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**EBBERSTON MOOR 1 WELL SITE
NORTH YORK MOORS NATIONAL PARK
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL STATEMENT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF
VIKING UK GAS LIMITED**

NYMNPA
- 4 FEB 2013

NYMNPA
- 2 SEP 2008

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Barton Willmore Landscape Planning and Design (BWLPD) was commissioned by Viking UK Gas Limited to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal of a Site containing an existing gas drilling well within an area of approximately 1.35 hectares of land (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). This occupies part of Dalby Forest to the west of Ebberston Common Lane.

1.2 The existing gas drilling Site was given planning permission under Application Number NYM/2005/0254/FL on 22 March 2006. Consent is now sought to remodel and retain the existing well site for a period of three years. As part of extending the duration of this consent, landscape mitigation forms part of the application to ensure that any existing visual impacts of development are more effectively reduced.

1.3 The findings of this landscape assessment identify that the scale and nature of extending the duration of consent for existing minerals development will be effectively absorbed within this Site. This entails the enhancement of existing screen planting, temporary re-vegetation of stockpiled soil and a reduction in the visibility of security fencing. Once established this work will ensure the existing visual impact of development is minimised when viewed from limited public vantage points adjacent the Site.

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2.0 SITE CONTEXT

2.1 The Site is contained within a wedge of established and regenerating forestry bound by Ebberston Common Lane to the east, Dalby Forest Drive to the west and an informal logging track to the south. Forestry planting in this area includes mature Scots Pine to the northwest, mixed Larch and Spruce to the southwest and pockets of regenerating broadleaf to the west and south. The Forestry Commission is responsible for the management of forestry in this area and will also monitor the establishment of regenerating woodland to ensure its success.

2.2 Existing built development in this area is limited and typically restricted to isolated farm buildings set within pockets of established woodland. An adjacent gas depot extends to the north of the Site and contains some existing built form enclosed by a periphery of fencing. This is operated by Northern Gas and does not form part of the Site. The nearest residential development is Ebberston Common Farm located approximately 270 metres to the southeast of the Site. This has no direct views into the Site given the screening provided by intervening forestry planting.

2.3 The wider landscape represents an elevated plateau established predominately in forestry vegetation. The elevation of the Site is 246 metres AOD and appears similar to much of the surrounding land.

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Landscape Character

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National

2.4 Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) acknowledges the role of landscape character assessments in Informing Local Planning Authorities on policy and guidance. National landscape guidance has now moved from concentrating efforts on designating and protecting those areas of the countryside which are most important for landscape and wildlife, that is the quality approach, to a character approach as a way of enriching the quality of the whole countryside whilst accommodating appropriate development, in order to complement the protection which designations offer.

2.5 The Countryside Agency and English Nature (which have now been amalgamated to form Natural England) have produced a Countryside Character Map of England and the landscape of which encompasses the Site is described in Volume 1: The North East: Character Area 25 – North Yorkshire Moors and Cleveland Hills. The detailed extracts of this assessment are included in **Appendix I** with the key features relevant to this assessment identified below:

- **Upland plateau landscape underlain mainly by sandstone and mudstone of Middle Jurassic age, and in the south, calcareous sandstone and limestone of Upper Jurassic age, with areas of undulating land arising from deposits of glacial till, sand and gravel.**
- **Arable landscape to south and east, but part still on elevated, sweeping plateaus and hills.**
- **Sparsely settled, with population concentrated in the dales and around the fringes.**
- **Valley landscapes characterised by predominantly pastoral farming with clear demarcation between the enclosed fields, farms, settlements and the moorland ridges above. The transition is often marked by bracken fringes.**
- **Extensive areas of coniferous plantations, especially on the Tabular Hills in the south-east and Hackness north of Pickering; with remnant areas of predominantly ancient semi-natural woodland occurring mainly on valley side slopes, on escarpments and fringing hills.**
- **Traditional stone walls and hedgerows enclosing fields in the dales and lower fringing farmland - now often replaced by fences.**

2.6 Within the 'Shaping the Future' section of this assessment, it is acknowledged that most of the area is designated as a National Park and so many of the issues relating to change in the landscape are already being considered. In this context, it is noted that development issues need to be addressed, explicitly identifying those relating to tourism and infrastructure.

