
8 Landscape and Visual Resources

Introduction and Methodology

8.1 This chapter describes and assesses the existing landscape, townscape and visual resources of the project site and the surrounding area. This includes identification of the character and features of the landscape and townscape and consideration of the changes that would result as a consequence of the project. In addition, it considers the potential visual effects arising as a result of the project. The chapter reports on studies, including a combination of field surveys and desktop research, to describe, classify and evaluate the existing resource to form a basis for the assessment of the likely effects of the project.

8.2 The principal objectives of the assessment are:

- To describe, classify and evaluate the existing landscape and townscape likely to be affected by the project during its construction and operational phases;
- To identify visual receptors with views of the project;
- To identify effects on landscape, townscape and views and assess their significance, taking into account measures proposed to reduce or avoid any effects identified.

Relevant Guidance

8.3 As a matter of best practice, this assessment has been undertaken based on the relevant guidance on landscape and visual impact assessment. This includes:

- The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 2nd Edition (2002) Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment;
- The Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment (2004) Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment; and
- Guidelines for Landscape Character Assessment, (2002) Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

Study Area

8.4 The study area for the project relates to the zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) established for the SEP. The landscape/townscape character and visual receptors have been identified and described within a 15km radius of the site following current guidance. However, due to the character of the local landscape and limited visibility of the existing site and proposed scheme, viewpoints beyond 10km have not been considered. The study area is illustrated on Figures 8.1 and 8.2

Consultation

- 8.5 In carrying out the landscape and visual impact assessment, consultation has included:
- The formal scoping process;
 - Identification of the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) landscape character context information;
 - Discussion with the developers of the project (Brunner Mond & E.ON Energy from Waste UK Limited);
 - Liaisons with other members of the design and environmental team including, principally, the project architect and ecologist;
 - Consultation with regard to viewpoint locations.

Formal Scoping Process

- 8.6 As detailed in Chapter 5, a formal scoping exercise has been undertaken to inform the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment. The scoping response from DECC highlighted the following issues relevant to the landscape and visual impact assessment:
- *'22. The study area detailed in paragraph 4.9.18 will need to be reviewed when the height of the proposed stack is determined.'* Following confirmation of the stack height the study area was reviewed and defined to 15km based on relevant best guidance.
 - *'23. I would recommend that the viewpoint locations for the assessment are agreed with the local council (para 4.9.11).'* A viewpoint location plan was submitted to the local planning authority and contact was made initially with the planning officer regarding the plan which was referred to a landscape officer within the Council. Requests for comments were made but no response has been received to date.
 - *'24 The ES should detail the potential impact of the project on the setting of the Former Lion Salt Works Scheduled Monuments'*. Effects on setting of the former Lion Salt works are assessed in Chapter 13.

Assessment Methodology

- 8.7 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) considers the potential effects of the development upon:
- Individual landscape features and elements;
 - Landscape character; and
 - Visual amenity and the people who view the landscape.

Distinction between Landscape and Visual Effects

8.8 In accordance with the published guidance, landscape and visual effects have been assessed separately, although the procedure for assessing each of these is closely linked. A clear distinction has been drawn between landscape and visual effects as described below:

- Landscape effects relate to the effects of the project on the physical and other characteristics of the landscape and its resulting character and quality.
- Visual effects relate to the effects on views experienced by visual receptors (e.g. residents, footpath users, tourists etc) and on the visual amenity experienced by those people.

Duration of Landscape and Visual Effects

8.9 The LVIA assesses both permanent effects relating to the operational lifetime of the project and also temporary effects associated with its construction. Effects which occur during the construction phase but which are permanent are considered to be permanent effects (e.g. removal of trees).

8.10 Consideration has been given to seasonal variations in the visibility of the development.

8.11 Consideration has been given to changes in the significance of effects likely to take place as new planting, proposed as part of the project, matures.

Landscape and Visual Assessment Process

8.12 The assessment of landscape effects for the project has followed a recognised process set out below:

- Identify the baseline landscape resource (e.g.. individual landscape elements and landscape character) and its value;
- Identify forces for change in the landscape of the surrounding area;
- Evaluate the sensitivity of the landscape resource to the type of development proposed;
- Identify potential landscape effects of the project through review of initial plans;
- Develop measures to avoid, reduce and ameliorate adverse effects and to maximise the positive benefits of the project;
- Identify scale of magnitude of change proposed;
- Assess the significance of effects of the project on the landscape, taking into account the measures proposed; and
- Report the findings of the assessment.

8.13 The assessment of visual effects followed a recognised process set out below:

- Identify potential visual receptors of the project (i.e. people who will have views of the development);
- Select an appropriate number of representative or sensitive viewpoints to reflect the full range of different views towards the project;
- Describe the nature of the baseline views towards the project for each representative viewpoint;
- Identify forces for change in the visual amenity of the surrounding area;
- Evaluate the sensitivity of the visual receptors represented by the viewpoints;
- Identify potential visual effects of the project through review of initial plans;
- Develop measures to avoid, reduce and ameliorate adverse effects and to maximise the positive benefits of the project;
- Identify the scale or magnitude of the proposed changes;
- Assess the significance of effects on the view from representative viewpoints, taking into account the visual context of the development and the measures proposed;
- Assess the significance of effects on overall visual amenity; and
- Report the findings of the assessment.

8.14 The assessment of representative viewpoints has been supplemented by scheduling of specific visual receptors and selected additional site visits to various locations to determine visual effects upon those likely to be affected to the greatest degree.

Assessment Criteria

8.15 The purpose of the LVIA is to evaluate the significance of landscape and visual effects to enable the determining authority to consider the likely significant effects of the project as part of the EIA process.

8.16 Published guidance states that the significance of effects is ascertained by professional judgement based on consideration of the sensitivity of the baseline landscape or visual receptor and the magnitude of change as a result of the project.

Sensitivity of Receptor

8.17 The sensitivity of a landscape or a view to change varies according to the nature of the existing resource and the nature of the proposed change. Considerations of value, integrity and capacity are all relevant when assessing sensitivity. For the purpose of this assessment, these terms are defined as follows:

- Value: the value or importance attached to a landscape for its scenic or aesthetic qualities, or cultural associations, can be recognised through national, regional or local designation. Views tend not to be designated, but can be recognised through a name, or shown on a map, or through the creation of a parking lay-by or location of a bench;
- Integrity: the degree to which the value has been retained, the condition and integrity of the landscape or the view; and
- Capacity: the ability of a landscape or view to accommodate the proposed change while retaining the essential characteristics that define it.

8.18 Sensitivity is not readily graded in bands. However, in order to provide both consistency and transparency to the assessment process, Table 8.1 defines the criteria which have guided the judgement as to the sensitivity of the receptor.

Table 8.1 Sensitivity of Receptor

	Landscape Receptor	Visual Receptor
Low	Landscape value is low, with no designations; landscape integrity is low, with a landscape in poor condition and a degraded character; and the landscape has the capacity to potentially accommodate significant change.	May include people at their place of work, or engaged in similar activities, whose attention may be focussed on their work or activity and who may therefore be potentially less susceptible to changes in view.
Medium	Landscape value is recognised locally, but is not designated; the landscape is relatively intact, with a distinctive character; and the landscape is reasonably tolerant of change.	Viewers' attention may be focused on landscape, such as road or rail users, users of secondary footpaths, and people engaged in outdoor sport or recreation. e.g. fishing, water sports, golf
High	Landscape value recognised by existing or proposed national or regional designation. Sense of tranquillity or remoteness specifically noted in Landscape Character Assessment. High sensitivity to disturbance specifically noted in Landscape Character Assessment. The qualities for which the landscape is valued are in a good condition, with a clearly apparent distinctive character. This distinctive character is susceptible to relatively small changes.	Landscape value recognised by existing or proposed designation. Large number or high sensitivity of viewers assumed. Viewers' attention very likely to be focused on landscape. E.g. Residents experiencing views from dwellings; users of strategic recreational footpaths and cycleways; people experiencing views from important landscape features of physical, cultural or historic interest, beauty spots and picnic areas.

Magnitude of Change

8.19 The magnitude of change affecting landscape or visual receptors depends on the nature, scale and duration of the particular change within the landscape, the location of it, and the

overall effect on a particular view. This may be very small if the development is at some distance. In a landscape, the magnitude of change will depend on the loss or change in any important feature or characteristic or a change in backdrop to, or outlook from, a landscape that affects its character. The angle of view, duration of view, distance from the development, degree of contrast with the existing characteristics of the view, prominence of the development and the extent of visibility can all influence the magnitude of the change in view. In addition, the general visibility and combination of effects of elevation and topography on openness and degree of obstruction by trees and buildings affect the magnitude of change.

