Landscape

Lea Bank Energy Park

Landscape Strategy

From the outset of the project, the landscape strategy has recognised the local context of the LBEP site, the operational requirements of the LBEP and potential environmental issues, specifically landscape and visual, ecological and cultural heritage. The work on the landscape strategy is still evolving as the design process for the overall LBEP moves forward.

In order to create a level platform for the LBEP, a cut and fill exercise will be required and soil bunds will be created from the excavated soils towards the western and southern edges of the site, to provide screening and reduce noise from the site. The bunds to the southwest and south east are proposed to be in the region of 6m above the platform level of the CHP facility, with trees providing additional screening. The bund to the northwest is proposed to be up to 16m above the platform level of the CHP facility, and the railway cut slope is approximately 9m in height above the platform

The soil bunds will be planted with native trees and shrubs, under planted with a suitable shade tolerant species rich grass and wildflower mix, which will help to screen the buildings and also support habitat creation within the site. It is anticipated that the northern end of the site will be set aside for habitat creation, including a mix of habitats for species identified within the site during ecological survey work.

Within the operational part of the site, the landscape strategy is likely to comprise the planting of attenuation ponds to promote their biodiversity interest. Trees will be proposed along internal roads to enhance the appearance of the site. More structured planting is proposed around parking areas and key entrances to buildings, and this is likely to continue the promotion of biodiversity objectives e.g. by selecting plants that support pollinating insects.

Visual Impact Assessment

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be undertaken by members of SLR's landscape team, who have extensive experience of assessing the potential effects of similar developments, including numerous comparable power plant developments. Proactive engagement has already been taking place to seek agreement on the scope of and approach to the LVIA with the Landscape Officer at Central Bedfordshire Council. SLR's Landscape and Cultural Heritage teams will work closely to ensure that an integrated approach will be taken, recognising the need to consider historic landscapes in the vicinity of the site, notably Luton Hoo Park. The assessment will examine the potential impacts of the CHP facility on the landscape and visual amenity of people within the area surrounding the site. It will concentrate on an area that extends 5km from the CHP facility. The LVIA is being approached in accordance with the most up to date and accepted guidance published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

The assessment of potential landscape effects will include a review of local character and designations, and identify potentially important local sensitivities. It will also consider potential effects on specific landscape features and elements and how this will influence local landscape character. The baseline assessment is being informed by the local landscape character assessments, including the assessment published by Central Bedfordshire Council.

The assessment of potential effects on visual amenity will consider a wide range of visual receptors, i.e. people, within the area surrounding the site. Key considerations for the assessment include local residents and people that visit the area (including Luton Hoo Hotel and the associated grounds), together with users of Public Rights of Way, cycle route and transport infrastructure (roads and railway). The LVIA will include a range of viewpoints that represent the views seen by different receptors and how these views will change as a consequence of the proposed CHP facility. These viewpoints are informed by zones of theoretical visibility (ZTV) that provide an indication of where the proposed CHP facility is most likely to be seen from. The potential changes at certain viewpoints will illustrated by visualisations such as photomontages, which will show the relative scale and position of the Proposed Development.

The LVIA and design for the proposed CHP facility are being undertaken as iterative processes. This is allowing the evolving assessment findings to influence the scheme design and inform measures that are evolving to help reduce potential impacts, including the overall size of the building and the elevation of its platform, materials to be used, the use of bunds and fencing and the incorporation of planting. The landscape strategy is also informed through discussion with the project ecologists to ensure interactions/relationships between different issues are considered as part of this process.