

**BISHOPS CASTLE BIOMASS
POWER LTD**

**Section 78 Appeal by Bishop's
Castle Biomass Power Ltd, Site at
Land to the South East of Bishop's
Castle**

The Planning Inspectorate

Reference

APP/K3225/A/08/2086011/NWF

Proof of Evidence on Landscape

by

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APPENDICES

Appendix A	Photographs and wireframes produced for Bishop's Castle Biomass Power Ltd
Appendix B	Excerpts from Landscape Character Studies
Appendix C	Table 1 – Landscape Impacts
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DRAWINGS

JK1	Photoview and Plate Location Plan
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PHOTOVIEWS

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JK4	Photoview 3
JK5	Photoview 4
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PLATES

JK13	Plate A
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1. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Personal Details

- 1.1 My name is Jonathan Christopher King and I am a Technical Director with Wardell Armstrong LLP engineering and environmental consultants based in Stoke-on-Trent.
- 1.2 I hold a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Horticulture from the University of London and a Master of Landscape Design from the University of Manchester. I am a Chartered Landscape Architect and Member of the Landscape Institute.
- 1.3 I have previously been employed in Private Practice in the south and north west of England. My experience has ranged from land reclamation and minerals through to detailed landscape proposals for residential, industrial and commercial development. I am also actively involved with co-ordinating and managing environmental assessments, landscape character assessment and sustainability appraisals for a number of major projects.
- 1.4 I joined Wardell Armstrong in 1999 where I am responsible for project management within the landscape group specialising in landscape related projects.

2. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF EVIDENCE

- 2.1 This inquiry concerns the appeal by Bishop's Castle Biomass Power Ltd against refusal by South Shropshire District Council of their planning application for a biomass power project at Bishop's Castle, Shropshire. The development comprises a proposed pellitiser building, wood chip bunker, power plant and stack/cooling plant located within an existing business park to the south-east of Bishop's Castle.
- 2.2 In January 2009, Wardell Armstrong was instructed by Bishop's Castle Biomass Power Ltd to consider the landscape impacts of the proposed scheme. This evidence, which reflects my own professional opinion, is given on behalf of the appellants in support of the application.
- 2.3 This evidence deals with issues relating to landscape and visual impact and does not consider matters relating to planning issues which are dealt with by Mr-----.
- 2.4 In my evidence I will demonstrate that the proposed development by virtue of its use and appearance, will not be detrimental to the visual amenity of the local area. I will demonstrate that in terms of landscape and visual impact, the development will not have a significant impact. My evidence will deal with the following key issues:-
- The appeal site and its relationship with the surrounding landscape character.
 - Impacts on visual amenity and landscape character of the scheme which is the subject of this appeal.
- 2.5 This Proof of Evidence has appended to it a plan, photoviews, a plate and appendices which are referred to in the text as appropriate.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION AND VISIBILITY

- 3.1 The development is located within an allocated Industrial/Business park, which is surrounded by tree planting/screening. The development comprises of a proposed pellitiser building, wood chip bunker, power plant and stack / cooling plant. The building height is limited to 12m with a stack height of 16m, in order to limit visual impact.
- 3.2 The visibility of the appeal site both from outside and inside the site is affected by the nature of the existing topography, vegetation and existing development. These factors determine the extent of the visual envelope that would be generated by the proposed scheme, ie the area within which the development could potentially be visible.
- 3.3 The topography and vegetation surrounding the site is the major factor in determining the extent of the visual envelope. The appeal site is located on the relatively flat topography. Existing development, hedgerow trees and tree cover surrounding the site provide significant screening of views of the appeal site.

4. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The appellant's statement of case states that the scheme does not have an adverse impact in the landscape.
- 4.2 I agree with this statement as will be illustrated by the following landscape and visual assessment.

5. VISUAL AND LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 Having examined the context of the development, it is important to consider the landscape and visual impact which would be generated. This part of the evidence deals with methodology for assessing the impacts associated with the development on the visual amenity of local residents and users of public rights of way, the Shropshire Hills AONB and roads as well as the impact on the landscape resource.

Approach and Methodology

- 5.2 In undertaking the landscape and visual impact assessment, 'The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' published in 2002 by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (Core document **XXX**) have been utilised. Site surveys were carried out in January 2009. These identified public viewpoints from which the development would be visible. A series of photographs were taken (see Photoviews 1-11 (JK2–JK12) and Plate A (JK13) and these have been used as the basis of the landscape and visual impact assessment.
- 5.3 The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment defines landscape and visual impacts as follows:

“Landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked, procedures. The landscape baseline, its analysis and the assessment of landscape effects all contribute to the baseline for visual assessment studies. The assessment of the potential effect on the landscape is carried out as an effect on an environmental resource, ie the landscape. Visual effects are assessed as one of the interrelated effects on population.

Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. This may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape.....

Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes, and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity”.

5.4 Landscape and visual effects are therefore addressed in separate sub sections of this proof of evidence.

5.5 The guidelines recommend the development of thresholds of impact significance as a way of standardising the conclusions of landscape and visual impact assessment so that they are consistent within themselves and different categories of impact. In describing the nature of effects it recognises that:

“Effects can be negative (adverse) or positive (beneficial); direct, indirect, secondary or cumulative and be either permanent or temporary (short, medium or long term). They can also arise at different scales (local, regional or national) and have different levels of significance (local, regional or national).”

5.6 The guidelines explain that both landscape and visual impacts are dependent upon the sensitivity of the landscape resource or visual receptors and the magnitude of impact.

Landscape sensitivity and magnitude of effects

5.7 The sensitivity of the landscape resource is defined by the 2002 guidelines as follows:-

“the degree to which a particular landscape type or area can accommodate change arising from a particular development, without detrimental effects on its character, will vary with:

- existing land use;*
- the pattern and scale of the landscape;*
- visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors;*
- the scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape*
- the value placed on the landscape.*

Variations of these characteristics within the local landscape and within the site need to be identified.

The determination of the sensitivity of the landscape resource is based upon an evaluation of each key element or characteristic of the landscape likely to be affected”.

5.8 The methodology used for the quantification of the scale or magnitude of landscape effects is based on the scale or degree of change to the landscape resource, the nature of the effect and its duration including whether it is permanent or temporary.

Visual sensitivity and magnitude of effects

5.9 For visual impacts the sensitivity of visual receptors are classified as follows:

- High Sensitivity eg views from ground floor windows of residential properties and public rights of way
- Medium Sensitivity eg views from upper floor windows of residential properties, sporting and recreational facilities, views from vehicles
- Low Sensitivity eg industry and places of work

5.10 Impact magnitude for visual impacts are classified as follows:

- High Magnitude major changes in view
- Medium Magnitude moderate changes in view
- Low Magnitude minor changes in view

Significance of effects

5.11 Significance is not absolute and can only be defined in relation to each development and its location.

5.12 The two principal criteria determining significance are the scale or magnitude or effect and the environmental sensitivity of the location or receptor. A higher level of significance is generally attached to large-scale effects and effects on sensitive or high-value receptors; thus small effects on highly sensitive sites can be more important than large effects on less sensitive sites.

5.13 Significance thresholds can therefore be determined from different combinations of sensitivity and magnitude; for example:-

- Very high significance/very substantial impacts, where impacts are of both high sensitivity and high magnitude.
- High significance/substantial impacts which can be a product of high sensitivity or high magnitude.
- Moderate significance where impacts can result from medium sensitivity and magnitude, or low sensitivity with high magnitude.

- Low or slight significance where impacts can be product of low sensitivity or low magnitude.
- Negligible significance where the impact of the development is minimal.
- Nil/no significance.

5.14 The analysis of significance of landscape and visual effects involves balancing the complex relationships between these different components.

Presentation of results

5.15 The landscape impact assessment analyses the sensitivity of the identified landscape resources. The information is summarised and presented in Table 1 (Appendix C) and in section 7 of this proof. This sets out the information on which the assessment is based and concludes with a statement of significance. This allows objective judgement of the overall significance of the effects.

5.16 The results of the visual assessment analyses the effects on views from viewpoints in terms of the degree of visual change that would be generated by the proposed scheme. A series of photographs have been taken from viewpoints with potential views of the development (Photoviews 1-11 (JK2-JK12) and Plate A (JK13). Drawing JK1 shows the location of these photoviews and plates. These have been used to form the baseline position and determine the visual impact of the proposed scheme taking into account factors such as local topography, vegetation and existing development. In addition, photographs and wireframes produced by the appellant have been used in analysing the impacts of the appeal scheme (see Appendix A).

5.17 A table accompanies each photoview. The table describes the location of each vantage point, the existing view of the site and visual impacts generated by the scheme subject to this inquiry.

6. IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON VISUAL AMENITY AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Visual Impact

- 6.1 In undertaking the visual assessment of the proposed development all adjacent roads, footpaths and residential properties have been considered and photographs taken from relevant public vantage points. Detailed descriptions are included on Photoviews 1-11 (JK2-JK12) which analyse existing views and the scheme which is subject to this public inquiry. Significant views are described below.