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2.7 White Young Green Environmental In association with North York Moors National Park Authority has produced a Landscape Character Assessment of the area that includes the Site. This is dated December 2003 and was adopted in September 2004. Within this document, the Site is contained within the Forest Landscape Character Area and forms part of Dalby Forest (Area 3C). The detailed extracts of this assessment are included in **Appendix II** and includes the following landscape characteristics apparent in the vicinity of the Site:

- **A large and diverse area of coniferous and deciduous forest, situated on the Tabular Hills and overlying Middle and Lower Calcareous Grit from the Corallian Group.**
- **Landform is typical of the Tabular Hills landscape; a gently graded plateau towards the north of the forest (at a maximum height of 240m) falls away towards the Vale of Pickering in the south. The plateau is deeply incised by river valleys with steep sides and occasional clifflines and by shallow dry valleys mainly orientated in a north east to south west direction. The forest extends down the edge of the north facing scarp with its irregular wavelike form, the top edge of which allows views across Langdale Forest to the north.**
- **The extensive forestry includes large area of recently felled and newly planted areas. The forest contains a diverse range of habitats, including sizable blocks and linear belts of deciduous woodland are present particularly within valleys and on steeper slopes. Species present include larch, Scots pine, birch, cherry, ash, rowan and oak. A small area of upland heath – Troutdale Moor – is included to the east of the character area. Small areas of rough pasture and fen occur. In some areas there is an abrupt geometric edge to the forest.**
- **Some areas of remnant farmland occur within openings in the forest. Fields of pasture are divided by both stone walls and fences.**
- **The public vehicular access to the forest is via Dalby Forest Drive, a toll road, with numerous car parking, picnic areas and other facilities for tourists located along its length, or via Ebberston. Tracks through the woodland, in a loose grid pattern, provide access for forestry vehicles.**
- **The small hamlet of Low Dalby is the main settlement in the area situated in a narrow opening in the forest in the valley of Dalby Beck. Other settlements are limited to very occasional isolated farms within the open areas.**

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Relevant Landscape Planning Designations

North York Moors Local Plan (2003)

2.8 Mineral planning within the National Park comes under the jurisdiction of the National Park Authority. The North York Moors Local Plan was adopted in May 2003 and sets out the policy framework for mineral planning in within the North York Moors National Park. This framework identifies that the landscape impact of mineral extraction has potential to be magnified within a National Park while acknowledging a national need for gas generated from this area has been established.

2.9 Policy M3 of the Minerals Local Plan relates specifically to the impacts of gas exploration on the landscape or environment. This states:

"Proposals for gas or oil exploration, appraisal and production will only be permitted where any impact on the landscape or environment of the National Park, or on the amenity of residents and visitors, can be moderated to a level acceptable in a National Park in the context of any overriding need for the development."