Table 8.2 - Magnitude of Change

	Landscape Effects	Visual Effects
Negligible	The effect of change on the perception of the landscape, the physical landscape or the landscape character is minimal or there is no change.	There is either no view or the character of the view will not be altered by the proposed development. The proposed development is at such a distance as to be imperceptible, and may only be discernible in clear conditions. May go unnoticed.
Small	Changes to the physical landscape, its character and the perception of the landscape are slight. Long distance to affected landscape type with views toward the character type the key characteristic. Effect reduced by presence of many built elements.	Visible but not prominent.
Medium	The proposed development forms a visible and recognisable feature in the landscape. Proposed development is some distance from affected Landscape Type. Other built elements or human activities in views. Scale of development fits with existing features.	Prominent. Has an important but not defining influence on view; is a key element in the view.
Large	Where there are substantial changes affecting the character of the landscape, or the important elements. Proposed development within or close to affected landscape type. Size of development out of scale with existing elements.	Dominant. Has a defining influence on view.

8.20 The following considerations are relevant when evaluating the magnitude of change:

- Distance: the distance between the receptor and the development. Generally, the greater the distance, the lower the magnitude;
- Extent: the extent of the proposal which is visible;
- Proportion: the arc of view occupied by the development in proportion to the overall field of view. A panoramic view, where the development takes up a small part of it, will generally be of lower magnitude than a narrow, focussed view, even if the arc of view occupied by the proposal is similar;
- Duration: the duration of the effect. An effect experienced in a single location over an extended period of time is likely to result in a higher magnitude of change than an effect which is of a short duration, such as a view from a road;
- Orientation: the angle of the view in relation to the main receptor orientation, where there is a dominant direction to the vista;
- Context: the elements, which in combination provide the setting and context to the proposal. In particular, vertical man-made structures within the context can decrease the magnitude of change; and,
- Background: the colour of the development has been selected on the basis that the majority of viewers will see the scheme (in particular the stacks) against the sky. Where the landform forms the background to the view, this can have an effect on the magnitude of change.

Significance of Effect

8.21 The significance of the landscape and visual effects are assessed through consideration of the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change. The following table outlines the broad approach adopted to assess the significance of effect, together with professional judgement.

Table 8.3 – Significance of Effect

Landscape And Visual Sensitivity	Magnitude Of Change			
	Large	Medium	Small	Negligible
High	Substantial	Major	Moderate	Minor
Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	Neutral
Low	Moderate	Minor	Neutral	Neutral

8.22 The effect of relevant aspects of the proposal on the landscape and townscape has been described and the significance evaluated against the following criteria, defined as:

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- 8.23 Substantial adverse: Where the proposed changes cannot be mitigated; would be completely uncharacteristic and would substantially damage the integrity of a valued and important landscape or townscape.
- 8.24 Major adverse: Where the proposed changes cannot be fully mitigated; would be uncharacteristic and would damage a valued aspect of the landscape or townscape.
- 8.25 Moderate adverse: Where some elements of the proposed changes would be out of scale or uncharacteristic of an area.
- 8.26 Minor adverse: Where the proposed changes would be at slight variance with the character of an area.
- 8.27 Neutral: Where the proposals would be in keeping with the character of the area and/or would maintain the existing quality or where on balance the proposals would maintain quality (e.g. where on balance the adverse effects of the proposals are off set by beneficial effects).
- 8.28 Minor beneficial: Where the proposed changes would fit in well with the existing character and would improve the character and quality of the landscape or townscape.
- 8.29 Moderate beneficial: Where the proposed changes would not only fit in well with the existing character of the surrounding landscape or townscape, but would greatly improve the quality of the resource through the removal of detracting features.
- 8.30 Major beneficial: Where the proposed changes would substantially improve character and quality through the removal of large scale damage and dereliction and provision of far reaching enhancements.
- 8.31 The effect of relevant aspects of the project on views has been described and the significance evaluated as follows:
- 8.32 Substantial adverse: Where the proposed changes would form the dominant feature, would be completely uncharacteristic and substantially change the scene in valued views.
- 8.33 Major adverse: Where the proposed changes would form a major part of the view, would be uncharacteristic, and would alter valued views.
- 8.34 Moderate adverse: Where the proposed changes to views would be out of scale or uncharacteristic with the existing view.
- 8.35 Minor adverse: Where the proposed changes to views would be at slight variance with the existing view.
- 8.36 Neutral: Where the project would be imperceptible or would be in keeping with and would maintain the existing views or where on balance the proposals would maintain the quality of the views (which may on balance include adverse effects of the proposals which are off set by beneficial effects for the same receptor).

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- 8.37 Minor beneficial: Where the proposed changes to the existing view would be in keeping with and would improve the quality of the existing view.
- 8.38 Moderate beneficial: Where the proposed changes to the existing view would not only be in keeping with, but would greatly improve the quality of the scene through the removal of visually detracting features.
- 8.39 Major beneficial: Where the proposed changes to existing views would substantially improve the character and quality through the removal of large scale damage and dereliction and provision of far reaching enhancements.
- 8.40 The significance of effects is described as substantial, major, moderate, minor or neutral. Where there is only a negligible effect on a landscape or visual resource, the assessment records neutral.
- 8.41 Those effects identified as being of substantial, major or moderate significance may be regarded as significant effects in EIA terms. A conclusion that an effect is 'significant' should not be taken to imply that the project is unacceptable. Significance of effect needs to be considered with respect to the extent of a landscape or a view over which it is experienced.

Cumulative Effects

- 8.42 Reference has been made to any major proposed developments within the vicinity of the project which would lead to a significant change in the baseline situation that exists at present (February 2010).

Measures Adopted as Part of the Project

- 8.43 The project includes a range of measures that have been designed to reduce or avoid significant adverse environmental effects. The assessment of effects has therefore taken into account all measures that form part of the project (including its layout and design) and to which the applicants are committed.
- 8.44 Details of the project are provided below. In summary, the proposed SEP would have the following characteristics:
- Electricity generation capacity of approximately 60MWe;
 - Steam generation capacity of up to 100 tonnes per hour (tph) depending on steam conditions;
 - On-site pipelines for the collection and distribution of steam;
 - An ash handling facility, located on site,;
 - Ancillary development including internal roads, parking, gatehouse weighbridge, rail connection, water treatment, fuel store, fencing, landscaping and offices;

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- Grid connection for electricity export, including transformer and an indicative cable route to the existing substation at Hartford;
 - Relocated coke store (relocating the existing coke store currently adjacent to the rail connection to an area to the north of the SEP site).
- 8.45 The proposed SEP would comprise two individual but identical process lines. Each line would consist of a combustion zone, heat recovery zone and a flue gas treatment area before the cleaned gasses are released to atmosphere via a stack.
- 8.46 The project would comprise a layout of several buildings housing the main equipment for production of electricity and steam. The main turbine building/fuel handling building would be located in the central section of the site. The building comprises a series of connected simple rectilinear forms, clad in metal sheeting, with a maximum roof height of 48m. The metal cladding would be coloured either green or grey. A pair of stacks for the discharge of flue gas would rise to 90m at the southern end of the site. Smaller buildings linking to the production of steam and electricity would be arranged around the main buildings including the building housing the air cooled condensers located along the canal corridor. Ancillary development would include an ash storage building, rail offloading gantry, gate houses internal roads, parking, landscape planting, fencing, offices and lighting. Details of the landscape masterplan are described below and shown on Figure 8.21.
- 8.47 Landscape proposals have been designed as an integral part of the project to provide treatments for the perimeter and internal green spaces. The design has evolved with reference to key landscape features and qualities found within the surrounding landscape. The objective of the landscape proposals is to provide a scheme that is:
- Uncluttered to allow easy access and flow around the site;
 - Integrated into the landscape and townscape in views from receptors particularly from the immediate vicinity;
 - Provides an attractive working environment for employees that is practical and fit for purpose.
- 8.48 Landscape proposals would complement the entrance to the Lostock Site bringing the surrounding rural landscape into the area.
- 8.49 The perimeter landscape treatments to the south eastern boundaries would work in conjunction with the attenuation feature below the air cooled condensers which run parallel to the development and the canal. Marginal wet grassland would be established on the gently sloping sides of this area.

- 8.50 Internal green spaces within the site would be sown with a simple treatment of grassland and wildflower mix with a network of mown paths. Seating areas would be defined and shaded by clusters of trees on the exposed sides of the building.
- 8.51 The proposals seek to reflect the character of Lostock and the surrounding landscape, establishing vegetation types using native species which would provide a transition in the landscape to connect the areas different features and characteristics.

Baseline Conditions

Planning Policy

- 8.52 A review of the development plan documents and planning context in relation to the project is provided in Appendix 8.1.

Landscape Baseline – Site Features

Introduction

- 8.53 This site description focuses on the main project site at Lostock comprising the SEP and associated fuel reception and ash handling facilities. The application site boundary also encompasses a construction laydown area and a site access road from the A530 Griffiths Road, across the Trent and Mersey Canal.

The Main Project Site

- 8.54 The main project site is situated within an area of industrial development bounded by the railway line to the north and the A530 to the east. It is located on the site of the former Lostock Power Station, which stands as a redundant structure dominating the site. The former power station site is located within the wider Lostock Site, which consists of permanent or temporary industrial structures of varying heights. The existing landscape of the site is therefore dominated by industry, and in particular the scale and extent of the chemical works to the immediate north.
- 8.55 The site area totals approximately 9.2 hectares and comprises three linked areas. The SEP would be located within the main area of the site to the immediate west of the Trent and Mersey Canal and to the south of the Brunner Mond works. A smaller area to the west would site the fuel reception and ash maturation plant. A further area to the east of the Canal on currently redundant ground would contain the construction laydown area. The existing coke store would be relocated to the north of the main development area.
- 8.56 Access to the main development site would be from the existing access road from the A530 Griffiths Road, across the Trent and Mersey Canal. The stretch of access road from the A530 to the west of the canal is also a public footpath.

