

# Supplementary Agenda



<b>Meeting name</b>	<b>Special Meeting of the Planning Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Thursday, 31 August 2023</b>
<b>Start time</b>	<b>6.00 pm</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, LE13 1GH</b>
<b>Other information</b>	<b>This meeting is open to the public</b>

<b>Meeting enquiries</b>	Democratic Services - <a href="mailto:democracy@melton.gov.uk">democracy@melton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Direct Dial</b>	01664 502579
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:democracy@melton.gov.uk">democracy@melton.gov.uk</a>

No.	Item	Page No.
	3.1APPLICATION 22/00537/FUL Fields OS 6700 6722 and 5200, Muston Lane, Easthorpe	1 - 28

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# Bottesford Parish Council **objects**

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Bottesford Parish Neighbourhood Plan  
2020-2036

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In contravention of...

Neighbourhood Plan

Policies 2, 4a, 4b & 9

MBC Local Plan

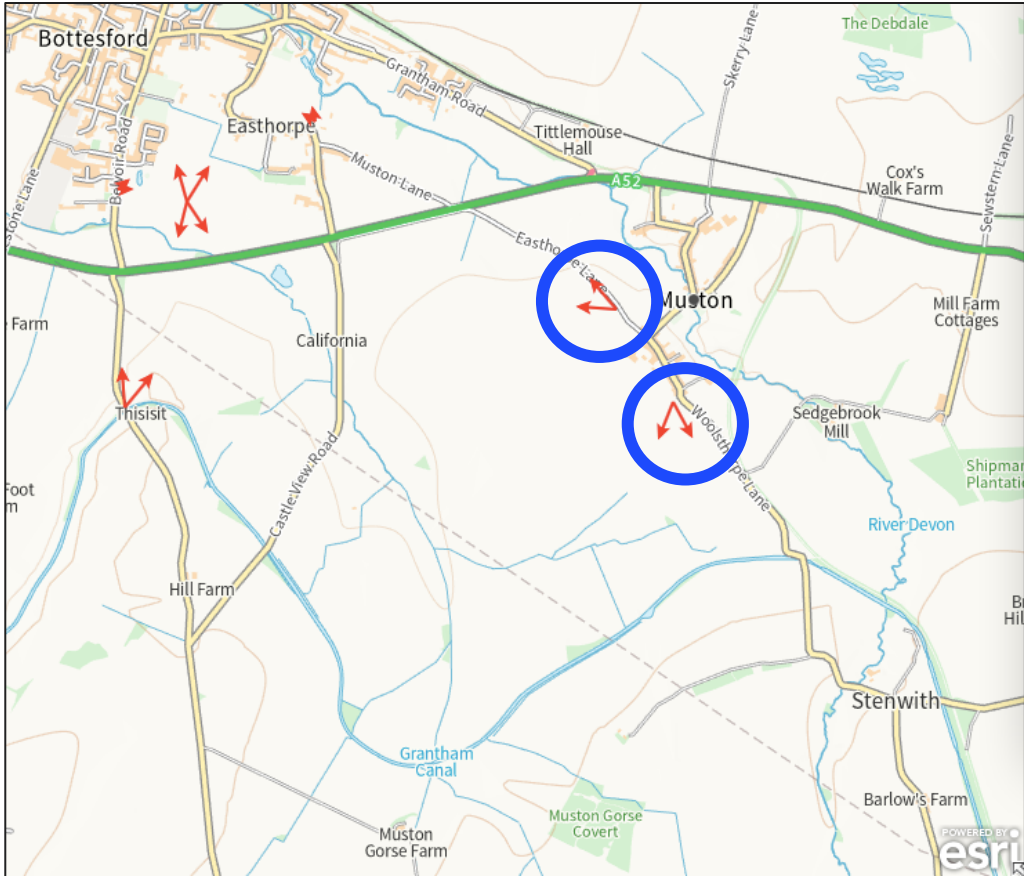
Policies inc: EN1, EN13

**Landscape Sensitivity**

# Neighbourhood Plan: 'Significant Views and Vistas'

## View Points 6 & 7

Page 2



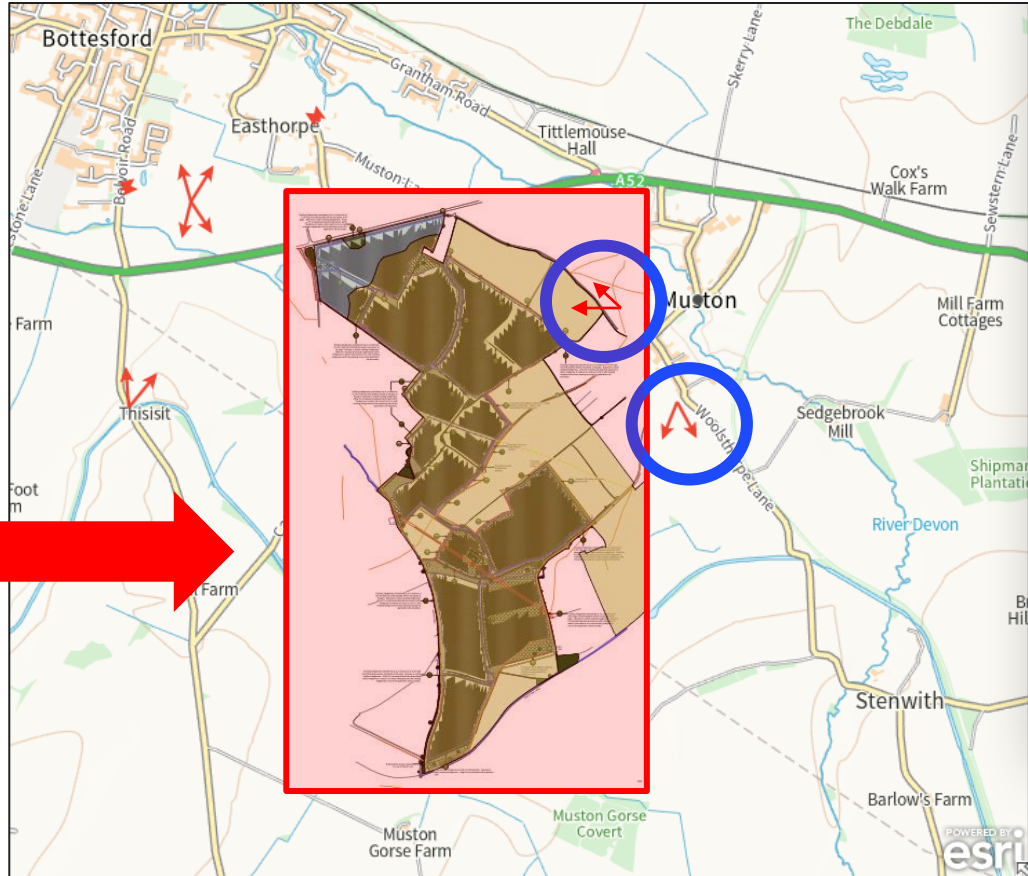
# Neighbourhood Plan: 'Significant Views and Vistas'