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3.0 SITE APPRAISAL

- 3.1 The Site presently consists of a modified area of landscape associated with existing gas exploration activity covering a total area of approximately 0.9 hectares. The central area of the Site includes a rectangular drilling platform covering a total area of approximately 0.44 hectares. This forms a level drilling platform covered by 300mm of crushed stone compacted over a geo-textile membrane and contains a suspended well structure and an additional cellar in its centre. Surrounding this is a 600mm deep drainage ditch which acts to severe drainage within the Site from the surrounding hydrology. Along the western and southern boundaries of the Site, two separate bunds have been formed comprising of sub-soil and top-soil respectively.
- 3.2 To the east of the larger drilling platform extends a smaller elevated platform of approximately 0.25 hectares and used to accommodate temporary parking and buildings associated with drilling operations undertaken within the drilling platform area. This is separated from Ebberston Common Lane by a corridor of limited vegetation approximately 13 meters wide. At present this accommodates some existing semi-mature Oak, Hawthorn and Ash trees. On the opposite side of the road, extends a contained area of pastoral land use enclosed by the broader periphery of Dalby Forest. This area also contains an existing flare pit associated with gas exploration undertaken on the Site. The flare pit is proposed to be restored as part of this application and introduces an additional 1,000m³ of additional subsoil along the western boundary of the Site.
- 3.3 Access to the Site is provided into the southeast corner of the Site. This enters a 2 metre high wire mesh gate set back approximately 10 metres form the road margin. Security fencing also encloses the periphery of the Site including the elevated car-parking area to the east.
- 3.4 Three Site Appraisal Photographs have been taken from within the Site in June 2008 and serve to demonstrate the character of the Site as existing. These are included in **Appendix 1**. The location from which these photographs were taken is shown on **Figure 1**.
- 3.5 **Photograph A** illustrates the view of the Site taken from its northwest corner looking south. On the left hand side of this photograph, the Northern Gas site is visible introducing an area of adjacent built from, fencing and hard standing. To the right of this, fencing and a drainage ditch enclosing the northern boundary of the Site can be observed extending along the margins of the drilling platform. Through the centre of the photograph is an area of level gravel containing the existing gas drilling well. This area is partially contained by existing vegetation along Ebberston Common Lane, seen to the centre left, and existing sub-soll bund observed to the right. A periphery of established forestry is also evident along the horizon through the right hand side of the photograph.

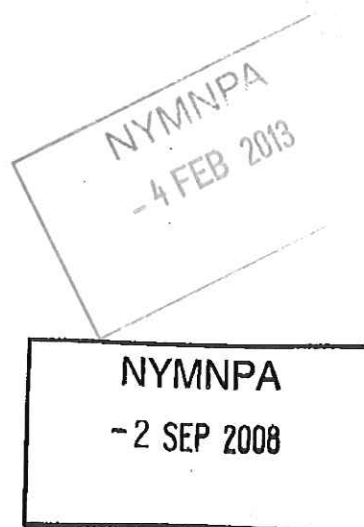
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- 3.6 **Photograph B** illustrates a view of the Site from the existing elevated top-soil bund in the southeast corner of the Site looking north. From this area the existing gas drilling platform is visible on the left hand side of the photograph within an area enclosed by established woodland. In the centre of the photograph access to the Site is visible against a corridor of existing vegetation established along the Site's eastern boundary. On the right hand side of the photograph Ebberston Common Lane is visible separating the Site from an adjacent area of pasture enclosed by further Ebberston Common Plantations. The existing Gas Flare pit is evident in this area within an open grass area.
- 3.7 **Photograph C** illustrates the view of the Site from the southeast corner of the Site looking south over the adjacent area of regenerating woodland. On the left hand side of the photograph, Ebberston Common Lane is visible extending south passed the Site. Beyond this Ebberston Common Plantation can be observed blocking views between the Site and Ebberston Common Farm located approximately 270 metres from the Site. Through the centre of the photograph, regenerating woodland is apparent extending towards Hybrid Larch and Sitka Spruce plantation planted in 1996. Fencing along the southern boundary of the Site is evident extending to the right hand side of the photograph.

Summary

- 3.8 An appraisal of the Site reveals that its existing character is influenced by existing gas exploration activity. This occupies the area to the south of an adjacent gas depot and predominately appears enclosed by established and regenerating woodland to the west and south. Access to the Site is provided in the south-east corner of the Site which also accesses a terraced parking platform between the Site and Ebberston Common Lane. Limited vegetation has been retained along the eastern margin of the Site and enables activity within the Site to remain apparent from this adjacent public area.



4.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

4.1 A Visual Appraisal of the Site was carried out and consideration was given to its potential visibility from areas readily accessible to the public. While the surrounding land consists of Forestry Commission Woodland enabling public access on foot, the impact of development has focussed on visibility from adjacent roads and tracks given the understanding that these areas are significantly more likely to attract future public use.

