

Simon Skelton

September 2023

### SUMMARY

This report demonstrates the significant impact of the Cottam Solar Project on our family home and our way of life.

It shows how the Developer did not consult in good faith and suggests how the proposal could quite easily have been mitigated with considerate and moral planning in place of commercial avarice.

I question why so much land is being offered to the lowest yielding form of power generation, when superior alternatives are available.

This report includes maps, photographs, and visual aids to augment the points being made. They are a vital part of the story and as such I respectfully ask that the full report is considered and that the site is visited to truly appreciate the life changing impact on us and the wider area.

- Our 20-year journey creating a home and nature reserve.
- What we have achieved and what it means to us.
- The significant and unnecessary blight on our property and surroundings.
- The magnitude of development.
- Retirement income plans destroyed.
- David and Goliath. "Developer and Landowner will make a fortune, we lose everything."
- Unfaithful consultation. Agreements not kept by Developer.
- A done deal.
- Comparisons.
- Solar misinformation.
- Site selection and equipment issues.
- Dishonest documentation.
- Inaccurate photomontages.
- Visual impact and solutions.
- Impact on local public rights of way and a landscape dominated by solar. (photos)
- Blight on [REDACTED] (photos)
- Biodiversity concerns.
- Hedgerow removal and new planting schemes.
- The Policing of thousands of acres.
- Need and energy contribution versus Mental and visual harms.
- Cumulative effect of 10,000 acres of solar in one area.
- Cooperation achieved nothing.

The beauty of this area with its undulating patchwork of fields dotted by small deciduous woodlands, make it a quintessential English arable backdrop to the footpaths and bridleways in the area and from our much loved home. This is an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and must be preserved.

In 2002 we bought a derelict farmhouse in an unspoilt part of rural Lincolnshire, to fulfil our dream of escaping to the country with our young family to create a smallholding and wildlife sanctuary.

We rebuilt the house in Lincolnshire limestone, in keeping with the local vernacular and to blend in with natural surroundings, we renovated the outbuildings and created our forever home in this now quite rare patch of undeveloped countryside. We have invested everything into [REDACTED]

Over the years we began to concentrate more on wildlife, creating new ponds and extending woodland and hedgerows, we left areas of land to rewild, establishing scrubland for rare bird and insect species. Brown hare and deer are thriving due to the open landscape in which they are free to roam.

Sensitive species of farmland birds flourish here. 5 species of owl, 3 species of harrier, little and great white egret and water rail to name just a few have been recorded.

Fish, frogs, and newts bring the wildlife pools to life, and bats, dragon flies and insects abound during the summer months.

Summer also brings back other rare or red listed farmland bird species such quail and turtle doves.

We have created something special, and we are very proud of our achievements. This is a real biodiversity success story. We do not want our finely balanced project ruining by the total encirclement and considerable blight of this ill planned giant solar farm. **(See map1)**

This is our life and our home.

If this project were to go ahead, especially in its current form, this tranquil landscape in which we live would be engulfed by a sea of giant solar panels and humming electrical apparatus.

The staggering scale of this solar plant would be visible from every window, which currently look out over this beautiful open countryside.

The loss of all this would be devastating for us. This is not just a couple of fields; we would be surrounded, North, South, East and West. This would be a complete landscape change!

The sheer land mass taken by these solar arrays would totally transform the character of the countryside, with the panels becoming the dominant feature for miles around.

The land use would change from beautiful productive farmland to an alien and industrial omnipresence. The magnitude of which no family or community should be subjected to.

Even our daily walks with friends and family would be spoilt by this solar takeover. The Public footpaths and Bridleways around here would be thoroughly degraded.

