

Good afternoon,

I speak on behalf of local residents as ward District Councillor, but I am also speaking to you, as an expert, in Agriculture, I have farmed all my life, attended Harper Adams University, and was a National Farmers Union group secretary. I have also diversified my farm and have installed solar and battery on my green offices, plus I have 2 GSHPs. I should add, I also farm land adjacent and next to this site at Walton on Trent and live, own and protect, the scheduled monument referred to in this application.

The entire site is 472 acres with the main solar site 398 acres that is an additional 74 acres of track, 3m by 3m trench with the 50m wide corridor for the cable and access, on potentially BMV land, and worse felling of a 16m swathe of mature woodland. I have watched all my life this land improved by the dairy farmers adding manure to improve the soil, so I know far more of the entire site is BMV.

The most astounding fact is the placement of this application, one of the many reasons this application should be rejected, it is on the highest point for miles around, from the scheduled monument at Walton the land rises steeply to it, from the cottages opposite Oaklands farm the land rises upwards, the horizon, views and skyline will be gone if this is approved. It is also fundamentally flawed in that it needs to destroy 74 acres of woodland, brook, BMV land to even build and access the site, this is supported by the Natural England submission.

I note in the applicant's paperwork they believe the likelihood of sub aquifers is low in the area, well that is simply incorrect, all farms had wells historically. I put in 11 years ago eight 100m vertical GSHP loops, I hit a sub aquifer on them all at 10m deep and it was still going strong at 100m, the water so clear I put a borehole in for my drinking water. This is adjacent to this site and far lower than this whole solar site, so how will you stop diffuse pollution entering water courses, and if there is a battery fire how are you going to stop lithium-ion pollution getting into the sub aquifer I drink from?

If you ring 999 on landline or mobile anywhere from Walton to the edge of Swadlincote you go through to Staffordshire not Derbyshire emergency services, this causes huge delays, well documented with my meetings with the Police, currently none of the emergency services can access this site from Staffordshire due to weight restrictions at the Walton and Chetwynd

bridge. Time after time we see fire engines and ambulances stuck the wrong side of these bridges in emergencies, there is no mention of these issues by the applicants in their Battery Safety Management Plan.

The impact of the piling on the soil structure and land drainage is utterly disregarded. These are underground field drainage systems of pipes which remove excess soil water and control the water table. Land does not store or lie fallow for 40 years when land drains are smashed, water runs from the panels onto the ground leaching nutrients from the soil. Manure is not being added back to the soil to increase the organic matter content. The plans show every solar array will have the steel supports pile driven in at 2m deep, this destroys the existing land drains. The DEMP is not fit for purpose as it shows they plan to cut the cables at 1.1m deep in 40 years' time leaving them in situ, this is not decommissioning the land, it is merely paying lip service to the idea of decommissioning. The land will be **incapable** of returning to BMV or any agricultural use as it is no longer drained, new drains are put in at 1.1m deep, not possible with cables in place. If under the DEMP they dig out the cables, then they render the last 40 years fallow a waste of time. This simply cannot be mitigated and is clearly not understood.

A further application for a BESS was validated last Friday adjacent to the track and brook at Fairfield's Farm, this adds to the cumulative effect of this application, the small Walton tenant farmer is now faced with compulsory purchase from this application, and a BESS on a steep slope next to the brook cutting them from the only thing they own a wood which the local guides and scouts use for camping, this family farm will become unviable.

There are now 3 BESS applications around this site, another was given permission last year and Haunton's 346 acres solar is being built now. A solar application is expected on the Eon land at Drakelow after pre application talks – the right place on brownfield employment land. All this adds to a significant urbanising effect, the mitigation proposals for all these applications form enclosed corridors of 4m high hedgerows, further visually detaching the farmland from its surroundings, adversely affecting the intrinsic interest and beauty of the Countryside. The cumulative impact from this onslaught of applications with the concentrated and industrial form will appear incongruous within its predominantly rural landscape, a

very significant urbanising affect and a coalescence of many villages with the urban environment.

The Historic England submission states clearly the harm to the setting and interconnectivity of multiple heritage assets for 5 villages and a huge area. The proposal of plastic netting for over 10 years on industrial fencing leading to St Marys Church at Coton in the Elms to prevent glint and glare is frankly ridiculous!

I also note close investigation is needed on the applicants glint and glare documents which have possibly not considered the daily regular road use by horse riders, agricultural vehicles and lorries who sit far higher on the road than car users, these panels sit on very high ground.

Not one document discusses the management of the new hedges to be planted to mitigate the 11,000 metres of fencing, Ditches need pulling or emptying every 8 years and hedgecutting annually to prevent blackthorn taking over and blocking them which causes localised flooding, in year 4 you remove the plastic hedge protectors, they do not degrade and prevent the bases of hedges filling out, year 10 you lay the hedges to thicken them and need to shape them trimming both sides as they grow. Most importantly for the first few years you remove the weed, cleavers annually, which smother new hedges and kills them, I would urge the Planning Inspector to visit the site in January, hedges have no leaves for 5/6 months of the year and mitigate nothing! A hedgecutter can only reach across to put a top on a hedge at 3m, far less if there is a ditch, if you just plant and let them go in 40 years they will be thin trees forming corridors hanging over roads, enclosing them. It takes 15 plus years to get a hedge, thick, properly managed so realistically to get them to 4m high it is 25 years, this is a lifetime of no mitigation for this industrial structure.

There is nothing in the PINS papers or DEMP about the ongoing management of these hedges, farmers and landowners comply with the DEFRA legislation and best practice why not the applicants?

Coton road out of Walton in heavy rain floods by Walton Hill Farm and further on by point 4 of your suggested site location, the road spent 8 months under water this winter. We had 1 ft of rain between Christmas Day and May 1st, the water runs off Oaklands Farm the highest point, often

onto the road, into ditches and Council drains which end up on local farms, ending up in the river Trent at Walton. This increased rainfall is now becoming the norm and is already flooding roads, if you smash all the land drains, no SuDS are proposed, then local roads and villages will flood further, desktop surveys are pointless, you must know the land and see it for yourself.

Traffic is an issue in this area, we sit now in Staffordshire to discuss a South Derbyshire application, I find that very disappointing. The traffic plans for this application are poor, a whim and a hope the new Walton bypass is built after 20 years and then take out an additional 74 acres to build a so called 40 plus year temporary track. If the new bypass is not built the traffic for this site will come through Stapenhill and more likely cut through Coton Park and Castle Gresley from the A444, which is at breaking point with the new distribution center at Cadley Hill. There was zero consultation of this route, that seems very undemocratic and against process.

In the last 8 weeks, I received 6 letters from Solar and Bess firms, in addition, I received numerous un-solicited phone calls and even a cold call visit, all offering me £1,500/acre to put my farm into a solar or Bess. This makes a mockery of the site assessment and the weight it has been afforded.

The District Council has called an Ecological emergency, and this is not mentioned by any document on PINS. Planning appeals have shown 40 years is a significant period in people's lives, many of the mitigations will not take effect for 25 years. The staff who work at Oaklands farm are fully aware and have openly stated the dairy farm will cease. It is fact that sheep never graze solar sites because the sheep farmers must pay for any damage to the arrays and sheep rub and chew, any farmer knows that!

Farmers have just had the wettest year on record, crop yields are low this year, there is a war in Ukraine, global yields are down, you cannot replace the best and most versatile agricultural land, this land is a finite commodity and should be protected.

Thank you.