

RE: Application by Oaklands Farm Solar Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Oaklands Farm Solar Park

Interested Party Reference number: **20048433**

Submission for Deadline 5

Thank you for holding the useful meeting at Branston Golf & Country Club, DE14 3DP on Tuesday 22nd October 2024.

I took note of all that was said at the meeting and I would like to make comments on these.

Generally I am not objecting to any suitably sited solar and wind power generation. In this proposal I am more concerned about the disruption during construction. I will be long gone when the site becomes unusable in 40 years time !

1. Site suitability.

As the proposed site is excellent productive farmland as it was stressed and it would be against current policy advocating agricultural self-sufficiency and the protection of the natural environment and wildlife not being disturbed.

We lost many hundreds of Acres with the establishment of the 'National Forest' (I approved of this) which contributes to the removal of CO2. You will have noticed how well the trees have grown since they were planted illustrating just how good the farmland is around here. We do not want to lose any more of this farmland since they are not making any more!!

Careful attention should be given to the orientation of some of the proposed fields, their slope directions and close proximity of the National Forest trees and hence not being suitable for panels due to self shadowing especially in the winter months (Note that on reading the first Lullington Solar farm application, I commented to the proposers that half the fields sloped in the wrong direction - the second proposal removed these!).

As per [REDACTED] comments re the aquifer in the Trent Valley are, should there be a fire, say in the battery storage units, and contamination occurs, the site could permanently contaminate this. Water from this aquifer is used by the residents and the Brewing Industry.

2. Access to site for construction vehicles / disruption

Various routes have been suggested, none of which is entirely suitable for heavy vehicles. I comment below on certain aspects regarding this:
So how are the lorries going to access the site:

FROM A38 North or Southbound

No access via Alrewas to Tamworth Road A513 (as Tame Bridge has width and weight restrictions),

No access from Barton Turn on Station Road due to no access over Walton Bridge due to width and weight restrictions. (AND the fact that the long awaited NEW Walton Bridge has not been built)

So only route is up or down to Burton (Branston) junction A5121.

No access through Branston B5128 due to width and weight restrictions on Railway Bridge so only access is A5121 Wellington Road and thence through congested Burton Town centre and across the Old Bridge (A511) or the New (A444) New bridges over the Trent. These will lead on to Stapenhill's congested roads to either Drakelow but then no access through the narrow roads in Walton on Trent to 'Lads Grave' Crossroads on the Coton Road and site.

Or left along Rosliston Road South towards Rosliston which is again narrow roads and left on the narrow Catton Road which has 's' bends and the site.

FROM TAMWORTH ON A513

Height restrictions on Railway Bridge at Croxall then narrow lanes from Catton Road and thence Lad's Grave site

FROM A42/M42. Two routes:

one via A444 to Acresford (A444) then through already dangerous congestion in Overseal then on through to Stapenhill and route as previous,

Or A42/M42 to Acresford (A444) but left turn through Grangewood and thence Coton via various narrow sharp bends and 's' bends. So on into Coton where there is a weight restriction on Chapel Street so sharp 90 deg. left turn down Mill Street then right again over a Pessall Brook bridge up Church Street then access to site at 'Lad's Grave'

Basically NOT an easy site to reach from any main road

2.1 Road Damage from heavy and frequent vehicles:

The A444 is prone to collapse into sink holes from the now disused mines being below the road. The same applies for the lane between Coton in the Elms and 'Lad's Grave' crossroads, adjacent to the proposed site. Both of these sites have already suffered collapses. There is also the weak bridge over the Pessall Brook in Coton in the Elms village centre which must be considered.

2.2 Other Road users:

It was pointed out by a contributor from Overseal that there was already too much heavy traffic on the A444, some of which is only just getting through the narrow sections in the centre of the village, This is causing potential risk to pedestrians using the footpaths and as a consequence, results in extra cars being on the road transporting children to and from school instead of them walking.

The access route from the A444 through Coton in the Elms is even worse as none of it is what we would call a 'wide road' and has numerous narrow sections and tight 's' bends and left turns especially near to the Bubble Inn within the Village itself Church Street does not have continuous footpaths and the road has to be crossed to be on one. Vehicles exceeding the speed restriction is a frequent occurrence. We also have buses using Church Street.

It was mentioned that there is a risk to life to people riding Horses throughout our area of the National Forest. We must also include other road uses too:

In the summer time we have frequent pelotons of up to 40 cyclists taking advantage of our relatively flat roads and beautiful countryside.

We also have numerous pedestrians usually with children and dogs and horses.

At certain times of the year we have visits of numerous motorbikes and annual marches coming from the National Memorial Arboretum visiting the Russell Aston XXXXXXXXXX Memorial which is in in Coton Churchyard.

Already we have a seriously high risk of a serious accident occurring involving many such road users due to certain driver's total disregard of blind corners and crossroads. Some lorry and van drivers in a hurry already do the same.

We are in the National Forest where many people visit to appreciate the benefits of acres of forest and peace and quiet. All this disruption will not just be very disruptive to the locals but also give the impression to visitors that this is not a place to revisit

2.2 Noise/vibration from piling

Some of the time there will be the need to drive piles into the ground for the support frame - clearly this will disturb the people living in the locality and in Coton in the Elms, Walton on Trent and Rosliston. There is also a distinct possibility that such vibration might cause ground disturbance which might also result in more Sink Holes into the myriad of disused mine workings below.

3. Alternative energy generation

It was mentioned about the use of wind turbines in the area which would not destroy the farmland but would still cause problems when accessing the site during construction. These can be operational 24hrs a day as opposed to the solar alternative but it is suggested that bird strikes are a big problem to birds of prey of which we have many including the return of the Red Kites.

The use of water power from the River Trent was also suggested but, although successful in small sites would not be considered here.

It is likely that Solar, and wind power generation will be superseded in the near future with tidal generators and even local nuclear power production.

4. Alternative sites for Solar Power generation.

I think that many people are dismayed / angry that we should be destroying excellent farm land for ever when there is no effort being made to insist on solar panels being fitted to every new house at the building stage (if roof directions are suitable). The acres of roof on the new warehousing on the A38 and off the A444 with no such solar generation installed is unforgivable. No or not many houses on the new Drakelow Power Station sites have panels either. There is no excuse that there is no access to the grid as there are sufficient pylons and cabling from the existing grid distribution point near to the old Drakelow Power Station site near to the A38.

Also we have many 100's of acres of disused gravel pits, totally unsuitable for any other use, at Alrewas and Barton under Needwood

5. Conclusion

Great idea - wrong place!