Rocks is a small village along the A520, south of Cheddleton. This viewpoint looks west from the pavement on a high point along the A520 / Leek Road approximately 1.4 km from the site boundary. The view is open across the rolling landform, with mature hedgerows and trees along field boundaries and scattered farms in the distance. The pylons within the site are visible above the vegetation, however the site itself is obscured by the intervening landform and vegetation.

Viewpoint 11

- 4.56 This viewpoint looks south west from a high point on Cheadle Road in Cheddleton (south) approximately 2.3 km from the site boundary and represents the view for residents and road users. The view west from this point is open across the rolling landform, with mature hedgerows and trees along field boundaries and scattered farms in the distance. Glimpsed views of the pylons within the site are visible above the vegetation, however the site itself is screened from view due to the intervening landform and vegetation.

Viewpoint 12

- 4.57 Public Right of Way Footpath ref 'Cheddleton 21' runs from Brund Lane to Ostlers Lane at Cheddleton. This viewpoint looks south west from the southern settlement edge of Cheddleton approximately 3.1 km from the site boundary, and represents the view for residents, users of PRow and road users at Cheddleton. The site is fully obscured from view by the intervening landform and vegetation at this point.

Summary of Visual Baseline

- 4.58 The baseline analysis results in a number of reasoned conclusions which are summarised below:
- The site is located adjacent to a substation and contains high voltage pylons within the site, both of which are visually dominant features which can be readily seen and heard from the surrounding landscape;
 - A number of Public Right of Way Footpaths pass adjacent to the site boundary to the north, west and south, with PRow Footpath ref 'Cheddleton 60' along the proposed access track;
 - The adjacent substation, woodland, hedgerows and residential form along Rownall Road limits the visual envelope to the west and east;

- The site is located on a localised ridge of higher ground, with the landform rising mildly across agricultural fields to the north and south, allowing for filtered views into the site from some locations on higher ground close to the site;
- Mature hedgerows and trees along field boundaries obscures views into the site from further afield.

5.0 LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS AND MITIGATION

Introduction

- 5.1 The development proposals are described in the Design and Access Statement and other information accompanying the planning application. The existing landscape resource and the visual receptors and amenity of the site have been considered by the planning and design process and have informed the resultant scheme. This approach has entailed collaboration between landscape, urban design, ecological and other professionals. The landscape components of the scheme are an important integral part of the proposals.

Landscape Design and GI Objectives

- 5.2 The key objectives of the landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are to:
- Retain existing landscape elements where possible including trees, hedgerows and grasslands;
 - Enhance the deteriorating landscape elements such as the traditional native hedgerows along field boundaries, which have become gappy and overgrown, or where boundaries have been replaced by post and wire fencing;
 - Improve the ecological diversity and value of the existing grassland which is currently low;
 - Enhance opportunities for biodiversity;
 - Manage surface water runoff on-site through SUDS features;
 - Soften views and integrate the development into its setting, with additional native planting reflective of the surrounding landscape context.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure (GI) Proposals

- 5.3 The landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are detailed in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the planning application. In summary these proposals include:
- The provision of 1.75 hectares of land dedicated to green infrastructure, including:
 - An area of grassland beneath the existing pylons to be harrowed and re-seeded with green hay methods, if possible, intended to remain as grazing land following completion, improving the ecological value of the grassland;
 - Surface water drainage features including an infiltration basin in the north western corner and two drainage swales adjacent to the proposed vehicular access, planted with an appropriate wetland seed mixture;
 - Retained trees and hedgerows, with gaps filled-in with a suitable mixture of native species reflective of those found on site;
 - Proposed native tree planting within hedgerows to reflect those existing on site;
 - A belt of native woodland planting with some larger, structural specimens along the eastern edge of the site.
 - A further 3.84 hectares of land south of the site also under control of the applicant is proposed to be planted with additional native hedgerows, trees and the grassland managed and improved

to enhance its ecological value. The successful establishment of this land as highlighted in the ecological assessment is expected to provide a net gain to biodiversity

- 5.4 The landscape and GI proposals will establish a network of native planting appropriate to the rural setting. Once mature, will create a connective habitat for wildlife and assimilate the proposed built form into the receiving landscape context. New native hedgerow planting and infilling of gaps in the existing hedgerows will restore the original traditional field boundaries which are in decline and offer new opportunities for biodiversity. The proposed woodland planting and trees will reflect the existing woodland elements in the surrounding context and soften existing views of the pylons within the site, and the adjacent substation. The existing grassland will be enhanced by suitable treatments to topsoil and seeding methods appropriate for continued grazing and creating a more valuable ecological resource. New wetland areas will create opportunities to enhance biodiversity.
- 5.5 It is proposed that the battery storage facility will be in operation for 40 years, after which the structures will be removed, and the site returned to agricultural use. The associated mitigation planting will however be retained in perpetuity.