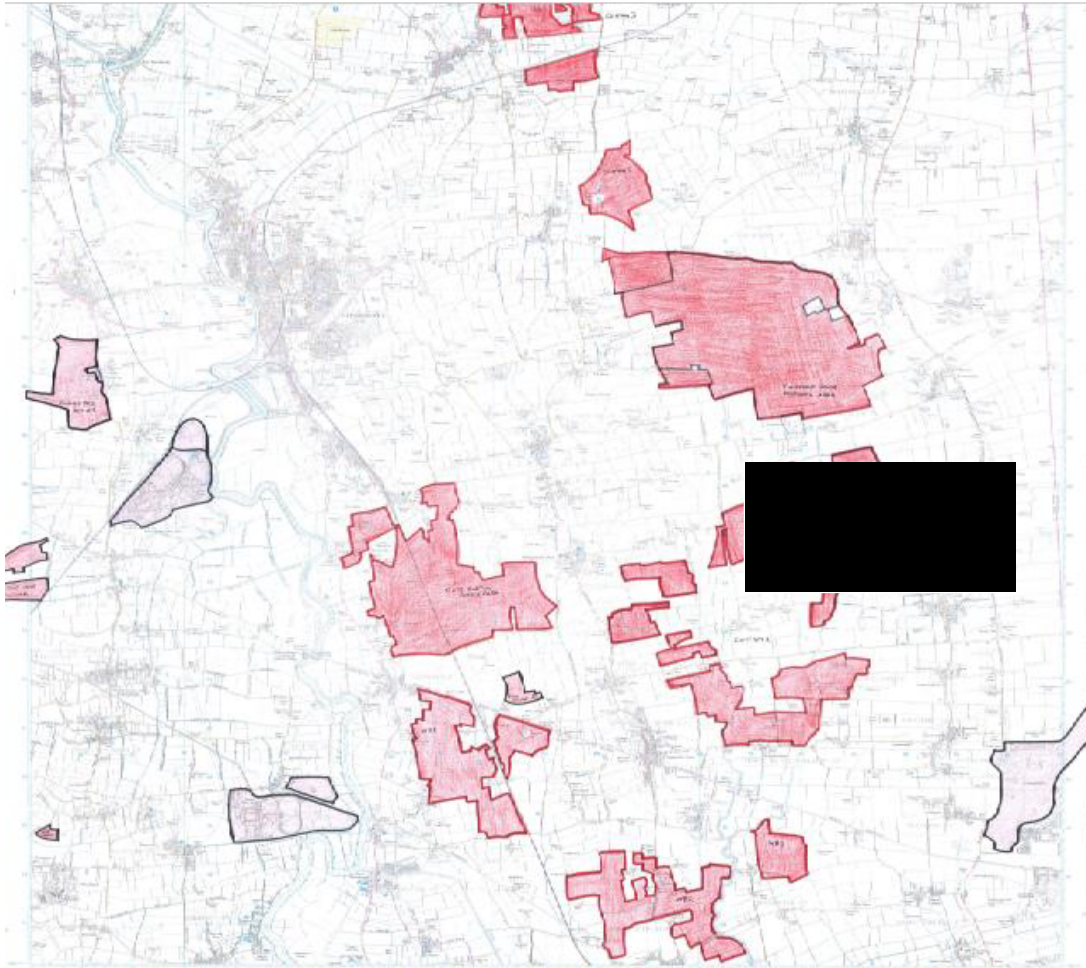
This solar dominated area would quickly become a very depressing place to live.

The undulating character of the land being used means that with the best will in the world, the proposed and unprecedented 15 feet (4.5m) high tilting panels (not low profile as quoted by Solar Energy UK) could never be screened, especially in the Winter months.

The nature of this proposal would create a "Solar Industrialised Zone" around our home.

The solar arrays are distanced from towns and villages, but individual properties are not offered the same respect by the developer, this is discriminatory as well as inhuman. All the reasons that attracted us here would be taken away.

Even the local authority thought our property must belong to the leasing landowner due to its encirclement. Alas the landowner's home will not be affected by these proposals!



