

7000 Acres

**7000 Acres, Personal Statement from John Parkin, on the subject of health and wellbeing,
at West Burton Open Floor Hearing, 8th November 2023**

Deadline 1 Submission – 24th November 2023

Open hearing session: West Burton Solar Power 8th November 2023

Thank you, for giving me the opportunity to have my say today.

I will keep this brief and to the point.

I am a resident of one of the villages who will be affected by the West Burton scheme we are discussing in the open hearing.

Having heard speakers from the two previous open hearings, that being Gate Burton, and recently Cottam, I was struck by the number of residents who stated how these schemes would affect their Mental Health and Wellbeing. It is due to their concerns that I felt I needed to address you today in this open hearing.

I am a retired General Practitioner, and still work for the Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board with over 30 years' experience of health in Lincolnshire.

Having read the documents on Human Health and Wellbeing, most of this is described in terms of the construction and the decommissioning phase. There is very little around the operators cycle of 40 years. This needs to be addressed.

In particular, I am concerned as to the cumulative impact which may worsen health inequalities, marginalising already identified areas where deprivation exists, such as in the town of Gainsborough, which has not been mentioned at all by name within any of the documents presented by Gate Burton and Island Green Power. This has the potential to impact on the work the NHS is doing around CORE20PLUS5 in addressing health inequalities within Lincolnshire.

Also, depression is increasing in our communities, and the impact of changing our environment will only worsen this. It is well recognised that green spaces are beneficial to mental health and well-being. Our loss of the countryside will manifest in grief, which has a direct impact on physical and mental health.

There is also a potential to impact on social care within our communities if these schemes go ahead.

We have predominantly more older people living in our communities who potentially could be further isolated, therefore making them more vulnerable.

The qualitative data within the documents refers to ONS data from 2011 which is not satisfactory to inform a balanced view as to how these schemes make us feel emotionally, physically and mentally.

I am therefore asking you to consider addressing this by creating a session on Health and Wellbeing within the examination process, looking at the implications this and the other schemes will have on the people who live in this area focusing on the 40-year impact.

In fact, I am surprised that no Health Impact Assessment has been provided given the cumulative effects of all the schemes in such a concentrated area, and the impact it will have

on people. This should have been carried out in partnership with Public Health and the NHS who work within our communities, and who have in-depth knowledge of the health issues that exist within this area. I would like to see this requested, and completed as a single document across all the schemes as one scheme of this magnitude, (I stress again, that being all 4 now 5 schemes combined together as one), would have necessitated this document as key to the Environmental Impact Assessment for your examination and crucial to advise the Secretary of State. Using a desktop search to assess health in my view is not satisfactory. A Health Impact Assessment would put the local health and wellbeing needs and priorities into the plan for better decision making, by putting people at the heart of the process.

I am also aware, that there is currently a Public Health opinion around these developments, and should a Health Impact Assessment not be carried out, this should be incorporated into a session on health if permitted as part of the examination.

The Gate Burton document referenced a potential workforce of 2000 contractors for all the proposed schemes, coming into this area. To put it into context, one full time General Practitioner equivalent looks after approximately 2000 patients. Our services are already stretched to capacity. How will this be addressed and resourced?

Finally, I was stunned to hear that £1.4 billion was paid back to electricity suppliers last year to switch off supply. I would hate to think that schemes like this would be paid for being non-productive, where that money could be used much more effectively in levelling up communities in towns such as Gainsborough.

Thank you for listening.

Reference:

Health Impact Assessment in spatial planning A guide for local authority public health and planning teams October 2020 PHE