Landscape Management

- 5.6 All of the landscape areas and public open space features will be managed and maintained. This would be achieved through the implementation of a comprehensive Landscape Management Plan (LMP), to ensure the successful establishment and continued thriving of the landscape proposals.

6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

- 6.1 The following section outlines the likely landscape and visual effects that would arise from proposed development on the site. Schedules detailing these likely landscape and visual effects for the receptors are included in Appendices B and C respectively. Please refer to these in conjunction with the following descriptions.

Landscape Effects

Construction

- 6.2 The construction phase is anticipated to take 18 months. During this phase, some temporary disruption to the site's landscape will occur, including:
- Laying of the proposed paving surface for the vehicular access from the existing access track / PRow Footpath ref 'Cheddleton 60', including the removal of some trees adjacent to the track;
 - Construction machinery travelling to and from the site;
 - Ground works to create the proposed infiltration basin and drainage swales / trenches adjacent to the proposed access road;
 - Laying of the proposed gravel surfacing within the main land parcels;
 - Siting and setting up of the battery storage infrastructure, security fencing and acoustic fencing;
 - Works to topsoil of proposed grassland areas to ensure successful establishment of grass seed;
 - Planting of the proposed woodland, hedgerows and trees.
- 6.3 All construction works will be carried out in accordance with best practice procedures to minimise potential effects on landscape character. Appropriate methods will be adopted to protect existing trees and vegetation in accordance with guidance contained within BS 58376.
- 6.4 The landscape effects during construction are assessed as being of a transient nature and the timescales involved would be relatively short, this is considered to be of limited significance overall. Therefore, the landscape effects during construction are considered to be **Negligible** for both the wider scale 'Potteries and Churnet Valley' NCA, and neighbouring local character areas. Effects are anticipated to be **Minor Adverse** for the 'Ancient Plateau Farmlands' Landscape Character Type in which the site is located, and **Moderate Adverse** for the site itself.

Operation (following Completion)

National Character

- 6.5 The site is located within the 'Potteries and Churnet Valley' NCA, which encompasses the city of Stoke on Trent and extends north past Biddulph and east to the outskirts of Ashbourne. The NCA covers a very extensive landscape area of which the site forms a very small part. The pastoral agriculture land use of the site with scattered hamlets and farmsteads with A-roads within the surrounding landscape relate to some elements of the description for the NCA. Otherwise the site and its immediate landscape context do not generally reflect the listed key characteristics.

- 6.6 The landscape mitigation proposals include a block of native woodland planting along the eastern boundary, which relates to SEO 1 which states: “...*Manage, expand, link and buffer the characteristic semi-natural woodland...*”.
- 6.7 The filling-in gaps in hedgerows and planting new hedgerows with hedgerow trees also relates to SEO 3: “...*restoring traditional boundary features to benefit landscape character...*”.
- 6.8 Overall effects are assessed to be **Negligible** for both completion and at year 15.

District Character

- 6.9 The proposed development is anticipated to have **Negligible** effects at both completion and year 15, for all district-scale character areas identified as covering the site and adjacent landscape context, discussed as follows:
- 6.10 The Staffordshire Moorlands Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment 2008 identifies the site as being located within the ‘Ancient Plateau Farmlands’ Landscape Character Type (LCT) which forms a single, relatively small section of the Staffordshire Moorlands district. The site reflects some key characteristics of the LCT including the: “...*gentle undulating landform... Fields often demarcated by fencing... Dairy farming... Electricity power lines and substation.*”
- 6.11 The description highlights detracting features and declining Landscape Quality: “...*proliferation of incongruous features and the deteriorating condition of existing landscape features*”. This relates to the site and surrounding landscape including the field boundaries hedgerows being: “... *generally in poor condition... . Power lines and electricity substation are dominant incongruous features within the landscape... Hedges used as field boundaries are poorly maintained with gaps that have been replaced with post and barbed wire fence that is also in poor condition...*”
- 6.12 The proposed development generally reflects the character of the existing landscape setting, with the adjacent substation and electrical pylons within the site. Once established, the proposed woodland and hedgerow planting provides opportunities to restore traditional field boundaries and soften views of the proposed built form, along with the existing incongruous pylons within the site and the substation to the west.
- 6.13 The ‘Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands’ LCT covers a broad area across the district, and the boundary is located immediately adjacent to the site’s eastern boundary where it meets Rownall Road off PRoW Footpath ref ‘CH60’. There is limited inter-visibility between the site and the vast majority of this LCT, with only glimpsed views from areas immediately adjacent to the site access off Rownall Road. The site and immediate context reflect only some Key Characteristics, including “*Small scale ... irregular fields bounded by trees and hedgerows*”, along with Rownall Road being a “*Narrow winding lane*”.
- 6.14 The site and context also reflect some ‘Incongruous Landscape Features’ identified, including: “*Electricity pylons are intrusive features visible in the landscape. Replacement of hedgerows and drystone walls by replacement by fences that are often poorly constructed.*”
- 6.15 Overall, there is very limited intervisibility between the site and this LCT. Once established, the proposed woodland planting along the eastern section of the site will soften views of the scheme and of the existing pylons and substation. The proposed scheme could help mitigate listed incongruous features for this adjacent LCT.