**Map 1.** [Redacted] location within the proposed 10,000 acres of solar developments in the area and showing the mindless encirclement by the multi-site Cottam1 solar proposal. Surely no one could say this is acceptable?

This map also shows existing solar farms, power station sites, and RAF Scampton.



One of Britain's rarest breeding birds, the Black Redstart (above) successfully bred at North Farm in 2022 and 2023.

The secretive and equally rare corncrake has also been present during several Summers, with breeding a possibility.

We cannot afford disturbance to tranquil habitats and established eco systems with these ill planned and inefficient solar land grabs.

Doing so would be environmental hypocrisy.

**The fragile UK status of the black redstart and corncrake means that this page should be omitted from public view.**

The developer Island Green Power's initial home visit resulted in a token compromise to lessen the proposal's impact. This has since been rescinded.

After this first meeting, we were pleasantly surprised that IGP seemed to want to accommodate us, and we acknowledged this in a thank you email and completed the phase 1 consultation on the back of their decent attitude. How naive we were!

Initially IGP agreed with us in using the natural topography of the land such as established hedges and land contours as screening. However, they are now putting profit before visual and community impact, by renegeing on almost all our consultation agreements, such as using the very important contour of the land behind our property as an immediate and permanent mitigation measure to limit visual impact. Instead, their proposal is now unbearably close to our home and would rely mainly on the trees that are on our property as screening. Many of which suffer from ash dieback. These are shocking consultation and mitigation standards, and no one deserves these steamrolling tactics by a developer!

Native hedging species would take 25 years to grow 5 metres for screening and would be next to useless when they lose their leaves. Furthermore, our small woodland is an important wildlife habitat and is a much used and enjoyed family amenity.

So now we have part of this fragmented solar farm proposal sited unacceptably close to our home with no effective mitigation in place. Solar at this scale should not encircle and be this close to private property **(See photo 16)**

Other areas of concern that we discussed during consultation were not addressed as promised. Such as the views to the South of our property which look directly over Willingham Road. In this case, the solar farm would be mounted largely on sloping land of a 15 to 20 metre elevation, with a significant zone of visual influence. This vast expanse could never be mitigated. **(See photos 13&14)**

IGP now say that we never asked for such mitigation. This is an infuriating statement to make!

We contacted IGP as soon as the proposal was made public knowledge, to express our anguish. This was followed up with several meetings and endless emails.

What were we supposed to have done?

We could hardly demand signed copies of what we discussed. We trusted these people.

They are dishonest and callous!

Buffers have been provided for many of the farming estate properties and surrounding villages, but not our home.

I would expect a responsible developer to engage faithfully with residents like us, who have fully cooperated during the consultation process. We allowed IGP access to sample our wildlife ponds and to install sound monitors in woodland areas. Even humiliating pleas for compassion fell on deaf ears.

IGP invited me to bring all these issues up with the Planning Inspectorate.

Their disrespectful attitude and confidence, shows to me that this is a done deal!

If this project goes ahead and if IGP will not consider sensible low profile panels, and remove the apparatus as we agreed, then our home due to it being surrounded by this oppressive solar farm will look like an intrinsic part of it, and be forever blighted.

As an example of more sensitive site selection, the Raventhorpe and Little Crow (NSIP) solar farms in Scunthorpe are in a semi-industrialised area nestled cohesively between the steelworks and a large coniferous forest. This site has clearly been chosen on merit and not purely convenience.

The preposterous solar panel height of 4.5 metres is a further example of opportunism and disregard. Other recent proposals such as the Sunnica site in Cambridgeshire have proposed 2.5 metre high panels. This would make a significant difference to visual impact and successful screening.

IGPs WB4 site (which has now been removed entirely from the West Burton Solar Project) was reduced by over 30 percent and the solar panel height lowered to accommodate the opposition from a professionally managed local campaign.

Neighbours [REDACTED] have the proposal behind them sited much further back than we do. We are not being treated fairly and with equality. If this estate property is being afforded favourable distancing, then we should at least get the same. It all seems very underhanded and wrong.

