

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
3-8 Whitehall Place
London
SW1A 2AW

15th April 2024

Dear Sirs

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the responses to the Secretary of State's recent consultation. I respond on behalf of myself and my husband, we are local residents identified in this process as affected persons – for your information our unique Reference nos. MPSP-AFP156 and MPSP-AFP155.

I have been fully engaged in this process throughout the various consultation phases and the examination undertaken last summer/autumn.

I make the following comments:

1. Cabling Route

- 1.1 The actual cable routing is a critical aspect of the project – the choice of route will mean materially different impacts to the local communities, including those living in Essendine who are directly affected by Compulsory Acquisition, local residents and those who use the road network with the A6121 running through Essendine being an important connecting road between Bourne, Stamford and the surrounding villages.
- 1.2 It is therefore very concerning that at this late stage in the planning decision making process this issue is still not resolved and the SoS does not have the full details on which to make a decision on the proposed scheme.
- 1.3 Regardless of which cabling route is taken if the scheme is given the go ahead there will be significant street works across the site to build the infrastructure.
- 1.4 These will likely vary depending on the cabling route. Outline traffic management plans show significant road closures with very long diversions in place for some routes – this is particularly so at the cross-roads of the B1176 and Carlby High St. This is an important route for local traffic and the diversions will be long and likely direct traffic along the A6121 through Essendine. The knock-on impact could be even more significant if, Essendine, is chosen as the cabling route particularly if there is any crossover in terms of timing with street works in Essendine when diversions are sending vehicles through the village.
- 1.5 Broadening the cabling discussion slightly. it is my understanding that the street works on the B1176 are to enable:
 - 1.6 the construction of 3 secondary compounds, 2 either side of the B1176 near to field 2 and the other adjacent to field 4, these compounds are no more than 700m apart and looking at the plans it suggests that the compound at field 4 just supports the solar panels in this field. Other fields are seemingly supported by the compounds near field 2. This begs the question as to why 3 compounds are needed in such close proximity.

1.7 the closure at the crossroads of B1176 & Carlby High St appears to be to enable a cabling route from the solar panels in field 4 only into field 5 – this is a relatively small area of solar and the disruption to the road network at the cross roads seems disproportionate.

1.8 The consequence of both of the above points will be huge disruption to the daily lives of us as an affected person, our neighbours and the wider community who use this important route daily.

1.9 The applicant did not, in my opinion, fully address a question regarding the need for all 3 of these secondary compounds during the PI examination process.

2.0 Highways Side Agreement

2.1 Given the impact the scheme will have on the road network and in turn on all road users it is of concern that the three parties, Applicant, RCC and LCC, do not yet seem to be aligned and the expectation being offered by the Applicant is falling short of that sought by the two county councils.

2.2 Our property is located very close to the county boundary of Lincolnshire and Rutland and on occasion it takes time for issues to be resolved as it is necessary to identify which highways authority is responsible. This re-enforces how important it is that both highways' authorities are 'fully' bought into the Highways Agreements which are still to be agreed.

2.3 Studying the responses it suggests that there is still some way to go to reach agreement.

2.4 With such a large scheme in close proximity to so many rural villages, market towns and communities with a network of well used country roads and lanes well planned traffic management will be essential if this scheme were to be approved. Surely the side agreements must be agreed between all parties before consent can be considered.

3.0 Community Benefit Fund (CBF)

3.1 I was surprised to note the Applicant introduced the subject of a Community Benefit Fund in its response to the SoS's questions despite this not being one of the questions.

3.2 It is my understanding that Community Benefit Payments cannot be taken into account in the planning balance and I would therefore request that the SoS does not take this into consideration in her decision-making process.

3.6 As a resident, I note what is proposed by the applicant and this would in no way compensate us for:

- Blighted properties
- Compulsory Acquisition
- Proximity and visibility of solar arrays to residential properties
- Proximity of sub-station, primary & secondary compounds to residential properties
- Increased noise throughout the life of the scheme but particularly during construction

- Glint & Glare with no mitigation where properties are identified as moderately affected
- Huge disruption due to road closures, traffic measures, impractical diversions routes, significant increases in traffic volume
- Dramatic changes to the landscape from a rural to an industrial landscape for a scheme which is sub-optimal
- Loss of recreation and residential amenity
- Absolutely no perceived meaningful community benefit

Yours Faithfully

Mrs Helen L Woolley (BSc Hons) and Mr Geoff W Woolley