

**Historic Landscape and Cultural Heritage Summary Proof of Evidence of
Caroline Hardie MA MIFA IHBC**

Appeal by RidgeWind Ltd against Refusal of Application for the Installation of an
eight turbine wind farm at Palmers Hollow, Normanton, Leicestershire

Ref: APP/Y2430/A/09/2108595

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SUMMARY

1. Qualifications and Experience

1.1 Professional Qualifications

1.1.1 My name is Caroline Hardie. I am an archaeologist holding a Master of Arts degree in archaeology from Glasgow University (1985). I am a Member of the Institute for Archaeologists and a Member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation.

1.2 Experience

1.2.1 I have 24 years of continuous professional experience in the Historic Environment sector. I am currently the Director of Archaeo-Environment Ltd which I established in 2003 and in that capacity have carried out a range of development related work, have advised local authorities on their heritage assets and worked with local communities to promote their historic environment. I have carried out Historic Landscape Characterisation for Cumbria County Council and the Lake District National Park Authority and prepared Environmental Statements and pre-application reports for a variety of developers throughout England and Scotland. I am a cultural heritage adviser to Natural England on the designation status of landscapes in the North West and have carried out work for English Heritage on designating monuments (MPP) both as a County Archaeologist and as a consultant. I am also an expert advisor and mentor to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

2. My Involvement and Scope of Evidence

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 I was asked to consider the impact of the proposed development on the historic landscape and cultural heritage of the Vale of Belvoir in October 2009. This was in response to matters raised in particular by English Heritage and BLOT. I have given some thought to the objections to this proposal and revisited a number of areas, namely:

1. The quality of the original methodology and scoping
2. The perceived quality and density of heritage assets in the Vale of Belvoir
3. The existing historic landscape character and the context for the proposed development
4. The impact on a number of heritage assets raised in the objections

3. The Quality of the Original Methodology

3.1 Scoping and consultation

3.1.1 Scoping for the original EIA was carried out by SKM in order to provide consultees with the opportunity to flag up key issues and concerns they may have. The work was carried out initially by Headland Archaeology who also consulted the Historic Environment Records for the three counties up to 15km from the development site and then aspects of the cultural heritage such as listed buildings, conservation areas and registered parks and gardens were handed over to the landscape architects. The issues raised by the consultees in scoping were specifically chosen to identify heritage assets which required further assessment, even if that was beyond the original study area. The response from BLOT was particularly useful and they suggested a number of additional viewpoints and their suggestions were followed up where possible. English Heritage responded with a standard letter into which two lists of scheduled monuments and listed buildings were inserted for consideration. These were subsequently included in the EA.

3.1.2 In addition to the formal scoping, RidgeWind requested multiple meetings with English Heritage to discuss the application and key viewpoints ahead of the planning application however EH declined to meet until after the application was submitted. This is contrary to best practice where early consultation is recommended (PPG16 1990 para 12 and PPG 15 1994 para 2.11). RidgeWind also requested a meeting with The National Trust and this was duly arranged and their concerns allayed.

3.2 The Study Area

3.2.1 The approach taken in the original EA was for data acquisition up to 15km and the setting of a 5km radius for further assessment, with additions beyond this for sites flagged up in scoping or where they are deemed especially sensitive. This was entirely within normal standard practice. There is a long established approach to study areas in cultural heritage where significant impacts beyond 5km are relatively rare and so they are dealt with as they arise rather than as a matter of course. The planning process has to be reasonable and with any wind farm proposal the numbers of heritage assets within a given area are huge, particularly when listed buildings and buried archaeology are included. In order to be practical, there needs to be a way of scoping out of the study area all those sites where common sense would dictate that an impact cannot be significant because of the distance. This allows the resources to focus on those sites which genuinely are at risk of diminished understanding of their importance by the presence of a wind farm.