4.2 The visual appraisal concludes that the combination of existing topography and extensive forestry planting is effective in curtailing views from most surrounding publicly accessible areas. Where vegetation is less established along the eastern and southern boundaries of the Site, visibility into the Site is more apparent. Such visibility is available from a brief section of Eberston Common Lane as it passes adjacent to the Site for a length of approximately 180 metres.

4.3 As identified above, much of the vegetation surrounding the Site comprises designated forestry blocks in various stages of maturity. Established forestry to the west of the Site includes mature and semi-mature conifers and is effective in curtailing views in the vicinity of Dalby Forest Drive. Vegetation enclosing this area of the Site is not anticipated to be felled until at least 2052 and will outlive any proposed temporary gas drilling activity in this area. Accordingly this enables the potential visual impact from public vantage points to the west of the Site to be disregarded.

4.4 The area to the south of the Site has recently been felled and is anticipated to accommodate regenerating native broadleaf species. The establishment of vegetation in this area will be monitored by the Forestry Commission and may include enrichment planting should regeneration prove unsuccessful over the next 5-10 years. The existing open character of this area currently enables partial views towards the southern boundary of the Site including the southern approach along Eberston Common Lane. Visibility of the southern boundary of the Site typically comprises the existing top soil bund with visibility over the drilling platform restricted to the area in closer proximity to the Site access.

4.5 When passing directly adjacent to the Site along Eberston Common Lane, visual cues of development in this area typically comprise security fencing, an exposed sub-soil bund and a cleared level drilling platform visible through limited planting retained along the Site's eastern boundary.

4.6 Two photographs were taken of the Site from Eberston Common Lane and serve to represent the nature of visibility from this adjacent public area as presently exists. These photographs are included in **Appendix 1** and demonstrate the view from locations indicated on **Figure 1**.

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- 4.7 **Site Context Photograph No. 1** illustrates the view into the Site from a point approximately 20 metres south of the Site entrance. On the left hand side of this photograph, regenerating broadleaf to the south of the Site is visible extending east of Ebberston Common Lane. Through the centre of the photograph, fencing enclosing the southern area of the Site is visible along the southern edge of an area of topsoil extending along the southern boundary of the Site. To the right of the photograph, Ebberston Common Lane can be seen separating a more significant area of woodland to the west from a contained area of pasture to the east.
- 4.8 **Site Context Photograph No.2** illustrates a view looking west into the Site from a point adjacent the Site along Ebberston Common Lane. Ebberston Common Lane is visible to the left and right hand side of the photograph as it passes adjacent the eastern boundary of the Site. Through the centre of the Site the existing vegetation enclosing the Site's eastern boundary can be observed with breaks in this vegetation enabling direct views into the Site. From this area visibility of the Site includes the levelled drill Site enclosed by both perimeter fencing and sub-soil bunding and viewed against a backdrop of plantation forestry.

Summary

- 4.9 A visual appraisal of the Site concludes that views from the wider landscape are effectively curtailed by an enclosure of forestry planting in various states of maturity. In this context visibility is limited to areas adjacent the Site's eastern boundary including an adjacent section of Ebberston Common Lane. When approaching the Site along Ebberston Common Lane from the south, the Site is viewed over an area of regenerating woodland with views over the drilling platform made possible through sporadic planting retained along the Site's eastern boundary. A disused gas depot, to the north of the Site is also visible through pockets of woodland retained in this area. Visibility of existing fencing and exposed soil bunds provide the most visible indicators of existing development in this area.