Grid Connection

- 8.57 Energy from the SEP would be distributed to the main grid via underground cabling to the nearby existing Hartford Substation.

Vegetation on the Main Development Site

- 8.58 No significant vegetation is located on site. The site predominantly consists of existing industrial buildings and hardstanding with small areas of semi-improved grassland, ephemeral/short perennial vegetation, tall ruderal vegetation and scrub.

Other Features on Site

- 8.59 There are no landscape features of note on the main project site. The site is within the area of the Mersey Forest, an environmental regeneration initiative, of which the Northwich Woodlands to the north of the River Weaver form part. The Northwich Woodlands provide more than 350 hectares of parkland open to the public and includes Marbury Country Park, Alderton Nature Park and Neumann's Flashes as described below.

Adjacent Features

- 8.60 The following nearby features are noted (see Figure 8.2):
- The Trent and Mersey Canal which runs to the immediate east of the main project site (between the main site and the construction laydown area);
 - The existing Brunner Mond works to the west, creating visible steam across the landscape;
 - An area of derelict ground around which the development site wraps to the west, north and east;
 - Griffiths Park, an area of parkland located on a former landfill site managed by the local authority, which lies to the south-west of the site.

Nearby Land Uses

- 8.61 Nearby land uses within or just beyond 2km of the site (see Figure 8.2) include:
- Anderton Nature Park, which forms part of the Northwich Community woodlands to the north-west of the development site. The park is located in an area of former saltworks and large scale salt extraction where the River Weaver meets the Trent and Mersey Canal resulting in the creation of Witton Flashes. Public access is provided along surfaced routes suitable for pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists and access is also available from the canal.
 - Marbury Country Park, part of Northwich Woodlands, is located around the former residence of the Smith-Barry family and is now managed by Cheshire West and Chester

Council as a Country Park. There are a variety of walks and trails for visitors and features include a children's play area, orienteering course and a range of events throughout the year.

- Neumann's Flashes, which also form part of the Northwich Community Woodlands. This is the most recently reclaimed area of land within the Woodlands and provides access for pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists along linear and circular routes which link with the wider Northwich Woodlands area. A variety of bird species including waders and water fowl are found at this location and visitors can view the wildlife from three new bird hides which are wheelchair accessible.
- Watercourses including the River Dane to the south-west, the Wade Brook to the north of the site, south of the railway line and the Wincham Brook to the north of the A559 Manchester Road;
- Agricultural land to the east and beyond the A556.

Topographical Context

8.62 Figure 8.3 provides a picture of the topographical context for the development. The main project site is flat and located within a low lying area between 25 and 30m AOD.

8.63 The landscape of the study area ranges from sea level to 150m+ with a series of river corridors and tributaries leading from the surrounding higher ground.

Landscape Sensitivity

8.64 The existing site features are considered to have low sensitivity due to the essentially derelict appearance of the overall site. The main project site is not considered to make any particularly important contribution to the general landscape character of the surrounding area.

Landscape Baseline – Landscape Character

Introduction

8.65 The assessment of landscape effects focuses on the effect of the development on landscape character. Landscape character areas and landscape character types can be defined at a variety of scales and a substantial amount of existing published information is available at the national, county and district scales. The principal published information comprises the Countryside Agency's (now Natural England) national landscape characterisation of England and the county level characterisation undertaken by Cheshire County Council prior to its division into the new unitary authorities.

National Landscape Context

- 8.66 At a national level the site is identified within the Countryside Commission document 'Countryside Character Volume 2: The North West'. That document puts the main project site within the broad Countryside Character area No 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain, which extends from Manchester in the north to Telford in the south. To the almost immediate west of Northwich is Character Area 62: Cheshire Sandstone Ridge.
- 8.67 The key characteristics of the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain/Cheshire Sandstone Ridge character areas are:
- *“Extensive gently rolling plain, interrupted by sandstone ridges, the most prominent being the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge.*
 - *A unified rural landscape, dominated by dairying, with strong field patterns, merging with more mixed and arable farming to the north and south-east.*
 - *Mosses, meres and small field ponds are scattered throughout; subsidence flashes occur to the east of the Cheshire Plain.*
 - *Boundaries are predominantly hedgerows, generally well managed, with abundant hedgerow trees, mostly oak; metal railing fences occur locally on estates.*
 - *Woodlands are few, restricted to deciduous and mixed woods on the steeper slopes of sandstone ridges, and some of the more difficult wet areas. There are also locally extensive tracts of coniferous woodland. The plentiful hedgerow trees, particularly in Cheshire, give the appearance of a well-wooded landscape.*
 - *Large farmsteads regularly spaced throughout, with dispersed hamlets, and few market towns.*
 - *Buildings are predominantly red brick, with warm sandstone churches and, in the national parks occasional very distinctive black and white half-timbered buildings.*
 - *Extractive industries generally small scale but widespread - sand, gravel, salt, sandstone, peat.”*
- 8.68 In relation to the canals, including the Trent and Mersey Canal which runs to the east of the main project site, the document states that:
- 8.69 “The Shropshire Union, Trent and Mersey and Llangollen Canals run through the Plain but have only a limited, local effect on the landscape”.
- 8.70 Physical, historical and cultural influences around Northwich are recorded as follows:
- 8.71 “The extraction of salt, by dissolving it and pumping it out to underground deposits within the Triassic Mercia Mudstone, has caused subsistence flashes particularly around Northwich and Middlewich in Cheshire.

- 8.72 The towns of the north expanded through industrial activity and tend to be larger, sprawling settlements. Sandbach, Middlewich and Northwich developed as a result of the salt industry.....”

Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment

- 8.73 At the county level Cheshire County Council, prior to the division of the County into new Unitary Authorities on 1st April 2009 (Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East), further refined and subdivided the national character areas. The project site is located within the ‘Urban/Industry’ character area, with the salt flashes at Anderton to the north of the railway and the A559 forming part of Landscape Character Type 11 ‘Salt Flashes’. The document provides the following description:

- 8.74 “This character area comprises both rock salt mines and brine pumping shafts. Northwich, of which this area comprises a large part, was a centre for salt extraction with 109 mine shafts and 61 brine shafts at its peak. The first rock-salt mines date to the 17th century – one was located near Marbury lime bed, while another is under Neumann’s lime bed.

- 8.75 Much of the derelict land within this area was reclaimed under a comprehensive land regeneration programme initiated in the 1980’s and utilising government funding. In locations such as Wincham this involved the development of new industrial estates, perpetuating the area’s former industrial character. Elsewhere the emphasis was on the creation of new public spaces. In the 1990’s work began on the establishment of the Northwich Community Woodland, created under the auspices of the Mersey Forest. Decades of inactivity had resulted in many of the former lime beds drying out sufficiently to allow colonisation by dense growths of birch trees. Such areas were incorporated into a management programme which also included the establishment of new woodlands on regraded ground. A pathway system was created to encourage public access throughout, in many places utilising the remaining bunds.”

Vale Royal Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document

- 8.76 The Vale Royal Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document was adopted in 2007. The project site falls within the urban area of Northwich in the western part of the Lostock Plain (6c) landscape character area and adjacent to the Stublach Plain (6b) landscape character area. The Salt Heritage Landscape (13a) character area lies to the north of the railway.
- 8.77 The Lostock Plain is described as a distinct area of the East Cheshire Plain, located to the east of Northwich, where “*Industrial works at Northwich East form a backcloth to the Lostock Plain.*” Landscape management should “*Seek opportunities to create a woodland setting for the industrial and business areas to the east of Northwich.*”

- 8.78 In relation to landscape character area 6b it is noted that “Industrial works at Northwich East have a visual influence on the Stublach Plain” and in relation to landscape management there should be “*Support plans to create a woodland setting for the industrial and business areas to the east of Northwich.*”
- 8.79 The Northwich Salt Heritage Landscape (13a) is “an area of formerly extensive salt works on the northern outskirts of Northwich. It incorporates the confluence of Wade Brook and Marbury Brook with the River Weaver and a large area of subsidence flashes.....surrounded by a mosaic of grassland, marsh, scrub and woodland forming the heart of the Northwich Community Woodlands.”
- 8.80 The adjoining Stublach Plain (6b) “forms a flat pastoral plain. The character area is bounded to the north by the more industrialised Lostock Plain and to the east by the heathy landscape of Allostock Woodland, Heath, Meres and Mosses. The flat, expansive nature of the landform produces large scale landscape which is overlaid by a more intricate and irregular pattern of hedged fields. The presence of hedgerow oaks contributes texture to this otherwise flat and open landscape and filters views across the otherwise open plain.”

Visual Baseline – General Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI)

Zones of Visual Influence

- 8.81 The potential zone of visual influence of the project has been considered as follows:
- SEP;
 - Associated stacks;
 - Fuel reception and ash treatment plant.

