



**Visual Impact Appraisal,
Bolfornought Energy Storage**

A report to
Stirling Council

Issue	Reason
1	Issue, April 2021
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The application

This document supports an application to Stirling Council by Intelligent Land Investments Group plc for consent under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 for construction of a battery energy storage system at Bolfornought Farm, by Springkerse, Stirling FK7 7LL. The proposal is described as Bolfornought Energy Storage.

The application seeks consent for the installation of an energy storage system with a generating capacity of up to 49.99 megawatts. The development would consist of containers containing batteries, associated equipment, an access track, electricity meter building, fencing and new planting. Figures show the site location, and layout.

1.2 Site description

The proposed development site lies in farmland, part of Bolfornought Farm, a working farm. The site is agricultural land. The field in which the proposed development is sited is accessed from the A91 Distributor Road at the Muirton roundabout from where the existing private access serves the farm and 6 houses. This is in the vicinity of Forthbank Stadium and St Modans High School.

The site lies on the flat carse farmland around 2 kilometres east of the town of Stirling on the edge of the large Springkerse industrial area.

The site is around 300 metres from the nearest house at Upper Taylorton Farm to the north.

2 VISUAL IMPACT

The project site was selected for having limited prominence and visibility, as well as good setback from potential receptors and meeting the necessary technical criteria. Within the farm, the facility has been located and designed to minimise its prominence. A belt of new trees is to be planted around the site to provide visual screening and softening. The design consisting of an array of low structures surrounded by screening was chosen for, and considered suitable for, the wide flat carse location.

The fence, containers, meter building, water tank and valve house are to be coloured dark green to minimise contrast with the surroundings.

The development consists of relatively low elements – fence 3m, containers 2.9m, meter building 3.2m, water tank 3m (upstand 3.6m), security cameras 4m, other equipment lower. This makes this a relatively low development, below other features such as telegraph poles and trees in the immediate vicinity.

It is considered that the potential for significant visual effects is limited to around 2 kilometres around the site. Of course there is no impact where the project cannot be seen. The potential for impact from the development has been considered and is presented here.

Residential receptors

Consideration was taken of nearby houses in the evolving design. There are around six dwellings at Taylorton and Bolfornought accessed via the farm road. The project area has been set well back from the houses and designed such that continuous screening from the landscape bund and new planting will form as the planting grows in. Due to intervening hedgerows and trees and house orientation, only Taylorton Farm has significant views to the project site, at a distance of over 300 metres. From Taylorton, there will be views from the main elevation through a gap between trees and barn, past a wooden fence and metal farm gate across open farmland. Low hills with much tree cover evident form the backdrop, the bright caravans of Wallace View caravan park stand out on slightly elevated land. The energy storage facility will form a new element in this view, however it will not break the skyline and the bund, planting and green coloured fencing will help to mitigate and soften its impact, even when first built.

There are views from the front parking area though the existing amenity is affected there by the close presence of the A91 road. The residents were consulted and involved in the design development and the developer understands are content with the final design. Overall, the impact is considered acceptable and will reduce over time as the planting matures.

At Steuarthall Farm, the principal elevation faces south of west, towards Coxethill and the Touch Hills. Views are available from the grounds out through mature trees, over the carse, to Stirling Castle, Abbey Craig, the Highland edge mountains and the Ochils. The light coloured caravans of Wallaceview are quite prominent. The proposed facility would appear in an area of carse at around 400 metres distant, approximately between the Forthbank floodlight towers and the new St Modans High School. Existing telegraph poles that run alongside the Bolfornought Farm road can just be made out – the new facility would be lower than these poles. The upper parts of the proposed facility's wooden fence would be seen above the bund and behind the new trees. Overall the impact is considered negligible.

Stuarthall Cottages are at slightly lower elevation and the foreground of higher agricultural land screens more distant views to a large extent. The impact is considered negligible.

The residential caravan park at Wallaceview has open views north from the north-most units, to the Monument, Ochils and Highland mountains. The project would

appear on carse land at around 500 metres and would likely be fully visible at construction, though not skylined and not in a key part of the existing view and reducing to views of the top of the fence only behind the new planting of trees. Overall the impact is considered minor.