View Points 6 & 7

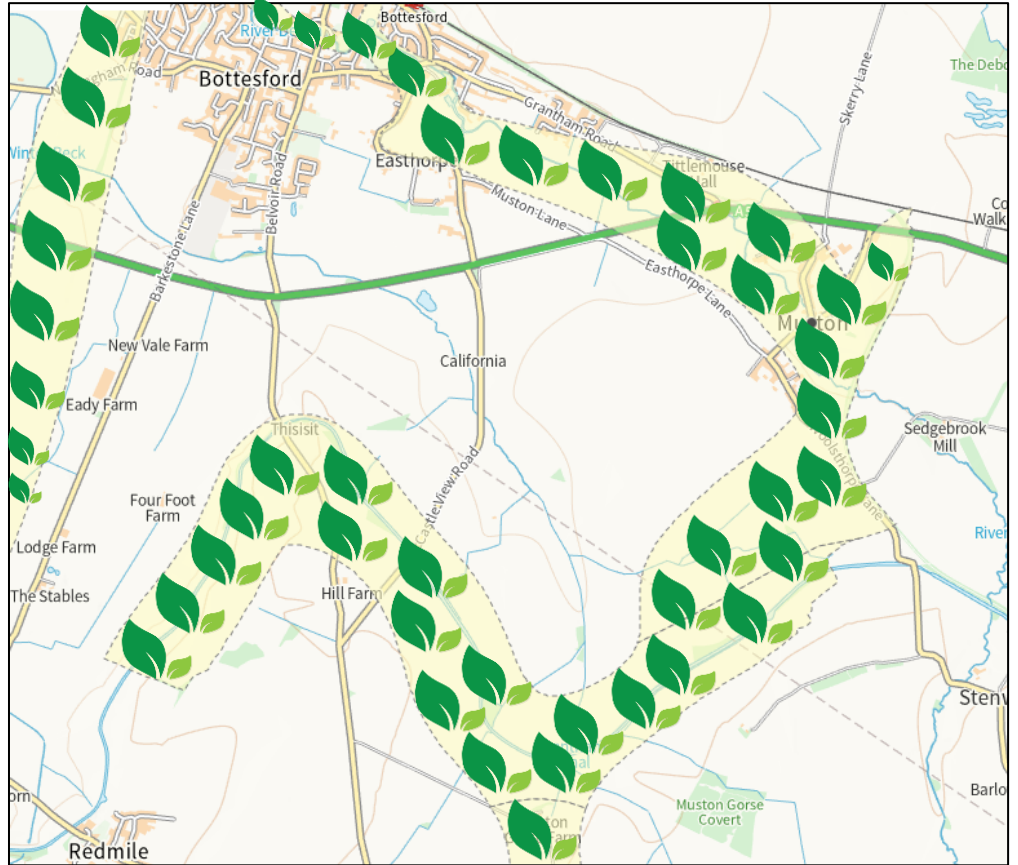
**Low regard shown  
for the importance  
of these views**



**Mitigation suggests growing hedgerows  
which will take 15 years to mature and  
then will block views across open  
countryside**



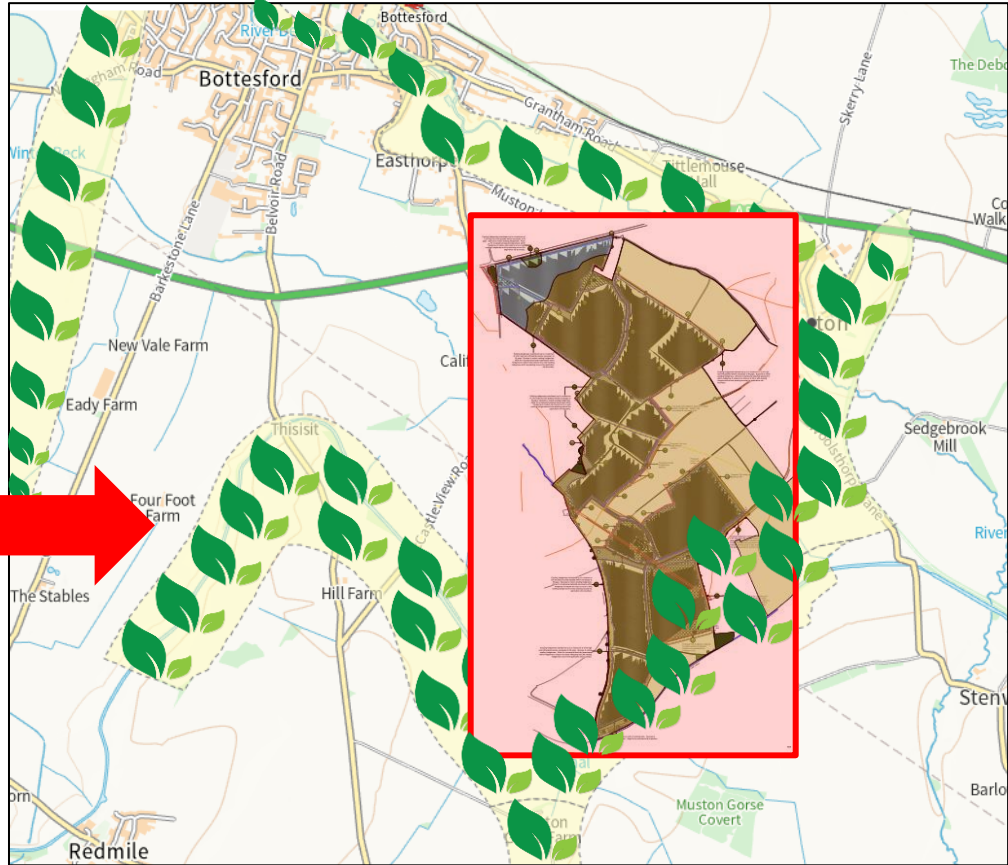
# Neighbourhood Plan: The 'Ecological Setting'



