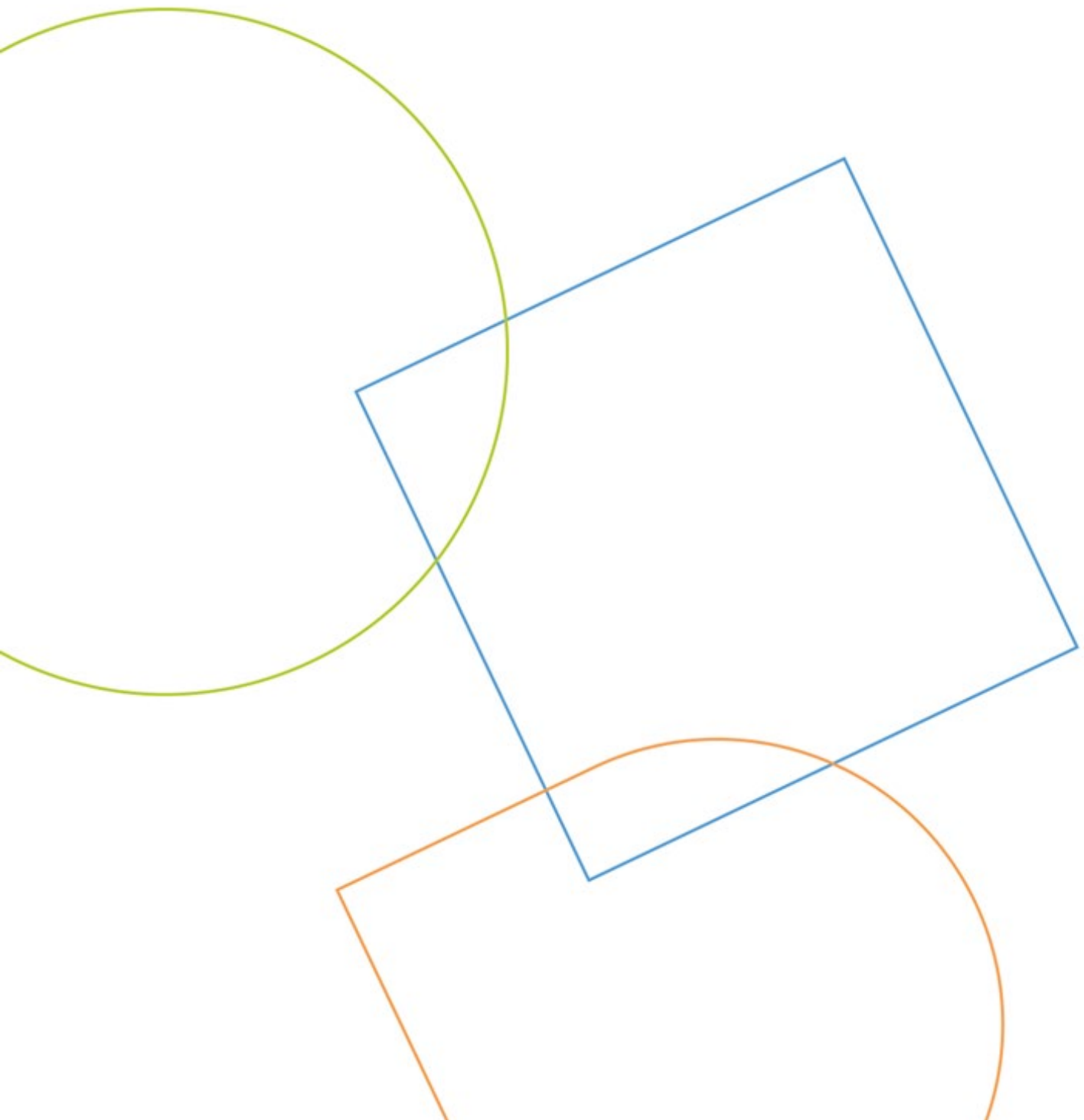




Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Tean Leys BESS, ST10 4NS

Tean Leys Energy Storage Ltd.

May 2025

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Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)

3306 Tean Leys BESS, ST10 4NS

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1 Introduction

1.1 Context

- 1.1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by Lanpro Services Ltd on behalf of Tean Leys Energy Storage Ltd to review landscape and visual issues relevant to the development of a battery energy storage system (BESS) and associated infrastructure, access and cable route on land at Tean Leys Farm, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire (the Site).
- 1.1.2 This LVA (herein referred to as “the Appraisal”) identifies potential landscape and visual effects associated with development of the Site and the likely landscape and visual effects that could arise as a consequence of the proposed development.
- 1.1.3 A Site visit was undertaken in January 2025 by an experienced Chartered Landscape Architect to appraise the character and condition of the Site and the landscape context, and to identify key visual receptors. The weather was mixed although visibility improved throughout the visit.
- 1.1.4 All photographs within Appendix 2 were taken with a digital camera, a Nikon D610 (a Full Frame Sensor camera) with a 50mm Focal Length prime lens in accordance with the guidance contained within LI Technical Guidance Note 06/19.
- 1.1.5 Lanpro Services Ltd. is a multi-disciplinary planning, environmental and design consultancy with over 15 years’ experience of landscape, masterplanning, urban design, architecture, archaeology, heritage, ecology, planning, and environmental impact assessment. The company is a registered practice of the Landscape Institute.

1.2 Methodology

- 1.2.1 This Appraisal is based upon the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ Third Edition (GLVA3)¹ produced by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. The Methodology also considers the following guidance:
- Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 Published August 2024 Notes and Clarifications on aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3) – consultation²;

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013, *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd Edition, Routledge, London.

² Landscape Institute Draft Technical Guidance Note 05/23 (July 2023) *Notes and Clarifications on aspects of the 3rd Edition Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3)* – Consultation.

- Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note 02/21 (26 May 2021) Assessing landscape value outside national designations³;
- Christine Tudor and Natural England, An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (October 2014)⁴;
- Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note 06/19 (17 September 2019) Visual Representation of Development Proposals;

- 1.2.2 A LVA is carried out when a development falls outside of the requirements of the EIA Directive and Regulations and is a standalone Appraisal.
- 1.2.3 The overall principles and the core steps in the process are the same as a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment but with the Appraisal the process is informal and there is more flexibility, but the essence of the approach – specifying the nature of the proposed change or development; describing the existing landscape and the views and visual amenity in the area that may be affected; predicting the effects, although not their likely significance; and considering how those effects might be mitigated – still applies.
- 1.2.4 Local Planning Authorities may ask for ‘Appraisals’ where planning applications raise concerns about effects on the landscape and/or views and visual amenity. As an LVA is not intended for use in EIA the use of the term ‘significant’ or ‘significance’ is avoided.
- 1.2.5 The landscape or visual baseline that describes the existing situation could be used for any form of development on a Site. However, the proposals, the assessment of the effects of the proposals, and the assessment of the ability of the Site to absorb changes associated with the proposals are specific to the development under consideration.
- 1.2.6 GLVIA3 stresses the need for an approach that is proportional to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects.

2 Existing Situation/Baseline

- 2.1.1 The application Site (‘the Site’) covers an area of approximately 10.7 hectares, this includes the proposed cable route corridor and accesses. The cable route corridor runs north from the Site to the electricity distribution site on Cheadle Road in Upper Tean and south from the Site to a proposed electricity substation (approved under planning application ref SMD/2023/0594) located adjacent to the railway line to the south of the A50.
- 2.1.2 The Site of the proposed BESS sits on a northeast / southwest axis and is broadly rectangular. It is located approximately 150m to the west of Tean Leys Farm and approximately 180m north of the A50. The Site forms an agricultural field located immediately to the west of Tean Leys Farm, a dairy and poultry farm. The nature of the

³ Landscape Institute (26 May 2021) Technical Guidance Note 02/21 *Assessing landscape value outside national designations*.