Visual Baseline – Visual Receptors

Schedule of Receptors

- 8.82 The site is relatively flat and bounded by the existing industrial buildings. To the north, east and south the surrounding topography is flat with limited tree cover. The height of the proposed buildings, plant and associated stacks would be open to views from these directions.
- 8.83 The visual assessment has primarily been based on an assessment of 11 representative viewpoints agreed with the local planning authority described below. In addition, ZVI information, supplemented by selected (but not comprehensive) site visits, has been used to identify and consider all of the main specific visual receptors within the vicinity of the development (with increasing detail closer to the site).

8.84 These visual receptors, including notes regarding their baseline views, are scheduled in Table 8.4 below.

Residential Areas

8.85 The main locations where the ZTV indicates that there could be potential visual effects on residential properties include:

- Northwich to the west;
- Broken Cross to the south;
- Rudheath to the south;
- Lostock Green to the south-east;
- Marston to the north;
- Wincham to the north;
- Lostock Gralam to the east.

Other Built-Up Areas

8.86 The other principal residential areas slightly further a-field include:

- Plumley to the east;
- Higher Wincham to the north;
- Middlewich to the south.

8.87 Site survey has indicated that the landform and intervening built environment is such that the majority of these areas would not receive views of the project. Where residential views would be gained, these have been considered in combination with local publicly accessible views in the subsequent sections.

Public Rights of Way and Public Access

8.88 Reference to the definitive map has confirmed the extent and status of public rights of way in the immediate vicinity of the site. These are shown on Figure 8.2. Short distance (within 2km) open views to the project site would be gained from the following resources:

- Public footpaths on, within and adjacent to the site, including the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk;
- Viewpoints along the main nearby roads – the A530 Griffith Road and the A559 Manchester Road;
- Griffith's Park to the south-west of the development site;

- The Northwich Woodland which extends to over 350 hectares of public open space to the north of the A559;
- Marbury Park located to the north-west of the site, beyond the railway and A559, which is managed by Cheshire West and Chester Council as a Country Park;
- Anderton Nature Park, part of which is designated as access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;
- The Trent and Mersey Canal to the immediate east of the development site.

8.89 In addition, there would be some long distance (over 2km) open views of the project site from minor roads within the study area. These include:

- A556 east and west of the site;
- A559 north of the site;
- A530 Roman Road south of the site.

8.90 These footpaths and access areas, their baseline views and sensitivity to the proposed development are scheduled in Table 8.4 below.

Visual Baseline – Viewpoint Assessment

Selection of Representative Viewpoints

8.91 Eleven representative viewpoints have been selected to assess the effects of the proposed development (see Figure 8.13). Their selection has been based on:

- Selection of a range of distances and directions;
- Selection of important or potentially sensitive locations;
- Interrogation of digital ZTV information;
- Confirmation of potential visibility on site (i.e. absence of local land cover).
- The viewpoints have been provided to the local authority for comments. To date, no response has been received.

Schedule of Representative Viewpoints with Baseline Conditions

8.92 Table 8.4 provides a schedule of the selected representative viewpoints and their baseline conditions.

Table 8.4 – Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint No.	Viewpoint Location	Distance to proposal	Baseline Conditions
1	Access to existing works	0.1km	Near open view looking northwest immediately adjacent the entrance to the proposed site. The derelict power station (proposed site location) and the existing works dominate the view.
2	Griffith's Park	0.1km	Near open views from high points within the park. The industrial landscape dominates the view in the foreground and mid distance. High voltage lines also cross the landscape.
3	Footpath between A530 (Griffiths Road) and Lostock Hollow, North of Brook	0.4km	Close to mid distance views west from the public right of way north of the brook. Views are dominated by the existing Brunner Mond Soda Ash plant, associated works and the derelict Lostock Power Station.
4	Footpath between A530 (Griffiths Road) and Lostock Hollow, South of Brook	0.3km	Close distance view similar in character to Viewpoint 3. Existing works dominate the view with the derelict power station filtered by existing steam on site.
5	Canal Path, Rudheath (public right of way and residential area)	0.4km	Mid distance open views looking north from the Grand Trunk Canal Path. The view focuses on the mid ground which contains the active Brunner Mond site and the derelict power station located on the proposed development site. High voltage lines add an intrusion across the landscape. The appearance of the 'rural' landscape provides a green belt between Rudheath and Wincham. This view is also representative of residential properties on the northern fringes of Rudheath.
6	A556 / Canal Path, Rudheath (public right of way, residential area and road corridor)	1.2km	Mid to long distance views looking north from the A556/ Canal Path across the townscape of Rudheath. The view over the roof tops takes in the upper sections of the active Brunner Mond site and the derelict Lostock Power Station. This view is also representative of residential properties on the northern fringes of Rudheath and road users.
7	Carey County Park, Northwich	2.4km	The made landform and landscape within the foreground filters and screens views out of the country park. Long distance views from the park are limited but can be found. Filtered views towards the existing Brunner Mond site and other industry located to the south are available upon higher ground within the park.

Viewpoint No.	Viewpoint Location	Distance to proposal	Baseline Conditions
8	Vale Royal Abbey Golf Course, PRoW (open access land, public right of way and residential area)	6.5km	Enclosed views from Vale Royal Golf Course of the course and surrounding landscape. No existing views are gained of the Brunner Mond Site. This view is also representative of residential properties on the northern fringes of Vale Royal Park.
9	Dane Valley Way PRoW, Middlewich (long distance path, Kinderton Hall and residential area)	7.8km	Long distance open views north towards the proposal site from the entrance of Kinderton Hall and Dane Valley Way. Typical rural landscape with some tall elements including the high voltage overhead line which runs to the south and east of the proposal site.
10	PRoW /M6 overbridge, Lower Peover	4.2km	Mid to long distance across the redundant Cheadle Farm Salt Mine from the PRoW. Heavily filtered views are available west of the existing derelict Lostock Power Station within the proposal site.
11	PRoW / M56 overbridge, Stretton Moss (public right of way and road users)	9.8km	Long distance views south across a predominately rural landscape from the M56 Overbridge / PRoW at Stretton Moss. No views are available of the existing Brunner Mond Site.

Potential Changes to Baseline Conditions

8.93 The following projects and initiatives are located within the vicinity of the proposed development and may affect the baseline conditions over the coming years.

1. *Bedminster/Organic Waste Management: Bio-Energy Plant (within Lostock Site)*

- Construction of a Bio-Energy Plant. Proposal to manage mixed waste and separate recyclables for treatment elsewhere and to use the organic fraction to generate electricity, including pyrolysis.

2. *Precious and semi-precious metal recovery plant with fertiliser manufacture (within Lostock Site)*

- Plant for waste transfer, recovery of precious and semi-precious metals and production of fertiliser.

3. *Waste Treatment Plant: Viridor (within Lostock Site)*

- Waste treatment plant, including mechanical and biological treatment of waste. Site to treat household residual waste and Household Waste Recycling centre derived residual municipal waste from Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East. This will produce recyclates, solid recovered fuel and some waste for landfill.

4. *Wincham: Energy from Waste (approximately 1.4 km to the north)*

- Waste treatment plant as for Viridor, including Energy from Waste plant.

5. *Covanta Middlewich (approximately 8.4 km to the south)*

- Energy from Waste development and associated buildings.

8.94 Details of additional schemes have been provided by Cheshire West and Chester Council. However the distances between these schemes and the project prevents any intervisibility. In addition, establishment of woodland areas under the Mersey Forest and Northwich Woodlands initiatives and maturity of existing restoration works to the north of the A559 will progressively increase the continuity of woodland cover in this area. Medium distance views from the north are therefore likely to take on an increasingly wooded character, within which the project would sit.

Construction Assessment

SEP

8.95 The construction site would be surrounded by hoardings and/or security fencing. Located within the site area would be site offices, materials and spoil storage areas and cranes.

8.96 Normal construction working hours would be 07.00 to 18.00. Lighting would be required for working outside daylight hours. Where provided, hoardings would screen ground level activities. However cranes, high level construction activities, large plant and vehicles would be visible above these barriers.

8.97 The programmed period for construction site occupation is approximately 3.5 years.

Landscape Effects

8.98 The likely effects on the townscape and landscape fabric and character are described below.

8.99 At a national scale, direct effects on the landscape apply to the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain character area. The project would affect the townscape and the industrial fringes of Rudheath and Wincham. These character areas are of poor condition and considered to be of a low sensitivity to change. Effects of medium magnitude are anticipated, giving rise to an effect of minor adverse significance in the short term. The neighbouring character area of Cheshire Sandstone Ridge would experience a temporary effect that would be of medium to small magnitude resulting in an effect of minor adverse to neutral significance. No night time effects are considered significant during the construction period.

8.100 At the local scale, effects on local landscape character relate to the Lostock Plain Character Area, within the overarching East Cheshire Plain Landscape Type which has a poor to ordinary condition and local value. The character area's sensitivity to change through the effects of construction activities within the project site would be low. Low level ruderal

vegetation and scrub would be cleared from the construction site as part of the construction phase. This vegetation is not visually significant within the wider landscape and its loss would not open up views. The direct effect of the large scale construction works on the derelict site would create a medium magnitude of change to the character, which would be adverse in nature, but only short term in duration. The overall significance of effect on the Lostock Plain character area during construction would be minor adverse to neutral.