# Neighbourhood Plan: The 'Ecological Setting'

Application clearly  
brings metal  
hardware and  
urbanises  
the Ecological Setting

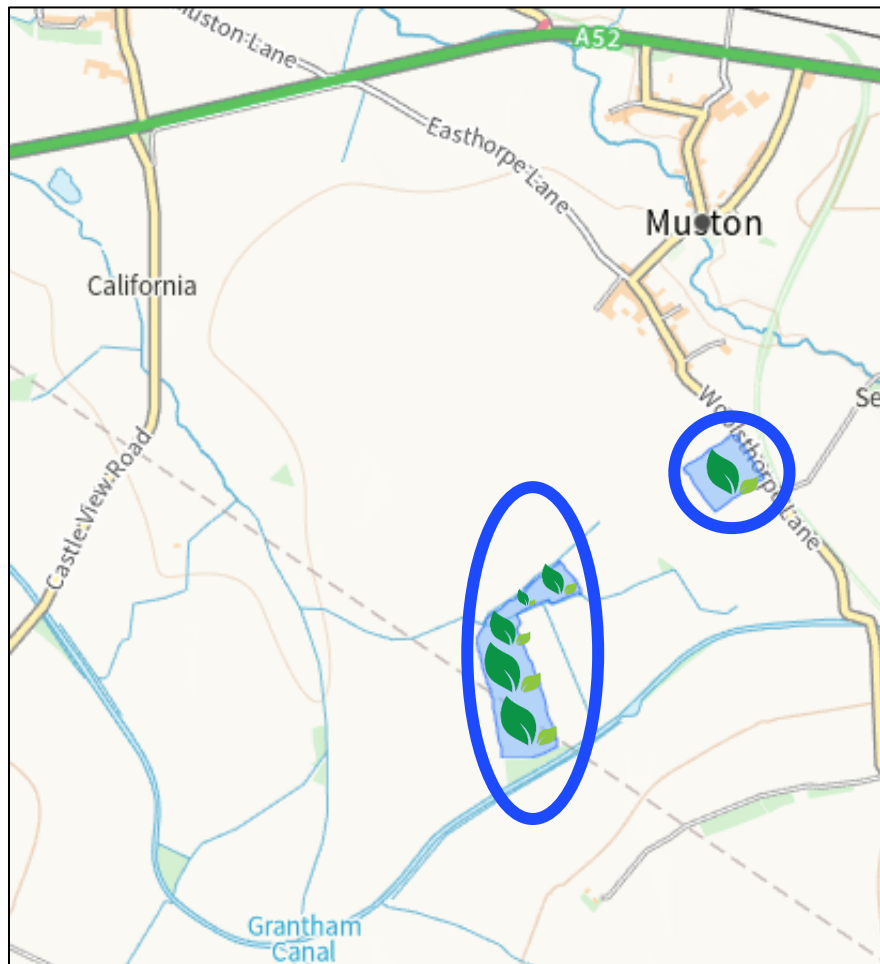
Page 5



# Muston Meadows SSSI

## Site of Special Scientific Interest

Page 6

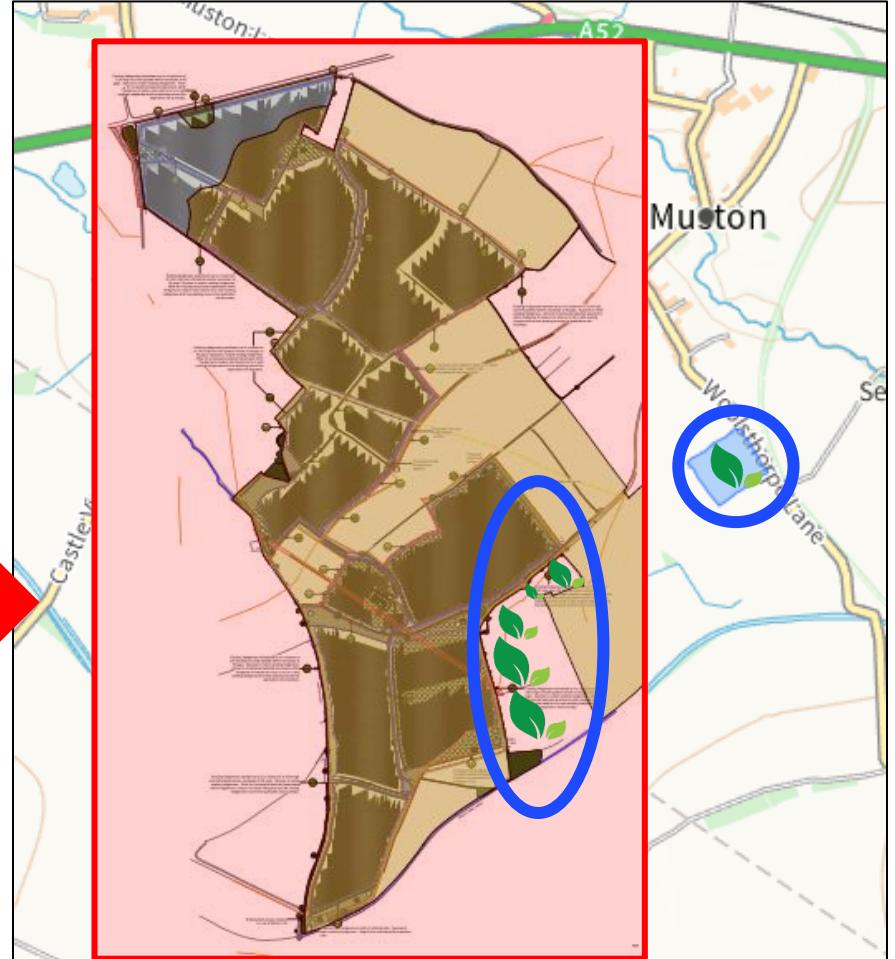




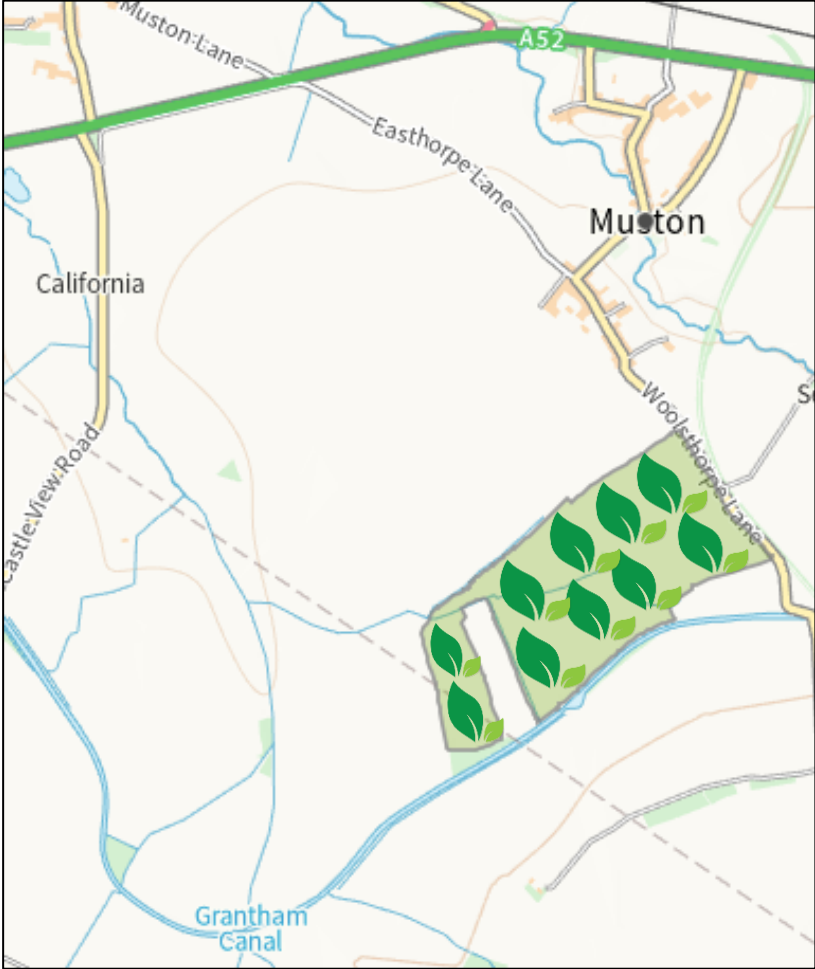
# Muston Meadows SSSI

Site of Special Scientific Interest

Surrounded and squeezed - not an appropriate way to look after an SSSI



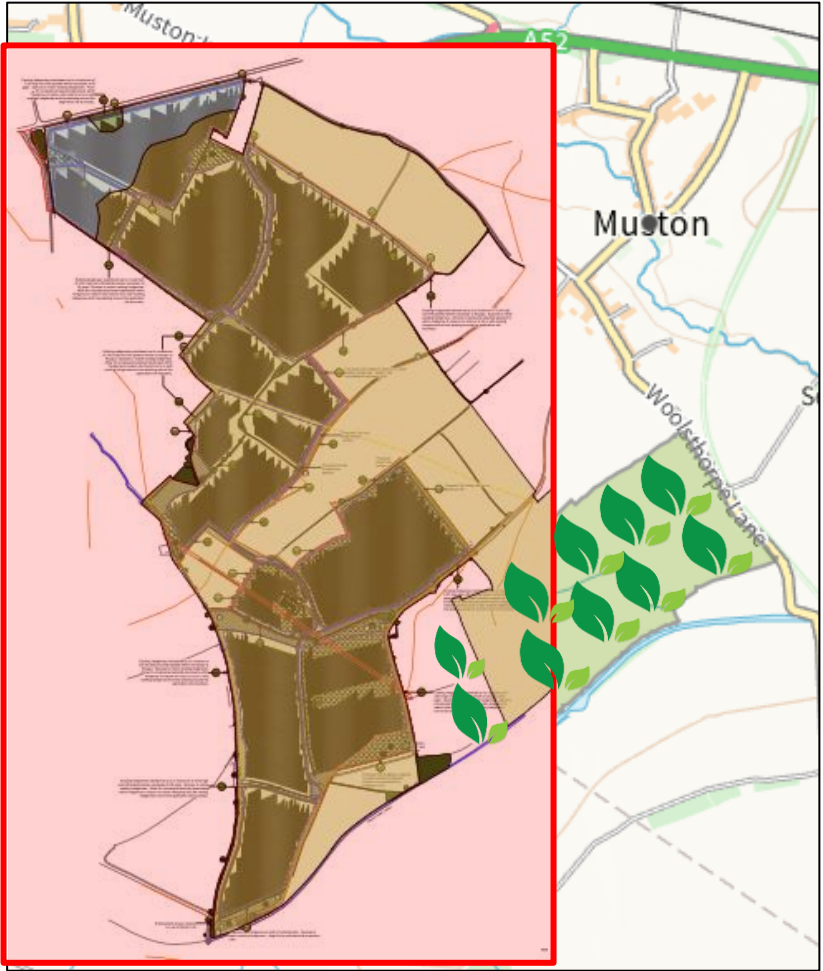
