

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Cleve Hill Solar Park](#)
Subject: Cleve Hill Open Floor Hearing
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Attachments: [REDACTED]

Good morning

Cleve Hill NSIP – Open Floor hearing statement

Please find attached the statement Helen submitted to the Open Floor Hearing on 16 July 2019.

Kind regards

Alison

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You can read Helen's privacy notice here: www.helenwhately.org.uk/privacy

If you would like to find out more about what Helen is doing in Faversham and Mid Kent, you can sign up to her newsletter here: <http://eepurl.com/bFdMgr>. You can also see what Helen is doing in Westminster and the constituency by following her on Twitter [here](#) and liking her on Facebook [here](#).

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Cleve Hill – Helen Whately statement to Open Floor Hearing

Helen had hoped to attend in person today as she feels very passionately about this application. Unfortunately, she is unable to be here as she is introducing a new piece of legislation in the House of Commons on flexible working. As the timetable for Parliamentary business is set out on the actual day, she has been unable to guarantee when her Bill will be called, hence this has not enabled her enough time to get to the constituency and back to London.

Helen has therefore asked me to read out the following statement on her behalf.

“As the local MP for Faversham and Mid Kent, the proposed development of a solar plant and battery storage facility falls within my constituency. Since the idea of the project first arose, I have received a great number of letters from constituents – not only those living in the Graveney area, but also across Faversham and the wider area. Whilst the common theme has been great concern about the proposal, what is clear is that this is not simply as a result of what some might view as NIMBYism. Rather, the opposition expressed to me is the result of a complex interaction of different factors.

Today, I want to reiterate some of those factors, that I hope will be taken fully into account as this proposal is examined.

At 491.2ha, and despite being pared back from its original size, the proposal is vast, larger even than the footprint of Faversham itself. This part of my constituency comprises flat, agricultural marshland, representing a special, tranquil and beautiful landscape. The natural topography here affords far-reaching views across to Faversham and vice-versa, which are important to local people as they evoke memories, traditions and a sense of place. The unusual scale, density and directional setting of the solar panels anticipated for the site will inevitably impact negatively on this landscape and I can only emphasise the anxiety that this is causing among residents who will have no choice but to lose the views and openness that are so important to them. Whilst natural screening is proposed, clearly this won't bring back lost views and that sense of wide landscape.

Equally concerning is the unknown impact of the panel arrangement on the huge variety of birds, mammals and other species of flora and fauna. With no precedent set on the potential impacts of this arrangement, which are by their very nature likely to let only a little sunlight to the earth below, I am unclear as to what wildlife this will effectively

support. There is a growing acceptance of the need to recognise and enhance the multiple benefits of green spaces – including their importance in combating pressure on wildlife, habitats, biodiversity and geodiversity. This applies particularly where individual spaces have a greater collective value as part of a wider chain of green infrastructure. Whilst this tract of land is not protected by statutory designation, it is surrounded by land that is, and in turn provides a critical space as a wildlife refuge and stepping stone that can prevent species becoming isolated.

Recent studies have illustrated the importance of marshland landscapes such as that at Graveney as being critical to mitigating climate change as they lock away carbon. With climate change mitigation being a national priority, I am unclear to what extent the applicant has fully considered the impact of the proposal on this and I would urge the Inspector to take this into account.

There is no question that I and my constituents support the development of alternative energy sources, but some balance must be struck between the big picture benefits and the immediate, local impact. I don't feel a balance is achieved here. I also don't believe the applicant has fully considered the alternatives to Cleve Hill as a site for a solar plant, including for instance whether there are other sites – nationally – that would connect to the national grid.

The local impact of this proposal is simply unacceptable. At a time when the emphasis on localism has never been greater, it's vital that we enable planning to take place in a participatory way that gives local people a true voice in applications and I hope that the voices of my constituents will be heard and listened to during the Examination.