We are by far the most impacted property on this vast proposal. Why the developer's mitigation fields such as C26 or C28 for example, could not be swapped for the fields adjacent to our home is again disappointing.

The single unmetalled track that provides sole access to our property and the farmland beyond, would become extremely dangerous. Heavy construction traffic would destroy the surface and make it very difficult to enter or leave our own home. Traffic would increase from practically zero to an unconscionable amount. This track is locked for security and has provided us with peace of mind for 20 years. This would all be lost with solar company employees having access and freely roaming the site adjacent to our isolated farmhouse at all hours.

Again, this highlights how this proposal is changing our home and homelife out of all recognition, the potential impact upon us would be intolerable and unjust.

Our plans to open a B&B for a retirement income have now been halted due to this impending doom. We have a right to a continued quality of life with an income stream to be realised from our long established plans. We now have nowhere to turn.

All hope now rests with the Examining Authority to protect us from this industrial suffocation and the destruction of our much invested and cherished home.

There is a map in the PEIR document, fig 15.9 which shows a "Sensitive receptor location plan" This also clearly shows the Cottam 1 site with panels removed as the minimum we originally agreed with IGP. This publication shows that IGP were indeed willing to compromise with their design and accommodate us. We are reasonable people and feel this is acceptable mitigation and would bring parity to us and our neighbour, at Fillingham Grange (Point R28). See maps below.



**Map 2.** Left. Showing fig 15.9 from IGP PEIR document. The solar panels shaded grey within the red outlines are quite clearly removed around North farm (fields C15 to C20 & A3 and half of A4) as per the agreement between the Developer and ourselves.

Right. A copy of the same map showing just one field removed (A3 and a minimal part of A4) as per the Developers devastating final application.

With thousands of acres of land at IGP's disposal, I think it is disgraceful to expect my family and I to accept this destruction of our home setting, outlook and way of life. Especially when an agreement was made during consultation and then subsequently revoked!

Furthermore, these haphazard, 10 parcels of land on the Cottam proposal such as the one directly behind our property are littering the landscape and spreading the disfiguring nature of these developments over a larger area than is necessary. With solar arrays 20km from the Grid connection, this shows a desperate land grab and not a well planned and cohesive scheme.



Above. C6.4.8.14.76 Figure 8.14.76 LCC-C-I Viewpoint 76 Photography Photomontage (image 10) **supposedly** showing 4.5 metre high tilting solar panels, facing east.

Below. Is myself with a 4.5 metre gauge stick at the same location as above, showing the true proposed panel height and the immense impact and unsuitability of their size in a countryside location.

Note. Hedge heights for screening could never be achieved along Willingham Road, due to the overhead power lines and transformers and the preservation of the statutory 3 metre safety exclusion zone.





It is disturbing that IGP are again misleading the public and indeed the Examining Authority by publishing these shameful photomontages, showing significant deception over panel height. I do not believe any of the photomontages to be accurately scaled!

4.5 metre panels are not low level. We would not only be getting the biggest solar complex in Europe, but we would also be getting the tallest!

With the locality potentially losing 10,000 acres of countryside all at once and within a 6 mile radius, this would all add up to an unproportional 15% of this areas farmland.

It seems so wasteful that the lowest yielding and most land hungry generating source is being considered for such extravagant amounts of land on this small island of ours.

What other type of development would dare to demand 10,000 acres of farmland in one area and offer so little in return? A whole city could be built on this much land!

These solar proposals would cover 20 times more land than one of the power stations they propose to replace, and produce only a fraction of the electricity.

With an aim for 70GW of solar and the lack of developer appetite for rooftops, another 285,000 acres of farmland would be required to reach this goal. This would be enough land to build 28 cities the size of Lincoln!

The one sobering fact that is fully guaranteed by solar power generation is that it produces exactly nothing for half of its life!