4. The Perceived Quality and Density of Heritage Assets in the Vale of Belvoir

- 4.1 English Heritage and BLOT in their objection to the proposal quote the inspector's decision at Thackson's Well suggesting that the Vale of Belvoir is unusually rich in heritage assets of the highest grade and in the historic relationships between them. I have explored this assertion using English Heritage data on how many designated assets there are in the local authority area and the region and compared this to national figures. These figures do not support this assertion. On the contrary the statistics would suggest that the number of designated heritage assets of the highest grade in this local authority area and in the region are average or even in some cases, below average. The Thackson's Well statement would better fit with the South West, Yorkshire and Humber or the South East regions. What is clear is that while the heritage of the Vale of Belvoir may not be 'unusually rich in heritage assets of the highest grade', like every other corner of England it does have local distinctiveness; aspects of its heritage that make it the Vale of Belvoir and it is that distinctiveness which we should seek to retain through the planning process rather than unquantifiable statements about the relative quality of the heritage assets in one area compared to another.

5. Historic Landscape Character

- 5.1 By exploring the historic landscape character we can see to what extent the landscape has altered through time and to what extent the presence of turbines would alter the historic character of the wider vale. We can also attach some value to different landscape elements in terms of their contribution towards landscape character and assess to what extent the presence of the turbine would have an impact on these elements.
- 5.2 In particular I have looked at field pattern, woodland cover, settlement pattern, military landscapes, post war agricultural improvements and infrastructure and the historic landscape as inspiration to nationally famous artists.
- 5.3 It is important to understand that the English Landscape is the product of change caused through human activity over several hundreds of years, sometimes radical, sometimes gradual. This is a continuing process and so must be placed within an understanding of the events of many centuries not just any one single human lifetime.
- 5.4 The Vale of Belvoir cannot in any reasonable sense be considered to be unaltered and

references in objections to ‘unspoilt countryside’¹ are misleading. The distinctive open field system of the champion lands has now gone and the matter in hand revolves around identifying what is important about the current historic landscape composed as it is of features of various dates, and then assessing how this importance may be affected by the proposed wind farm.

- 5.5 Importance in the case of cultural heritage is derived from its architectural, historic or archaeological interest. The main features of importance which create local distinctiveness in this landscape are therefore the 18th century enclosure pattern, coverts with more designed woodland planting to the south, mature tree cover within settlements, especially around churchyards, some limited ancient field systems around village margins and the nucleated settlement pattern, including a number of church towers or spires. There is also a significant contribution from both military archaeology in the form of airfields and a busy transport infrastructure that has overwhelmed the earlier transport infrastructure of the pre-18th century.
- 5.6 The historic character of the villages in the Vale (for more assessment of Normanton and Bottesford see below) would remain unaltered if the proposal was to go ahead. This is accepted in the Statement of Common Ground which states that the setting and visual amenity of all other historic buildings and monuments (excluding those assessed below) within the study area would not be unacceptably adversely affected by the proposed wind farm. The present day historic character of the wider landscape will remain as described in my proof should the proposal be granted planning permission. That is it will still be of an agricultural regularly enclosed landscape with some modern intrusive elements, scattered with nucleated settlements, some with church towers or spires. Its historic readability would be unaffected.
- 5.7 There are strong cultural associations with nationally famous artists, but these tend to focus on Belvoir Castle rather than the wider vale. There are also literary associations, but these are also connected to specific heritage assets such as Staunton Hall, rather than the wider Vale and are not exceptional. The artistic importance tends therefore not to be of the wider Vale, but of specific assets within it.
- 5.8 In essence the site chosen for the turbines sits on a landscape where the late 18th century field pattern has already been altered by modern agricultural practices; it is a site where a windmill once stood providing a historical and technological connection with wind energy and it is on the margins of two villages, one of which the council has

¹ BLOT objection Vol I p26

said can better withstand change because it has already witnessed much change. It is north of this altered village margin, east of the industrial estate at Normanton and south of Kilvington gypsum mine and so in this respect, the location is well chosen.

6. Historic Views and Setting Issues – SITE ASSESSMENTS.

This section addresses issues of setting regarding important heritage assets scoped into the study, and also considers certain important historic views of, to and from those assets.