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5.0 LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

- 5.1 In order to mitigate identified visual effects, a landscape strategy has been devised and included as **Figure 2: Landscape Strategy**. This serves to demonstrate areas of remodelled topsoil and sub-soil, additional areas of planting and an amended location of fencing designed to reduce the existing visual impact of the Site from surrounding public vantage points.
- 5.2 In summary the landscape strategy has been designed to achieve the following objectives:
- Enhance existing vegetation enclosing the eastern periphery of the Site;
 - Enhance the establishment of broadleaf forestry along the southern boundary of the Site;
 - Remodel naturalistic bunding that curtails views from the southern entrance to the Site along Ebberston Common Lane;
 - Reinstate bunds with temporary vegetation that reduces their visual impact observed from surrounding public areas; and
 - Reduce the impact of fencing observed from Ebberston Common Lane.
- 5.3 The area extending to the west of the Site includes coniferous plantation forestry that provides an effective screen from public vantage points in this area. The area immediately to the south of the Site has recently been felled and left to regenerate in broadleaf species. Given the screening benefit of re-establishing broadleaf species within open land in these areas, natural regeneration is proposed to be assisted with the addition of broadleaf species of local provenance along the southern and western peripheries of the Site.
- 5.4 The eastern boundary of the Site provides a narrow corridor of limited vegetation that enables views from public vantage points in this area including, in particular, the adjacent section of Ebberston Common Lane. Views from Ebberston Common Lane typically comprise of views of peripheral fencing enclosing an open drilling platform. Such visibility is proposed to be reduced through relocating the fence beyond a vegetated screen and enhancing the level of vegetation established along the road margin and along the eastern margin of the platform. Once established the Site would appear more effectively assimilated within its vegetated context and significantly less prominent when viewed from the road.
- 5.5 Bunding enclosing the southern and western boundaries of the Site currently contains exposed soil and represents a visual detractor that contrasts with the texture and colour of vegetation enclosing the Site. In order to reduce the visual presence of these areas bunding is proposed to be remodelled to a gentler gradient of 1:3 and established in temporary native grass species. Once revegetated, bunding will contribute to a reduction in the visual presence of development and enhance the effective integration between the Site and the wider natural character of the National Park.

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6.0 REINSTATEMENT

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- 6.1 As with the previous application, in the event that the existing well proves commercially unviable, gas exploration on the Site would be abandoned and the Site would be reinstated. This process is proposed to remain consistent with conditions imposed under Planning Permission NYM/2005/0254/FL.
- 6.2 Reinstatement work will include removing the existing access, hardcore and fencing into the Site and re-grading stored sub-soil and topsoil to replicate the pre-existing levels. This would then be scarified and returned to forestry in accordance with the Forestry Commission Plan within the next planting season. Much of this area is proposed to include regenerating broadleaf forest which will be assisted by the proposed planting of broadleaf species along the Site's southern boundary.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The Site contains an existing gas drilling activity comprising a suspended well enclosed by a periphery of drainage ditches, bunding, car parking and perimeter fencing. This occupies a cleared area of woodland within Dalby Forest and forms part of the larger North Yorkshire National Park. With the exception of the wider National Park Designation, the Site is not subject to any additional landscape designations.
- 7.2 The topography of the Site is influenced by earthworks approved under Planning Permission NYM/2005/0254/FL. This creates a rectangular platform and adjacent car parking area contained by bunding to the west and south and enclosed by peripheral fencing providing gated access off Ebberston Common Lane.
- 7.3 A visual appraisal of the Site reveals that visibility into the Site is effectively restricted to its eastern and southern peripheries including an adjacent section of Ebberston Common Lane. The main visual indicators of development include peripheral fencing, exposed soil bunds and levelled areas accommodating the existing drilling platform and car-parking viewed through gaps in peripheral vegetation along the eastern boundary.
- 7.4 In order to reduce the visual impact of development from identified public areas, a landscape strategy is proposed to improve the quality of vegetation enclosure, temporarily revegetate visible areas of bunding and reduce visibility of fencing. Once established, the visual impact of temporary gas drilling activity, as proposed, will represent a minimal intrusion to the wider character of Dalby Forest to the extent that it will be appropriately absorbed on this Site.