Our farmland is a precious and finite resource.

The historic B1398 “Middle Street” would have its iconic panoramic views over the Trent valley (AGLV) ruined forever by solar industrial zones.

Below. Is the view from the B1398 (SK 954873). The area shown would have the middle distance views dominated by Cottam 1 North proposals.





Above. The view from the RAF Ingham Heritage Centre (SK 956851) on the B1398 looking over part of the Cottam 1 proposal (centre of photo). Showing the open views over this “Area of Great Landscape Value”.

Significant glint and glare would be produced by vast areas of giant sun tracking solar panels causing danger to motorists and spoiling these popular views.

The well used footpaths and bridleways around Cottam 1 enjoy the same much loved views, such as the one starting from Middle Street (SK 956843) Westwards onto Willingham Road (SK 933852). This would be dominated by the industrial nature of these developments.



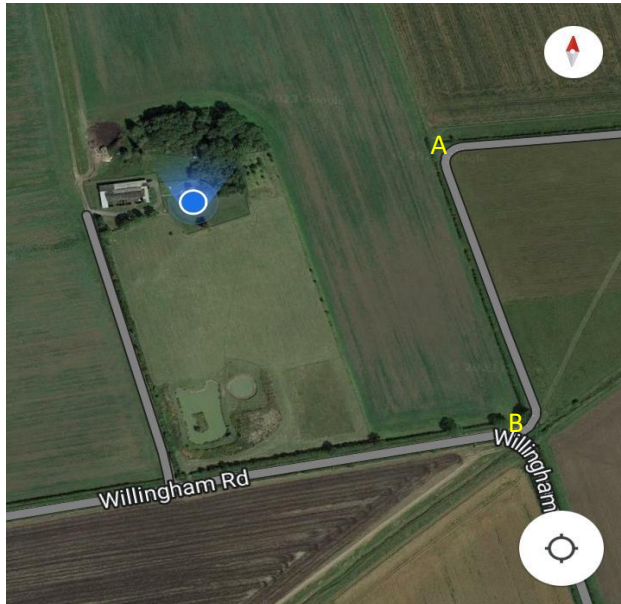
Above. View from public footpath starting on the B1398 Middle Street (SK 956843). The centre of the photo would be dominated by the Cottam proposal.



Above. The view from the Bridleway as it joins Willingham Road (SK 933853). Local amenity destroyed by the adjacent proposal.

Below. Is on the same Bridleway due South from Willingham Road. The whole area would be a sea of giant solar panels.





Map showing [redacted] and the nearby  
Bridleway with viewpoints A and B



View from point A. Facing North,  
showing proposed development  
site, unacceptable 4.5 m panel  
height and lack of screening.



View from point B. Facing South,  
showing proposed development  
site, imposing 4.5 m panel height,  
and lack of screening due to the  
proximity of an important water  
course.



This photograph shows the 4.5 metre height of the proposed solar panels against a native hedge planted over 15 years ago. This highlights the absurd panel proposals and the fact that hedge planting should be a last resort mitigation measure, as it would take a generation to have any effect. The correct site selection and using land gradient as screening are surely best practice for these imposing projects.

The 15 year mitigation maturity period stated by the developer is too long and the planting schemes would never grow sufficiently to mitigate structures of the proposed dimensions. Our elevated views over open and undulating countryside would continue to be dominated by stifling solar apparatus. Significant blight would remain indefinitely.



**Photograph 13.** Taken from a South facing window at [REDACTED] Showing just part of the Cottam 1 proposal (The far side of the tall hedgerow). This is part of a two mile stretch of continuous development along Willingham Road and shows the sloping character of the land. Map 2 in this report shows some of these fields removed as per consultation with the Developer.

Lincoln Cathedral is visible in the distance.





**Photograph 14.** Taken from a South facing window, showing just part of the Cottam 1 proposal (far side of the tall hedgerow). Showing the beautiful and unspoilt countryside that would be displaced. Internal field boundary hedgerows would never be seen due to the immense height of the proposed solar panels.