# National Nature Reserve in Muston



# National Nature Reserve In Muston

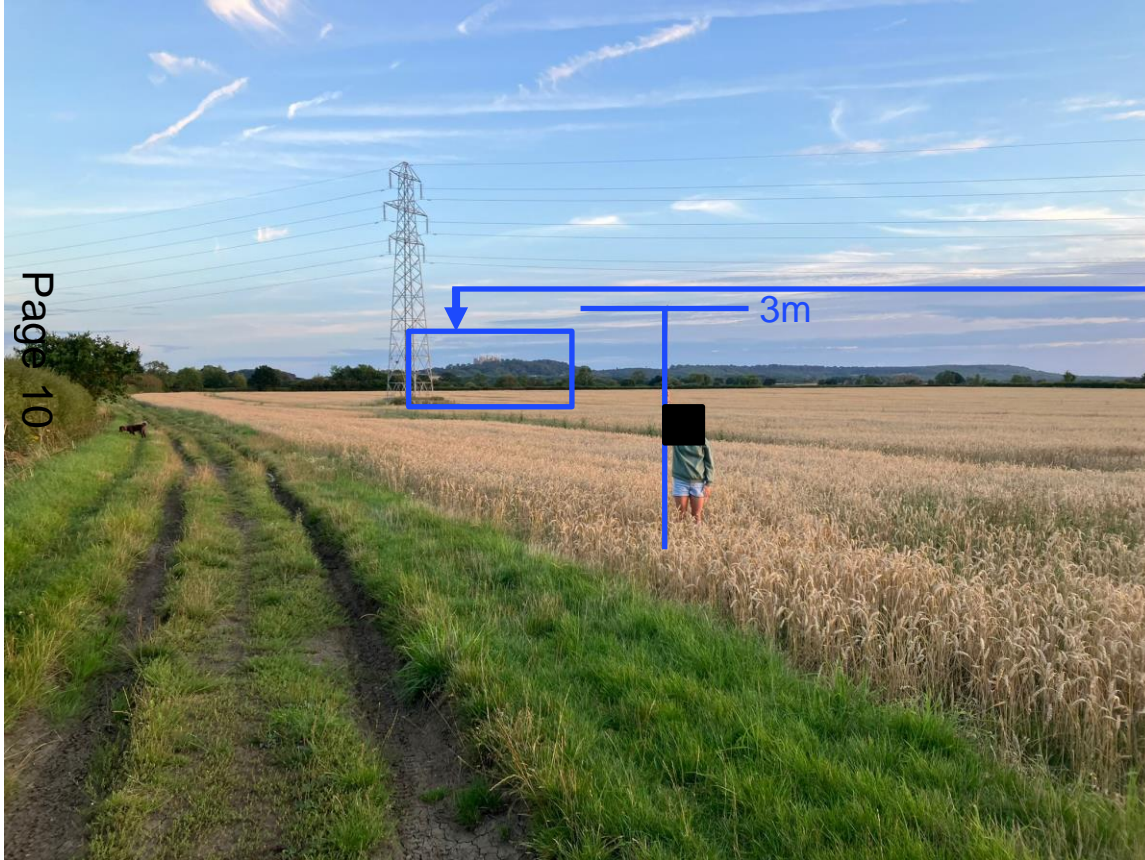
Page 9

This is not an appropriate  
way to look after a  
National Nature Reserve



# The Reality of 3 metres from within the site

3m is the highest point of the proposed tracking panels



Page 10



Photo location

## Belvoir Castle

Listed Building

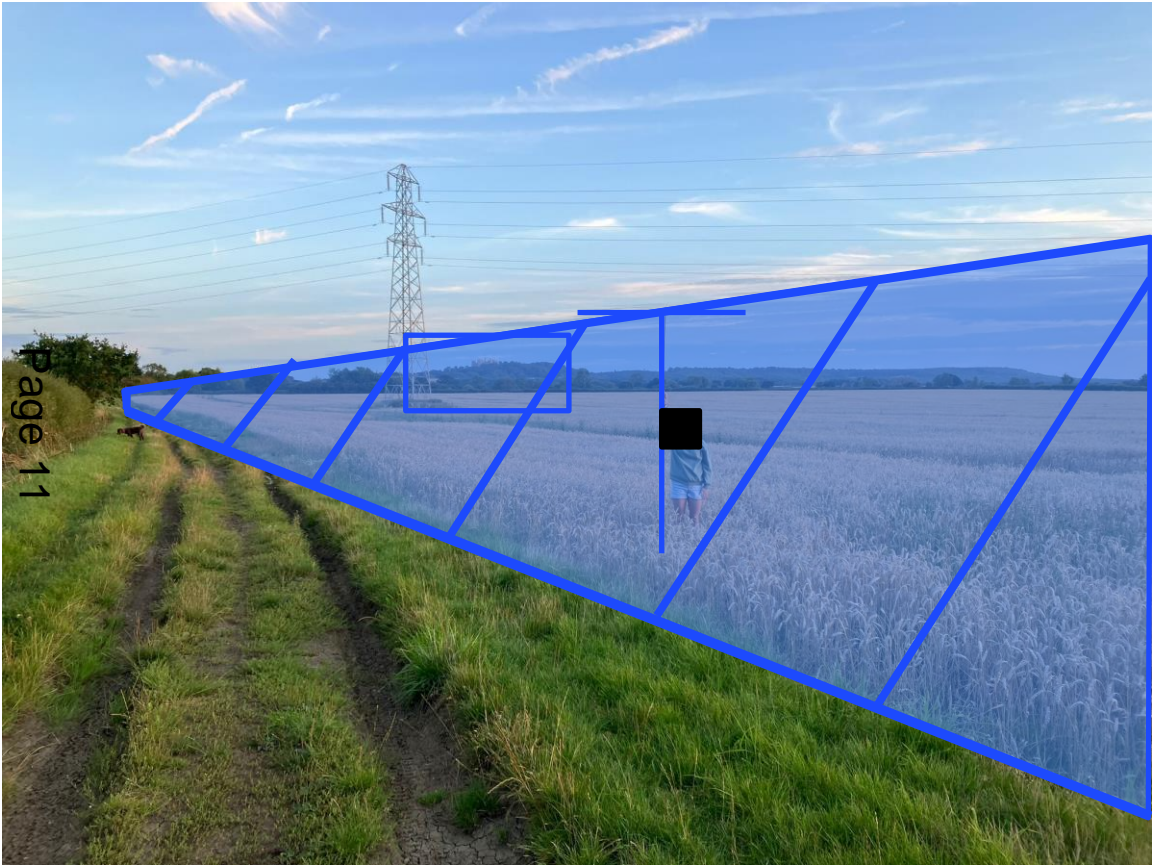
Scheduled

Ancient Monument

### **MBC Local Plan: Landscape and Sensitivity Study**

- Views towards Belvoir Castle and the Belvoir scarp where the **Castle forms an important landmark feature** (including the good views from Beacon Hill).
- Choice of location and size/scale of development **does not diminish the perceived scale of Belvoir Castle** and the escarpment on which it sits.
- The overall aim... developments **do not become a key characteristic of the landscape** or have a defining influence on the overall experience of the landscape of the Vale of Belvoir