- 8.101 The Northwich Salt Heritage Landscape (13a considered to be in a poor condition) and Stublach Plain (6c considered to be in an ordinary condition) are considered to be of low sensitivity. Effects during construction are considered to be of negligible magnitude and of neutral significance.
- 8.102 Temporary lighting proposals would result in an extension of the existing industrial conditions on adjacent land, into the site itself, during the construction phase. This would be within the well lit context of the existing buildings and tower mounted lights and lighting columns within industrial areas. The sensitivity of the Lostock Plain landscape is considered to be low. The magnitude of the night time effects is considered to be small, resulting in a neutral significance of effect.
- 8.103 The overall townscape/landscape effect during construction can be summarised as minor adverse to neutral.
- 8.104 The effects on the landscape further afield during construction are not considered to be significant.

Predicted Visual Effects

- 8.105 The zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) for the existing site area would increase during the construction phase due to the introduction of large scale tall structures, buildings and cranes into a relatively flat landscape. The activities associated with the construction of the stacks and tall buildings would be visible above the adjoining industrial development and landform, which currently screens some views. The ZTV would extend over additional areas to the south and south west and also over the wider landscape to the north. Construction activities would appear as new elements in views gained by all visual receptors identified at the baseline stage. A number of additional visual receptors would also be affected which have no view of the site at present.
- 8.106 Occupiers of residential properties at Rudheath, Wincham and Lostock Gralam on the fringes of the industrial sites surrounding the site would gain filtered views through intervening industrial development of high level construction activities. These receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity with the magnitude of change during the construction phase considered to be small to negligible. The significance of effect for the receptors would be moderate to minor adverse.

8.107 Users of the public open space at Griffith's Park and canal path to the south and the PRoW's to the east of the site would gain open views of demolition of the derelict building and all level construction work and considered the closest receptors to these works.

8.108 Employees at industrial premises adjacent the project site and along the edges of Rudheath Wincham and Gralam would be visual receptors of low sensitivity and form the largest group of receptors in close proximity to the project. Many views of the SEP construction activities would be gained through intervening development of a similar character. The works would be seen as an extension of existing industry. The scale of the project would potentially create a small magnitude of change in view due to the similar nature of the proposals, leading to a neutral significance of effect.

Viewpoint 1: Entrance to Proposed Site

8.109 Near open views gained by footpath and road users would focus on the construction site, activities, laydown area and traffic. The works would be undertaken with an industrial landscape within a site already containing a heavy vehicle movement. The sensitivity of the receptor in this industrial fringe is considered to be medium and the magnitude of change in view would be medium and temporary in nature, leading to a moderate adverse effect on views.

8.110 The derelict site is currently unlit at night. Temporary lighting for night working during the construction period would be seen in the context of existing light sources within the adjoining industrial district. Lighting would be seen as an extension to existing conditions resulting in a Minor significance of effect, in the short term.

Viewpoint 2: Griffith's Park

8.111 Near open views gained by park users would focus on the construction site, activities and high level crane activity in particular the Ash Maturation Plant situated directly to the north at the rail sidings. The works would be undertaken with an industrial landscape within a site already containing a heavy industry. The sensitivity of the receptor from this industrial fringe is considered to be medium and the magnitude of change in view would be medium and temporary in nature, leading to a moderate/minor adverse effect on views.

8.112 The derelict site is currently not lit during night time. Temporary lighting for night time working during the construction period would be seen in the context of existing light sources within the adjoining industrial district. Lighting would be seen as an extension to existing conditions resulting in a minor significance of effect, in the short term.

Viewpoint 3: Footpath between A530 (Griffiths Road) and Lostock Hollow, North of Brook

8.113 Walkers would gain near to mid distance filtered views of the SEP during construction from this location within a rural/green belt landscape. Low level activities would be concealed by intervening industrial development. However, the construction laydown area would be evident

near the steam pipes to the left of the view. High level construction activities would be visible above existing industry to the east of the canal. The sensitivity of the receptor is medium and the magnitude of change in view would be small, temporarily leading to a minor adverse effect on views.

- 8.114 Only high level lighting for night time working during the construction period would be seen in the context of existing light sources within the adjoining industrial district. Lighting would temporarily be visible as an intensification of existing conditions. The significance of night time effects would be neutral.

Viewpoint 4: Footpath between A530 (Griffiths Road) and Lostock Hollow, South of Brook

- 8.115 This viewpoint offers similar views to viewpoint 3, where walkers would gain near distance filtered views of the SEP during construction from the fringes of a green belt/industrial landscape. Low level activities would be concealed by intervening industrial development with the construction compound evident to the left of the view. High level construction activities would be visible above existing industry to the east of the canal. The sensitivity of the receptor is medium and the magnitude of change in view would be small, temporarily leading to a minor adverse effect on views.

- 8.116 Only high level lighting for night working during the construction period would be seen in the context of existing light sources within the adjoining industrial district. Lighting would temporarily be visible as an intensification of existing conditions. The significance of night time effects would be neutral.

Viewpoint 5: Canal Path, Rudheath (including residential area)

- 8.117 Walkers and people engaged in leisure pursuits would gain near open views of the SEP during construction focussing on the construction site, laydown area, construction activities and high level crane activity. The works would be undertaken with an industrial landscape within a site already containing a heavy industry. The sensitivity of the receptor from this green belt/industrial fringe is considered to be medium/high and the magnitude of change in view would be medium and temporary in nature, leading to a major/moderate adverse effect on views.

- 8.118 The derelict site is currently not lit during night time. Temporary lighting for night time working during the construction period would be seen in the context of existing light sources within the adjoining industrial district. Lighting would be seen as an extension to existing conditions resulting in a neutral significance of effect, in the short term.

Viewpoint 6: A556 / Canal Path, Rudheath (including residential areas and road users)

- 8.119 Mid to long distance glimpsed view would be gained by residents, pedestrians and traffic along the A556 of high level construction activity only. The sensitivity is considered to be high (residential receptors) to low (road users) and the magnitude change experienced would be

small to negligible and temporary in nature leading to a minor adverse/neutral significance of effect.

- 8.120 Only high level lighting for night time working during the construction period would be seen in the context of existing light sources within the adjoining industrial district and urban area. Lighting would temporarily be visible as an intensification of existing conditions. The significance of night time effects would be neutral.

Viewpoint 7: Carey Country Park, Rudheath

- 8.121 Walkers and people engaged in leisure pursuits would gain filtered long distance views of the SEP during construction focussing on the high level construction activity with the majority of works screened by existing vegetation with the Country Park and adjoining industry. The works would be undertaken with an industrial landscape within a site already containing a heavy industry. The sensitivity of the receptor is considered to be medium/high and the magnitude of change in view would be small to negligible and temporary in nature, leading to a minor adverse to neutral effect on views.
- 8.122 Only high level lighting for night time working during the construction period would be seen in the context of existing light sources within the adjoining industrial district and urban area. Lighting would temporarily be visible as an intensification of existing conditions. The significance of night time effects would be neutral.

Viewpoint 8: Vale Royal Abbey Golf Course, PRow (including residential area)

- 8.123 Walkers, people engaged in leisure pursuits and adjacent residential properties would gain filtered long distance views of the stack construction associated with the SEP. All other works would be screened by existing vegetation within the golf course. The sensitivity of the receptors is considered to be medium/high and the magnitude of change in view would be small to negligible due to the distance of approximately 6km and temporary in nature, leading to a minor adverse to neutral effect on views.
- 8.124 Due to the distance only high level cranes would be visible containing lighting with the significance of night time effects considered to be neutral.

Viewpoint 9: Dane Valley Way PRow, Middlewich (including residential area and Kinderton Hall)

- 8.125 Walkers would gain filtered long distance views of the stack construction associated with the SEP. All other works would be screened by existing vegetation within the mid ground. The sensitivity of the receptors is considered to be medium with the magnitude of change in view considered small to negligible due to the distance of approximately 8km, leading to a minor adverse to neutral effect on views.

- 8.126 Due to the distance only high level cranes would be visible containing lighting with the significance of night time effects considered to be neutral.

Viewpoint 10: PRow /M6 overbridge, Lower Peover

- 8.127 Walkers would gain filtered long distance views (5km) of the SEP during construction focussing on the high level construction activity with the majority of works screened by existing vegetation within Cheadle Farm. The sensitivity of the receptor is considered to be medium and the magnitude of change in view would be small to negligible and temporary in nature, leading to a minor adverse to neutral effect on views.
- 8.128 Only high level lighting for night time working during the construction period would be seen in the context of existing light glow from the adjoining industrial district and urban area. Lighting would temporarily be visible as an intensification of existing conditions. The significance of night time effects would be neutral.

Viewpoint 11: PRow / M56 overbridge, Stretton Moss

- 8.129 Walkers would gain filtered long distance views (10km) of the stack construction associated with the SEP. All other works would be screened by existing vegetation within the mid ground. The sensitivity of the receptors is considered to be medium to low and the magnitude of change in view would be negligible and temporary in nature, leading to a neutral effect on views.
- 8.130 Due to the distance only high level cranes would be visible containing lighting with the significance of night time effects considered to be neutral.

