

Steve Mills notes for Open meeting regarding Oaklands Solar Power Station at Branston Golf Club on 22nd October 2024

Introduction: 14 year resident of Coton in the Elms. A layman with 27 years experience in the Fire Service and hopefully a modicum of common sense.

In favour of renewable energy and solar, wind and especially tidal

I have solar panels on my home

Since March 2023

- 1, Have produced 10,500kWh of electricity
- 2, Exported 6400kWh of electricity into the grid (60% of the production)
- 3, Reduced CO2 emissions by over 10 tonnes

HOWEVER

I have deep reservations about the proposed Solar Power station planned at Oaklands Farm

1, The road infrastructure in this area is pretty well unsuitable for the current levels of traffic which would be exacerbated by the type and amount of traffic needed to build this large scale development.

We already have poor road surfaces and heavy lorries using the lanes. This will only get worse with this proposal.

2, I enjoy the benefits of being in a rural location, both for my mental and physical health. Agricultural land is, in my opinion, best suited for farming and not industry. As the population grows we will need to have more food security and rely less on imports. Taking away farmland like this proposal does, not only reduces the nations capacity to produce food but also denies farmers a livelihood. I am also dismayed at the loss of wildlife habitat for birds, fauna and flora both during construction and when built.

3, The 40 year timescale of this project indicates to me that the land will be taken out of agricultural use for far to long. Projections of restoring it after that time are purely fantasy. Realistically it could never be restored. In any case, who can project what development will come along in that time to negate the need for this installation. Certainly, the widespread installation of solar panels on homes and industry buildings would call into question the validity of this project.

4, It is current government policy to use brownfield sites and roof top locations in preference to farmland for solar power production. The Oaklands Farm proposal goes against this policy. In this area we have several such sites such as the former power stations at Drakelow and Willington and the River Trent has many such former power station sites all along its banks. These of course are directly connected to the power grid. There are also old airfield sites which are far more suitable than Oaklands Farm.

5, I am concerned about the potential for pollution of the local environment due to the need to have a large amount of Lion batteries stored around the proposed site along with toxic chemicals in the panels themselves. As we already know, these can be a significant pollution hazard especially in the event of a fire. As an experienced fire officer of 27 years I am also concerned about provision for the local Fire Service to attend and deal with potential major incidents at the site.

6, A well known national charity (CPRE) have produced an excellent report to show that we, as a nation should be encouraging and legislating for solar panels to be fitted on rooftops rather than on farmland. (<https://www.cpre.org.uk/about-us/cpre-media/rooftops-can-provide-over-half-our-solar-energy-targets-report-shows/>) Their report reveals that half of the nations solar output could be achieved in this way. There are any number of large warehouses and other buildings being built around the country.....Each new home should be fitted with them.....ideal

places to install solar panels. In this way, not only is there the direct link to the national grid for any surplus to be fed but also that the consumer benefits from installations on their property

I am also surprised that we as a nation are not utilising the greatest regular natural asset we have to produce power, namely the diurnal tides around our coast.

7, I have heard nothing in the proposals about the fiscal viability of this proposal. Taking into account that I do not expect to pay off the investment on my rooftop panels for a considerable time I am left wondering how long it would take for this proposed investment at Oaklands to turn a profit and who is funding the project? The Government want cheaper energy for everyone but to my way of thinking, any solar power station must aim to return a profit as quickly as possible which would inevitably lead to higher prices being charged to the consumer.

In short, While I sincerely advocate the wider use of renewable energy this proposal is certainly the right thing in the wrong place for the wrong reasons. It would cause long term disruption in the locality and destroy the beauty of the rural aspect of this area. It will be an eyesore and blot on this rural landscape for many years to come if allowed to proceed.

Agricultural land for farming

Solar power stations should be sited in more appropriate sites

Solar panels should be more widely placed on rooftops

Thank you.