

REPORT ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED REGF AND TAD DEVELOPMENTS ON THE VISUAL AMENITY OF VISITORS TO HOTHORPE HALL

PEBBLE HALL FARM, THEDDINGWORTH ROAD, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, LE17 6NJ

CARBONARIUS LTD / WELLAND WASTE MANAGEMENT LTD

April 2014
Version 1



Introduction

In 2013 two planning applications have been submitted to Northamptonshire County Council for a Renewable Energy Generation Facility (REGF) and a Thermophilic Aerobic Digestion Facility (TAD) at Pebble Hall, Theddingworth. Throughout the consultation period on both planning applications the proprietors of Hothorpe Hall have raised concerns about the potential visual impact the proposed REGF and TAD developments at Pebble Hall will have on their complex. This supplementary report provides an assessment of the potential visual impact on the visual amenity of the Hothorpe Hall complex.

This statement will first provide an overview of the Hall and its surroundings, and will provide an overview of the visual amenity of the Hall and the likely visual impact of the proposed TAD and REGF Facilities. An assessment of visual impact from one specific viewpoint has been undertaken.

This statement is supported by photographs in Photopanel A – F (Drawing GPP/C/PH/REGF/14/22) and Cross Sections (Drawing GPP/C/PH/REGF/14/21). In addition, supporting information is provided in an Appendix to this statement (Appendix 1). A visit to Hothorpe Hall was undertaken on Friday the 4th April 2013 by a qualified Landscape Architect to take photographs of the Hall and its surroundings.

Visual Amenity of Hothorpe Hall

For the purposes of this assessment Hothorpe Hall has been broken down into four zones:

1. Entrance and The Car Park
2. Hothorpe Hall
3. The Gardens
4. The Woodland Area

Each of these zones will be described and assessed in turn.

Entrance and The Car Park

Entrance to Hothorpe Hall is off the Theddingworth to Sibbertoft local road, immediately south of the River Welland. The entrance is marked by two residential cottages and a cattle grid. The access road passes through a field currently grazed by sheep, which is open with a limited number of mature parkland trees. From here the Hall is seen in a woodland setting, with mature trees to the north. There is no intervisibility between the access to the Hall and the Pebble Hall complex.

The car park area and visitor entrance is situated to the north east of Hothorpe Hall complex, at a lower level than the Hall sloping towards the river valley. This is the area that visitors to Hothorpe Hall first encounter. Photographs 1 – 6 on Photopanel A illustrate the location of the car park in a woodland setting with mature woodland trees. Views towards Pebble Hall are screened by mature trees, rising topography, and workers cottages. There is no intervisibility between the car park to the Hall and the Pebble Hall complex.

Hothorpe Hall

Hothorpe Hall itself is located to the south east of the land within its ownership. Photographs 7 – 12 on Photopanel B illustrate the Hall, its formal gardens and the views from these locations over the open countryside to the north east, east and south east. The chapel, terrace, reception, and main façade all face in a north easterly direction. The terrace and formal gardens are situated to the south east with views over the wider countryside to the east and south east. There are no views towards Pebble Hall from the primary elements of Hothorpe Hall.

The Gardens

There are mature landscaped gardens to the rear of Hothorpe Hall, located in the south west portion of the land under the ownership of the Hall. Photographs 13 – 18 on Photopanel C illustrate this area. Within the mature gardens there is a tennis court and childrens play area, along with summer house, yew avenue and numerous walkways and benches. In addition, there is a single storey bungalow, which is used as a residential dwelling by one of the workers at the Hall. Furthermore, the western boundary of the formal gardens is defined by a garden wall and ancillary garden buildings (illustrated in photographs 19 and 20 on Photograph Panel D).

Due to the presence of the mature vegetation, particularly along the southern and south eastern boundaries of the gardens, there is no intervisibility between the Pebble Hall complex and the tennis courts, children play area, workers house and the majority of the gardens. It is noted that there are limited views of the open countryside from the rear terrace of the Hall towards the south west. The gardens with mature trees limit views from the windows to the rear of the Hall, including the second storey and from within gardens.