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















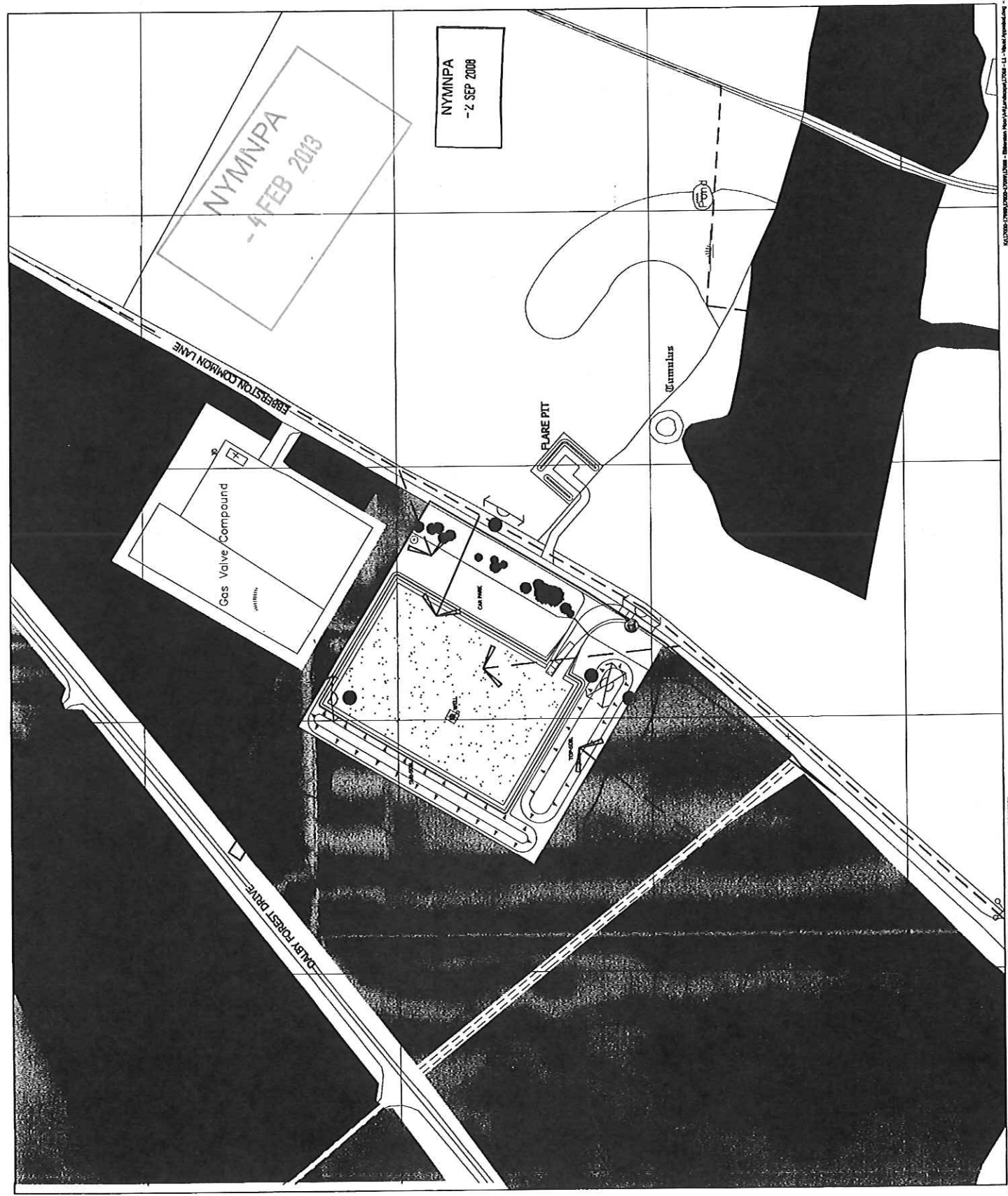
-  SITE BOUNDARY
-  EXISTING VEGETATION
-  EXISTING VEGETATION - HYBRID LARCH, SITKA SPRUCE
-  EXISTING VEGETATION - MIXED BROADLEAVED / SCOTS PINE
-  EXISTING VEGETATION - SCOTS PINE
-  EXISTING VEGETATION - REGENERATION PHASE
-  EXISTING INDIVIDUAL TREES
-  EXISTING BUND
-  EXISTING GRAVEL
-  EXISTING FORESTRY TRACK
-  EXISTING PUBLIC FOOTPATH
-  VISUAL APPRAISAL
-  OPEN VIEW
-  PARTIAL VIEW
-  TRUNCATED / NO VIEW
-  LOCATION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWPOINTS

