

Ms. Andrea Mageean
Examining Authority
National Infrastructure Planning
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

1st September 2023

Dear Ms. Mageean,

Joint Position from Parishes Regarding Solar Developments

I am writing on behalf of 19 local Parishes (listed below), as well as the 7000Acres action group, to make you aware of the local opposition to the proposed solar developments in our region, currently Cottam Solar Project, West Burton Solar Project (both proposed by Island Green Power), Gate Burton Energy Park (proposed by Low Carbon) and Tillbridge Solar (proposed by Tillbridge Solar Ltd).

Our Parishes represent the overwhelming majority local villages effected, where there is growing concern over the cumulative adverse impact these schemes will have on the region. To our knowledge, no Parish is in favour of the proposed developments.

Our position is that we agree that climate change calls for action to decarbonise our economy.

However, we are concerned that the benefits the schemes can bring are being overstated and oversimplified by developers, because the role solar can play in decarbonisation is very limited:

- In the UK, solar panels produce on average between 9% and 11% of their rated output – and they produce most of that power on sunny, summer days when we least need it. When demand is at its highest, on winter evenings, they produce nothing at all.
- To keep the lights on, something else must produce power when solar is not producing, so for much of the year, that means relying on alternative sources, e.g. which may be low carbon (e.g. wind, hydro, nuclear), but may as easily be fossil-based (e.g. gas, oil, diesel).
- The proposed solar projects make no material attempt to match when power is produced to when it is needed. They take up a huge amount of space for the limited contribution they can make to the electricity system, and therefore represent an extremely inefficient use of land.

In addition, the proposed battery schemes don't solve the problem:

- Batteries help in a limited way, in that they can store a few hours of electricity; they are not capable of storing volumes of solar power from the summer to be used in the winter.

We are also concerned that development on this scale will have serious adverse consequences, for the region and for the nation:

- **Food & Farming:** Using arable land for solar will displace the production of existing crops, food, animal feed and energy crops. It makes no sense, from an environmental perspective or from a security of food supply perspective, to cease farming here and import more crops.
- **Employment:** Solar farms will destroy agricultural jobs, skills and livelihoods and create very few new skilled jobs or replace livelihoods. It is likely, there will be a net reduction in employment, in an area with relatively few opportunities. There will not be any economic benefit to the already hard-pressed communities affected.
- **Wildlife & Habitat:** No matter what precautions and assurances, it will not be possible to deliver and install millions of solar panels, pour thousands of tonnes of concrete, as well as containers with batteries and switchgear, plus miles of fencing, without significant damage and disruption to habitat.
- **Visual:** The cumulative scale of the development is unprecedented, and the impact of such a development would change the character and nature of the area for 50 years or more, such a change has the potential to have a significant detrimental impact on the general health and wellbeing of residents.
- **Disturbance during construction:** The impact of traffic during construction and decommissioning phases, in terms of road safety, noise, disruption, damage to roads is of great concern to residents owing to the volume and potential size of material being moved, particularly on the local small, inadequate road infrastructure.

We acknowledge the challenge climate change poses, and we are in favour of good solar development:

- Solar should be deployed where there is little else that can be done with the space – such as rooftops (in the UK only around 3% of households have solar panels)
- To make that happen, planning should require solar on new-build commercial warehouses and domestic properties as an immediate priority, and a framework should be provided to support retrofitting of solar to existing buildings.
- Where a solar development is considered at scale, it should be decided upon locally, not nationally – and any development must consider sustainability in its widest sense, including the impacts on sustainability of food production, sustainability of communities, impact on health and wellbeing.

To conclude, our position is clear, **we are against the proposed large-scale solar developments, because of their limited contribution to decarbonisation and the adverse consequences arising from using farmland in this way.**

Yours sincerely,

Jamie Allan,

Chair, 7000Acres

Jointly with:

Brampton Parish Meeting

Brattleby Parish Council

Broxholme

Burton Parish Council

Cammeringham Parish Council

Fillingham Parish Meeting

Glentworth Parish Council

Ingham Parish Meeting

Hemswell Parish Council

Kexby Parish Council

Knaith Parish Council

Marion and Gate Burton Parish Council

Saxilby with Ingby Parish Council

Scampton Parish Council

Springthorpe Parish Meeting

Stow Parish Council

Sturton by Stow Parish Council

Upton Parish Council

Willingham Parish Council