Grid Connection

- 8.131 The proposed routing of the grid connection to Hartford Substation would take the cabling adjacent to the highway along the A530 and then beneath the cycleway along the A556. The works would involve trenching and distribution of cabling. No landscape and visual effects are considered with this section of the development as these works are considered to be a common occurrence in the urban environment and of a very temporary nature. No significant effects are considered likely with respect to the landscape and visual resources during the construction phase.

Table 8.5 Construction Phase Landscape Effects

Townscape/Landscape Receptor			Sensitivity	Effects			Significance of Effect	
Character Area	Condition	Value (Level of Importance)	Townscape/Landscape Sensitivity	Description of Townscape/Landscape Effects	Magnitude of Proposed Change	Nature/Duration of Proposed Change	Daytime	Night time
National Character Areas								
Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain	Poor	Local	Low, site characteristic of the landscape	Large scale construction site, and prominent, ground level and high level activities in an industrial urban fringe location, not uncharacteristic of character area.	Medium-effect on landscape	Adverse, short term	Minor adverse	None
Cheshire Sandstone Ridge	Ordinary	Local	Low, site not within character area	Large scale construction works in the context of adjacent industry and character areas.	Medium to small- effect on townscape	Adverse, short term	Minor adverse to Neutral	None
Vale Royal Landscape Character Areas								
Lostock Plain	Poor to Ordinary	Local	Low, site characteristic of the landscape	Large scale construction works in the context of adjacent and nearby industry.	Medium-effect on landscape	Adverse, short term	Minor adverse/ Neutral	Neutral
Northwich Salt Heritage Landscape	Poor	local	Low, site not within character area	Large scale construction works in the context of adjacent industry and character areas.	Negligible	Neutral, short term	Neutral	None
Stublach Plain	Ordinary	local	Low, site not within character area	Large scale construction works in the context of adjacent industry and character areas.	Negligible	Neutral, short term	Neutral	None

Table 8.6 – Construction Phase Visual Effects

Receptor				Description of Visual Effects			Significance of Effects	
VP	Type	Location	Sensitivity		Magnitude of change	Nature & duration of proposed change	Daytime	Night time
1	Entrance to Proposed Site	Site Entrance	Medium: Users of public right of way	Near open views gained by footpath and road users would focus on the construction site, activities, laydown area and traffic. The works would be undertaken with an industrial landscape within a site already containing a heavy vehicle movement.	Medium	Adverse, Short term	Moderate adverse	Minor adverse
2	Griffiths Park	Footpath on highpoint within Griffiths Park	Medium: Users of public right of way	Near open views gained by park users would focus on the construction site, activities and high level crane activity in particular the Ash Maturation Plant situated directly to the north at the rail sidings. The works would be undertaken with an industrial landscape within a site already containing a heavy industry.	Medium	Adverse, Short term	Moderate /Minor adverse	Minor adverse
3	Footpath between A530 (Griffiths Road) and Lostock Hollows, North of Brook	East of the site	Medium Users of public right of way	Near to mid distance filtered views of the SEP during construction from this location within a rural/green belt landscape. Low level activities would be concealed by intervening industrial development, However the construction laydown would be evident near the steam pipes to the left of the view. High level	Small	Adverse, Short term	Minor adverse	Neutral

Receptor				Description of Visual Effects			Significance of Effects	
VP	Type	Location	Sensitivity		Magnitude of change	Nature & duration of proposed change	Daytime	Night time
				construction activities would be visible above existing industry to the west of the canal.				
4	Footpath between A530 (Griffiths Road) and Lostock Hollows, South of Brook	East of the site	Medium: Users of public right of way	Near distance filtered views of the SEP during construction from the fringes of a green belt/industrial landscape. Low level activities would be concealed by intervening industrial development with the construction compound evident to the left of the view. High level construction activities would be visible above existing industry to the east of the canal.	Small	Adverse, Short term	Minor adverse	Neutral
5	Canal Path, Rudheath	Canal path to the south of the site	High / Medium: Residents /Users of public right of way	Near open views of the SEP during construction focussing on the construction site, laydown area, construction activities and high level crane activity. The works would be undertaken with an industrial landscape within a site already containing a heavy industry.	Medium	Adverse, Short term	Major/ Moderate adverse	Neutral
6	Canal Path, Rudheath	South of the site, Rudheath/ A556	High/Medium/ Low: Users of public right of way (also representative of occupiers of residential properties)	Mid to long distance glimpsed views would be gained by residents, pedestrians and traffic along the A556 of high level construction activity only.	Small to negligible	Adverse, Short term	Minor adverse/ Neutral	Neutral

Receptor				Description of Visual Effects			Significance of Effects	
VP	Type	Location	Sensitivity		Magnitude of change	Nature & duration of proposed change	Daytime	Night time
7	Carey Country Park	North of the site	Medium to High: Users of public open space	Filtered long distance views of the SEP during construction focussing on the high level construction activity with the majority of works screened by existing vegetation with the Country Park and adjoining industry.	Small to negligible	Adverse, Short term	Minor adverse/ Neutral	Neutral
8	Vale Royal Abbey	Public open space/public right of way and Residential edge south of site	High/Medium/Low: Users of public right of way (also representative of occupiers of residential properties)	Filtered long distance views of the stack construction associated with the SEP. All other works would be screened by existing vegetation within the golf course.	Small to Negligible	Adverse, Short term	Minor adverse/ Neutral	Neutral
9	Dane Valley Way	Residential edge south of the site	High to medium: Residents/SAM / users of public right of way	Filtered long distance views of the stack construction associated with the SEP. All other works would be screened by existing vegetation within the mid ground.	Small to Negligible	Adverse, Short term	Minor adverse/ Neutral	Neutral
10	Public Right of Way Cheadle Farm	East of site	Medium: Users of public right of way	Filtered long distance views (5km) of the SEP during construction focussing on the high level construction activity with the majority of works screened by existing vegetation within Cheadle Farm.	Small to negligible	Adverse, Short term	Minor adverse/ Neutral	Neutral

Receptor				Description of Visual Effects			Significance of Effects	
VP	Type	Location	Sensitivity		Magnitude of change	Nature & duration of proposed change	Daytime	Night time
11	PRoW M56 Overbridge	North of Site	Medium to Low: Users of public right of way/road users	Filtered long distance views (10km) of the stack construction associated with the SEP. All other works would be screened by existing vegetation within the mid ground.	Negligible	Short term	Neutral	Neutral

Operational Effects

SEP

Predicted Landscape Effects

- 8.132 At a national scale, effects on the landscape apply primarily to the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain character area. The ordinary condition of the landscape along with the low sensitivity of the predominantly industrial and residential character would lead to a small magnitude of change and result in a neutral effect. The neighbouring character area of Cheshire Sandstone Ridge (also of low sensitivity) would experience an effect of negligible magnitude and neutral significance.
- 8.133 Direct effects on local landscape character relate to the Lostock Plain Character Area, within the overarching East Cheshire Plain Landscape Type which has a poor to ordinary condition and local value. The character area's sensitivity to change through the effects of the projects activities would be low. The project would offer the opportunity to improve the immediate character of the industrial landscape through the introduction of a high quality integrated development that incorporates landscape structure planting. The effect of the project would create a small magnitude of change in an area of poor to ordinary condition, no townscape designations and local value. The change in character would be neutral to beneficial in nature in the long term resulting, on balance, in a neutral significance of effect.
- 8.134 The redevelopment of the project site would result in new lighting for the site roadways and external areas. Although this would result in some high level lighting within the site and an increased level of lighting along the site boundaries, this would be in close proximity and in context of existing industrial site. Overall, therefore it is not considered that the lighting at this site would affect the existing character of the area, particularly given the measures adopted to ensure lighting is directional and that spillage is therefore controlled as far as practicable. The significance of night time effects on the Lostock Plain Area would be minor adverse to neutral.
- 8.135 Indirect effects on the Northwich Salt Heritage Landscape (13a) and Stublich Plain (6c) are not considered to be significant during operation due to the existing industry, intervening landscape character and distances from the project.

Summary of Character Effects

- 8.136 The redevelopment of the project site would result in the removal of the majority of existing features. The derelict building would be demolished and replaced by new buildings, infrastructure, roads, circulation space, parking and landscape structure planting.
- 8.137 The project site is typical of the industrial character of Rudheath. This area has a poor to ordinary landscape condition, local value and a low sensitivity to change. The introduction of a group of relatively large-scale buildings and infrastructure elements and two high level stacks into this location would form a visually prominent new element in an industrial setting

typical of this character area. Redevelopment of the project site would be on a large scale, however, opportunities also exist for enhancement of existing site conditions.

- 8.138 The overall townscape/landscape effect during operation can be summarised as minor adverse to neutral.

Predicted Visual Effects

- 8.139 The operational phase ZTV for the Sustainable Energy Plant would extend over broadly the same area as the construction phase ZTV (See Figures 8.7 – 8.8).
- 8.140 The effect on views from visual receptors is set out below and illustrated in photomontages 1 (viewpoint 2) and 2 (Viewpoint 5) in Figures 8.19 to 8.20.