6.1. The View from Staunton Hall to Belvoir Castle

6.1.1. The views from Staunton Hall which are the subject of the objections face towards the south and are from Staunton Hall gardens towards Belvoir Castle and include St Mary's Church Bottesford and Beacon Hill. Belvoir Castle is located 7.6 km to the south and St Mary's 4.2 km to the SW (the proposed turbines are 3.3 km to the SE). According to local tradition, there are historic connections between Belvoir Castle, St Mary's Church, Bottesford and Staunton Hall which add importance to this view. The Stauntons held their land from the Lords of Belvoir by tenure of the Castle Guard and were obliged to defend Belvoir Castle in times of trouble. This same local tradition states that the beacon on Beacon Hill was used to summon the men of the Vale if the castle was threatened. Since the Middle Ages the Staunton family have been responsible for replacing the tenor bell rope at St Mary's Bottesford, used to summon help. It is less clear to what extent this latter tradition also required a view to St Mary's, nor is it clear why Staunton Church didn't have a role to play with its much more elevated position than the hall. Further, an article by George Staunton dating to 1900, says that this tradition existed up until 1860 suggesting that there was a break in maintaining it after that date, although it has since been revived. It is therefore not a continual tradition as suggested by objectors.

6.1.2. When the present Belvoir Castle was built, it retained the Staunton Tower, with the Staunton family coat of arms on the outside wall, from the earlier castle. However Staunton Tower is on the south east side of the castle and not visible from Staunton Hall. A tradition also exists that if a member of the Royal family visits Belvoir Castle, the head of the Staunton family ceremonially presents the golden key to the tower. Again, it is not clear that the retention of this tradition requires a field of view between Staunton Hall and Belvoir Castle.

6.1.3. There is therefore a series of local traditions linking Staunton and Belvoir and to a lesser extent between Staunton and St Mary's Bottesford. The historic importance in

this instance is in the perception of uninterrupted views from Staunton towards Belvoir Castle taking in St Mary's, Bottesford and so conserving the relationship between the sites. The objectors are concerned that the location of the turbines will adversely affect the intervisibility between these heritage assets and specifically raised the view from Staunton Hall.

- 6.1.4. However no direct evidence has been cited in objections by BLOT or English Heritage for why the views from Staunton Hall to St Mary's is a necessary requirement for the local tradition, as the need to replace the rope for the tenor bell is based on the need to hear the alarm, not to see the church. Likewise the loss of view of Staunton Tower part of an earlier defensible castle, to be replaced with a more picturesque and domestic castle, suggest that the importance of this view was less important in the 19th century than it has become today.
- 6.1.5. BLOT also raise the importance of Beacon Hill to the view, as the beacon was used to raise the alarm (presumably in addition to the church bells at St Mary's only a little distance away). I have found no evidence that Beacon Hill had this function. Beacons were traditionally used as part of a national chain, particularly when England was threatened by the Spanish Armada. They are less useful for local battles as they are slow to light and as a result, church bells were used for a more immediate alarm.
- 6.1.6. In this instance it is clear there is no impact on the setting of Staunton Hall itself which, I would suggest includes much of the designed grounds clearly visible on aerial photographs. In order to assess the impact on the views from the Hall there are several possible viewing places.
- 6.1.7. I have found difficulties with the views from the Hall as a designed planting of trees, probably 18th century in date, reduce the views from the Hall. The hall has also been through a number of changes especially on the elevation which faces towards Belvoir Castle. In particular the house has been heightened and larger windows inserted where there were none before. So the Hall from which views were once important as part of the defence of the vale, no longer exists.
- 6.1.8. The modern viewing platform is of no historic importance and viewpoints in the garden do not allow an unbroken line of sight which includes Belvoir Castle, St Mary's Bottesford and the proposed turbines. The only way to achieve this is from the height of the church tower. This is of some interest, because there are references to Anne Staunton positioning a man on the church tower to keep look out during the Civil War. Given that the tower has been through less radical changes than the Hall and that there

is a stronger precedence of the use of the tower during conflict, I have chosen to assess the views from here.

- 6.1.9. My assessment of this view considered that the view itself was important, but the magnitude of impact was low adverse. This therefore suggests that the overall effect in terms of significance is minor. It is also worth noting that none of these views are publicly accessible. This does not diminish the importance of the view, but does restrict the magnitude of impact as there are few people who can appreciate its historic importance.

