

Observations from the Preliminary Hearing

Site Visit

I would hope that the InspAuth took note of the wealth of crops readily visible during their time in the area, it is likely that the area will be largely harvested during subsequent visits, giving a somewhat bleak appearance as fields overwinter.

I note that WLDC suggested site visit includes Kexby Lane. This should include the longer view from the East side of the proposed site, close to 'Woodside' and further up the rise. Looking to the West, North of the road, in addition to being an area which has flooded in recent memory, with floodwater extending to the homes immediately adjacent, the proposal as currently planned will add a potential glare risk to traffic heading towards Gainsborough, particularly in winter when the sun is lowest and the road most treacherous. The inclusion of the land will block currently open views between two small communities while adding relatively little to the overall output, and in the short term add to traffic congestion on the road with its additional access requirement.

From the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP), Policy S16

"However, any such proposals should take all reasonable opportunities to mitigate any harm arising from such proposals, and take care to select not only appropriate locations for such facilities, but also design solutions (see Policy S53) which minimises harm arising."

Design of Proposal.

The applicant's design appears to be purely around maximising coverage and thus potential profit.

CLLP 'Design and Amenity'

"9.0.4. Central Lincolnshire is made up of many locally distinctive places including high streets, market squares, industrial estates, urban neighbourhoods, rural villages, historic environments and landscapes, which, in combination with a variety of natural forms and features, contribute to the rich and varied character. The scale of Central Lincolnshire means that villages vary greatly from one another, as do larger settlements due to the differing roles and periods of growth experienced in our settlements. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan is a strategic document and so is not the appropriate mechanism to undertake a detailed assessment of the character and heritage of every settlement, instead the Local Plan should provide a framework for applicants, decision makers and communities to undertake such assessments and deliver the right responses for the local context.

9.0.5. All development must make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the environment within which it is located, having regard to its local context, without harming the amenity experienced by neighbours."

CLLP S52

"d) Not result in the visual or physical coalescence with any neighbouring settlement nor ribbon development;"

Biodiversity Net Gain

While the applicant makes claims for net-gain it should be noted that these are unproven and that CLLP Policy S66 concludes;

“Ongoing management of any new or improved onsite and offsite habitats, together with monitoring and reporting, will need to be planned and funded for 30 years after completion of a development.”

Conclusion.

I can only echo what many others have said in their submissions, many passionately.

While Solar should be part of the UK energy supply mix, this proposal is excessive in size, particularly when taken into consideration with the others with applications pending in the area. It is not feasible to replace the output of a large fossil fuelled power station with inefficient, in land use terms, solar. The use of BESS to store energy produced off-peak by any means for resale during more profitable periods is fast becoming commonplace. That a reliable back-up source of power continues to be required is telling.

The potential loss of arable land, regardless of sub-designation, while Russian weaponization of worldwide food, energy and fertiliser supplies continues, is foolhardy at best. With an increasing population and probable decrease in yield as inputs of fertiliser and other products are reduced to meet environmental demands, we should be protecting farmland that can produce food or bio-fuel crops as a strategic national resource.

While we, as a nation have, and continue to drive down our carbon emissions, much of the world lags. A look at the Agricultural Land Classification map and the areas predicted to be under threat shows some considerable overlap between the Grade 1 agricultural land and that most at risk from sea level rise. The application is for a 60-year period, and while energy is important, food is essential.