- 6.16 The 'Wetley Rocks' Sub-Area is a more localised part of the of the 'Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands' LCT identified in the Churnet Valley Landscape Character Assessment 2011. It forms the area west of Wetley Rocks and Cheddleton, and the westernmost edge of the Churnet Valley. As with the broader level LCT, there is very limited intervisibility between the site and the Wetley Rocks sub-area, with only glimpsed views from immediately adjacent to the site access off Rownall Road.
- 6.17 The site and immediate context reflect only some Key Characteristics, including:
- "Hedgerows mainly form field boundaries although these can be poorly maintained, left tall with frequent gaps. Infrequent small blocks of woodland include broadleaf and conifer plantations... Minor roads can be narrow, incised and steep linking small farms. Public Rights of Way link through this landscape."*
- 6.18 The proposed landscape mitigation measures reflect Landscape Planning Guidelines including:
- "Field boundaries should be retained, maintained and, in places, replaced to maintain the scale of the landscape. Stone walls or native hedgerows should be used as a means of enclosure dependent upon local character... The planting of small woodlands, hedgerows with associated trees and tree groups can help to restore the vegetation cover and re-articulate the scale of the landscape..."*

Site and immediate context

- 6.19 The site and immediate context currently comprise agricultural fields and a large electrical substation to the west, which connects to 2 high voltage electrical pylons within the site and a further pylon. Three Public Rights of Way run adjacent to the site. The proposed vehicular access point utilises an existing access track within the site, which is shared with the substation and Wayfields Farm, and also forms PRow Footpath ref 'CH60'. Footpath ref 'CH47' traverses north to south through the fields to the south of the site and through the woodland adjacent to the site's western boundary, connecting to Footpath 'CH53' which runs adjacent to the northern boundary. The site's primary land use is pasture, and an agricultural barn and storage area is situated adjacent to the site's north eastern boundary. A strip of woodland separates the site with the substation, however the structures within the substation are highly visible within the site and surrounding landscape and emit noise which can be heard from most points within the site and adjacent footpaths.
- 6.20 There are currently no waterbodies within the site, however a pond marked 'Reservoir' lies adjacent to the site's north eastern boundary, which was dry at the time of the assessment. The landform of the site will change but to a minor extent only, with the overall gradient remaining as existing. Some earthworks are required for the construction of the infiltration basin in the north western corner and drainage swales / trenches along the proposed access road.
- 6.21 3 category 'U' trees are proposed to be removed as recommended within the Arboriculture Assessment, with 2 category 'C' trees and one category 'C' tree group to facilitate construction of the vehicular access. The development proposes to retain the majority of existing trees where appropriate. Gaps within the existing hedgerow field boundaries will be filled-in with suitable native species and where possible, hedgerow trees will be planted within the new sections of hedgerow. A strip of native woodland planting on the eastern boundary will offer enclosure of the scheme once established and will increase the overall tree cover of the site.