It is quite clear how high the hedges would need to be, to offer any kind of screening on sloping land of this character and how unrealistic this would be to achieve.

Map 2 in this report shows some of these fields removed as per consultation with the Developer.



Above. [REDACTED] showing the proposed solar fields above the gate and the open vistas that are so enjoyed. New planting would take a generation to have any effect and the extreme height needed to offer screening would further spoil the landscape character and block views.



**Photograph 16.** Taken from the rear [REDACTED] facing North. Showing where the solar arrays would begin in field A4. IGP originally agreed to siting the solar panels further away and using the fact that the land gradient falls sharply beyond the single ash tree, mitigating in a responsible and effective manner and not relying on an inadequate planting scheme (map 2 illustrates this agreement). The current proposal would significantly spoil our woodland amenity due to the solar farm's close proximity. Fields C26 or C28 could be substituted here, perhaps?

I am extremely concerned over the effectiveness of IGP's limited planting schemes. There is no evidence of superior plant protection being provided. High populations of browsing animals such as brown hare and deer would quickly decimate these areas unless comprehensive exclusion was provided, standard tree guards are not enough. These animals would be channelled towards hedgerows and areas of new planting by hundreds of miles of security fencing. Browsing damage would therefore be intensified due to the thousands of acres of land that they would be excluded from.

Costly protection and much effort is required for success.

With commercial emphasis on the initial planting, and not the aftercare required, means failure rate is always high.

I also have reservations over the maintenance regime for the hundreds of miles of the hedgerows. The importance of hedge thickness and height is paramount, especially as this is the sole mitigation. I am sure that hedges will continue to be cut hard back on rotation to "make them last." How would all this be policed, and what would be the legal consequences be. A small fine? If reported.

The developer giving 15 years for the mitigation efforts to have effect, is unrealistic and is an unacceptable time to endure this scale of industrial oppression without any screening!



Left. Hedges on the Cottam 1 proposal have over the past few years been allowed to increase in height in preparation for this application. They are still nowhere near the height of the proposed panels and are so thin as to be totally ineffective as a screening solution (4.5 m gauge stick used as a solar panel comparison).

In many parts hedges are non-existent!

Areas that require new hedgerows to be planted from scratch should not have been considered.

Native saplings required to grow 5 metres tall as mitigation would take a generation to achieve, even in the best conditions.

It must be considered, that if these vast electromechanical structures cannot be initially sited out of view, then the waiting of 25 years for effective mitigation is too long a period to be considered acceptable.

A site visit would show the view blocking hedgerow heights required for screening with some hedges needing to be more than double the proposed height due to the rolling landscape.

The biodiversity claims could be easily achieved with continued agriculture. The proposed tree planting is limited and fall outside the solar array and inverter compounds. Therefore, biodiversity net gain is nothing to do with the solar farms themselves but is a by-product of the mitigation efforts that are required around them.

The Draft DCO seeks permission to remove miles upon miles of hedgerow including my own boundary hedges that are biodiverse and offer the only screening to this horrific proposal. (Important hedgerows H154 and H155)

How could a Developer with supposed biodiversity at heart, seek such inexcusable habitat destruction permissions. This “carte blanche” approach cannot be allowed, granting such powers would be catastrophic for our wildlife and landscape. New hedge planting can never replace the wildlife rich, old hedges that abound this Lincolnshire farmland. Biodiversity would swing negatively with every mature tree or hedging plant removed.

It is important to note there has been little independently funded research into the effects of large ground mounted photovoltaics on biodiversity.

To approve schemes of this magnitude and when we do not really know the ecological consequences would be a gamble to say the least.

In this current dash for giant solar farms, the Human impact consequence appears to be seriously overlooked. IGP are not giving local communities the consideration deserved.

Resident’s welfare and their continued quality of life surely comes first, and it is disturbing that mental health has barely been mentioned?