6.2. Belvoir Castle

- 6.2.1. This view was chosen because the impact of the proposal on the setting and views from the castle was objected to by English Heritage and BLOT, as were intervisibility issues concerning Belvoir Castle and St Mary's Bottesford.

- 6.2.2. I have had some difficulty in assessing the impact on the views from the castle as access was refused in order to do this on the basis that the view was a private one.

- 6.2.3. The important aspects of Belvoir Castle relating to its architectural, historic and archaeological interest (as relevant to the impact assessment), and which may be affected by the proposed wind farm, can be summarised as follows:

- The subliminal and ever-present presence of the Castle within the Vale landscape.
- Views from the castle across the Vale of Belvoir
- The castle as artistic inspiration
- Its views towards St Mary's Bottesford

- 6.2.4. I have therefore examined the potential views of Belvoir Castle from a number of heritage assets in order to explore whether the presence of the turbines would affect the dominance of the castle or its subliminal presence in the landscape whether they would raise intervisibility issues or interfere with planned vistas. I can find no evidence of this.

- 6.2.5. In order to put the turbines in the same view as the castle, the viewer needs to be north of the turbines and at this stage the distance between castle and viewer is so great and the proximity of the turbines potentially so close, that even vegetation at a low height and existing built development can appear to dominate the castle. In that respect, we have moved beyond what could be described as the castle's setting to what has

become a distant view of the castle, where understanding of its importance has become diminished.

- 6.2.6. The dominance of the castle within the Vale was traditionally a medieval feudal dominance and it was seen to be the power base from which the feudal estate was run. Even when it was remodelled in the 19th century, architectural styles were chosen deliberately to hark back to this idea of medieval feudalism in order to express legitimacy of the line through longevity and of course wealth and status, but they were tempered with the new concept of creating a landscaped backdrop in order to display picturesque ideals of beauty rather than dominance.
- 6.2.7. Military dominance is no longer important to the castle, and indeed was deliberately designed out from the 17th century, but the sense that it was once a military stronghold will still be retained. In order to diminish that understanding, the turbines would have to be much closer to Belvoir Castle, or be another feudal power base nearby. They are neither.
- 6.2.8. I have also attempted to assess views from the castle without having access to it. I have shown that the views towards the development site are quite restricted, and that the primary façade of the castle has been designed to face towards the NE and so it does not face on to the turbines directly. Views of the proposed turbines would be possible from the Elizabeth Saloon and Chinese Rooms, but I have not been able to visit to determine to what extent vegetation obscures these views, if at all. The turbines would be at a sufficient distance not to dominate any view out of the windows on the second floor and would be impossible to see from the lower floors. The 'private' nature of the view must also restrict the magnitude of the impact.

6.3. St Mary's, Bottesford

- 6.3.1. St. Mary's is a Grade I listed building and at 1.4 km from the proposed wind turbines the effect of the proposal on the setting of the church itself and on the perceived visual prominence of its tall spire within the Vale of Belvoir has caused concern to a range of objectors.
- 6.3.2. I have spent some time discussing the setting of the church and have assessed the impact of the proposed development on the church. I have also explained why I disagree with English Heritage's suggestion that the setting is the whole parish or Mr Dawson's that the setting is as far as the church bells can be heard. Because of the intimate nature of the street pattern and building density, there is no impact on the

setting and so I have looked at views of the church from places ranging from the outskirts of Bottesford to more distant viewpoints.

6.3.3. Having assessed the views of St Mary's and the extent to which the turbines would dominate the spire, I am of the view that while the turbines can be seen in the same view as the spire in some places, they do not necessarily dominate the spire. I accept that the spire, like other spires in the region, were designed as landmarks, although their original intention has already been diluted by subsequent changes in the landscape.

6.3.4. The fact that turbines can be seen in the same view does not mean that the viewer is in the setting. It is clear that not every view of the spire will have turbines in it; that the turbines will often be to one side and will often be smaller than the spire because of perspective. At a distance and from very few angles the spire may have turbines to both sides, but the same distance renders spire and turbines difficult to discern.

