

Unique Reference: 20031592

Supplementary Submission by Paul Harrison to National Planning Inspectorate
in respect of the proposed Longfield Solar Array Scheme

The Longfield Solar Array Scheme as currently proposed, will be sited on what is valuable agricultural food producing land. Its food producing potential is beyond doubt. The high value of crops produced currently and over recent years on this land includes Winter Wheat & Barley, High Protein Beans, Sugar Beet, Rape & Potatoes - each and every food source makes a valuable contribution to the Nations Strategic Food resource. To put this in context, this land is capable of producing enough milling wheat to produce sufficient bread to feed a City with a population of 120,000+ for an entire year - and every year!

It is widely accepted that in excess of 50% of the UK's food is imported. This has three strategic impacts.

- a) Imported foods require expensive and the increasingly expensive use of fossil fuels to transport them to the UK market - often from across the Globe
- b) Foods imported to the UK inevitably depletes the sovereign food resources from local and regional markets of Third World Nations - many adversely affected by Climate Change and Political instability. Perversely, this diminution of local and regional food resources, demands food aid funded and supplied by wealthier so-called Advanced Nations as part of International Food Aid Programmes sponsored by the United Nations and others. This too requires expensive use of carbon-based fuels to enable such initiatives initially to be imported and processed - before being exported back to Nations in need. There is a strong moral case to be made for increasing local food sustainability by investing in food producing infrastructure.
- c) It must be held as a moral imperative that all Nations are required first and foremost to utilise its naturally occurring and locally produced resources in order to sustain its local population before importing or exporting them for narrow commercial gain

It is noted that Longfield has classified much of the land (37%) as BMV Grades 1-3a. This has been separately challenged by Professor Alder who has demonstrated that in excess of 55% of the proposed site is in fact BMV. That this land is of a premium quality, is evidenced by the fact that much of the land in question benefits from a comprehensive - almost unique underground irrigation system, resourced initially by the River Ter and stored in a strategically located system of lagoons. All of which will be entirely lost as a capital investment by Lord Rayleigh's Farms Ltd and as an invaluable agricultural food producing resource in this region in particular. No farmer would ever so much as consider installing such a capital expensive and flexible irrigation system over such an extensive acreage of low quality unproductive land.

The case to protect agricultural land from any industrial development - including solar arrays, has been made by many, including the former Secretary of State for DEFRA Sir George Eustice whose quotes on the subject are recorded on Hansard, and which clearly state developers should use marginal food producing land of a lower quality Grade 4 and below. It is the case that in recent years, in the rush to placate Government demands and achieve so-called "Green

Targets” many local authorities have simply nodded through Planning Applications for Solar Arrays without properly considering planning guidelines or the environmental and ecological consequences resulting from local and the cumulative impacts of tens of thousands of acres being designated for Solar Arrays across the UK irrespective of alternative land use priorities or uncommercial levels of solar generation.

During the recent Conservative hustings election campaign for the leadership of the Conservative Party - and election of the de facto Prime Minister of the UK, Rishi Sunak stated unequivocally he would seek to prevent good quality agricultural land from being covered by Solar Arrays. He must be held to this electoral commitment as part of his mandate to lead his party and this Nation..

It would be foolhardy at this historically volatile stage in our Nation's history, to consign this valuable agricultural food producing land to Solar Arrays for what amounts the foreseeable and indeterminate future. This is particularly so, as the 1,400 acres designated for this site will be lost to agriculture for at least and as stated by the Longfield developers “a minimum of 40 years”: or as is more likely in perpetuity. Additionally the soil contamination resulting from the installation of Solar Arrays and Construction Materials used, including the Industrial Scale Lithium Ion Battery Installation and Transformers located around the site, will potentially result in soil and groundwater pollution from a combination of persistent highly toxic chemicals, effectively preventing this land serving any alternative useful function.

No financial arrangements such as a bond held independently, has been set aside - discussed or even considered which could be available to fund the restoration of this land to its current state at the inevitable end of the solar array's commercial life. All current participants and commercial entities will have long departed the scene - and it will be the taxpayer that will be forced to fund the extensive and extremely expensive restoration work required to rehabilitate the soil by removing thousands of miles of underground pipework, wiring, concrete and tarmacadam.

Finally, and in the light of recent events - including the 2022, once in a generation drought, this irrigable food producing land must not be squandered and particularly on the basis that others may benefit fleetingly on the sole basis of financial gain. Neither must schemes such as this be funded directly or indirectly by Britain's taxpayers and hard pressed energy users. As we have witnessed in recent days £700,000 taxpayer-funded investments made by Central Government and a rather too local Essex Council to be comfortable, has been entirely lost to a “financier” and one of his companies Toucan Energy Holding Ltd., which has been wound up and placed in administration. At the flick of a switch!

Paul Harrison 16 November 2022