

Unique Reference: 20035512

Braceborough and Wilsthorpe Parish Council written submission from Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) and Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2)

(Braceborough and Wilsthorpe Parish Council are representing the views of our Parishioners)

ISH1

Proposed output of generating station and connection to Ryhall substation

With regards to the solar farm's connection to the existing substation at Ryhall, (which is the sole reason the applicant had chosen this location) the applicant has insisted all along that the solar farm will produce an installed capacity 350 megawatts (not actual yield) however Network Rail's capacity at the Ryhall sub station is a maximum 240 megawatts. The sub-station could be upgraded now or at a later date, but it will cost the applicant over £3m to do, which they say is not commercially viable. This fact undermines the whole purpose of the applicant's base assumption of producing an installed 350 megawatts of power. The applicant has not included Lithium battery storage to store the additional energy produced in their revised application, so any additional energy will not be captured and fed into the grid. The application by Longfield solar farm (referenced by the applicant on many occasions) states that Lithium storage is critical to achieving the energy output detailed in their application. This brings up the question of overplanting. If the development cannot deliver the amount of energy it has promised, then it should scale back its proposal which would mean that overplanting would not be necessary and that less land would be required.

Period of operation

The applicant talks about an initial period of 40 years; this creates complete uncertainty for future generations as the application has no time limit. Generally, the life of a solar panel is 20 - 25 years, there was no commitment forthcoming from the applicant to maintain and replace the solar panels at correct regular intervals thus ensuring maximum output. The output of the panels will reduce as they get older, the applicant's response to this was a vague reference to the fact that technology will improve in the coming years.

Proposed decommissioning

There is no bond in place to cover decommissioning and no plan to ensure that this happens. Who has responsibility for decommissioning the solar farm If the company in charge at that time is wound up? There must be a guarantee in place at the outset.

Proposed photovoltaic arrays/panels

530000 Panels (over half a million) are to be deployed. All we know is that the panels will be mounted and at a height of 3.3 metres. There is no layout of where and how these panels will be situated or of their orientation. The positioning should be shown already.

Proposed on-site substation

The applicant's proposal for this is for it to be in field 19 and within the construction compound. Positioning is not known, (other than that it will be near to Glen Close), nor are the dimensions of the substation, its screening or other details. These details should be available.

Details of solar stations and other equipment

As mentioned, there are no details of positioning of solar panels or of any other equipment. i.e. sizes and positions of storage containers for solar station inverters, transformers, switch gears. Storage containers for various electrical equipment. There is no plan of these to allow for assessing visual impact. These details should be available

Proposed cable routes.

There is still no agreement between the applicant and Network Rail on the cabling route to connect the solar farm to the Ryhall sub-station. This may not be agreed or even near agreement with Network Rail by the end of the examination process. There are three routes proposed by the applicant. Only one is a single cable route. There may be a need to route these cables through multiple locations, which would obviously cost more money for the applicant and create further upheaval and uncertainty to the residents of Essendine.

Proposed fencing, cameras, lighting, et cetera.

Insurance companies insist on strong security fencing or they will not agree to insurance. This has not been considered or factored into the applicant's proposal, so we do not know what the security fencing will ultimately look like. The spacing of lighting parameters is not shown on the plans, nor are the security camera positions. The applicant's response is that these will be in the detailed design.

Why at this stage of the process are they not available?

Proposed construction phasing.

The applicant stated that the construction would be done in one go, i.e. two years plus with no gaps in between construction. However, they are unable to say when and where they will start and in which areas they will move into. There is no construction process, and the applicant is still committed to having up to 400 workers a day on-site working 7am-7pm Monday to Saturday. The result of this will be a continuous onslaught on the local community.

Other matters

Overall, the main concern is that the applicant wants flexibility in how they develop everything, and this has come in for serious criticism from all of the local council bodies and interested parties. There are no detailed plans on anything, which at this stage of the examination process beggars belief!

Community benefits

Rutland County Council feel that a relevant community package should be forthcoming from the applicant should the application be successful and would welcome a conversation with the applicant regarding this. The applicant said that a community package would not be forthcoming, which we feel is consistent with the applicant's disregard for the local community.

Site selection and alternatives

The applicant has selected the wrong siting for this development. Not only because of the major loss of arable land, extreme environmental damage in all areas and destroying a wonderful landscape, but because they never considered one fundamental major issue. The Ryhall substation cannot accommodate fully the power they purport to generate from the solar farm.

ISH2

Other landscaping and visual matters

The local authorities are conducting their own assessment of the visual impact, however the Parishes point of view is broadly in line with theirs, in as much as the applicant's study area is inadequate. There is potential for concerns arising on the landscape over the whole development. Selection by the applicant of the receptor groups and their photography does not show the whole picture. It comes back to the fact that there is no detail in the applicant's submission. The local authority's assessment will no doubt be thorough.

Ecology and biodiversity

The applicant's biodiversity net gain figure is only 10%, not the higher metric that the government states. The applicant said they cannot commit to a higher number. The result will be no significant biodiversity gain, and over-all it will be a biodiversity net loss.

The effect on BMV land

We will be losing approximately 55% of BMV with this development, just when we need to be growing our own food as much as possible, we have this farming land now, why destroy it! The applicant has said that the impact on agricultural land is reversible. This will be very difficult because of the toxins that will leach into the ground from poorly maintained and damaged solar panels, contaminating the soil with lead, cadmium etc.

Surface water run-off and flood prevention

This has not been addressed or considered properly by the applicant and they need to answer the searching questions posed to them by the experts.

Socio-economic

No benefits whatsoever to the local community, leisure, financial or otherwise.

Health and wellbeing

Parishioners have voiced their concerns about their own health and wellbeing during construction and when the solar farm becomes operational. The constant rush of construction traffic and seeing the destruction of this wonderful countryside unfold daily before their eyes has created a climate of creeping stress and anxiety.

And this is not just about people, because once constructed noise pollution from the many containers and substations, combined with light pollution will have a cumulative effect on humans and the local wildlife causing stress and anxiety. Worryingly, this is dismissed by the applicant as having no significant effects! Mental health issues have a direct impact on physical health. Increased amount of light at night lowers levels of melatonin resulting in sleep deprivation, fatigue, headache, stress, anxiety and other health problems. Combine the effect of noise and high pollution and the mental health and wellbeing of residents increases. These truly concerning issues, are dismissed as unimportant by the applicant. Going forward a few years, I fear for the future health and mental wellbeing of the people in the local area.

Effects on public rights of way

See health and wellbeing.

David Kentish – Chair Braceborough and Wilsthorpe Parish Council