6.4. Bottesford Conservation Areas

6.4.1. I have also assessed the impact on the proposal on the three Conservation Areas within present day Bottesford, namely Bottesford itself, Easthorpe Manor Road and Castle View Road in Easthorpe.

6.4.2. Parts of the turbines will be visible from parts of the Conservation Areas, but the visualisations would suggest that they will not dominate them, will be largely restricted from view by existing buildings and tree cover and will not impair our understanding of the architectural, historic or archaeological importance of each Conservation Area.

6.5. Normanton Conservation Area

6.5.1. This Conservation Area has been selected because it was cited in the reason for refusal by the local authority, was objected to by BLOT and English Heritage and a number of residents in Normanton. The Conservation Area was designated in 1994 and runs down the main road and includes properties to either side. In the subsequent 15 years the local authority have failed to provide a Conservation Area Appraisal to guide development, define special character or identify key views into and out of the village or to highlight what was considered important at the time of designation. There are two sites of archaeological interest recorded on the Historic Environment Record within the Conservation Area, namely the military airfield and the former Chapel of Ease. It contains three listed buildings. The Conservation Area is 740m from turbine 1.

6.5.2. I have assessed the proposal against what is important in terms of cultural heritage, and in that respect it does not erode our understanding of the historic village of Normanton. The historic character of Normanton has been significantly altered by the Second World War and the subsequent use of the airfield as an industrial estate. The storage of blue painted cranes and rows of cars glistening in the sunlight, visible for miles around, poor landscaping near the village, overhead wires, signage for the industrial estate and some inappropriate modern development have all contributed towards the erosion of historic character. Those buildings which retain their traditional features have become rather swamped by the negative factors around them. In effect it is no longer an agricultural village as it was pre 1940s.

6.5.3. My assessment of the historic landscape character has shown that the surrounding countryside around Normanton is in transition towards being industrialised and in that respect it has created an environment that turbines would not be out of place. I note BLOT's concerns regarding the visual impact on houses at the south end of the village. One turbine will appear over houses adjacent to the un-listed neo-Gothic cottages but I also note the Victorian predilection for massive and monumental engineering works, often in close proximity to existing houses in many settlements in the country. For these reasons, I am minded to suggest that the proposal would not be out of place near Normanton where the character of the village was altered in 1940 from a small agricultural community to a bustling military town with all the infrastructure changes that this transition required.

6.6. Bennington Grange

6.6.1. I have assessed this site because of its proximity to the turbines, its national importance and to explore English Heritage's objections to the proposal based on its impact on the setting of this monument. I have identified the site's importance as follows:

- Good archaeological potential in both organic deposits and below ground remains, good earthwork survival and therefore the potential to inform us about how the grange worked and what was produced on the surrounding land (from pollen remains trapped in waterlogged deposits)
- Some documentary evidence of land ownership on the tithe map
- Its contribution to our understanding of the inter-relationship of contemporary components of the wider medieval landscape.

6.6.2. I have rejected English Heritage's assertion that the site is of international importance.

- 6.6.3. There are accidental gaps in the hedge which afford views westwards towards the turbines and beyond to the spire of St Mary's. This was not an intentional view as the grange pre-dates the construction of the spire. The visualisation shows that the tip of the spire of St Mary's is still visible between the turbines, but as one moves across the site of the grange, it may become obscured by a turbine, then exposed again as the viewer moves on. Belvoir Castle is a distant dark shape in another direction at the end of a tree lined ridge which is not easily identified as Belvoir Castle unless the viewer is familiar with the shape. This will not be affected by the turbines.
- 6.6.4. The present day character of the landscape is agricultural with some modern intrusion in the form of electricity pylons and the airfield/industrial estate at Normanton. The field pattern is degraded by post war rationalisation of field boundaries. If the turbines were to proceed this character would remain the same but with some added modern elements in the landscape.
- 6.6.5. The lack of any public access means that the site is currently not appreciated by the public for its importance and that therefore this has the effect of reducing the magnitude of impact.

