

I object to this proposal.

Non-Technical Summary

It is out of scale to its environment and landscape, and also to the local towns and villages. The applicant's motive is profit, and they will be selling the site on, if approved, to a different organisation to run. There is no issue with a solar farm of moderate size within this landscape, but not for one of this size and scale, even with the Stage 2 and Stage 3 mitigations. The reduction from 852 to 419 hectares (the 'old trick' of applying for too much, and then seeing what the company can 'get away with') still leaves a massive solar farm area, way too big for the surrounding area, and highly inappropriate for the site. It is not sympathetic to the countryside, the local area, people or wildlife, due to its size. If approved, mitigation and enhancement areas should be increased significantly.

Government policy is incoherent. For example, large-scale applications are being made when there is no requirement to put solar panels on new-builds' roofs. PM Liz Truss said solar panels are 'ugly and a blight on the landscape' and that 'farmers should get back to growing fruit and veg.'

2.1.2 considers 'no development'. Whilst not generating electricity, the site would be generating food. Both are required, but the consideration here is binary, whilst it is more appropriate to consider both needs separately. Solar panels can be sited elsewhere, e.g. roofs or along the railway embankment, but the high-grade farmland cannot be replaced. The same comment applies to 4.3.3.

2.2.1d is incorrect. The Barnack Hills and Holes SSSI is, for example, a site within a couple of miles of the edge of the site. The site will impact significantly on wildlife, including birds, which overfly and travel between sites.

2.2.1 s States that the development avoids the use of large areas of BMV land, when it actually does entirely the opposite, using a vast area of good quality agricultural land. Who carried out the survey (4.8.2)? This is not stated, and therefore may be an opinion, or a survey commissioned by the company making the application. The majority of land is graded as 3b, but a second opinion should be sought on this grading, as a simple view of these fields suggests 2 or 3a as more appropriate, with little at 3b.

2.2.1 k is not a good reason to site the farm at this place. The number of people living nearby is irrelevant, and it would seem the benefit to the application is that there will be fewer objections because of this.

2.2.4 All single-form renewables fail to generate under certain conditions. Why have alternatives, or a mix, not been considered when the conditions are, apparently so good, for example, in connecting to the sub-station?

2.2.7 Solar is not the best, because this application does not adequately consider the loss of valuable, good-grade agricultural land. Grade 2 land has been removed at Stage 2, but further consideration should be given to the remaining fields.

The Stage 2 and Stage 3 mitigations and removals are appreciated, but do not go nearly far enough.

2.5.2 What consideration has been made for the removal of the panels, and the return of land to agriculture, should the venture fail, or the farm come to the end of its life? 2.17 Does not give full consideration. For example, how will this be funded, particularly if the company goes into administration at the time.

2.11.1 10m and 15m set-backs are not enough. These should be increased to 12m and 20m

2.11.2 How far will panels be set back from rights of way?

2.11.13 what will happen to the farming of other arable fields - the 'majority' are given, but not others.

2.12.1 Deer fence will stop various forms of wildlife accessing the site. The site is meant to be receptive to the current wildlife population, but this will deeply harm larger wildlife. Is the fence to stop humans or animals? If animals, why? The deer fence is not needed. This is partially addressed in 4.3.9

2.14.1 I question the 71% biodiversity net gain. Against what figure? Is this compared to, for example, a field of wheat (monoculture)? If so, it is an unreasonable figure to include, and seems unlikely in all circumstances. Is it a hopeful or exaggerated figure?

4.3.6 does not fully consider that the settings of these features will be ruined.

Environmental Statement (comments similar to those above)

Overall, this is the industrialisation of the countryside for the purposes of providing energy. In doing so, the capacity to provide food is lost. A balance should be found, but this is too large, and destroys too much agricultural capacity, for it to be a sensible and tenable option. There is too much impact upon the locality, and the application should be refused.