⁴ *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (October 2014) (Christine Tudor, Natural England) Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), (2002) Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland.

farm use has led to the requirement for a number of large farm sheds to house both the cattle and poultry. These are located clustered together to the east of the Site alongside the farmhouse. Tean Leys Farm is the closest residential property to the Site at approximately 230m to the south east. A farm track leads north west from the main farmstead to the south eastern boundary of the Site, allowing access into the Site through a farm gate. There are two existing telephone masts located to the south of this track, both of which are outside of the Site itself. Approximately 180m to the south of the Site is the A50, which is in a cutting and enclosed by established roadside vegetation. Surrounding the Site to the north, west, and east are agricultural fields interspersed with copses, lone trees, and blocks of woodland. The Site is bounded by established field boundary hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees. There are a number of scattered trees outside of the Site to the north along the top of the ridgeline.

- 2.1.3 The topography of the Site is shown on Figure 3 (Landform), which illustrates how the surrounding landform is relatively flat at approximately 175m AOD and occupies a finger of elevated landform alongside the A50 that forms the plateau above the slopes of the River Tean to the north and the River Blithe to the south. The landform across the Site itself falls away from the northern boundary from approximately 181m to 171m AOD. There is a small depression within the middle of the Site associated with the historic (1983) excavation of subsoil from the Site and adjacent fields in connection with the construction of the A50 (SMD/1983/0005). Immediately north of the Site, the landform quickly falls away into the Tean Valley creating a ridgeline which the Site's northern boundary sits upon. A set of high voltage transmission lines run north east to south west along the valley slope to the north of the Site.
- 2.1.4 The Site is located to the southwest of Lower Tean, which is identified as a Smaller Village under Policy SS9 of the Local Plan. The Site is within the parish of Checkley.
- 2.1.5 There are a number of public rights of way (PROW) in the area surrounding the Site. The nearest is Checkley 12 which crosses the A50 to the southeast of the Site and runs through Tean Leys Farm. Checkley 42 splits from Checkley 12 to the east of the Site. Checkley 14 runs northeast from Blythe House before merging with Checkley 12 just south of the A50. To the west Checkley 5 runs north roughly parallel with Checkley 12. Further north, Checkley 9 travels northwest connecting Checkley 12 with Checkley 5.
- 2.1.6 The Site, according to Environment Agency (EA) mapping, is in Flood Zone 1, the category at lowest risk of flooding, and has no material flood risk.
- 2.1.7 The Site does not contain any ecological designations but is within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone. The nearest SSSI is Dimmings Dale & the Ranger approximately 4 miles northeast of the Site. The nearest Local Nature Reserve is Cecilly Brook approximately 3 miles north of the Site.
- 2.1.8 The Site also falls within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).
- 2.1.9 The Site is currently in agricultural use as grazing pasture and is classified as being Grade 3 agricultural land under Natural England's Agricultural Land Classification. On site

testing has been undertaken and has confirmed the site to be Grade 4. An Agricultural Land Quality Report is included within this planning application confirming this.

- 2.1.10 The Site forms part of the open agricultural / pastoral fields associated with the wider farmstead.

2.2 Published Landscape Character Assessments

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

National Character Area

- 2.2.2 Natural England's Character Map of England identifies the Site falls within National Landscape Area 68: Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands. This profile describes the area as "though divided by the River Dove's wide floodplain, is predominantly a rolling plateau that slopes from the southern edge of the Peak District to the valley of the River Trent in the south-west..."⁵ The key characteristics are described as:
- 2.2.3 *'A predominantly pastoral landscape of rolling countryside that is still largely rural and relatively tranquil, featuring distinctive field boundary patterns and characteristic hedgerows with hedgerow trees.*
- *Grassland for livestock is the dominant land use although dairy and cereal farming are also important.*
- 2.2.4 *An overall wooded character derived from scattered ancient and semi-natural woods, parkland and boundary trees.*
- 2.2.5 *Predominantly hedgerow bounded, the field pattern varies from small to medium-sized fields to the north of the Dove; mostly large-scale and rectilinear on the broad river flood plains; strongly rectilinear in Needwood Forest; and smaller and more irregular to the west.*
- *There are good surviving examples of water meadows feature along the three main river valleys.*
- 2.2.6 *Wood pasture and designed parklands, often with veteran trees, are found throughout the area. They are generally associated with landscape parks and country houses, such as Sandon, Sudbury and Kedleston.*⁶
- 2.2.7 NCA 68 includes additional guidance in relation to the management of the landscape and the opportunities of relevance include the following measures:
- 2.2.8 *'Planting new hedgerows, hedgerow trees and associated grassland buffers strips, and managing hedgerows in traditional local Midlands style, to maintain and enhance*

⁵ National Character Area Profile: 68. Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands, Natural England, January 2013, Page 3.

⁶ National Character Area Profile: 68. Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands, Natural England, January 2013, Page 6.

landscape character and improve habitat connectivity, particularly where this can assist in regulating soil erosion.

2.2.9 *Restoring existing wood pasture and extending it where appropriate to enhance the overall network of woodland habitats.*

- *Restoring and creating species rich grassland and other habitats associated with wood pasture.*

2.2.10 *Establishing a strong landscape framework as the context for existing major settlements and potential development areas within and t surrounding the National Character Area (NCA), and ensuring that their influence on the quality of the surrounding landscape is positive and that new green infrastructure is provided.⁷*

2.2.11 Overall, NCA 68 sets out that in the west of the character area, woodland planting is recommended to screen the advancing conurbations and provide a strong framework. This is to be supplemented with the reinforcement and replacement of field boundary treatments where appropriate to create further structure within the landscape and to reinforce landscape pattern.

2.2.12 Equestrian driven development and landscape change has negatively impacted on the landscape through the removal of hedgerows and the introduction of shelter for horses, and where possible this should be reversed or counteracted. The NCA also notes that where possible native woodland planting could be introduced to connect isolated blocks of woodland, where appropriate.

2.2.13 This is a national scale assessment and though it provides a useful broad scale overview of landscape character, the detail of more local scale landscape character assessment studies is more relevant to LVA for development proposals of this scale.

Staffordshire Moorlands Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA) 2008

2.2.14 The Staffordshire Moorlands LSCA identifies the Site within the Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes. This character type is found in both the Potteries and Churnet Valley Joint Character Area, to the central west of the District south of Werrington and Cellarhead, and in the Needwood and Claylands Joint Character Area, in the south western corner of the District. The LSCA describes the Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes as a '*generally small scale landscape comprised of irregular fields*' upon a '*rolling plateau with dispersed scattered hamlets and farmsteads*'. Tall hedgerows are common across the countryside and the field boundaries are lined with ancient hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees creating dense cover which along with the rolling landform provide visual enclosure. Oak and ash are predominate trees in this area, although lines of alder and willow are found along streams and rivers. New tree and shrub planting lines the A50 dual carriageway creating a green corridor through the area. The large scale feature of the A50 has in parts

⁷ National Character Area Profile: 68. Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands, Natural England, January 2013, Page 13-16.

been cut into this small scale landscape limiting views out and creating a sense of enclosure.