Viewpoint 1: Entrance to Proposed Site

- 8.141 Near open views gained by footpath and road users would focus on the large scale buildings and tall stacks of the new SEP. The project would form an extension to the industrial development of the immediate area. The development would be consistent with the previous site use as a power station. The proposed buildings have a similar height and massing to the power station buildings. The architecture would be modern and provide a contrast to the existing industrial works on site. From this close proximity, all elements on the southern elevation would be visible including the lower treatment of the proposed stacks. The sensitivity of the receptor in this industrial fringe is considered to be medium and the magnitude of change in view would be small and considered beneficial, leading to a neutral effect on views.
- 8.142 Proposed lighting columns and building mounted floodlights would be visible as new light sources in the context of extensive existing lighting within the adjoining industrial district. The building facades would also be visible as partially lit large scale structures within the industrial landscape. Lighting would be seen as an intensification of existing conditions resulting in a minor adverse significance of effect, in the long term.

Viewpoint 2: Griffith's Park

- 8.143 Near open views gained by park users would focus on the proposals within the context of an industrial landscape. Views would focus on the Ash Maturation Plant located immediately to the north of the viewpoint along the rail sidings. The view would also contain the western elevation of the main SEP building with the stacks evident from ground level. The sensitivity of the receptor from this industrial fringe is considered to be medium and the magnitude of change in view would be medium leading to a moderate adverse effect on views.
- 8.144 Lighting columns and building mounted floodlights for operational purposes would be seen in the context of existing light sources within the adjoining industrial district. Lighting sources and

the lit facades of buildings would be seen as an extension to existing conditions resulting in a minor adverse significance of effect.

Viewpoint 3: Footpath between A530 (Griffiths Road) and Lostock Hollow, North of Brook

- 8.145 Walkers would gain near to mid distance filtered views of the SEP from this location within a rural/green belt landscape. A major proportion of the project would be concealed by intervening industry with only the upper section of the building and the stacks evident in the view. The sensitivity of the receptor is medium to high and the magnitude of change in view would be small to negligible and beneficial in nature, leading to a neutral effect on views.
- 8.146 No lighting columns or floodlights would be visible from this viewpoint. Night time views would include the partially lit outlines of stacks and buildings seen in the context of existing light sources and development within the adjoining industrial district. The project would be visible as a slight intensification of existing conditions. The significance of night time effects would be neutral.

Viewpoint 4: Footpath between A530 (Griffiths Road) and Lostock Hollow, South of Brook

- 8.147 This viewpoint offers similar views to viewpoint 3 where walkers would gain near distance filtered views of the SEP during from the fringes of a green belt/industrial landscape. The building would be situated within existing industry encompassed by the existing lower elements which are to remain on site and would assist in screening the lower section of the proposals. Only the upper elements of the building and the stacks would be evident from this vantage point. The sensitivity of the receptor is medium to high and the magnitude of change in view would be small and considered beneficial, leading to a minor beneficial to neutral effect on views.
- 8.148 No lighting columns or floodlights would be visible from this viewpoint. Night time views would include the partially lit outlines of stacks and buildings seen in the context of existing light sources and development within the adjoining industrial district. The project would be visible as a slight intensification of existing conditions. The significance of night time effects would be neutral.

Viewpoint 5: Canal Path, Rudheath (including residential area)

- 8.149 Walkers and people engaged in leisure pursuits would gain near open views of the SEP from the canal path. The building would be seen in its entirety from its southern facade including the stacks from ground level. The project would be consistent with the previous power station with similar height and massing in the buildings proposed. The architecture would be modern and provide an improvement to the existing industrial works on site. The sensitivity of the receptor from this green belt/industrial fringe is considered to be medium/high and the magnitude of change in view would be small and beneficial, leading to a neutral to minor beneficial effect on views.

Viewpoint 6: A556 / Canal Path, Rudheath (including residential areas and road users)

- 8.150 Mid to long distance glimpsed view would be gained by pedestrians and traffic along the A556 of the upper section of proposed building along with the addition of two stacks to the fore of the building. The stacks would be an added visual element to the view from the bridge. The sensitivity is considered to be medium and the magnitude of change that would be experienced is small leading to a minor adverse significance of effect.
- 8.151 No lighting columns or floodlights would be visible from this viewpoint. Night time views would include the partially lit outlines of stacks and buildings seen in the context of existing light sources and development within the adjoining industrial district. The project would be visible as a slight intensification of existing conditions. The significance of night time effects would be neutral.

Viewpoint 7: Carey Country Park, Northwich

- 8.152 Walkers and people engaged in leisure pursuits would gain filtered long distance views of the SEP and the associated stacks that would be located to the rear of the building from this location. The majority of the SEP would be screened by existing and proposed industry to the fore of the development. This would be further complemented as existing vegetation with the Country Park continues to mature. The sensitivity of the receptor is considered to be medium/high and the magnitude of change in view would be negligible leading to a neutral effect on views.
- 8.153 No lighting columns or floodlights would be visible from this viewpoint. Night time views would include the partially lit outlines of stacks and buildings seen in the context of existing light sources and development within the adjoining industrial district. The project would be visible as a slight intensification of existing conditions. The significance of night time effects would be neutral.

Viewpoint 8: Vale Royal Abbey Golf Course, PRow (including residential area)

- 8.154 The installation of the proposed building for the SEP would not be viewed from this location. However, the ZTV indicates that the two proposed stacks associated with the scheme would be viewed as an addition to the view rising above the existing mature copses within the golf course. The sensitivity of the receptor is considered to be medium/high and the magnitude of change in view with the addition of the proposed stacks would be small leading to a minor adverse effect on views.
- 8.155 No night time effects are considered from this location.

Viewpoint 9: Dane Valley Way PRow, Middlewich (including residential area and Kinderton Hall)

- 8.156 The installation of the proposed building for the SEP would not be viewed from this location. However, the ZTV again indicates that the two proposed stacks associated with the scheme would be viewed as an addition to the view rising above the existing mature woodland in the mid ground. The sensitivity of the receptor is considered to be medium/high and the magnitude of change in view with the addition of the proposed stacks would be small to negligible leading to a minor adverse/neutral effect on views.
- 8.157 No night time effects are considered from this location.

Viewpoint 10: Cheadle Farm PRow, Lower Peover

- 8.158 Long distance filtered views would be gained from sections of the public right of way crossing the derelict salt mine of the building from mid level to the roof line. The stacks would be seen perpendicular from this location and appear as one rising above the group of trees to the north of the Cheadle Farmstead. The introduction of the stacks would give clearer evidence of industry within the vicinity of the path. The sensitivity of the receptor is considered to be medium/high and the magnitude of change in view with the addition of the proposed stacks would be small leading to a minor adverse effect on views.
- 8.159 No night time effects are considered from this location.

Viewpoint 11: PRow / M56 overbridge, Stretton Moss

- 8.160 The installation of the proposed building for the SEP would not be viewed from this location. However the ZTV again indicates that the two proposed stacks associated with the scheme would be viewed as an addition to the view rising above the existing mature woodland in the mid ground. The sensitivity of the receptor is considered to be medium/high and the magnitude of change in view with the addition of the proposed stacks would be small to negligible leading to a minor adverse to neutral effect on views.
- 8.161 No night time effects are considered from this location.

Summary of Visual Effects

- 8.162 From many viewpoint locations, the existing industrial edge of the Lostock Site is prominent or dominates views towards the proposal site within its urban fringe location. The introduction of further industrial development of a similar nature would not be uncharacteristic or at odds with the adjoining landscape. This therefore reduces the sensitivity of receptors to the proposed SEP.
- 8.163 The overall visual effect during operation can be summarised as moderate to minor adverse (generally where the stacks are introduced to a view that contains no industry or the addition of new buildings such as the maturation) to neutral to minor beneficial (such as where existing

industry and the characteristics of industry exist and where the proposed development would add a modern facility within the existing industrial landscape).

- 8.164 Visible plumes can occur at times when ambient temperatures are cooler than the temperature of the dispersing plume, and are therefore less frequent during the warmer daylight hours than they are at night time. Plumes emitted from the stacks would also form a visible element of the proposals. Chapter 7, Air Quality, predicts that the plume would be visible between 22.1% and 26% of the time over a year with an average plume length of 63.2m and a maximum length of 271m. The form, size and extent of the plumes would constantly change throughout the day making a definitive assessment of their transient effect on views difficult. The proposed plumes would be visible in the context of existing steam at the Soda Ash plant and adjoining industrial premises, with large volumes of steam characteristic of the industrial landscape of the development site. The existing situation would be intensified through the introduction of the new SEP and high level stacks and is considered to have a minor adverse significance of effect.

Grid Connection

- 8.165 No effects are considered likely to arise from the grid connection during operation of the SEP.