6.7. Muston Grange

- 6.7.1. Muston Grange, a scheduled monument, is 1.4km from the nearest proposed turbine (Thacksons Well was 600m NE). It has not been raised as a reason for objection by English Heritage or BLOT, but I have assessed it as it has many similar qualities to Bennington Grange but has a more readable and intact landscape which contributes towards the understanding of its importance.
- 6.7.2. The Assessment of Importance in the scheduling documentation states that the moated grange at Muston contains substantial earthworks and has well documented connections with the distant priory of Olveston near Bristol. As I can find no reference to any priory at Olveston, I suspect that this may not be the case and that any association was with the much closer Owston Abbey.
- 6.7.3. Regardless of this, in my opinion it also has additional importance because of its connection with the early 17th century Hospital Farm (which may represent continuity of farming operations after the 16th century), the surrounding good quality ridge and furrow which in an area of intensive ploughing is not common, and a wider association with the village of Muston with clear medieval origins. These contribute towards the

site's archaeological and historical importance and help towards an understanding of the contemporary landscape within which the grange operated. Its importance can therefore be summarised as follows:

- Good earthwork survival
- High potential for below ground archaeology and possible organic remains
- High potential to explore medieval water management
- Good readability of the remains
- Group value with other historic features which may contribute towards the site's understanding

6.7.4. Most of the turbines will be hidden by the trees and buildings of Hospital Farm, only one turbine will be exposed without building or tree cover in the visualisation. They are not immediately adjacent to the site so will not dominate it and the presence of considerable development between the grange and the proposed site means that its visual impact will be diluted. However one turbine will be seen over the top of Hospital Farm, an adjacent listed building, although this will alter depending where on the site visitors walk to. This turbine will be taller than Hospital Farm, but still shorter than the surrounding trees. This view and the relationship between the turbines and Hospital Farm and the grange alters as one walks across the site.

6.7.5. The immediate setting around the grange retains some perceptible evidence of the past which may contribute towards our understanding of the grange and how it worked. However the location of the turbines will not intrude into this setting, nor will they detract from its importance. The A52 is the major intrusion into this historic landscape, described as a 'concrete barrier' in the local history web site, and it lies between the grange and the proposed wind turbines. Further the right of way into the site round the back of Hospital Farm is cluttered with building debris which detracts not just from the grange, but also Hospital Farm.

6.8. Harlaxton Manor

6.8.1. Harlaxton Manor is situated 10km SE of the proposal. It is being assessed because it was raised in scoping and assessed in the EA but English Heritage and BLOT felt that the EA downplayed the importance of the views from the Manor towards St Mary's Bottesford. English Heritage also felt that the historic links between Belvoir Castle and Harlaxton had been ignored and were relevant to the site's importance. Harlaxton Manor is a listed building (grade I) and sits within a registered parkland grade II*. The gateways into and in the grounds are also listed as are a number of decorative features throughout the grounds.

- 6.8.2. Much has been made by the objectors to this scheme of the suggestion that Harlaxton was designed by Gregory Gregory to outdo Belvoir Castle and the Manners family. However I would suggest that any speculative desire to outdo the Manners was overcome by a desire to be picturesque. In that he succeeded.
- 6.8.3. The (relevant) importance of the manor is therefore in summary:
1. The silhouette (chimneys and turrets) and positioning of the house into a wooded hillside expressing picturesque principles
 2. The layout of the garden in relation to the house with clever use of the hillside
 3. The early pioneering use of neo Elizabethan and Jacobean designs with Baroque
 4. The contrived approach with views and vistas offering glimpses of the treat to come
- 6.8.4. None of these will be affected by the proposal. However, allowing the 19th century speculation on the importance of the line of sight from the Manor to St Mary's and Belvoir Castle, I have explored the views of St Mary's from a number of viewing places. I have found that the spire of St Mary's is not visible from the entrance gates or the front doors of the Manor. Neither is it visible from the ground floor. The views from the first floor, which is where the principal reception rooms were, are very difficult to discern and require the aid of a zoom lens.
- 6.8.5. The best views are from the attic which is accessed with some difficulty by a narrow wooden stair to the clock tower where students who reside there are forbidden access.
- 6.8.6. I have also looked at the impact on the views from a designed viewing tower in the garden. This tower points away from the allegedly important views towards St Mary's and Belvoir Castle and faces the outskirts of Grantham and the Manor itself.
- 6.8.7. Whichever viewpoint is used, the turbines never obstruct the views from the Manor to the spire of St Mary's or the views towards Belvoir Castle.