2.2.15 Identified Key Characteristics are:

- *“Gentle undulating landform with flat open valleys*
- *Small scale ancient hedgerow field pattern*
- *Low lying wet fields with ponds and well vegetated streams*
- *Views limited by hedgerow pattern and dense tree cover*
- *Urban fringe farming with horseculture*
- *Incongruous A50 dual carriageway corridor and mainline railway”⁸*

2.2.16 Key Planning and Management Issues:

- *“Impact of conurbation; urban fringe farming and increase in horseculture*
- *Replacement of hedgerows by fencing*
- *Busy roads and mainline railway*
- *Loss of some semi-natural vegetation (ancient woodland, hedgerows and semi-natural grasslands)”⁹*

2.2.17 Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change:

- *“Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape character area as in the area to the north west of Blythe Bridge as a landscape requiring regeneration; and the remaining area including that part of the landscape character type within the Needwood Claylands as requiring landscape enhancement.”¹⁰*

2.2.18 Landscape Planning Guidelines include:

- *“In the area in the west of this landscape character type large scale woodland planting would screen and contain the edge of the conurbation reducing its visual influence. Plantations should be largely broadleaved and need to take account of the flatter landscape of the river valley. The re-establishment of hedgerows and/or small tree groups redefining small field enclosures will combine with the larger tree blocks to reduce the scale of the landscape.*
- *Reinforcing the existing vegetational structure of the area away from the urban fringe should consist of small scale planting of small field size, field corners and hedgerow trees.*
- *New native woodland planting should where possible be used to improve the distribution of and links to existing ancient woodlands, counteracting isolation of these woodlands.*

⁸ Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA) 2008, Page 55.

⁹ Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA) 2008, Page 56.

¹⁰ Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA) 2008, Page 57.

- *The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.*¹¹

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2014 – 2023 (adopted September 2020)

2.2.19 The Site is located in the Parish of Checkley within the administrative boundary of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Local Plan (SMDCLP) and the policies that are considered of particular landscape relevance to this proposal are:

- Policy DC1: Design Considerations
- Policy DC3: Landscape and Settlement Setting
- Policy C3: Green Infrastructure
- Policy NE1: Biodiversity and Geological Resources
- Policy NE2: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

2.2.20 **Policy DC1:** This policy notes that all development must be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness. The supporting text for the policy locates good design within the wider matrix of sustainable development.

2.2.21 **Policy DC3:** This policy notes that all development must have regard for the landscape within which it is situated. In particular five specific criteria are referenced, these will be addressed in turn.

‘1) Resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence;’¹²

2) Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence’¹³

3) Supporting developments which conserve or enhance the biodiversity qualities of any natural or man-made features within the landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, walls, watercourses or ponds’¹⁴

4) Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape’¹⁵

3) Ensuring that development does not adversely affect the wider setting of the Peak District National Park.’¹⁶

2.2.22 **Policy C3:** This policy notes that Green infrastructure must be considered under NE1 and C3. The Staffordshire Moorlands Strategic Green Infrastructure Network notes the

¹¹ Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA) 2008, Page 57.

¹² Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, September 2020, Page 110.

¹³ Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, September 2020, Page 110.

¹⁴ Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, September 2020, Page 110.

¹⁵ Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, September 2020, Page 110.

¹⁶ Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, September 2020, Page 110.

development priorities for the area. The Site falls between GI corridor 9 (the Cecilly Brook Corridor) and 11 (the Blythe Bridge Corridor) which run northwest in parallel to each other and are broadly perpendicular to the A50, adjacent to the Site.

- 2.2.23 Whilst the Site is not within either corridor it is worth noting that the corridors should be treated as permeable and with guidance applicable to the wider area. Common themes relate to the restoration of habitat and improvements to the accessibility of green assets. In addition, vegetation along watercourses should be supported along with enhancements to PROWs and other pedestrian and cycle routes.
- 2.2.24 Much of the wider guidance relates more directly to residential development and the benefits of connecting development to multi-use green spaces. As noted, the Site's capacity to contribute to green infrastructure and habitats is limited to its ability to strengthen peripheral habitats – it is not considered appropriate for the development to offer enhancements to public accessibility.
- 2.2.25 **Policy NE1:** This policy states that the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development.
- 2.2.26 Biodiversity enhancement has the potential to aid in addressing climate change by having a greater number of and better connected habitats, through providing valuable green infrastructure and helping reconnect people and nature, especially if local communities are encouraged to help establish or maintain new and existing habitats. The proposals deliver new native woodland and hedgerows, providing additional biodiversity and habitat provision and therefore it is considered that the proposal accords with Policy NE1.
- 2.2.27 **Policy NE2:** this policy notes that trees, woodlands, and hedgerows should be protected, enhanced, and extended. The development does not entail the loss of any trees or hedgerows and will provide new planting increasing the diversity of species within surrounding area. Given the absence of adverse impacts to trees, woodland or hedgerows it is considered that the proposal accords with Policy NE2.
- 2.2.28 The documents outlined above, together with the Site appraisal, have been utilised to establish the baseline conditions for the Site and its surroundings in order to complete this assessment.

2.3 Statutory Designations

Scheduled Monuments

- 2.3.1 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the Site. The nearest ancient monument is Bowl Barrow 280m ESE of Hall Green House, List Entry Number: 1008540, approximately 900m to the northeast of the Site. Refer to Figure 7 Visual Receptors.

Listed Buildings

- 2.3.2 There are no listed buildings on Site nor are there any scheduled monuments. The nearest listed building, the Grade II listed Footbridge over the River Tean, List Entry Number: 1037936, located approximately 630m northeast of the Site. There are a number of other

listed buildings within the wider area, including the Grade II listed Hall Green Farmhouse, List Entry Number:1374700, located approximately 650m north of the Site. The nearest ancient monument is approximately 900m to the northeast and the nearest conservation area is 1.2km to the north of the Site. Refer to Figure 7 Visual Receptors.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

- 2.3.3 The Site does not contain any ecological designations but is within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone. The nearest SSSI is Dimmings Dale & the Ranger approximately 4 miles northeast of the Site, outside of the 2km Study Area.

Conservation Areas

- 2.3.4 The Site is not within a Conservation Area. The closest conservation area is Upper Tean within the settlement of Tean located approximately 1.2km to the north of the Site. Refer to Figure 7 Visual Receptors.

Environmental Designations

- 2.3.5 The nearest Local Nature Reserve is Cecilly Brook approximately 3 miles north of the Site, outside of the 2km Study Area.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

- 2.3.6 There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within or directly adjacent to the Site. There are a number of PRoW crossing the surrounding farmland. The nearest is Checkley 12 (SF/Checkley CP/12) which crosses the A50 to the southeast of the Site and then continues north following the existing farm tracks approximately 200m west of the Site and then runs through Tean Leys Farm and across the farmland to the north.
- 2.3.7 To the south of the A50 there are a number of Public Footpaths radiating out of Blythe House, one of which Checkley 14 runs northeast from Blythe House before merging with Checkley 12 just south of the A50. Public Footpath Checkley 5 crosses the A50 approximately 560m north west of the Site and continues north through the countryside, past Highfields Farm and Benthouse Farm before continuing north to Upper Tean. Public Footpath Checkley 9 is located on the lower lying land alongside the River Tean approximately 600m from the Site.

2.4 Landscape Resource and Contribution of the Site to Landscape Character

Landscape Fabric of the Site (landscape Features)

- 2.4.1 The Site forms an agricultural field situated immediately to the north west of Tean Leys Farm. The Site is currently used for grazing pasture, and at the time of the site visit was set to grassland. Given the existing use of the Site, all other landscape features are associated with the field boundaries.

Vegetation Cover

- 2.4.2 Vegetation cover across the Site is limited to the field margins.

Tree Cover

- 2.4.3 Trees on Site are restricted to the field boundaries. The Site is close (approximately 110m) to two isolated blocks of woodland to the north west and there is a scattering of trees to the north of the Site.
- 2.4.4 The Northern Churnet and Rudyard Woodlands Zone contains scattered blocks of woodland set within a wider landscape of heathland, pasture, and agriculture. The priorities are the preservation and enhancement of existing woodland and increasingly the connectivity of the semi-natural habitats, particularly those associated with the woodland.

Hedgerows

- 2.4.5 The Site is contained by established native hedgerows.

