

7000 Acres

7000 Acres Response to the West Burton Solar Project Application on the subject of:

Executive Summary Human Health and Wellbeing

**Environmental Statement Chapter 18: Socio-Economics and Tourism and Recreation
EN010132/ APP/WB6.2.18**

**Environmental Statement Chapter 21: Other Environmental Matters EN010132
APP/WB6.2.21**

Deadline 1A Submission – 7th December 2023

Executive Summary Human Health and Wellbeing

Human Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing has been described more in terms of construction and decommissioning, with very little substance as to the forty-year gap, that being the operators cycle where potentially the biggest impact will be to the health and wellbeing of the people that live and work in Gainsborough and its surroundings (Local Impact Area). The definition of health and wellbeing is important to understand within the context of this written representation.

Legislation and Policy:

Much of the guidance is around urban development and not much is in place to guide the issues faced in rural development around health and wellbeing. The Equality Impact Assessment for this scheme written for the applicant has not highlighted the potential health and wellbeing issues to be faced by this scheme and the others (cumulative) on the people of Gainsborough, and surroundings (Local Impact Area). The Health and Social Care Act of 2022, provides the foundations to improve health outcomes, which brings together the NHS, Public Health and Social Care at a local level with the hope that this will tackle health inequalities, which should have been highlighted by the Equality Impact Assessment. A Health Impact Assessment would have enabled the applicant to obtain better health related data which would highlight potential health and wellbeing issues as a consequence of this and the other schemes. There is potential to widen health inequalities?

Deprivation

This DCO document fails to recognise Gainsborough town as the four LSOAs (Local Authorities and Lower Super Output Areas) within West Lindsey District which is in the top 10% most deprived LSOAs in England. This scheme is close to this town and is inextricably linked to it, and therefore this document is failing in its duty to understand how the scheme will directly impact on human health and wellbeing as part of its surroundings. This has the potential to widen health inequalities. This was highlighted in the Director of Public Health report 2022 as an urban industrial centre with high levels of economic inactivity and low social mobility. Two papers written for the energy sector state that these solar energy farms are more likely to be passed in areas of deprivation and where communities of lower social capital exist.

Qualitative data

The only qualitative data provided was outdated ONS (Office of National Statistics) data from 2011. We argue that the only way to obtain this data is through a widened qualitative feedback survey following a well-informed process. This would highlight whether or not there are issues around the impact of health and wellbeing on how this scheme makes us feel emotionally, physically and mentally. Much of this is subjective and needs exploring.

Physical, mental and social

Rural communities on the whole tend to be healthier than urban. However, rural areas tend to have much older people with a higher life expectancy. There is natural outward migration of younger people from rural communities, and with schemes like this making it less attractive for young people to live and settle in, because of field industrialisation. Areas could be left with older people with no workforce attraction to prop up health and social care within these communities. This would compromise the vulnerable and has the effect of increasing loneliness and isolation.

There is a failure in this document to use well established Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) data as well as the data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to understand health in this area. For example, there is a higher modelled prevalence of respiratory disease in Gainsborough, in an area that has poor air quality compared to the rest of Lincolnshire. In many of the other disease profiles (e.g. stroke, coronary heart disease and cancer), these are higher than the National and Lincolnshire prevalence. The higher the deprivation, the greater the multimorbidity.

Mental health and the environment are linked in health outcomes and wellbeing. Many people gain benefit for their mental health by living in the countryside. Depression in our communities is increasing and particularly in rural farming where this has been well recognised. The impact of these schemes has the potential to worsen mental health because they take away the very fabric of what rural life is about.

Rural vs Urban

There is a real concern, that as cities and towns heat up with climate change “heat islands”, that the rural environment should be preserved to provide areas for people from urban areas to come out into rural areas to cool down. By developing forests and woodlands, this would enable rural shade, carbon sinks as well as providing nature-based therapy. People in urban areas seek out the natural environment to connect with nature as a means of helping them cope with life.

Noise and light pollution

Rural communities on the whole have little exposure to traffic noise. In rural communities, there is very little light pollution. This scheme has the potential to increase noise generated from transformers, inverters and battery cooling fans. Perimeter fence lights have the potential to increase light pollution. This is an issue to those residents who border the scheme. Both noise and light pollution could potentiate sleep deprivation, worsening mental health, and eventually poor physical health.

We urge the Inspector to read the full report on health and wellbeing