FIGURE 1

Project
**EBBERSTON MOOR
 GAS SITE**
 Drawing Title
**LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL
 APPRAISAL**

Drawn by
 NJ-HN
 Date
 22.08.2008
 Project No
 17068
 Drawing No
 L1
 Revision
 B

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 14/10/2008 - 17068-0000-01-0001-DWG - Eberston Moor Gas Site - Landscape and Visual Appraisal - L1 - North Appraisal.dwg - A2

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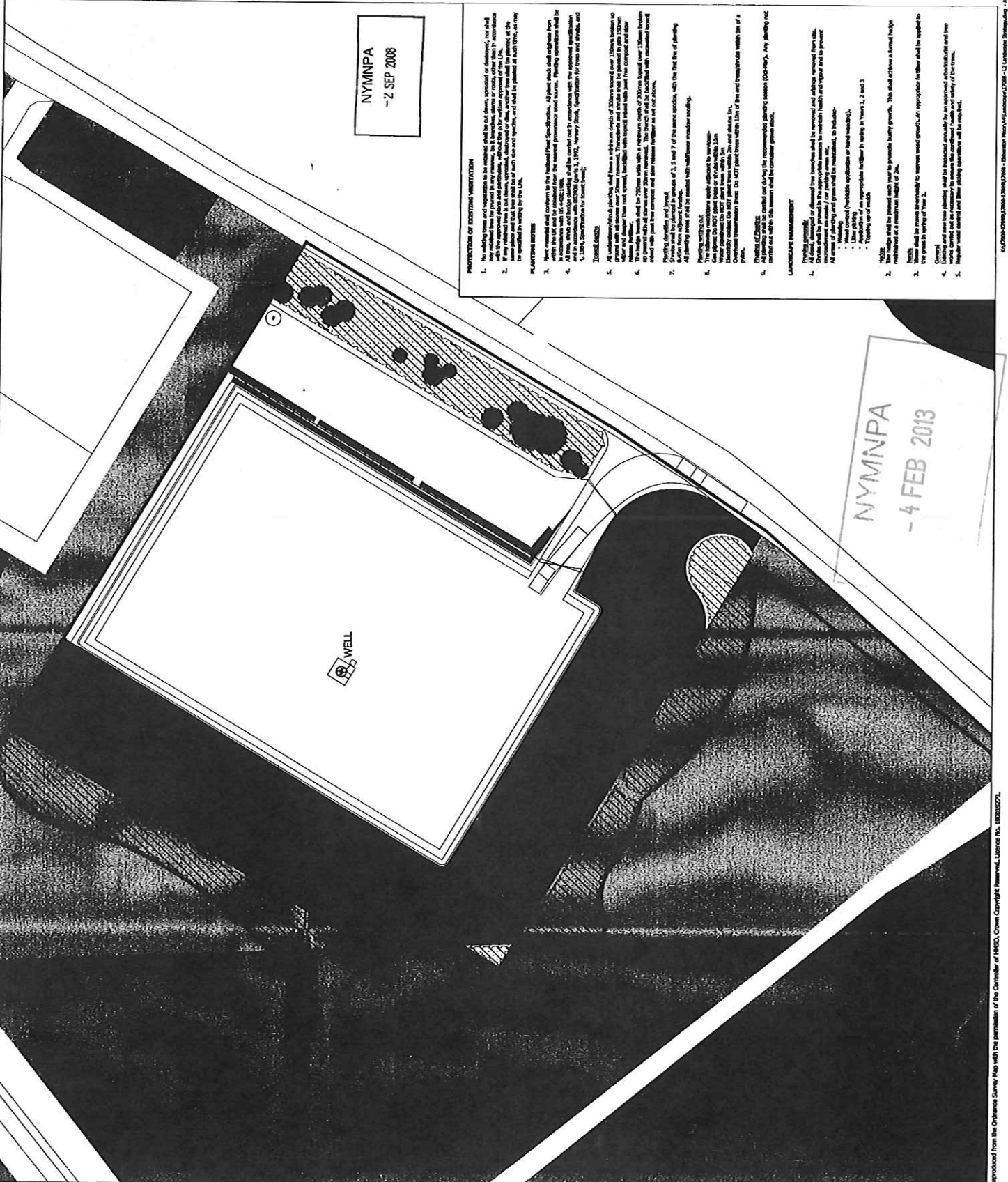
- SITE BOUNDARY
- EXISTING MIXED PLANTATION
- EXISTING PLANTATION WITH ENRICHMENT PLANTING - REGENERATION PHASE MONITORED OVER 5-10YRS
- EXISTING FENCE TO BE RELOCATED
- PROPOSED FENCE
- PROPOSED SUBSOIL BUND TO BE FORMED AT MAXIMUM GRADIENT OF 1:3 TO 2m IN HEIGHT
- PROPOSED TOPSOIL BUND TO BE FORMED AT MAXIMUM GRADIENT OF 1:3 TO 2m IN HEIGHT
- INDICATIVE LOCATION OF EXISTING TREES TO BE RETAINED
- PROPOSED GROUND COVER TO BE ESTABLISHED WITH FISH HOOK TYPE RES OR SIMILAR AT 3-5 g/m²
- PROPOSED HEDGE TO BE PLANTED WITH DOUBLE STAGGERED ROW AT 1.5m SPACING. TREES SELECTED FROM THE FOLLOWING SPECIES:
Ceanothus monspeliensis
Ilex aquifolium