Impacts on Views from Public Highways

- 6.2 The scheme will generate visual impacts for sections of:
- The A488 (Love Lane)
 - B4385
 - The access road to Oakley Farm
- 6.3 The sensitivity of road users varies from moderate (for vehicle users) to high (for pedestrians).
- 6.4 Road users will generally be of medium sensitivity to visual impacts
- 6.5 The proposed development would be visible from a very limited section (approximately 300 metres) of the A488 (Love Lane) in the vicinity of the existing wood yard located on the eastern edge of Bishop's Castle. The stack and upper portions of the power plant building would be just visible although substantially screened by intervening vegetation on the northern boundary of the business park. This limited view would be experienced in the context of existing industrial buildings, especially the wood yard to the west of the A488. Consequently the degree of visual change experienced by viewers will be within the range of negligible to slight adverse.
- 6.6 The significance of visual impacts from this limited section of road will therefore be negligible to slight adverse. A further very restricted view would be possible from the A488 in the vicinity of the Bishop's Castle County High School. This is illustrated by Photoview 04 (JK 05). The magnitude of visual change experienced would be negligible. Consequently the significance of this will be negligible adverse. Further views from the A488 will be screened or blocked by a combination of intervening vegetation or existing development. Visual impacts will thus be nil or negligible.

- 6.7 Limited views of the development may be possible from limited sections of the B4385 between The Cottage/The Villa (south of the junction with Stank Lane) and the site. Intervening vegetation generally screens views from this section of the B4385. However, where more open views towards the site are possible the existing industrial buildings and vegetation within / on the boundary of the site will screen remaining views.
- 6.8 The significance of the visual impact from the B4385 will be in the range of nil to negligible.
- 6.9 The access road to Oakley Farm has views towards the site, where these are not blocked by intervening mature hedgerows or small blocks of woodland. Where open views currently exist the nature of the view would be similar to that illustrated by photoview 6 (JK 07). The stack and power plant would generally be screened by vegetation and would be seen in the context of surrounding industrial buildings. This magnitude of visual change would be negligible to low and the significance of these impacts would consequently be negligible to slight adverse.
- 6.10 Views towards the site from remaining roads in the area are screened by vegetation, topography or existing development.

Impacts on Views from Public Rights of Way

- 6.11 The scheme will be visible from some sections of the following footpaths:
- Footpaths linking the access road to Oakley Farm and the A488.
 - Footpath linking Oakley Farm and Totterton.
 - Footpath linking Stank Lane with Lydbury North.
 - Shropshire Way.
 - Footpath linking two sections of the Shropshire Way.
 - Footpaths between Bankshead and Kerry Lane.
 - Footpath between the Montgomery Road and the A488.
- 6.12 The sensitivity of views from Public Rights of Way will be high.
- 6.13 Two footpaths link from Oakley Farm to the A488. One of these footpaths bifurcates near the A488. Views from the eastern end of these footpaths are illustrated by Photoview 6 (JK 07). The magnitude of visual change experienced from these footpaths will be within the range of negligible to low due to the presence of intervening vegetation and the prominence of existing industrial buildings within views. Given the high sensitivity of viewers, (the eastern end of the footpath is within the Shropshire Hills AONB) the significance of visual

impacts will range from negligible to slight adverse being highest in close proximity to the site.

- 6.14 Views of the site from the footpath between Oakley Farm and Totterton (located within the AONB) are generally screened by woodland, vegetation and/or topography. The site would be visible from a limited section of this footpath between Oakley Wood and Narrowdale (woodland), on the northern side of Oakley Mynd. The nature of views will be similar to that illustrated by Photoview 5 (JK 06). The proposed scheme would be partially screened by intervening vegetation, would be seen in the context of existing industrial buildings and would be a barely visible element within the view. The magnitude of visual change would therefore be negligible to low, resulting in a negligible to slight adverse significance of effect.
- 6.15 Views from the footpath between Stank Lane and Lydbury North would be visible from Stank Lane to Long Nursery (woodland). These views are illustrated by Photoview 5 (JK 06). The magnitude of visual change would be negligible to low and the significance would be negligible to slight adverse.
- 6.16 Most views of the site from the Shropshire Way are blocked by intervening topography, existing development or intervening vegetation. The site is barely visible from a field gate entrance to the south of Bishop's Castle, illustrated by Photoview 7 (JK 08). However, screening by intervening vegetation would lead to a magnitude of change within the range of nil to negligible, with a negligible adverse significance of effect.
- 6.17 A footpath provides a westward link from near this point to the Shropshire Way to the south of Cwmmawr Dingle (woodland). Views of the site are blocked by intervening topography and / or hedgerows. The site is barely visible from a stile, illustrated by Photoview 8. However the proposed development will be substantially screened by intervening vegetation. The significance of visual impacts will be negligible.
- 6.18 Views from footpaths linking Bankshead and Kerry Lane are illustrated by Photoview 10 (JK 11).
- 6.19 The proposed scheme will be substantially screened by intervening vegetation. The significance of visual impacts on these footpaths will be in the range of nil to negligible adverse.