# The Reality of 3 metres from within the site



**3m height**  
of proposed panels and  
mitigation hedge

# The Reality of 3 metres from within the site



Page 12

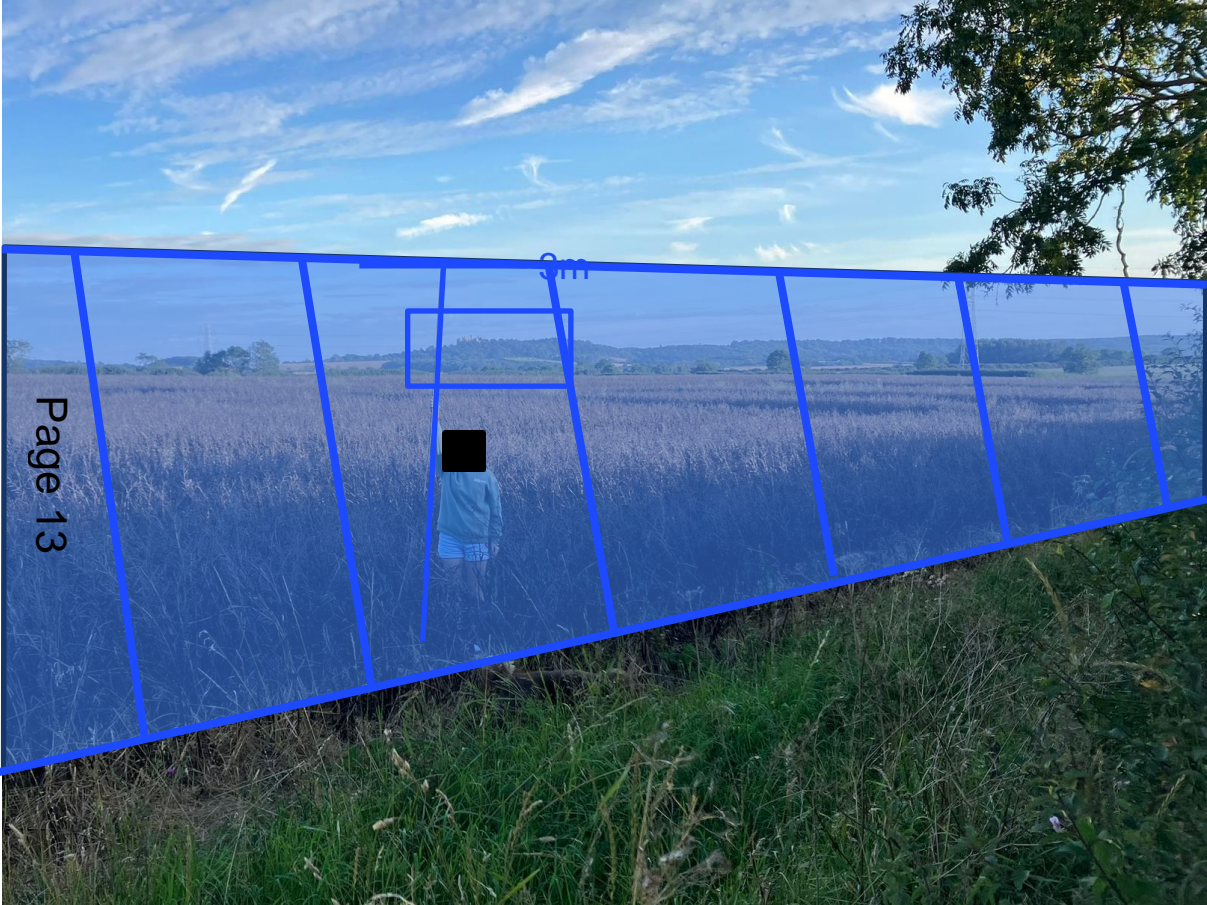
**Belvoir Castle**  
Listed Building

Scheduled  
Ancient Monument



Photo location

# The Reality of 3 metres from within the site



**3m height**  
of proposed panels and  
mitigation hedge

# The Reality of 3 metres

Page 14



**St Mary's,  
Lady of the Vale,  
Bottesford**

Listed Building,  
Scheduled

Ancient Monument

and in a  
Conservation Area



Photo location



# The Reality of 3 metres

Page 15



**3m height**  
of proposed  
panels and  
mitigation  
hedge

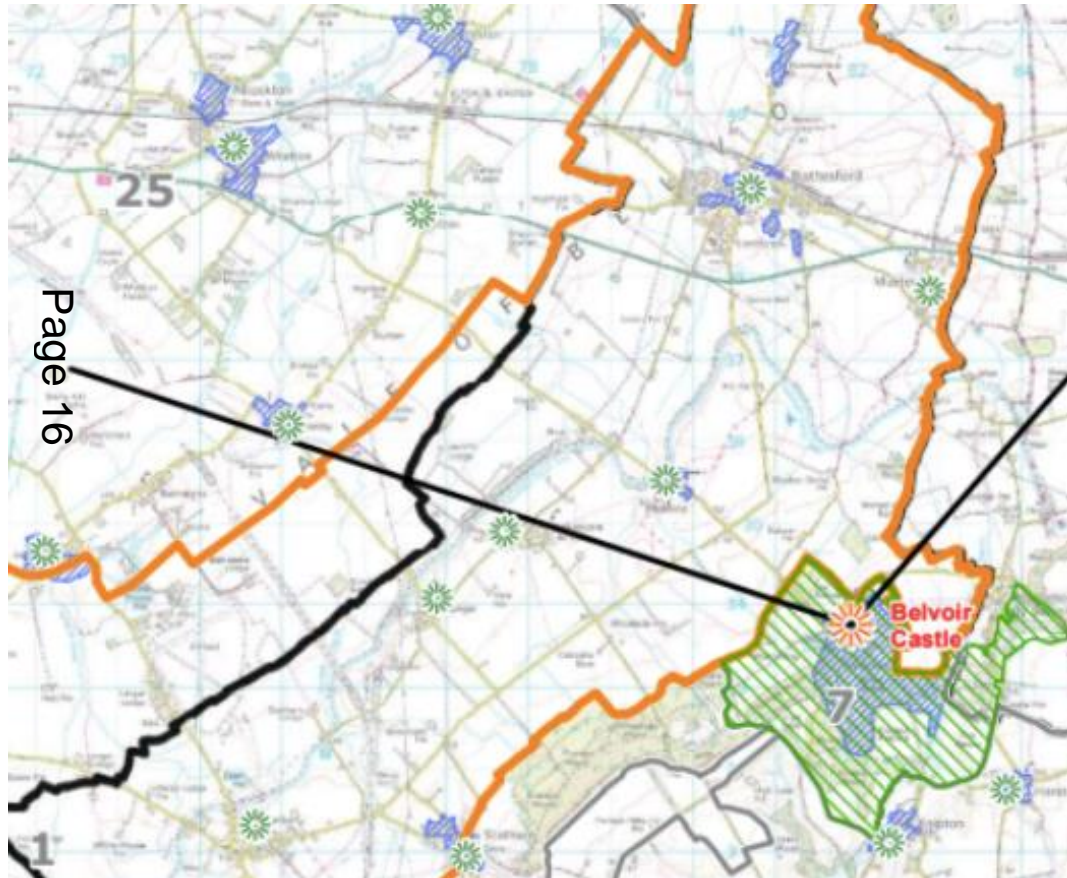
**Nick Carter**

Inspector of Ancient  
Monuments  
Sept 2022

**‘Historic England has concerns** with the application on heritage grounds.

It is our view that the impacts of the proposals upon the settings of the designated **heritage assets would result in harm to their significance. We consider the impacts to be higher than indicated in the EIA.’**