Table 8.7 Operational Phase Landscape Effects

Townscape/Landscape Receptor			Sensitivity	Effects			Significance of Effect	
Description of Character Area	Condition	Value (Level of Importance)	Townscape/Landscape Sensitivity (Refer to Effects)	Description of Townscape/Landscape Effects	Magnitude of Proposed Change	Nature/Duration of Proposed Change	Daytime	Night time
National Character Areas								
Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain	Ordinary	Local	Low, site characteristic of the landscape	Large scale Sustainable Energy Plant in an industrial urban fringe location, not uncharacteristic of character area.	Small- effect on landscape	Adverse	Neutral	None
Cheshire Sandstone Ridge	Ordinary	Local	Low, site not within character area	Large scale construction works in the context of adjacent industry and character areas.	Negligible-effect on townscape	Adverse	Neutral	None
Vale Royal Landscape Character Areas								
Lostock Plain	Poor to Ordinary	Local	Low, site characteristic of the landscape	Large scale construction works in the context of adjacent and nearby industry.	Small- effect on landscape	Neutral to beneficial (daytime) Adverse (Night time)	Neutral	Minor adverse to Neutral

Table 8.8 Operational Phase Visual Effects

Receptor				Description of Visual Effects			Significance of Effects	
VP	Type	Location	Sensitivity		Magnitude of change	Nature & duration of proposed change	Daytime	Night time
1	Entrance to Proposed Site	Site Entrance	Medium: Users of public right of way	Near open views gained by footpath and road users would focus on the SEP Stacks and day to day site activities including vehicle movement.	Small	Beneficial (daytime) Adverse (Night time)	Neutral	Minor Adverse
2	Griffiths Park	Footpath on highpoint within Griffiths Park	Medium: Users of public right of way	Near open views gained by park users would focus on the Ash Maturation Plant situated directly to the north at the rail sidings. The would be sited within an industrial landscape within a site already containing a heavy industry.	Medium	Adverse	Moderate adverse	Minor Adverse
3	Footpath between A530 (Griffiths Road) and Lostock Hollows, North of Brook	East of the site	Medium Users of public right of way	Near to mid distance filtered views of the SEP this location within a rural/green belt landscape. Low level activities would be concealed by intervening industrial development. Stacks would be a new element to the view.	Small/ Negligible	Beneficial (daytime) Adverse (Night time)	Neutral	Neutral
4	Footpath between A530 (Griffiths Road) and Lostock Hollows, South of Brook	East of the site	Medium: Users of public right of way	Near distance filtered views of the SEP from the fringes of a green belt/industrial landscape. Low level activities would be concealed by intervening industrial development east of the canal. Stacks would be a new element to the view.	Small	Beneficial (daytime) Adverse (Night time)	Minor beneficial to Neutral	Neutral

Receptor				Description of Visual Effects			Significance of Effects	
VP	Type	Location	Sensitivity		Magnitude of change	Nature & duration of proposed change	Daytime	Night time
5	Canal Path, Rudheath	Canal path to the south of the site	High / Medium: Residents /Users of public right of way	near open views of the SEP The building would be sited with an industrial landscape within a site already containing a heavy industry. Stacks would be a new element to the view.	Small	Beneficial	Neutral to minor beneficial	Neutral
6	Canal Path, Rudheath	South of the site, Rudheath/ A556	High/Medium/Low: Users of public right of way (also representative of occupiers of residential properties)	Mid to long distance glimpsed view would be gained by residents, pedestrians and traffic along the A556 of upper portion of the building and stacks only.	Small	Adverse	Minor adverse	Neutral
7	Carey Country Park	North of the site	Medium to High: Users of public open space	Filtered long distance views of the SEP would be gained with the majority screened by existing vegetation with the Country Park and adjoining industry. Stacks would be a new element to the view.	Negligible	Adverse	Neutral	Neutral
8	Vale Royal Abbey	Public open space/public right of way and Residential edge south of site	High/Medium/Low: Users of public right of way (also representative of occupiers of residential properties)	Filtered long distance views of the stacks only associated with the SEP. All other buildings would be screened by existing vegetation within the golf course.	Small	Adverse	Minor adverse	None

Receptor				Description of Visual Effects			Significance of Effects	
VP	Type	Location	Sensitivity		Magnitude of change	Nature & duration of proposed change	Daytime	Night time
9	Dane Valley Way	Residential edge south of the site	High to medium: Residents/SAM / users of public right of way	Filtered long distance views of the stacks only associated with the SEP. All other buildings would be screened by existing vegetation within the mid ground.	Small to Negligible	Adverse	Minor adverse/ Neutral	None
10	Public Right of Way Cheadle Farm	East of site	Medium: Users of public right of way	Heavily filtered long distance views (5km) of the SEP with the majority of works screened by existing vegetation within Cheadle Farm. Stacks would be a new element to the view.	Small	Adverse	Minor adverse	None
11	PRoW M56 Overbridge	North of Site	Medium to Low: Users of public right of way/road users	Filtered long distance views (10km) of the stacks only associated with the SEP. All other elements would be screened by existing vegetation within the mid ground.	Small to Negligible	Adverse	Minor adverse to Neutral	None

Decommissioning

8.166 It is anticipated that landscape and visual effects would be similar during any future decommissioning phase to those experienced during construction and would be temporary. Effects are not therefore anticipated to be greater than those arising during the construction phase.

Recommendations for Further Mitigation

8.167 The project would sit within an industrial townscape on the northern edge of Rudheath, beside the Trent and Mersey Canal. The proposed buildings would introduce a modern industrial facility which complements the redundant building on site due for demolition. The project includes a planting scheme, where appropriate. No further mitigation is proposed.

Cumulative Effects

8.168 Future major developments would/could include the following.

- Bedminster/Organic Waste Management: Bio-Energy Plant
- Precious and semi-precious metal recovery plant with fertiliser manufacture.
- Waste Treatment Plant: Viridor
- Wincham: Energy from Waste
- Covanta Middlewich

8.169 The approved and proposed developments within the Lostock Site, Griffiths Road (developments 1-3 above) would centralise these industries within an already influenced industrial landscape. These developments would lie within the same Lostock Plain character area as the SEP project. It is possible that the construction phases of these projects could overlap, resulting in temporary cumulative adverse effects on the townscape character. Permanent cumulative effects on this landscape may occur as a result of the intensification of these developments, although the land use and character of this part of Rudheath would remain intact as industrial fringe.

8.170 The treatment plant at Wincham would have direct effects on the adjoining character area of the Salt Heritage Landscape. Due to the introduction of stacks proposed to be to a height of approximately 55m a cumulative effect would also occur on the intervening landscape between the two developments where the schemes have an overlapping influence. This is not considered to be significant.

8.171 The proposed Covanta scheme at Middlewich is of a similar type to that of the proposed SEP at Lostock with stacks to a height of approximately 80m. The proposed scheme would have a direct influence upon the landscape to which it is situated and an indirect effect on adjoining character areas. No cumulative effect is considered due to other influencing character areas between the two schemes.

- 8.172 The project would be visible as a minor addition to a number of the schemes approved and proposed within the Lostock Site on the receptors at viewpoints 1-5 and viewpoint 7. Further afield, the Wincham development would also be viewed in combination as a minor addition from the Carey Country Park (viewpoint 7). There may be a sequential effect when driving (low sensitivity) through the area with a small magnitude of change resulting in a change of minor significance.
- 8.173 These developments are large in scale and would be visually prominent in the landscape/townscape in their own right. During construction and operation, visual receptors would gain views of the SEP in the context of a more developed location. The proposed developments would not wholly block any of the views of the SEP from identified receptors.

Summary

- 8.174 The overall context of the site is that of an industrial townscape on the northern edge of Rudheath, beside The Trent and Mersey Canal. The townscape is influenced by a variety of land uses including industrial, commercial, open land, disused land, transport corridors and residential. The proposed industrial redevelopment of the site would reflect the existing derelict power station the adjoining Brunner Mond complex and those developments consented and proposed within the Griffith's Road industrial area.
- 8.175 The existing derelict Lostock Power Station is prominent in views from the surrounding area and appears as an eyesore in its current state. The proposed buildings would introduce a modern industrial facility which complements the nature of the site. Although of similar industrial character to those consented and proposed, the project is of a large scale which draws attention to them. The redevelopment of the SEP site would not extend the built development edge along the canal as the proposed building would be situated approximately in the same location as the Lostock Power Station. In near views the project would become a part of a wider industrial area and would be a prominent element or the new focus within the view particularly along the stretch of the adjacent canal.
- 8.176 These views would be seen as minor beneficial to current views from the Lostock Site. However in more distant views the SEP merely creates a minor intensification of the industrial fringes of Rudheath which are already a major feature within the view.
- 8.177 The changes that would occur in the Lostock Plains character area as a result of the development of the SEP could be accommodated within the landscape. The poor condition of the industrial landscape of the site and the lack of significant features or designations, provide the opportunity for introducing the new elements of the proposals without unacceptably significant adverse effects. The project would not result in the loss of any key landscape elements.
- 8.178 The location of the SEP on the site of the derelict Lostock Power Station and to the south east of the existing Brunner Mond works would result new stacks and the tops of buildings being

viewed in the immediate context of existing stacks, buildings and pylons. The project would form an extension to the industrial development of the immediate area and Rudheath. The development would be consistent with the previous power station with similar height and massing in the buildings proposed. The architecture would be modern and provide a contrast to the existing industrial works on site.