There are some glimpsed views between boundary vegetation from the western boundary of the gardens towards the Pebble Hall complex and more open views to the west of the garden wall and ancillary buildings. These are illustrated on Photographs 21-24 on Photograph Panel D. In these views the arable fields are seen rising towards a near horizon to the south west. There are very limited foreground features in these views, except for the current post and rail fence which marks the boundary of the landownership of Hothorpe Hall. There is a block of woodland visible to the right and left of these views, with a limited number of individual trees visible on the horizon line. The existing little fence which surrounds the eastern portion of the Pebble Hall complex is also visible on the horizon line. No other elements of the Pebble Hall complex are visible in these views.

The Woodland Area

An area of woodland gardens is located to the north west of Hothorpe Hall, beyond the existing car park. This area is comprised of mature woodland trees, with woodland understorey, informal mown grass footpaths, timber log benches and is crossed by the River Welland. Photographs 25 – 28 on Photopanel E illustrate the character of this area. From within the woodland gardens themselves there are very limited views of the open countryside beyond, with some glimpsed views between trees and boundary vegetation to the countryside to the south west and towards Theddingworth to the north east.

The permitted woodland lodges will be located within this woodland area, in an open area of grassland surrounded by woodland to the west, north and east. The southern boundary here is open, marked by a post and rail fence. From this southern boundary there are views across the open countryside to the south west. There are very limited foreground features in these views, except for the current post and rail fence which marks the boundary of the landownership of Hothorpe Hall. There is a block of woodland visible to the right and left of these views, with a limited number of individual trees visible on the horizon line. The existing little fence which surrounds the eastern portion of the Pebble Hall complex is also visible on the horizon line. No other elements of the Pebble Hall complex are visible in these views.

Viewpoint Assessment

A specific viewpoint within Hothorpe Hall has been selected for assessment, located in the woodland area at the location of the first woodland lodge if approach from Hothorpe Hall. Views from this

location are illustrated on Photographs 31 and 31 on Photograph Panel F, and a Cross Section (Drawing GPP/C/PH/REGF/14/21) indicates the lines of visibility from this location to the south west.

Viewpoint Name	Hothorpe Hall
Type of Viewpoint	Specific Private Viewpoint
Direction of View to Centre of Application Site	South West
Distance to Development Boundary, m	680
Ground Level, m AOD	108
Drawing No.	GPP/C/PH/REGF/14/21 Photograph Panel F GPP/C/PH/REGF/14/22
Description of Impact on Visual Amenity	
<p>There are very limited foreground features in this view, except for the current post and rail fence which marks the boundary of the landownership of Hothorpe Hall. An arable field dominates the foreground of the view, with land rising to the south west to a relatively near horizon line. There is a block of woodland visible to the right and left of the view, with a limited number of individual trees visible on the horizon line.</p> <p>The Pebble Hall is located in the centre of the view. The existing little fence which surrounds the eastern portion of the Pebble Hall complex is also visible on the horizon line. No other elements of the Pebble Hall complex are visible in these views.</p> <p>The south western boundary of the gardens of Hothorpe Hall is also visible in this view to the left of the view. The ancillary garden buildings, garden wall, post and rail boundary fence and mature boundary trees are notable. Beyond which the chimneys of the Hall themselves are visible.</p> <p>In line with the methodology set out in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (September 2013) the susceptibility to change of the view is judged to be Medium. This is because there is a limited number of man made elements in the view, which are not considered to be intrusive, and the view is experienced by a relatively small number of private receptors (visitors to Hothorpe Hall who wish to experience the woodland garden). It is noted that the number of receptors will increase with the construction and use of the permitted woodland lodges and these visitors will have an interest in their surroundings. However, the view is not located within or across a Nationally designated landscape. The value of the view is also judged to be Medium, because it is considered to have some scenic quality.</p> <p><u>TAD</u></p> <p>The small extension to the TAD facility will not be viewable from this location due to intervening landform and topography. The stack, which will be 17 metres in height, will also not be visible due to the intervening landform and topography. Drawing GPP/C/PH/REGF/14/21 shows a cross section of the view towards the proposed TAD development from the selected viewpoint. The drawing demonstrates that proposed TAD development will not be seen at all. Therefore, there is No Impact.</p> <p><u>REGF</u></p> <p>Drawing GPP/C/PH/REGF/14/21 shows a cross section of the view towards the proposed REGF development from the selected viewpoint. The Cross Section demonstrates the extent of the visibility of the proposed REGF Facility in the worst case scenario (ie with no existing or proposed planting) and the extent of visibility when existing and proposed planting has matured.</p> <p>The Plant Hall to the REGF will be 18.5 metre in height and the stack will be 30 metres in height. Due to the presence of the intervening landform, in the worst case scenario only the top 3 metres of stack will be visible from this specific viewpoint. The stack is located approximately 870m away from the viewer, and due to distance would only be visible as a small feature on the horizon line adjacent to a number of existing trees which are notable horizon line features. The colour of the stack has been chosen to ensure that it does not stand out against the skyline.</p> <p>Only two woodland lodges are located on the southern boundary of the woodland area. Therefore,</p>	