Road receptors

The A91 road Eastern Distributor Road passes the site. The road is fast and has quite an urban feel despite its position on the edge of the town. A belt of trees lines the slightly elevated road for most of its length, limiting views out even in winter when most leaves are off, but travellers on the road will generally be aware of the wide flat carse to the east, the dramatic escarpment of the Ochil Hills and Abbey Craig with its monument. The vehicle passenger looking east may be aware past the belt of trees lining the road, of the fields of the open carse, studded by farms, those white-painted standing out, and of many belts or copses of trees. At breaks in the trees lining the road, the attentive viewer will see industrial flues with their steam cloud and electricity pylons breaking the horizon over the flatness of carse, and the bright array of caravans. Only the wooden fence of the proposed facility would be visible, behind the bund and new planting, and only seen intermittently through gaps in roadside vegetation. It is not considered that the proposed facility will cause significant impact on views from the road.

Given the scale of the development and position within the landscape, it is considered that there would be no significant impact on other roads.

Recreational and other receptors

Stirling Castle, a key landmark, viewpoint and visitor attraction, is screened from the site by the existing buildings and trees of Springkerse Industrial Estate.

Abbey Craig and the Wallace Monument atop serve as a known feature in the local landscape, a focus of views and popular visitor attraction. The viewpoint at the foot of the monument looks west and the project site is not visible from there or any point around the base of the Monument. There are views to the site from the crown of the monument tower where there are open views in all directions past the stonework of the crown.

Key elements within the view are Stirling Castle, the painted Great Hall standing out, the dramatic elevated vantage over the houses laid out on the flat carse below, the abrupt rising of the Ochil Hills from the flat land below, similarly the Gargunnoch Hills in the opposite direction, the snaking meanders of the River Forth by Causewayhead and Stirling, in clear weather the mountains to the west and north west. Much built development is present in the direction of the project site, Given the scale and design of the project, and the set back of over 2.5km, the impact is considered minor and will reduce over time as the planting matures.

A further viewpoint is present around 200 metres south of the monument on a path (Core Path 9078Ch/07) that leaves the vehicle road to the monument and roughly follows the upper edge of the escarpment down to the Alloa Road. Some of the path is in dense vegetation without views out, but at this viewpoint the path is near the cliff edge and there are elevated open views south west taking in approximately south east to north west. Key parts of the view are Stirling Castle, the almost aerial view of the industrial sites, houses and roads directly below, the great meanders of the River Forth, the Gargunnoch Hills and the mountains of the edge of the Highlands, the 'island' wooded hill of Craigforth. The carse around the project site comprises large fields interspersed with farms and frequent stands of trees. The project would be visible to the careful observer at this distance, but would not be at odds with the existing pattern of land use apparent from here, and would not stand out. The impact is considered minor and will reduce over time as the planting matures.

Dumyat is a popular local hill walk and the route to it from the Sheriffmuir Road is a Core Path (9078Lg/04). Certain points on the path and the summit in particular offer excellent views, over the Forth valley and in clear weather to Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh, the Pentland Hills and Kilsyth Hills. From the top, views can be had to Ben Lomond, Ben Vorlich by Loch Earn and the Ochils themselves. Focuses within the panorama include Stirling Castle and the Wallace Monument, the mountains of the west/north-west and the lower Forth estuary. The view of the plain below includes a number of geometric patterns: the extensive bonds of Cambus and Menstrie; the former munitions bunkers at Bandedath; the tower blocks of Callendar Park, Falkirk; the pillars of the former Alloa (railway) Bridge. The proposed development would be visible to the careful observer at a distance of just under 5 kilometres, appearing a small feature, like an agricultural facility, not out of place. Overall the impact is considered negligible.

There are no Core Paths in the vicinity of the site. Core Path 9078Ch/07 Abbey Craig and 9078Lg/04 Dumyat are covered above. Other core paths are not considered to have significant visibility to the site.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The project location has been selected to give limited impact on residents, travellers and visitors, and has applied good design practices to minimise visual impacts. Where visible, the project will be a minor elements in views. New planting is proposed of native trees that will screen and soften the development. It is considered that the project has been sensitively sited and can be accommodated by its setting.