Contribution to Landscape Character

- 2.4.6 The Site, and the wider countryside of which it is a part of, is typical of the character of the Settled plateau farmland slopes and is therefore considered to positively contribute to the rural character of this area.
- 2.4.7 The Site sits on the rolling plateau above the Rivers Tean and Blithe. The field parcels, including that of the Site are more rectilinear on the plateau than within the lower lying landform along the River corridors. Native woodland blocks provide containment and enclosure across the countryside to the north of the A50. The A50 itself forms a well vegetated visual barrier across the landscape to the south that separates the countryside and screens views and separates the countryside.
- 2.4.8 The Site is located in proximity to existing large scale farmsteads with large farm sheds and areas of hard standing. The existing enclosure provided by woodlands and the A50 allow for these large features to become absorbed into this landscape, with limited wider

appreciation. However, where these sit upon the ridgeline, they are visible within cross valley views from the north and east, as shown on Photo Viewpoint 4. The presence of the A50 is a detracting element within this area. It cuts across the landscape to the south of the Site disrupting tranquillity locally as well as being visually prominent in places. The high voltage transmission lines to the north of the Site detract from the character of the wider valley landscape.

- 2.4.9 Desk and field surveys have been undertaken to establish the baseline conditions of the Site itself, the ‘fabric’ of the landscape. Features, elements, combinations of elements and less tangible attributes such as the aesthetic qualities of the Site have been considered. These attributes have been assessed against criteria that indicate the value of the landscape as set out within LI Advice Note TGN 02/12 including: Natural Heritage; Cultural Heritage; Landscape Condition; Associations; Distinctiveness; Recreation; Perceptual (Scenic); Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity) and Functional. Other criteria include replaceable / substitutable, frequency and dominance of incongruous elements, importance placed on the Site by stakeholders, local accessibility to the Site and its role in wider pattern of accessibility and its importance at a local, national or international level, e.g. National Landscapes or National Parks.
- 2.4.10 In light of the above the value of the receiving landscape has been identified as being considered **Medium Value**. This is driven by the existing use and association of the Site within the wider farmstead and how this contributes positively towards the overall character of the Settled plateau farmland slopes combined with the presence of detracting features identified locally such as the A50 and the high voltage transmission lines. It is considered that whilst not unattractive, this is an area of ordinary landscape with high potential for substitution and demonstrating a quality that is fairly commonplace.
- 2.4.11 The ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies is referred to as Landscape Susceptibility.
- 2.4.12 The susceptibility of this landscape to accommodate the development is considered **Medium Susceptibility**. This is where, the relevant characteristics of the landscape have some ability to accommodate it without undue adverse effects, taking account of the existing character and quality of the landscape, and/or achievement of relevant planning policies and strategies.
- 2.4.13 The judgement on landscape sensitivity is based on consideration of both the landscape receptor’s value and its susceptibility to change arising from the Scheme. The Medium Value and Medium Susceptibility of the landscape are combined to lead to a **Medium Sensitivity**. This is where through consideration of the landscape resource and

characteristics, there would be a medium landscape capacity or some scope for landscape change or positive enhancement.

2.5 Visual Resource

- 2.5.1 The visual baseline establishes the areas from where the new components of the development can be seen, who can see them, the places where those who see them would be affected and the nature of views and visual amenity. This includes the identification of key receptors and viewpoints which represent such receptors.
- 2.5.2 The visual assessment aims to determine from which points the Proposed Development can be seen in the surrounding landscape; this is known as the visual envelope. Once determined, a series of key representative viewpoints are chosen (i.e. areas within the visual envelope from where it may be possible to see the Proposed Development from publicly accessible viewpoints), such as residential areas, public open spaces, PRoW / public footpaths and roads.
- 2.5.3 Visual effects relate to changes in available views and visual amenity of the landscape and the effect of those changes on people, including:
- The direct effects of the Proposed Development on the content and character of views and visual amenity through the intrusion or obstruction and/or the change or loss of existing elements.
 - The overall effect on visual amenity, be it degradation or enhancement.
- 2.5.4 The susceptibility of visual receptors to changes in the view and visual amenity is related to the activity they are engaged in and the extent to which their attention is focused on the views and visual amenity at that location. Receptors most sensitive to change are likely to include: residents at home; people, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views and visual amenity; visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views and visual amenity of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience; communities where views and visual amenity contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area.
- 2.5.5 Travelers on ordinary road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of medium susceptibility to change. Where travel that involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views and visual amenity is likely to be a high susceptibility to change.
- 2.5.6 Visual receptors likely to be the least sensitive to change include: people engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views and visual amenity of the landscape; people at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings, and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life (although there may on occasion be cases where views and visual amenity are an important contributor to the setting and to the quality of working life).

- 2.5.7 Consideration of the study area, via desk research and field survey, has identified locations from which the Site and the proposed development would potentially be visible. Visibility is limited by:
- Screening provided by the A50 and associated roadside vegetation.
 - Screening provided by woodland blocks throughout the surrounding landscape.
 - Location of the Site within the middle / top of the plateau. Set back of Site away from plateau edge limits opportunities for proposals to be visible on horizons or skylines.
 - Mature field boundary vegetation – mature trees and established hedgerows layer together to provide enclosure across the countryside.
- 2.5.8 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study (Appendix 1) was developed to guide and inform further site work for the visual assessment work. A 2km study area was used to review the Site and the surrounding area.
- 2.5.9 The ZTV (see Figure 9 Augmented ZTV) mapping suggests the following:
- Vegetation alongside the A50 provides a visual barrier to the south.
 - Woodland blocks and vegetated field boundaries help provide enclosure and screening of local views towards the Site.
 - The plateau location of the Site away from the prominent edge allows changes in landform to screen views of the Site from the surrounding areas.
- 2.5.10 Within the wider countryside:
- The ZTV indicated limited potential visibility in limited zones on the edge of the Study Area, however it is unlikely that at this distance (circa 2KM) that there would be any notable views of the proposals, with the layering of low level vegetation across the countryside screening the development.
 - The position of the infrastructure away from the northern edge of the Site results in no visibility from within the valley floor to the north.
- 2.5.11 ZTV only provides an indication of potential visibility. It is generated using broad scale data sets and does not take account of general tree cover, hedges or other vegetation, instead focusing on large scale woodland and topography. Accordingly, this draws an exaggerated impression of the extent of visibility.
- 2.5.12 Field study is required to provide a refined understanding of the likely extent of visibility for the proposed BESS. Current field work has established an area of search of approximately 2km, based on the following factors:
- Views and visual influence of the proposed development would be limited to the local area and mostly contained to locations immediately alongside the Site to the north of the A50.

- Setting the development back from the more prominent northern edge of the Site along the ridgeline allows the existing landform to provide enclosure and screening of the built form in locations to the north and east, including in cross valley views.

2.5.13 Field work, with the assistance of the ZTV has helped to inform the visual envelope and a number of representative and illustrative views have been selected for inclusion in the report to illustrate the visual effects of the proposed development. Photographic viewpoint locations are shown on Figure 10, and Illustrative and representative photography are shown on Figure 12 (Appendix 2).

2.5.14 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:

Private Receptors

2.5.15 The proposals occupy a location away from any large settlements, and as such impacts on large numbers of private Receptors are considered unlikely. There are a limited number of isolated farmsteads local to the Site. Other than Tean Leys Farm, these properties are not covered by the ZTV ‘splash’, however, for robustness, the nearest of these have been selected for inclusion within the assessment:

- Tean Leys Farm
- Highfields Farm

Public Receptors

2.5.16 In terms of Public Receptors, there are a number of public rights of way (PROW) in the area surrounding the Site, however in proximity to the Site, it is only PROW Checkley 12 that the ZTV identifies as having any potential visibility. PROW Checkley 5 is located to the west of the Site, and although is not covered by the ZTV ‘splash’, given proximity, for robustness has been selected for inclusion within the assessment:

- PROW Checkley 12
- PROW Checkley 5

Transport Receptors

2.5.17 In terms of transport receptors, views are unlikely to be experienced from the A50 at approximately 180m to the south of the Site owing to the extent of vegetation cover bordering the road, which creates an almost continuous visual screen. This is supported by the Augmented ZTV. However, given its proximity and for robustness it has been selected for inclusion within the assessment.