- PROPOSED STRUCTURAL PLANTING PLANTING OF OPEN AREAS TO ACHIEVE DENSITY OF 1 PLANT PER 10m² SELECTED FROM THE FOLLOWING SPECIES:
Quercus robur
Larix laricina
Fraxinus excelsior
Pinus sylvestris
Ceanothus monspeliensis

FIGURE 2
ERBERSTON MOOR
GAS SITE
LANDSCAPE STRATEGY PLAN

Date: 28.08.2008
Scale: 1:500@A2
Project No: 17068
Drawing No: L2
Revision: D

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PROTECTION OF EXISTING VEGETATION

- Any existing trees and vegetation to be retained shall be cut down, uprooted or otherwise, nor shall any existing trees and vegetation be removed or damaged, without the prior written agreement of the UK Forestry Commission. Any existing trees and vegetation to be retained shall be marked with a white flag and a white line shall be marked at the base of the tree. The flag shall be marked with the name of the tree and the line shall be marked with the name of the tree. The flag shall be marked with the name of the tree and the line shall be marked with the name of the tree.
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PLANTING METHODS

- Planting shall be carried out in accordance with the current Forestry Commission standards. All plant species shall be planted in accordance with the UK and be obtained from the nearest Forestry Commission nursery. Planting operations shall be carried out in accordance with the current Forestry Commission standards. All plant species shall be planted in accordance with the UK and be obtained from the nearest Forestry Commission nursery. Planting operations shall be carried out in accordance with the current Forestry Commission standards. All plant species shall be planted in accordance with the UK and be obtained from the nearest Forestry Commission nursery.
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LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

- All existing trees and vegetation to be retained shall be marked with a white flag and a white line shall be marked at the base of the tree. The flag shall be marked with the name of the tree and the line shall be marked with the name of the tree. The flag shall be marked with the name of the tree and the line shall be marked with the name of the tree.
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