

From: [Jim Blackwell](#)
To: [Oaklands Farm Solar](#)
Subject: Re: Oaklands Farm Solar Project Deadline 5 NSIP.
Date: 31 October 2024 12:13:23

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Dear Mr Cowperthwaite,

My Registration Number 20047785

Following my email yesterday the 30th October, I am aware that there is probably every chance that this application will be granted.

If so would you ensure that the specification and schedule of work addresses the concerns expressed by Councillor Wheelton, and that a fund/bond is set up, properly funded, to enable the careful dismantling and clearing of the site, the reinstatement of the land back to its present agricultural state and to deal with any pollution issues. Although any pollution should have been cleared up during the life of the solar farm.

I used to work for the [REDACTED] Board of Finance and was responsible for administering the Board's investment land. We had one piece of land used for coal stocking that was returned by the NCB under the lease agreement. A predecessor had accepted a small amount of money for the clean up, which was inadequate. Coal stocking is a very different matter from a solar array and battery storage, but there is legislation that the polluter has to pay for clean up.

Who is to say what will happen in 40 years time and bankrupt entities cannot clean up, so a fund should be set up to be accessible by public authorities with local input.

With kind regards

James Blackwell

From: Jim Blackwell
Sent: 30 October 2024 16:55
To: OaklandsFarmSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk
<OaklandsFarmSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: Oaklands Farm Solar Project Deadline 5 NSIP.

Dear Mr. Cowperthwaite,

Registration No. 20047785

Thank you for agreeing to the Open Floor meeting on Tuesday 22 October 2024 at

Branston Golf Club, which I attended and "had my say". I am still opposed to the proposal.

I agree with the submission from Councillor Amy Wheelton and the locality owes her a great deal for her research and commitment in opposing Oaklands Solar Farm.

During the meeting I heard nothing to mitigate the concerns of the occupants of the two small adjacent cottages Pennywort Cottage and Oakfield Cottage. Such "collateral damage" is completely unacceptable. The noise of piling for those houses and others close by and continuing disturbance should not be allowed. They will be denied the peaceful enjoyment of their homes, to which we are all entitled.

Nor is there any variation to the depth of the cabling, its removal at the end of the project's life, the possibility of toxins running into aquifers close by, nor restoration of the land at the scheme's end. There is loss of 74 acres of woodland for an access to the site all this in the middle of the National Forest. The following extract has been ignored by the applicant

“The Department for Energy Security & Net Zero National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)

Presented to the Houses of Parliament pursuant to section 9(8) of the Planning Act 2008 November 2023

2.10.33 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is the only approved system for grading agricultural quality in England and Wales and, if necessary, field surveys should be used to establish the ALC grades in accordance with the current, or any successor to it, grading criteria⁸⁶ and identify the soil types to inform soil management at the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases in line with the Defra Construction Code.⁸⁷

2.10.34 Applicants are encouraged to develop and implement a Soil Resources and Management Plan which could help to use and manage soils sustainably and minimise adverse impacts on soil health and potential land contamination. This should be in line with the ambition set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan to bring at least 40% of England's agricultural soils into sustainable management by 2028 and increase this up to 60% by 2030.

2.10.81 Where soil stripping occurs, topsoil and subsoil should be stripped, stored, and replaced separately to minimise soil damage and to provide optimal conditions for site restoration. Further details on minimising impacts on soil and soil handling are above at paragraphs 2.10.33 and 2.10.34.”

Following on from this how is the woodland to be restored? That and the removal of the solar panels and associated groundwork, the removal of the battery storage

containers and the possible removal of underground cabling is all quite a cost. Also the underground cabling if it remains at 0.8m will foul ploughs which operate at 1.1m.

There is nothing in the application about funding for the “clean up”. If there is pollution the polluter pays, and there needs to be a fund or a bond established sufficient to restore the land, woods and deal with any pollution, otherwise it will be left to the public purse. And this should be an effective amount, not a token.

I have drawn partly from a Research Briefing "Planning For Solar Farms" dated 20 May 2024 by Felicia Rankl which is lodged in the House of Commons library.

Governments have laid down guidelines for its target for the generation of solar energy, but it has not got beyond “seeking the widespread deployment of rooftop solar on commercial and industrial properties and the large-scale deployment of ground-mounted solar on brownfield, industrial, and low- and medium-grade agricultural land”. Government continues to say that BMV land should be avoided, but based on current research too much BMV land grades 1,2 and 3 is being used. Based on existing projects 0.1% of BMV is being used, but to achieve the government’s target of 70GW by 2035, that will scale up to between 0.5% and 0.7% of productive land. If between 125,000 and 175,000 hectares of land are lost at a yield of 7.87 tons (8 tonnes DEFRA figures for 2015-20) per acre that will equate to between 983,750 and 1,377,250 tons. The total land in wheat production in 2021/2 was 1.79million hectares, producing nearly 14 million tons.

There is far too little roof top solar, particularly on tall warehouse type structures and new housing. A drive north along the A38 from the Walton and Barton under Needwood junction, to the Clay Mills junction north of Burton upon Trent will show not a single solar panel on new industrial buildings and a new housing estate.

Lanes in and around Walton on Trent, Rosliston and Coton-in-the-Elms are very narrow and a massive increase in HGV use will be horrendous. Access is poor the two routes from Burton upon Trent through Stapenhill (route 6) and the other from the A444 skirting Netherseal and through Coton-in-the-Elms (route 8) will be used (because the new Walton bypass is certainly not going to be built in time). As a driver I would use the quieter route 8, which will impact Coton-in-the-Elms badly. I am a past cyclist. Roads around here are bad enough without many more HGVs. Footpaths between settlements are non-existent and many in the villages are narrow. Pedestrians and children, there is a primary school in each of Rosliston, Walton and Coton-in-the-Elms, can do without more traffic.

There is insufficient regulatory protection for the public. Guidelines are not enough. The result is a sort of “Wild West” approach by companies offering incentives to all and sundry with no regard to the quality of land being used. The only criteria companies use is the proximity of a grid connection. Over half of the best grades 1

and 2 land and 44% of grade three has easy access to the grid, and just a third of grade 4. Companies have plenty of resources, and rely on small communities having little power.

It is doubtful that there would be the level of opposition to this proposal if 63% of the project was not BMV land. On top of that we have a poor specification and schedule of work, with little or no provision for the aftermath when the scheme is wound up.

Add to this are five applications for BESS sites. One has up to 500 containers, the others about 200/250 each. They are like bees to honey, let us say between 1,300 to 1,500 in total, all to be transported using narrow country lanes coming on the back of this proposal. These additions to the locality are unwelcome and are going to spell disaster to the small communities where they will be placed.

With kind regards

James Blackwell