2.5.18 Riverside Road (route of PROW Checkley 5) is located to the west of the Site, and although is not covered by the ZTV ‘splash’, given its proximity and for robustness it has been selected for inclusion within the assessment:

- Users of the A50
- Users of Riverside Road

Summary

- 2.5.19 Overall, the extent of views and visual influence of the proposed development would be limited to the local area and mostly contained to locations immediately alongside the Site to the north of the A50, (see Figure 9 Augmented ZTV).
- 2.5.20 To accompany any future LVIA work, the representative viewpoints shown on Figure 10, Proposed Viewpoints are intended to be used to support the LVIA.

3 The Proposal

3.1 Overview of Proposals

- 3.1.1 The Appraisal of the proposed development has been based upon the proposals illustrated on drawings prepared by Lanpro and Tean Leys Energy Storage Ltd.
- 3.1.2 The proposed development is for an energy storage facility in the form of batteries and associated infrastructure. A site layout plan is provided at Appendix 3. This shows the likely layout of the battery storage site, which may be subject to some further refinement based upon the final selection of equipment suppliers.
- 3.1.3 The development itself has been located within the lower lying area of the Site away from the prominent ridgeline, to ensure limited appreciation of the new built form from within the surrounding countryside. The low level of BESS infrastructure (c4m), allows for the sloping nature of the Site (a change in elevation of c10m) to be utilised to provide screening of new built form within the Site.
- 3.1.4 The following elements (whilst not an exhaustive list) form key considerations in the assessment:

Energy Storage

- 3.1.5 The design principles and key characteristics of the BESS Site itself are listed below for clarity:
- The compound will measure approximately 120m x 170m.
 - Battery containers would have a maximum length of 6m, maximum width of 3m and a maximum height of 4m each.
 - Battery inverter units would measure 5.4m in length x 2.2m width x 2.3m in height each.
 - Palisade fencing around the compound with a maximum height of 3m.
 - Internal access tracks with a width of 4m.
 - No lighting is proposed.

Fencing and Security

- 3.1.6 The design principles of the fencing and security are listed below for clarity:
- A deer type wire mesh and wooden post fencing with a maximum height of 2.5m would be used on the Site perimeter.
 - No lighting is proposed.
 - 3m galvanised steel painted black or green palisade fencing would be used to surround the high voltage equipment.
 - CCTV camera on poles with a maximum height of 3m.
 - CCTV poles to be galvanised steel painted black or green.

Associated Infrastructure

3.1.7 The development also requires the installation of associated infrastructure required for the running of the battery storage site which comprises:

3.1.8 Customer substation compound with transformers – Maximum height 3.95m.

Site Access

3.1.9 The BESS Site will be accessed from the existing access road to Tean Leys Farm to the east. A secondary access point to the BESS site is also proposed to provide an alternative access for emergency vehicles. A southern access point is also included for construction and occasional maintenance of the cable route and connection to the approved 132kv substation under SMDC application ref. SMD/2023/0594.

3.1.10 The main traffic generated by the development will be during the construction period which will be relatively short. A construction management plan can be prepared to provide routing and traffic generation details as part of any planning application.

3.1.11 At this stage, it is anticipated that deliveries into the site will be concentrated during construction which will cover an 18-24 month period.

3.1.12 Once operational, traffic movements to and from the Site would be minimal, with only a maintenance team requiring access to the site periodically.

The Cable Route Corridor

3.1.13 The cable route corridor runs north from the Site to the electricity distribution site on Cheadle Road in Upper Tean and south from the Site to a proposed electricity substation (approved under planning application ref SMD/2023/0594) located adjacent to the railway line to the south of the A50.

3.1.14 The construction of the cable route undertakes a combination of open trench construction across agricultural fields and where possible within built up areas. Otherwise, a technique called Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) is utilised to drill the cable underneath features such as the A50 and a number of other smaller roads that the route passes across.

3.1.15 The construction of the cable route is akin to the initialisation of typical utility infrastructure, and whilst it is recognised that there would be some short term temporary disruption associated within its installation, these effects (on landscape and visual receptors) would not be notable, and so are not considered within the LVA.

Landscape Scheme

3.1.16 The following general landscape opportunities have been applied to the landscape proposals. These are based upon site investigations, landscape character assessment and visual effects considerations.

3.1.17 The scheme shown on Lanpro Landscape Strategy Plan (Appendix 3 of this document) includes the following:

- c15m wide native woodland belt along northern Site boundary.

- Reinforcement of existing field boundary hedgerows and new native hedgerow trees.
- New native individual tree planting.
- New areas of native scrub.
- Replacement planting of hedgerows requiring removal to facilitate cable corridor.

3.1.18 The landscape proposals outlined above meet with the Landscape Planning Guidelines for the Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes Landscape Type as detailed in Section 2 of this document through the use of new native woodland planting and the reinforcement of existing hedgerows and new native hedgerow trees.

4 Identification of Potential Effects

4.1 Potential Landscape Effects

- 4.1.1 The determination of the magnitude of landscape change combines an assessment of the size or scale of change likely to be experienced as a result of each effect, the geographical extent of the area likely to be influenced and the duration and reversibility of effects.

Landscape Fabric of the Site

- 4.1.2 Other than the agricultural / pastoral use of the Site, there are no tangible landscape elements within the Site itself. As set out above, all landscape elements are located to the edge of the field and associated with the field boundary hedgerows.
- 4.1.3 An Arboricultural survey has been undertaken, and all boundary vegetation would be protected in line with BS 5837 requirements. The intention would be to utilise the existing access into the Site, negating the need for any hedgerow loss for access.
- 4.1.4 During construction there would be a temporary loss of approximately 1.8ha of the existing agricultural field to accommodate the development with the remainder of the field coming forward to accommodate access tracks and the landscape proposals. As set out above all boundary vegetation would be protected in line with BS 5837 and new planting could be implemented at the first growing season. As such, during the Construction Phase, the Magnitude of Change is considered **Low**.
- 4.1.5 The judgement of effect is based on combining the sensitivity of the affected resource / receptor (**Medium Sensitivity**), and the magnitude of change (**Small**) caused by the proposed development. Effects can be either positive or negative, and in some cases, neutral (neither positive, nor negative). Overall, given the temporary loss of 1.8ha of the agricultural field to accommodate the proposed development for the 40 year lifetime of the project, the level of effect has been assessed to represent a **Minor / Moderate Adverse Effect**.
- 4.1.6 The Landscape Proposals include for the following:
- New native woodland along northern Site boundary.
 - New areas of native scrub.
 - Hedgerow reinforcement along the Site boundaries.
- 4.1.7 The Landscape Proposals could be secured as part of one or more planning conditions and could be implemented at the first growing season following any planning approval.
- 4.1.8 At Year 1, the proposed mitigation planting would yet to have established, and therefore effects would be as identified at Construction; **Minor / Moderate Adverse Effect**.
- 4.1.9 Once the scheme has established (Year 15) and the planting proposals have matured, the longer-term Magnitude of Change is considered **Small** but with the new planting now

having a **positive / beneficial effect**. Because of the increase in the overall level of planting, effects at Year 15 on the landscape fabric of the Site are considered **Minor / Moderate Beneficial**.

- 4.1.10 It is important to note that this is a temporary scheme proposed for 40 years, at which point the battery containers and concrete plinths are to be removed at the end of the 40 year development lifespan and the land returned to previous use.