6.9. Belmont Tower/ Belton House

- 6.9.1. Belton House registered park and garden (grade I) is located 9.7km east of the nearest turbine and Belmont Tower within the park is located 12.3 to 13.1km from the nearest turbine. Belton House is listed grade I and Belmont Tower Grade II*. This view has been chosen because it was flagged up in scoping and because it was raised as a reason for refusal by English Heritage using the Inspector's decision at Thackson's

Well. The Thackson's Well turbines were taller, greater in number and closer to the designed view and so it is questionable whether the same reasons for refusal should apply.

- 6.9.2. The National Trust who own and manage the site did not object to the proposal.
- 6.9.3. According to the listing description, Belton House is perhaps the best surviving example of a country house derived from the work of Roger Pratt. It also contains important examples of the work of Goudge and Carpenter, and the designs of Wyatt and Wyatville.
- 6.9.4. There is no statement of significance with the register of parks and gardens.
- 6.9.5. The Statement of Significance for the house, written by the National Trust has no specific statement regarding the importance of the tower, but does draw on the:

'The sense of completeness that the ensemble at Belton proclaims, contents, house, service buildings, gardens, park and village, once commonplace, now increasingly rare, is the key to the property's importance to the National Trust.'

'The quintessential Englishness of sheep and deer grazing the park and cricket on the south front, together with the ancient woods and east avenue, creates a feeling of timelessness.'

- 6.9.6. For me, the importance of the viewing tower is in its association with Belton House and its contribution towards the landscaped grounds. Its purpose as highlighted in the guidebook (Tinniswood 1992, 40-1) is as a termination of the view from the house along the avenue and as a place from which Tyrconnel could admire his landscape improvements.
- 6.9.7. I have assessed the impact of the proposal from two viewing places, namely the ground below the viewing tower which is publicly accessible all year round and the viewing gallery which is occasionally accessible. In both cases a tiny tip of the turbine blades will be visible over the hill which currently terminates the views. The turbines will not shorten that view and because of the distance and the hill ridge, the moving blades are unlikely to be a distraction. I therefore agree with the National Trust that:

'...the turbines would be visible from Belmont Tower but that the extent of their impact

would be limited by their design (height) and siting (both distance away and not being viewed along a principal, designed, vista at Belton). It is therefore considered that there would not be a significant adverse impact upon the heritage features at Belton that in isolation would warrant refusal of the application'.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. Overall I have found that objectors confuse visibility of turbines with a harmful effect. Wind turbines cannot be hidden. They will always be seen from a heritage asset somewhere if they are constructed in England. This was noted by the Inspector in the Swinford decision (CD 10. 24, para 52): 'England is a country where the density of cultural heritage features makes it all but impossible for any wind farm to avoid visibility from and proximity to a number of such assets.'
- 7.2. We need to consider how to differentiate turbines that can be seen from a heritage asset and those that harm the heritage asset. I have tried to be clear in outlining the historic importance of each heritage asset and then to what extent the visibility of the turbines will affect that importance by using an explicit methodology based on best practice and clearly defined terminology to differentiate setting, context and view.
- 7.3. I have also found that English Heritage's arguments have overplayed the importance of some sites and by a lack of rigour between the terms 'setting' and 'context', which have resulted in 'setting' encompassing huge tracts of the English countryside and 'context' not appearing at all. If their definition is allowed to flourish, it will bring the planning system to a halt.

8. Recommendation to Inspector

- 8.1. Any wind farm will be near to heritage assets of some sort. This site appears to be thoughtfully chosen by selecting an area where the historic landscape character has become altered since the 1940s, where there is a precedent for wind power and where the intervisibility with heritage assets and turbines is balanced with the need for wind power. There are one or two minor matters to be dealt with regarding buried archaeology and these can be dealt with through the appropriate conditions. These conditions are included in the Statement of Common Ground. Providing that these conditions are imposed, I can find no basis on cultural heritage grounds for refusing the application at Palmers Hollow.