## Melton BC Local plan: Protecting views from Belvoir Castle

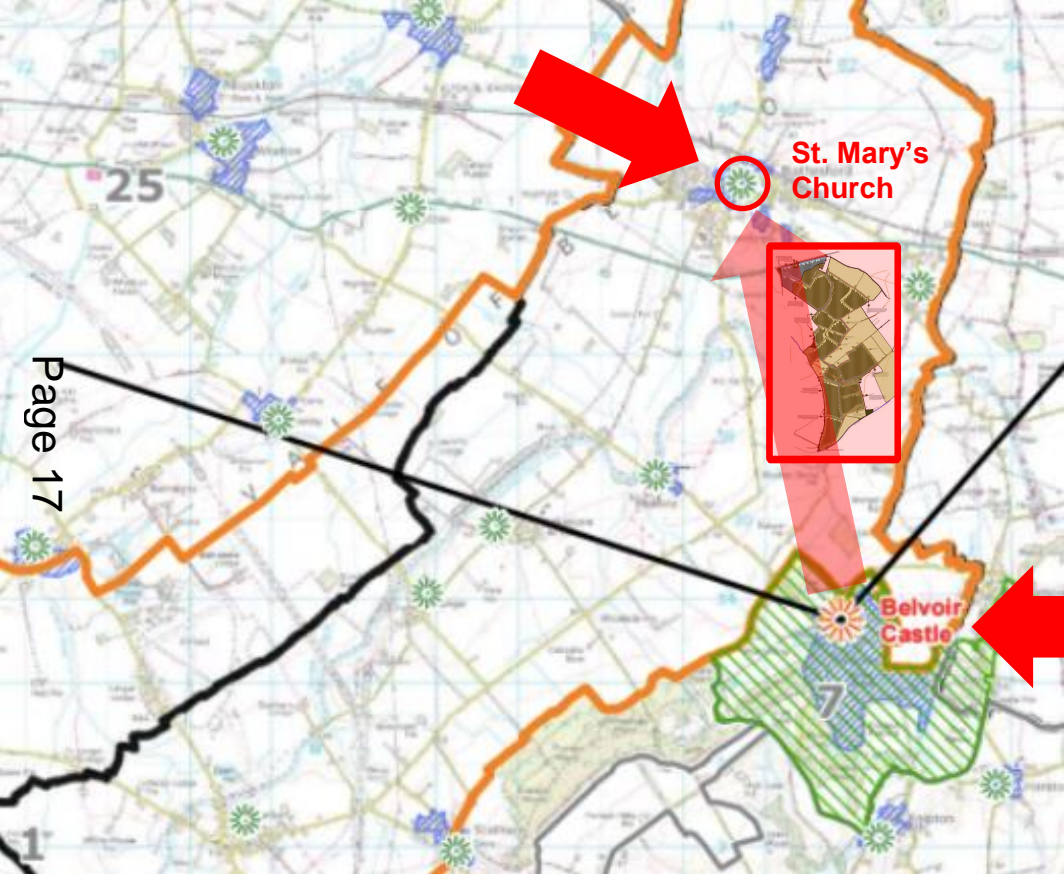


Source: **Melton & Rushcliffe Landscape and Sensitivity Study** and **NP Policy 2**

... "It is desirable to preserve the expansive and rural patchwork character of this view."


...there are close historic links between Belvoir Castle and St Mary's Church, Bottesford.. ..

# Melton BC Local plan: Protecting views from Belvoir Castle




... "and it is desirable to **maintain uninterrupted views** of the spire of St Mary's from the Castle".