the views to the south west will only be experienced by the residents of these two lodges, the views experienced by visitors to the other woodland lodges will be screened by the lodges themselves and the existing woodland setting. Glimpsed views will be experienced by visitors in parts of the woodland garden and mature gardens to the south west of the Hall. Visitors on approach to the woodland lodges, either by car or by foot past the proposed screen adjacent to the workers accommodation, will not experience these views because of the sloping topography within the woodland area and the presence of intervening structures (screen, workers accommodation, woodland lodges, boundary trees etc).

The intervening landform will screen the wood processing operations from view. Therefore, they will not be visible, and construction works associated with the movement of material within the site and creation of building foundations etc., will not be visible. During the construction period the tops of cranes associated with the construction of the buildings may be visible in this view, but only for short periods of time.

Mitigation

A range of landscape mitigation measures have been proposed, including the planting of hedgerow trees and a hedgerow along a field boundary within the landscape between Hothorpe Hall and the Pebble Hall complex. In addition, there is existing planting around the boundary of the Pebble Hall complex adjacent to the existing litter fencing. This will be enhanced with appropriate management to encourage further growth. Further information on the landscape planting is provided in Appendix 1. The hedgerow trees and hedgerow will significantly enhance the character of the view from Hothorpe Hall, adding visual interest and landscape features particularly in the middle ground of the view. These features will also break up the skyline in the view. Furthermore, as the planting matures it will screen both the existing litter fence and the top of the stack of the proposed REGF. The cross section demonstrates that at the point when the planting adjacent to the litter fence reaches the height of the litter fence the stack of the proposed REGF will not be visible. Once the planting is established there will also be no views of the proposed REGF development or the Pebble Hall complex.

In line with the methodology set out in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (September 2013) the scale of the change associated with the proposed REGF development will be minor, causing only a small change to the view and the composition of the view and the character of the landscape within the view. The presence of the proposed landscape planting will have a positive change on the character of the landscape within this view, restoring important landscape features. Only a small proportion of the view would be occupied by the visible element of the proposed REGF Facility. The extent of the change is considered to be within the immediate setting. The duration of effect will be long term and permanent. As a result, the magnitude of change is judged to be **Low**. With mitigation in the form of landscape planting the proposed REGF Facility would be screened from view, and therefore there would be **No Impact**.

Sensitivity to Change

*The susceptibility of the view is judged to be Medium and the value of the view judged to be Medium. Therefore, the sensitivity to change is judged to be **Medium**.*

Magnitude of Change

*Therefore, overall the size or scale of change in the view is judged to be minor and within the immediate setting. The duration of effect will be long term and permanent. As a result, the magnitude of change is judged to be **Low (No Impact with Mitigation)**.*

Significance of Effect

The significance of visual effect is judged to be **Minor (No Impact with Mitigation)**.

Conclusions

The visual impact of the proposed Thermophilic Aerobic Digester (TAD) and the Renewable Energy Generation Facility (REGF) on the visual amenity of the Hothorpe Hall complex, particularly from the location of the permitted woodland lodges, has been considered and assessed. It has been concluded that there will be no views of the proposed TAD Facility from Hothorpe Hall. There will also be no views of the REGF Facility, once the proposed landscape planting is fully established. In the worst case scenario, if there was no existing or proposed planting, the visual impact from the REGF Facility would be Minor. There will be a positive change in the views of the landscape to the south west of Hothorpe Hall through the restoration of landscape features, including hedgerow and hedgerow trees.

Overall, the visual impact of the REGF and TAD developments has been assessed from Hothorpe Hall. It has been concluded that potential impact on visual amenity is Minor to No Impact, and therefore is not significant.

APPENDIX 1: PEBBLE HALL PROPOSED ENHANCEMENT PLANTING