

Dear Sir,

Please consider my concerns regarding the intrusive nature of the Cottam Solar Project.

The Cottam Solar Project would cover thousands of acres of Lincolnshire farmland. A sprawling proposal on many separate parcels of land, and so far from its connection to the Grid on the other side of the river Trent.

This is an opportunistic land grab and an insensitive attempt at a large scale solar farm. The land is in an Area of Great Landscape Value, overlooked by the Lincoln cliff road B1398 (Middle Street). Glint and glare from giant solar panels across the Trent valley would be distracting and dangerous to motorists.

The impact of the extremely long cable route, which is partly shared by the other solar complex proposals would on its own be catastrophic for residents and wildlife without all the gigantic apparatus above ground as well.

This is one of four solar NSIP proposals within a 10 km radius. This would be an unprecedented scale of industrial development.

The applicant's photomontages are inaccurate, and misleading. Showing considerably lower panels than the proposed worse case and innocuous deer fencing shown instead of austere security fencing, which has been widely publicised as now being required for site insurance. Full hedges are shown, with no failures and no areas where access has been made by grubbing up. These visual aids are not a true representation of the horrors we would be getting in return for the productive beauty we have today.

The whole scheme, due to its size, should at least have a dedicated conservation officer overseeing works and the site should be supervised by them to provide guarantees of ecological compliance. The mitigation proposals are limited, and the visual impact totally understated.

The whole scheme is a criminal destruction of the surroundings and Lincolnshire's agricultural heritage.

Most of the biodiversity gains are the result of solar plant screening attempts and can only be measured as a success when the planting has matured. When new planting replaces old it must become fully established before it can be classed as a quantifiable replacement.

The Developer's claims are desktop based and far removed from reality.

“Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.”

How can the above statement be true when there are intentions of mature hedge and tree removal?

How can this statement be true when construction covering all seasons would mean that the soil structure and its delicate ecosystems would be destroyed, only to be left in near permanent shade for 40 years?

I do not believe anyone would agree that this solar farm can be classed as a natural environment. It is after all a 'Power Plant' on a massive scale!

Much of the planting would fail due to grazing deer, hare and rabbit, or lack of aftercare. There is no suggestion of any special tree protection or mammal exclusion measures while this is being achieved. With abundant wildlife populations in the area, this would need serious consideration. The Developer does not know the area and its wildlife.

The need for mitigation is an admission of the significant visual impact of this exposed scheme. The fact that the public would have to wait decades for planting to have even the smallest mitigating effect is unacceptable.

These hedges would have to be 5 to 10 metres tall due to the sloping land in places, and the size of the equipment proposed upon it. These hedges would look totally wrong in the open Lincolnshire landscape and the heights would probably never even be achieved in the hedgerow setting and would only serve to block views over swathes of countryside.

Disturbance to wildlife during the construction period of this and other giant solar farms close by would be huge and have a significant negative impact to the natural world.

Scarce bird species in this area could be permanently affected. The Developers own bird surveys fall woefully short on the true value of this rare and tranquil farmland. With its open landscape, wide "stewardship" verges and headlands, rough grassland areas and woodland makes this an important area for Raptors and Owls as well as "red listed" farmland species, such as Lapwing, skylark and tree sparrow to name just a few.

As mentioned earlier, deer and hare populations are extremely healthy here and are celebrated by those who live in and visit the area. The information we have is local, accurate and with no financial agenda.

This solar farm covering three thousand acres of land with towering solar panels, and electrical apparatus that are only fit for desert installations, cannot improve this landscape and wildlife habitat, and there is no evidence to prove it would.

At one consultation event the Developer openly stated that they would not want this amount of development near their home. I think that says it all.

Public footpaths and Bridleways would be ruined, with all enjoyment and recreational value lost. Traded in for a depressing and industrialised claustrophobia.

The people that live and work in this area have a right to a decent standard of welfare and continued amenity.

One, not to mention four Solar NSIPs would destroy this already deprived area. Our agriculture and open landscapes are what defines rural Lincolnshire. This is the one thing that we do have!

A total landscape and land use change is not what the people of these communities want. This massive retrograde step amounts to a violation of our human rights.

We would lose an unacceptable amount of farmland in this area, far more than the 0.5% proposed by Solar UK. This is intolerable and disproportionate.

The loss of thousands of acres of farmland, the destruction of landscapes and livelihoods by the hideousness of giant solar panels as far as the eye can see, is not a moral, democratic, or even an efficient way to generate electricity. We really do deserve better.

The cumulative impact on this area would be unprecedented if allowed to happen.

This last year has been a gold rush of solar applications and is already taking its toll on residents, and there is even more in the pipeline!

Below is the inspector's final comment on the Alfreton solar farm appeal last year.

"The need for renewable or low carbon energy does not automatically override environmental protections. I have taken into account all the other matters raised including the proximity of a suitable grid connection, but in the overall balance, the harm caused to landscape character and visual amenity is decisive. The adverse impacts cannot be addressed satisfactorily on a site of this size and character, and the suggested planting mitigation measures would be seriously out of keeping and would largely worsen, rather than mitigate for the landscape and visual impact. Objectors point out that the panels could simply be replaced after 40 years but it is difficult to predict whether national energy strategy will still require large solar installations in 2062. I consider that 40 years is a very significant period in people's lives during which the development would seriously detract from landscape character and visual amenity."

The overwhelming change to this one area of Lincolnshire is unacceptable and the electricity produced is clearly disproportionate to the amount of farmland lost and the human harm caused. Solar on farmland is not a serious or reliable contender in building energy security for this country.

What is clear though, due to this current mad scramble by developers, is that solar is a big money maker and it would give nothing back to the area of which it destroyed.

Let's do the right thing. We need to start looking seriously at solar becoming an important and efficient rooftop contributor in this country.

I finish on a serious issue. Many badly affected rural properties around this proposal are owned by a large farming estate, with tenants unsure whether they should speak up for fear of landlord retribution.

Due to this there is far more ill feeling in the community about this proposal than is represented by written feedback.

Together as a community will fight to save our surroundings and our proud sense of being.