Solar promoters constantly advocate that there is more than enough land in the UK for solar generation.

If this is so, then why is all this development going to be around our home?

We are truly heartbroken and feel helpless.

Sir, I am sure you are used to more professional reports than this and with clearer pictures etc... but I am not a multimillion-pound company. This is an honest and local representation of the real and extreme impact on our lives and unbelievable grief these intrusive and inefficient giant solar developments would cause if allowed to go ahead.

They represent an undeniable and avoidable waste of UK farmland, providing a tiny fraction of the UKs electricity and offer little in energy security. Combine this with the overwhelming landscape change and the degradation of rural communities in an already deprived part of the country.

“HARM CLEARLY OUTWEIGHS THE BENEFIT”

My family and I are now fighting for our very survival, mentally it would be impossible to wake up every morning to the overbearing presence of the Cottam 1 Solar proposal.

I hope this representation will be fully considered.

As stated earlier we have played by the rules and cooperated fully with IGP during consultation but in the end have we have been disappointingly let down by an irresponsible and untrustworthy developer. So, I must now unapologetically demand that this proposal is not recommended to the Secretary of State.

A home visit is essential and would be very much appreciated.

Do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Kind regards,

Simon Skelton.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED]

The Cottam Solar Project (CSP) will have a peak capacity of around 600MW.

In the UK, the average yield from solar generation is around 10% of its rated capacity according to the Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES).

The average output is therefore only 60MW and would generate annually around 526,000MWh.

The annual UK electricity demand is 300,000,000MWh. (300TWh)

Simple mathematics show that the CSP offers only a **0.17%** contribution to our national needs and is arguably delivered at the wrong time of day and indeed year. Nationally this is not a significant amount of electricity.

The loss of 3,000 acres of homegrown food producing land and the harm caused by the industrialisation of our countryside for this disproportionate **0.17%**, that would further diminish due to predicted summer solar curtailment and the inevitable rise of the nation's energy needs. The subsequent result is more likely to hamper our Net Zero ambitions than assist.

To help put electricity generation into context, EDF state that "Sizewell C will generate 3,200MW on just 170 acres of land providing a **7%** power contribution." That is over 40x more electricity generated than the CSP on a fraction of the land.

National electrification needed to achieve Net Zero will require low carbon generating capacity on an enormous scale, solar will not do this. Ticking a box now only in the end to achieve nothing is folly. We need to look at generation outputs and not waste valuable Grid connections on low yielding ground mounted solar.

Solar Developers only ever seem to advertise output by how many homes could be provided for, this figure being purely the solar farm's annual output divided by the average home electricity consumption.

This is oversimplification and does not consider the daily and seasonal solar shortfalls when other forms of generation are required to back this up. The figures quoted are also without context, never mentioning the other 28 million homes that require power 24/7.

Due to the relatively small amounts of electricity produced by solar and therefore its excessive carbon payback period means that it does not align with any climate emergency timeframes. Apparatus being replaced on a 20-year cycle, with batteries realistically having a far shorter serviceable life, means that the carbon footprint of the scheme would also be compounded. Along with inevitable extra food imports due to the loss of our own farmland.

As China is the obvious supplier of solar apparatus to this scheme, and with recent reports that take into account China's vast coal burning power industry, means that the manufacturing emissions would be as high as 250g CO2/kwh. This is 5x more than previously presented and over 60% of the CO2 from gas fired generation.

Electricity generation in the UK is responsible for less than 20% of the national CO2 emissions, therefore carbon reductions by the CSP would be imperceptible on our overall aims.

Solar on farmland, from an energy, food security and Net Zero perspective has largely gone without scrutiny, but it is clearly flawed.

The magnitude of land being given over to solar for such little in return could only be seen as unlawful and not in the nation's best interests.

**The rejection of the Cottam Solar Project would be of no consequence to UK Net Zero targets.**