Landscape Character

- 4.1.11 The Site, and the wider countryside of which it is a part of, is typical of the character of the Settled plateau farmland slopes and is therefore considered to positively contribute to the rural character of this area. The Site is located in proximity to existing large scale farmsteads with large farm sheds and areas of hard standing.
- 4.1.12 The Site sits on the rolling plateau above the Rivers Tean and Blithe. Native woodland blocks within the surrounding farmland provide containment and enclosure across the countryside to the north of the A50. The A50 itself forms a well vegetated visual barrier across the landscape to the south that separates the countryside and screens views and separates the countryside to the south. The valley landform to the north, notably the prominent ridgeline along the Sites northern boundary provides enclosure and separation of the Site from the valley landscape to the north.
- 4.1.13 The existing enclosure provided by woodlands, the A50 and the prominent ridgeline allow for low level features to be absorbed into this landscape, with limited wider appreciation. The nature of battery development is that it is low level and easily screened in a way that is consistent with the established pattern of boundary treatments within the landscape. The BESS and associated infrastructure have been located within the lower lying area of the Site intentionally to benefit from this.
- 4.1.14 In the context of the identified characteristics of the landscape character and the associated planning guidance, the development could be easily absorbed into the landscape to the north of the A50.
- 4.1.15 The proposal include for the retention of existing boundary vegetation and the use of native planting that would screen the proposals from view and help to reinforce local landscape character.

Local Landscape Character

- 4.1.16 Given the localised / small scale nature of the development, proximity to existing infrastructure, and association with the adjacent farmstead and sheds, the assessment of the overall Magnitude of Change is considered **Low**.
- 4.1.17 The judgement of landscape effects is based on combining the sensitivity of the affected resource / receptor (**Medium Sensitivity**), and the magnitude of change (**Small**) caused

by the proposed development. Effects can be either be positive or negative, and in some cases, neutral (neither positive, nor negative).

- 4.1.18 Overall, the level of the landscape effects with regard to the proposed development during construction and at Year 1 have been assessed to represent a **Minor / Moderate Adverse Effect** on local landscape character. Once the scheme has established (Year 15), the proposed scrub, hedgerows and native woodland would have begun screening the proposed built form allowing the new infrastructure to be further absorbed into the Site (and within the context of the surrounding farmstead) with minimal appreciation locally. As such, the longer-term Magnitude of Change is considered to reduce to **Negligible** and as a consequence, effects on landscape character locally are considered to reduce to **Minor Adverse** overall.

Wider Landscape Character

- 4.1.19 The scheme retains the existing field boundary hedgerows and trees. This allows the construction phase of the development to be somewhat screened locally whilst under construction. Given the position of the proposed infrastructure within the lower lying areas of the Site, the enclosure provided by the adjacent ridgeline and the A50 there would be very limited (if any) appreciation of the proposals during the Construction phase or at Year 1.
- 4.1.20 Given the lack of appreciation of the Scheme anticipated from within the wider surrounding landscape, the assessment of the overall Magnitude of Change is considered **Negligible** for both the Construction phase and Year 1. The judgement of landscape effects is based on combining the sensitivity of the affected resource / receptor (**Medium Sensitivity**), and the magnitude of change (**Negligible**) caused by the proposed development.
- 4.1.21 Overall, the level of the landscape effects with regard to the proposed development during construction and at Year 1 have been assessed to represent a **Negligible Adverse Effect** on the wider landscape character of the area.
- 4.1.22 Once the planting has established (Year 15) this would provide greater enclosure and canopy cover across the Site allowing for it to become further absorbed into the surrounding landscape.
- 4.1.23 Once the scheme has established (Year 15), the longer-term Magnitude of Change is considered to remain **Negligible**, but with the new planting now established and begun having some beneficial impacts upon the character of the area. However, these impacts would be small and tempered against the backdrop of the BESS scheme itself and so are considered to result in Neutral Effects (neither positive, nor negative).
- 4.1.24 Overall, the level of the landscape effects with regard to the proposed development once the landscape proposals had established at Year 15 have been assessed to represent a **Negligible Neutral Effect** on the wider landscape character of the area.

4.2 Potential Visual Effects

- 4.2.1 Visual effects relate to changes in available views of the landscape and the effect of those changes on people, including:
- The direct effects of the Scheme on the content and character of views through the intrusion or obstruction and/or the change or loss of existing elements.
 - The overall effect on visual amenity, be it degradation or enhancement.
- 4.2.2 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 through the area. The visual effects may include the following:
- 4.2.3 Visual effect: a change to an existing static view, sequential views, or wider visual amenity as a result of the Scheme, or
- 4.2.4 the loss of particular landscape elements or features already present in the view.
- 4.2.5 The visual assessment process aims to determine from which points the Scheme can be seen in the surrounding landscape. Visual effects relate to changes in available views of the landscape and the effect of those changes on people, including:
- The direct effects of the Scheme on the content and character of views through the intrusion or obstruction and/or the change or loss of existing elements.
 - The overall effect on visual amenity, be it degradation or enhancement.
- 4.2.6 In predicting the effects of the Scheme on the visual receptors from the viewpoints being assessed, GLVIA3 (para 6.27), states that it is helpful to consider (but not restricted to) the following factors:
- 4.2.7 Nature of the view (full, partial or glimpsed);
- 4.2.8 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.
- 4.2.9 Additionally, the seasonal effects of vegetation are considered, in particular the varying degree of screening and filtering of views.
- 4.2.10 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.
- 4.2.11 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.

4.2.12 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.

4.2.13 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). It is recognised that vegetation continues to grow beyond this period until full maturity is reached.

Value of Views

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

4.2.15 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.

Assessing Visual Sensitivity

4.2.16 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.

4.2.17 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.

4.2.18 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 Visual Effects

- 4.2.19 To determine visual effects both the sensitivity of the visual receptor and the magnitude of change are considered.
- 4.2.20 Overall, the extent of views and visual influence of the proposed development are limited to the local area and mostly contained to locations immediately alongside the Site to the north of the A50, (see Figure 9 Augmented ZTV). The ZTV indicated limited potential visibility in limited zones on the edge of the Study Area, however it is unlikely that at this distance (circa 2KM) that there would be any notable views of the proposals, with the layering of low level vegetation across the countryside screening the development.
- 4.2.21 Given the enclosure to the Site, and contained potential visibility identified by the ZTV study, a limited number of visual receptors have been selected for inclusion within any future assessment. The visibility of the proposed development locally is not considered likely to result in any significant adverse effects over and above the presence of existing farm buildings locally.
- 4.2.22 The following section identifies anticipated effects to the identified visual receptors which are likely to be affected by the change in views and visual amenity resulting from the proposed development:

Private Receptors

Teian Leys Farm (see photo viewpoint 1)

High Sensitivity

- 4.2.23 The farmhouse is located on the southern edge of the wider farmstead, with a large number of modern farm buildings located immediately to the north. The farmhouse looks out south west across the pastures that surround the farm and run down to the A50. The A50 and associated vegetation provide some shortening of views in this direction. There are also some views possible north east from the property and its curtilage towards the Site itself. However, vegetation surrounding the property's gardens provide enclosure. The Site is located approximately 230m north west of the property with a field and field boundary vegetation providing separation, and helping maintain the immediate rural context of the property.
- 4.2.24 Development of the Site would intensify development locally around the property, but with the immediate fields remaining in agricultural / pastoral use, the immediate context of the property would remain. During the construction period, there would be a noticeable change across the Site to accommodate the construction process. Whilst this would be intensive, it would be at distance from this property with the intervening agricultural field and hedgerow boundaries helping provide separation and helping to protect the rural nature of the area. The landscape proposals include for hedgerow reinforcement and new native scrub along the Site's eastern and southern boundaries. Once established, this would help screen the development in what views exist from this property.