- 6.22 Other land under control of the applicant to the south of the site / adjacent to the proposed access road is proposed to be managed in order to provide a 10% overall biodiversity net gain. The main improvements will be the ecological value of the grassland, with new hedgerow planting forming a new boundary to the field, with new hedgerow trees and a strip of trees adjacent to the southern boundary of the main land parcel.
- 6.23 The grassland proposed to be enhanced with topsoil treatment / stripping or harrowing, green hay seeding methods and as recommended within the ecological appraisal. Proposed surface water drainage features will be seeded with an appropriate native wetland seed mix, increasing the diversity of habitats within the site.
- 6.24 The proposed scheme will change the site's character by introducing new features in the form of the 4m high acoustic fencing. The paved surfaces are anticipated to be tarmac for the access road and gravel for the interior surfacing. The proposed electrical infrastructure within the site is anticipated to be smaller in scale in comparison to the adjacent substation and high voltage electrical pylons within the site. The proposed battery storage containers and other built infrastructure are reflective of that visible within the adjacent substation to the west. At completion the effects on the site's landscape are considered to be **Moderate / Minor Adverse**. Once established, the proposed planting will assimilate the built form into the receiving landscape context and provide screening benefits to existing incongruous landscape features of the substation and pylons. Overall, the proposed effects on the landscape of the site at year 15 are anticipated to be **Minor Adverse**.
- 6.25 It is anticipated that the proposed battery storage facility is expected to be in operation for 40 years, after which the structures will be removed, and the site returned to agricultural use. The associated mitigation planting will however be retained in perpetuity. Effects on landscape character are therefore temporary in nature with the retention of the proposed structural landscape and offsite ecological enhancements ultimately provide long term beneficial effects once the storage facility itself has been removed.

Visual Effects

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

- 6.26 The ZTV (Figure 6) of the proposed development identifies the surrounding land from within which views towards any part of the proposed development are likely to be possible. The ZTV is not however, an indicator of the effect of the proposed development on the view but simply, its visible extent in the surrounding landscape.
- 6.27 A computer modelled ZTV for the proposed development was initially prepared based upon landform data and proposed building heights. This has then been reviewed on site and refined to take account of the visual 'screening' provided by buildings, trees, hedgerows and other features.
- 6.28 The ZTV of the proposed development is broadly reflective of the rising landform to the north and south, with some areas identified mostly on elevated ground further afield. To the north the ZTV extends approximately 1km from the site towards Rownall Cottage Farm, where a localised hill in the landform reaches approximately 262m AOD. To the south it extends approximately 1.3km towards the northern settlement edge of Werrington, abutting Armshead Road. Approximately 4km to the north east, the ZTV encompasses the sloping landform of a localised valley to the west of Cheddleton. It also covers the western slopes of some areas of higher ground 500m to the south

east within the land north of Cellarhead, and a ridge of landform reaching 285m AOD approximately 1.5km to the south west, between Overmoor and Wetley Rocks.

- 6.29 There could be some limited locations (beyond the extent of the ZTV shown) that could have a potential distant or very limited view to a part of the development. Equally, there could be some locations shown within the ZTV that would not experience any views to the resultant development.

Visual Envelope (VE)

- 6.30 The VE (Figure 7) of the proposed development identifies the surrounding land from within which views towards any part of the proposed development are likely to be possible. The VE is not however, an indicator of the effect of the proposed development on the view but simply, its visible extent in the surrounding landscape.
- 6.31 Informed by the ZTV, a hand drawn VE for the proposed development was initially prepared based upon the local topography context and proposed building heights. This has then been reviewed on site and refined to take account of the visual 'screening' provided by buildings, trees and other features. Viewpoints 10 and 11 are located within the ZTV, however the viewpoints illustrate that there is no view of the site from these points. Viewpoints 5, 7 and 8 are closer to the site and are also set within the ZTV, however the viewpoints from these locations illustrate screening by the vegetation along intervening field boundaries.
- 6.32 The VE of the proposed development generally extends north and south of the site, due to the existing mature woodland vegetation and the substation to the west, and the residential / farm buildings and established trees along Rownall Road obscuring views to the east. The gently rising landform of a localised hill to the north and south allows for some views into the site, however mature vegetation along field boundaries and the lower landform obscures views into the site from further afield.
- 6.33 As with the ZTV there could be some limited locations (beyond the extent of the VE shown) that could have a potential distant or very limited view to a part of the development. Equally, there could be some locations shown within the VE that would not experience any views to the resultant development.

Construction

- 6.34 A temporary adverse effect upon the local visual resource will occur and this depends on the actual extent of visibility of the site for receptors. Inevitably those visual receptors in closest proximity such as users of the Public Rights of Way Footpaths ref 'CH60', 'CH53' and 'CH47' located within and immediately adjacent to the site will afford full and partial views of construction activity. This is likely to include vehicular movement and associated machinery, site compounds, and earthworks/ground modelling, and users are expected to experience **Major / Moderate Adverse** effects at this stage.
- 6.35 The following receptors are anticipated to experience **Moderate Adverse** effects:
- Users of footpaths slightly further afield such as 'CH58' and 'CH59' to the south are expected to experience partial views of machinery and vehicles accessing the site from the south.
 - A limited number of residential properties will also afford partial views of machinery during this phase, including residents of properties along Rownall Road.