6.20 Views from the footpath between Montgomery Road and the A488 are generally blocked by topography and / or vegetation. A more open view is possible from the location of Photoview 11 (JK 12). The proposed scheme will be just visible although partially screened by intervening vegetation and would be seen in the context of surrounding industrial buildings, including the wood yard to the west of the A488. The magnitude of visual change would be negligible with a negligible adverse significance of effect.

6.21 Views from remaining public rights of way are blocked by intervening topography, development and / or vegetation. Visual impacts from these rights of way would therefore be nil.

Impacts on views from areas of Public Open Space

6.22 Two areas of public open space in close proximity to the site will be affected by the proposed scheme. These are:

- Allotments adjoining the business park.
- Playing fields to the south of the junction of the A488 and the B4385.

6.23 The allotments adjoining the business park have open views across the site. This is illustrated by Photoview 2. The sensitivity of such views is considered to be low to medium. Existing industrial buildings are prominent within the view. The proposed scheme will be fully visible within the view and moderate adverse visual change will be generated. Given the sensitivity of the viewer, there will be a slight to moderate adverse significance of visual effect.

6.24 Views from the playing fields to the south-west of the site are shown by Photoview 3. The proposed scheme will generally be screened by intervening trees and / or development and the magnitude of change will be low. The sensitivity of viewers will be medium and a slight adverse significance of effect will be generated.

Impacts on Residential Properties

6.25 Very few properties have views of the site and where these exist they are from upper floor windows which will be of medium sensitivity.

- 6.26 A few properties on the eastern edge of Bishop's Castle near the junction of the A488 (Love Lane) and Brick Meadow have views from upstairs windows. Views would be similar to Photoview 2 but would be at a greater distance (approximately 150 – 200 metres). The magnitude of visual change would be slight to medium and the significance of effect would be slight to moderate adverse.
- 6.27 Some properties located on high topography to the north west of the existing Wood Yard (west of the A488), which currently have views of the site from upper floor windows, would experience views similar to Photoview 11 (JK 12). The magnitude of visual change experienced would be negligible. The significance of such effects would therefore be negligible adverse.
- 6.28 Oakley Farm may have oblique views of the site from upper floor windows, which would be similar to Photoview 6 (JK 07). The significance of effect on such views would be negligible adverse.
- 6.29 Views of the scheme from remaining residential properties will be blocked by intervening development, topography and / or vegetation. Consequently visual impacts of the scheme will be nil.

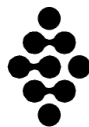
Landscape Impact

- 6.30 The proposed scheme will not significantly alter the landscape character of the site. Impacts on the landscape resource within the appeal site have been assessed using the methodology set out above, which follows the 2002 Landscape Guidelines.
- 6.31 The following documents describe the landscape character of the area:
- Countryside Character Volume 5: West Midlands [Core document XXXXXXXX]
 - The Shropshire Landscape Typology (2006) [Core document XXXXXXXX]
- 6.32 Extracts from these documents are set out in Appendix B.

- 6.33 The sensitivity of the landscape resource has been assessed by analysing the key elements or characteristics of the landscape which are likely to be affected. This has been assessed in terms of land use; elements contributing to the pattern and scale of the landscape; the extent of visual enclosure/openness and the distribution of visual receptors; scope for mitigation and value placed on the landscape. The magnitude of landscape effects has then been quantified. Significance thresholds have been determined from the interaction of the landscape sensitivity with the magnitude of landscape effects.
- 6.34 This analysis is presented in Table 1 in Appendix C. The overall significance of landscape impact is within the range of slight adverse to slight beneficial.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The development comprises a proposed pelletiser building, wood chip bunker. Power plant and stack/cooling plant located within an existing business park to the south-east of Bishop's Castle.
- 8.2 The visual impact from highways, footpaths, areas of public open space and residential properties would generally be within the range of nil to slight adverse significance. The impacts on the landscape characteristics of the appeal site would be in the range of slight adverse to slight beneficial. Landscape mitigation is proposed as part of the scheme which will complement the surrounding landscape character.
- 8.3 My evidence demonstrates that the development will not have a significant adverse visual impact and would not affect landscape character to a significant degree.



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