- 4.2.25 As such, the Magnitude of Change during Construction and at Completion is considered **Medium**, reducing to **Negligible** once the mitigation planting has had time to establish, at which point the proposals would become screened.

Scheme under Construction (winter): **Major / Moderate Adverse**

Scheme at Completion (year 1 winter): **Major / Moderate Adverse**

Scheme at Establishment (+ 15 years summer): **Negligible Adverse**

Highfields Farm (see photo viewpoint 2)

High Sensitivity

- 4.2.26 Located approximately 800m north west of the Site, this farmstead is accessed via Riverside Road. The house itself is surrounded by a series of barns and outbuildings, although it is orientated south west to address the access track, giving upper storey views east towards the A50 and more generally towards the Site. The layering of field boundary vegetation, the woodland block to the west of the Site, and the changes in landform are likely to screen all but the smallest of glimpses from any uppermost windows of this property with the day to day views from the property remaining unchanged.

- 4.2.27 As such, the Magnitude of Change during Construction, Completion and Establishment is considered **Negligible**.

Scheme under Construction (winter): **Negligible Neutral**

Scheme at Completion (year 1 winter): **Negligible Neutral**

Scheme at Establishment (+ 15 years summer): **Negligible Neutral**

Public Receptors

Users of PRow Checkley 12 (see photo viewpoint 1 & 3)

High Sensitivity

- 4.2.28 This Public Footpath leads north from Far Teanleys Farm along an existing farm track. It passes across the A50 via a bridge, before continuing north east along the farm track and through the farm yard at Tean Leys Farm. Here it passes through the farm sheds before emerging at the top of the Tean Valley and then continuing north into the valley floor.
- 4.2.29 Views to the Site are possible from the section of footpath located between the A50 and the farm buildings. Once through the buildings however, the buildings themselves, coupled with the marked change in topography associated with the ridge line above the valley screen views into the Site. As users head south on the PRow from the valley floor and up the valley slopes, the hedgerow along the northern boundary of the Site is only visible for a short section of the uppermost section of the route before it disappears into the farmstead itself. The floor of the Site is not visible.

4.2.30 From the section of the PRoW between the bridge (across the A50) and the farm buildings, the A50 forms a detracting feature of this area of countryside, with the road noise forming a notable impact upon the tranquillity of the immediate area. From this section, views into the Site are possible. From here the existing views are dominated by the farmstead and the associated cattle and poultry sheds to the north east. The two telephone masts stand as visual markers on the ridgeline. There is some vegetation along the farm track, which coupled with the field boundary hedgerows and trees would provide some initial softening of the BESS infrastructure until the landscape proposals had established, but up to this point, there would be direct views of the development which would be located some 230m north west of the PRoW. Given the surrounding built form, pylons, the Site's position in proximity to the main farmstead, there would be some synergy between the proposal and the existing farm activities. However, it is likely that until the new planting had become established that the development would appear somewhat as an intensification of the farmstead buildings. During the construction period, there would be a noticeable change across the Site to accommodate the construction process. Whilst this would be intensive, it would be at a distance from the PRoW with the intervening field and hedgerow boundaries helping provide separation from the construction activities and helping to protect the rural nature of the area. The landscape proposals include for hedgerow reinforcement and new native scrub along the Sites eastern and southern boundaries. Once established, this would help screen the development in views from this section of Public Footpath.

4.2.31 As such, the Magnitude of Change during Construction and at Completion is considered **Medium**, reducing to **Negligible** once the mitigation planting has had time to establish, at which point the proposals would become screened.

Scheme under Construction (winter): **Major / Moderate Adverse**

Scheme at Completion (year 1 winter): **Major / Moderate Adverse**

Scheme at Establishment (+ 15 years summer): **Negligible Adverse**

Users of PRoW Checkley 5 (see photo viewpoint 2)

High Sensitivity

4.2.32 Located approximately 540m north west of the Site, this PRoW runs along the route of Riverside Road, a rural lane that leads south from Upper Tean across the A50 providing access to Blythe House to the south of the A50.

4.2.33 For the majority of its length to the north of the A50, the lane is either sunken below the adjacent fields or contained by roadside hedgerows which limit opportunities for views east across the intervening farmland between here and the Site. Where views are possible in the direction of the Site, layering of field boundary hedgerows and changes in landform screen direct views into the Site itself. The changes to the topography within the Site would help accommodate the BESS proposals and associated infrastructure. Once the landscape proposals had established, the additional planting proposed along the Site's

western boundary would help reinforce the boundary hedgerow and provide greater screening of the BESS. Any views from this section of rural lane would be limited, with the immediate surroundings being unchanged as a consequence of the development.

- 4.2.34 As such, the Magnitude of Change during Construction, Completion and Establishment is considered **Negligible**.

Scheme under Construction (winter): **Negligible Adverse**

Scheme at Completion (year 1 winter): **Negligible Adverse**

Scheme at Establishment (+ 15 years summer): **Negligible Adverse**

Transport Receptors

Users of A50, (see photo viewpoint 3)

Medium Sensitivity

- 4.2.35 The A50 is a fast moving major dual carriageway located to the south of the Site. Where the road passes near to the Site it is within a cutting and enclosed by roadside vegetation.
- 4.2.36 From a short section of the highway, located further south east, there is a short section at grade, allowing taller vehicles traveling north, very glimpsed, oblique, transient views northwards towards the Site. However, given the layering of intervening field boundary vegetation, these fast moving views are very glimpsed and limited to winter months when the roadside vegetation and field boundary vegetation is more open.
- 4.2.37 The landscape proposals include for additional reinforcement of the Site's eastern boundary, which once established would enclose the BESS infrastructure and screen any of these views from the A50.
- 4.2.38 Given the fleeting nature of these views, the Magnitude of Change during Construction, Completion and Establishment is considered **Negligible**.
- Scheme under Construction (winter): **Negligible Adverse**
- Scheme at Completion (year 1 winter): **Negligible Adverse**
- Scheme at Establishment (+ 15 years summer): **Negligible Adverse**

Users of Riverside Road, (see photo viewpoint 2)

Medium Sensitivity

- 4.2.39 Located approximately 540m north west of the Site, this rural lane leads south from Upper Tean across the A50 providing access to Blythe House to the south of the A50.
- 4.2.40 For the majority of its length to the north of the A50, the lane is either sunken below the adjacent fields or contained by roadside hedgerows which limit opportunities for views east across the intervening farmland between here and the Site. Where views are possible

in the direction of the Site, layering of field boundary hedgerows and changes in landform screen direct views into the Site itself. The sloping topography within the Site would help accommodate the BESS proposals and associated infrastructure. Once the landscape proposals had established, the additional planting proposed along the Site's western boundary would help reinforce the boundary hedgerow and provide greater screening of the BESS. Any views from this section of rural lane would be limited, with the immediate surroundings being unchanged as a consequence of the development.

- 4.2.41 As such, the Magnitude of Change during Construction, Completion and Establishment is considered **Negligible**.