# Cumulative Assessment across the Vale of Belvoir

 = Solar Farm



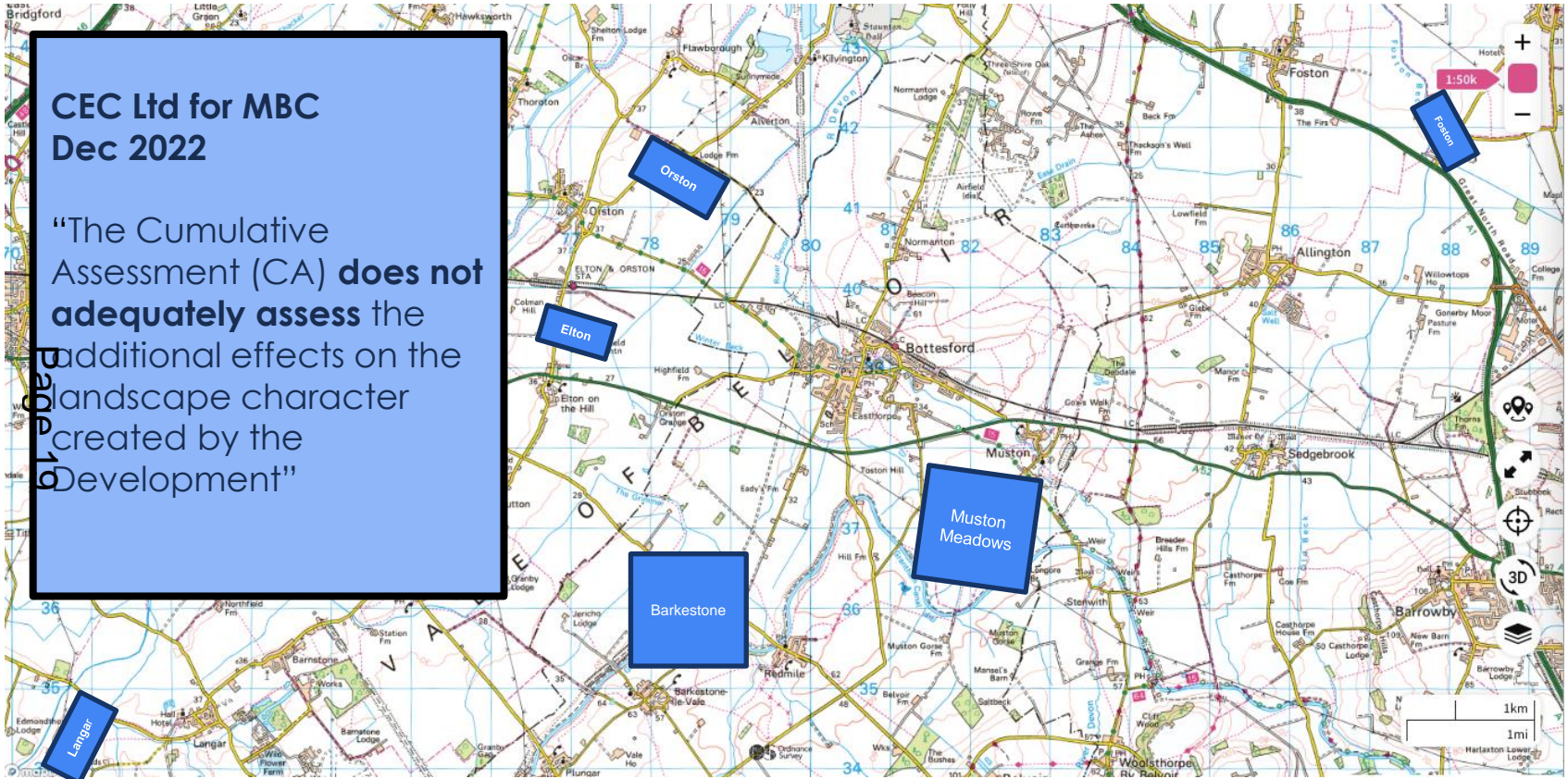
 = Solar Farm


# Cumulative Assessment across the Vale of Belvoir

 = Solar Farm


CEC Ltd for MBC  
Dec 2022

“The Cumulative Assessment (CA) **does not adequately assess** the additional effects on the landscape character created by the Development”



 = Solar Farm

# Cumulative Assessment across the Vale of Belvoir

 = Solar Farm

**Alicia Kearns MP,  
in the House of Commons  
19<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**"It is unacceptable that  
we are seeing this assault  
on our local planning  
infrastructure."**



 = Solar Farm

Finally, the numbers...

**Precedence of developers being at best vague and imprecise, and at worst understating outputs**

Alicia Kearns MP again (talking about a different developer, not JBM):

Page 22

..is claiming to the planning authorities.. ..49.9 MW.

**However, in internal presentations that are apparently only for shareholders.. ..those developments are listed as generating 80 MW and 53 MW..**

..This suggests foul play."



If it were to produce only 49.9MWatts then it would be amongst the least productive schemes in the country...

If it were to produce output more in line with other sites, it would be classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and would be open to far more scrutiny.

Page 23

Site	Hectares	MW per Hectare
Lyneham Solar Farm (Bradenstoke, Wiltshire)	86.3	0.81
Wroughton Airfield (Wiltshire)	66.8	0.75
Shotwick Solar Park (Flintshire, Wales)	101.2	0.71
Owl's Hatch Solar Park (Herne Bay, Kent)	85.8	0.60
West Raynham Solar Farm (Norfolk)	91.1	0.55
Muston Meadows entire site	135.0	0.37
Muston Meadows solar panels area	103.0	0.48

# Fear of losing on appeal

There has been a fear within MBC for a number of years.  
This should not cause us to make the wrong decision.

We have read 8 appeal decisions and none of the application sites had any of the historic or character significance of the site you are discussing tonight.

**If this was rejected by MBC, it is unlikely that it would be won on appeal.**

**Bottesford  
Parish Council  
objects  
and  
recommends  
rejection**  
of the  
proposed  
Solar Farm  
on our  
meadows



**The view of St Mary's, Bottesford,  
Duchess of Rutland painting 1780 – 1825**

(Bel voir = 'beautiful view' in French)



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### **Points to make in the 3-minute presentation on the Belvoir Solar Farm**

- 1 MBCs Local Plan policy requires development to conserve and where possible enhance the existing landscape character. Bottesford's Neighbourhood Plan requires new development to be sensitive to its landscape setting and to protect key views (one of which will be harmed by this proposal). Sustainable development in the Neighbourhood Plan is development which safeguards the integrity and function of the landscape character.
- 2 The existing landscape character is one of long open views with fields bounded by hedges of varying heights (as confirming by the Principal Landscape Architect for Cornwall Environmental Consultants commissioned by MBC to review the landscape impact of this proposal).
- 3 The solar farm will cover 15 fields and measures 2.5 km from north to south and 1km wide at its widest points. The scheme proposes uniform hedge heights of 3m to screen the panels, but hedge heights presently vary and are frequently 2m not 3m high, which in part allows for the long views. This landscape characteristic cannot be mimicked, or the panels would be more visible.
- 4 JBM wrote to Bottesford Parish Council on 11<sup>th</sup> August stating that the proposal will bring 'significant enhancements to the amenity of residents', it will not. The current footpaths provide long views of a rural, agriculture landscape. Cornwall Environmental Consultants have commented that 2,280 m of the public rights of way that run along the boundary of the site will have an existing or proposed hedge on one side and a site fence on the other (and no hedge). This is the case for the whole of the public right of way along Winter Beck.
- 5 The mitigation proposed would not respect or enhance the existing landscape as JBM suggest but it will turn it into an industrial uniform landscape, not forgetting that the infrastructure to provide the point of connection and inverters which will be permanent.
- 6 JBM also noted in their letter that adjustments have been made following discussion with Bottesford Parish Council – i.e. a setback from Muston and a setback from the Grantham Canal. JBM contend that this is 'above and beyond what we have done on other schemes'. MBC are reminded that these adjustments were not solely based on comments from the Parish Council but also reflect concerns raised by Historic England. The fact that JBM have made these adjustments demonstrates the sensitivity of the landscape around the site, with designated heritage and environmental assets, and the unsuitability of a proposal of this scale in this location. By way of a reminder the heritage assets are around Muston, the grasslands at Muston are a SSSI and National Nature Reserve and the Grantham Canal, which is a Local Wildlife Site.
- 7 The NPPF para 174 requires planning decisions to protect and enhance valued landscapes. MBC must also consider the cumulative impact of this proposal along with the other solar farm schemes that already have permission within 5km of this site. If approved, the defining characteristic of the Vale of Belvoir will be solar farms. What a demise that will be for a landscape that until recently was promoted for consideration as an Area of Outstanding National Beauty.
- 8 Approval of this scheme will harm the valued landscape of the Vale, as such the proposal is contrary to national, local and neighbourhood plan policy and should be refused.

*Helen Metcalfe for Bottesford Parish Council 15.8.23.*

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