Scheme under Construction (winter): **Negligible Adverse**

Scheme at Completion (year 1 winter): **Negligible Adverse**

Scheme at Establishment (+ 15 years summer): **Negligible Adverse**

4.3 Potential Cumulative Effects

Potential Cumulative Landscape Effects

- 4.3.1 A number of Cumulative Sites have been identified within the 2km Study Area. Figure 11 (LVA Appendix 1) illustrates their location in relation the Scheme. Of the 5 Cumulative Sites identified, 4 are located to the south of the A50, with proposals for a Solar Array at Highfields Farm (SMD/2023/0197) being the only one to the north of the A50.
- 4.3.2 Native woodland blocks and field boundary hedgerows within the surrounding farmland provide containment and enclosure across the countryside to the north of the A50. Proposals for a Solar Array at Highfields Farm (SMD/2023/0197) are located approximately 700m north west of the Site alongside the A50 and to the north of Highfields Farm. Field boundaries and woodland blocks within and alongside the solar scheme would help screen and absorb the proposed solar array locally. Riverside road crosses across the local highpoint, with land falling away to the east and west providing clear separation between the Proposals and the solar infrastructure to the north west.
- 4.3.3 This combined with the existing enclosure provided to the Site by woodlands and the A50 allows for low level features to be absorbed into this landscape with limited wider appreciation. As such, no significant cumulative landscape effects are anticipated between the Scheme and the Solar Array at Highfields Farm, (SMD/2023/0197).
- 4.3.4 The A50 itself forms a well vegetated barrier across the landscape to the south that separates the countryside locally north and south of the highway. All remaining Cumulative Sites schemes are located to the south of the A50, with all but SMD/2021/0662 (Screening request for proposed Solar Farm (sub 50MW)) being located between the A50 and the railway line. SMD/2021/0662 is located south of the railway line and adjacent to Dairy House Farm.

- 4.3.5 The A50 forms a well vegetated barrier across the landscape to the south that separates the area of countryside within which the Scheme is located from that to the south within which the Cumulative Sites to the south are located. Given this separation, development of the Scheme to the north of the A50 is not considered likely to lead to significant cumulative landscape effects with those Cumulative Developments to the South: SMD/2022/0160, SMD/2023/0197, SMD/2023/0594 and SMD/2021/0662.
- 4.3.6 No significant cumulative landscape effects have been identified between the Scheme and the Cumulative Sites.

Potential Cumulative Visual Effects

- 4.3.7 Cumulative Developments SMD/2022/0160, SMD/2023/0197, SMD/2023/0594 and SMD/2021/0662 are all located to the south of the A50, with no intervisibility between the Site or any of these Developments, as demonstrated on the Augmented ZTV (Figure 9). As such, there is not considered to be any 'Combined' visual effects associated with these Developments and the Scheme. PRoW Checkley 12 and 14 pass to the east of Cumulative Developments SMD/2022/0160, SMD/2023/0197, SMD/2023/0594, with PRoW Checkley 12 continuing north across the A50 and through Tean Leys farmstead. Depending on approach to mitigation, there would be an opportunity for users of these footpaths to experience some limited 'Sequential' visibility of these Cumulative Sites with the Scheme itself, however this would only be when users were to the north of the A50 and with the Scheme seen at distance from the footpath. As such, effects would not be to a level at which they were considered Significant.
- 4.3.8 Proposals for the Solar Array (SMD/2023/0197) north of Highfields Farm are located approximately 700m north west of the Site. As demonstrated on the Augmented ZTV (Figure 9) there is not anticipated to be any intervisibility between the two schemes. As such, no significant cumulative visual effects are expected.
- 4.3.9 No significant cumulative visual effects have been identified between the Scheme and the Cumulative Sites.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1.1 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal has reviewed the existing landscape and visual resource of land at Tean Leys Farm, Tean, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, (the Site), in consideration of the proposed development for an energy storage facility in the form of batteries and associated infrastructure (BESS).
- 5.1.2 The application Site ('the Site') covers an area of approximately 10.7 hectares, which includes the proposed cable route corridor and accesses. The cable route corridor runs north from the Site to the electricity distribution substation on Cheadle Road in Upper Tean and south from the Site to a proposed substation (approved under planning application ref SMD/2023/0594) located adjacent to the railway line to the south of the A50.
- 5.1.3 Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the proposed Site layout to reduce the effects on both landscape and visual amenity and to help to integrate the proposed development into the surrounding landscape. These include:
- c15m wide native woodland belt along northern Site boundary.
 - Reinforcement of existing field boundary hedgerows and new native hedgerow trees.
 - New native individual tree planting.
 - New areas of native scrub.
 - Replacement planting of hedgerows requiring removal to facilitate cable corridor.
- 5.1.4 In the context of the identified characteristics of the landscape character and the associated planning guidance, the development is considered unlikely to lead to any notable effects on Landscape Character or Visual Amenity. The proposal includes native planting that would screen the batteries from view and support the Landscape Planning Guidelines of the Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes Landscape Character Area.
- 5.1.5 Overall, it is considered that the proposal would provide development which respects and enhances local landscape character whilst also conserving and enhancing the biodiversity qualities of the Site through the use of native woodland and hedgerow reinforcement on the Site boundaries.
- 5.1.6 Receptors (people) with the most notable views of the Development are located within the immediate setting of the Site itself, such as users of PRow Checkley 12 and residents at Tean Leys Farm.
- 5.1.7 There are strong field boundary treatments in the area, as noted as part of the character assessment. Increasing the strength of the boundary treatment surrounding the Site would be consistent with both the existing landscape and the landscape planning guidance identified.
- 5.1.8 The Site does not form part of the views into or out of a settlement and the development of the Site would consequently have no impact on any such views.
- 5.1.9 The cable route corridor runs north from the Site to the substation on Cheadle Road in Upper Tean and south from the Site to a proposed substation (granted permission under

planning application ref SMD/2023/0594) located adjacent to the railway line to the south of the A50. The construction of the cable route undertakes a combination of open trench construction across agricultural fields and where possible within built up areas.

Otherwise, a technique called Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) is utilised to drill the cable underneath features such as the A50 and a number of other smaller roads that the route passes across. The construction of the cable route is akin to the initialisation of typical utility infrastructure, and whilst it is recognised that there would be some short term temporary disruption associated with its installation, these effects (on landscape and visual receptors) would not be notable.

- 5.1.10 With reference to priority habitat (peripheral habitats – hedgerows and field margins), restoration of hedgerows should be pursued with this including increases to the numbers of young trees and the diversity of flora within hedgerows. Where possible small field patterns should be restored with the creation or restoration of meadows. These measures could be secured within a Landscape and Ecology management Plan (LEMP) and secured as part of one or more planning conditions.
- 5.1.11 The development would be screened on all sides by planting which would conceal it within the landscape and allow it to be readily absorbed into its immediate setting with limited effects on the character of the immediate or wider area.
- 5.1.12 Five Cumulative Sites were identified and considered as part of the Appraisal. These are shown on Figure 11 contained within Appendix 1 of this LVA. Of the five Cumulative Sites identified, four are located to the south of the A50. The A50 forms a well vegetated barrier across the landscape to the south that separates the area of countryside within which the Scheme is located from that to the south. One Cumulative Site is located to the north of the A50, and is located approximately 700m north west of the Site and north of Highfields Farm. Given the separation of the Scheme and the Cumulative Sites, no significant cumulative landscape effects were identified between the Scheme and the Cumulative Sites, and no significant cumulative visual effects were identified between the Scheme and the Cumulative Sites.
- 5.1.13 The Site is considered to be visually self-contained with there being limited views into or out of the Site as a result of both its location and the strength of existing boundary treatments and the boundary treatments of other fields that interrupt views from any of the possible vantage points. The Site's proximity to the A50 limits its role within the wider landscape as the A50 is noted as being a dominant and negative landscape feature. The Site is in agricultural use as grazing pasture and consequently has some biodiversity potential, however new planting has the scope to improve habitat and biodiversity across the Site. The development provides the opportunity to deliver some biodiversity net gains as a result of the improvements to the Site boundaries and peripheral planting. Opportunity exists within the wider land holding for off site biodiversity net gains to be linked to these proposals. It is therefore acceptable under Local Plan policy NE1 and in line with the SBAP and Staffordshire Moorlands Biodiversity Opportunity Map.

Appendix 1 Figures 1-11

Appendix 2 Figure 12 - Photosheets

Appendix 3 Landscape Masterplan

