

Section 51 advice

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Representation by

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I live in the village of [REDACTED] and am concerned that the Planning Inspectorate should be considering a project covering a huge area of productive agricultural land, which with the other 3 schemes would amount to over 16 square miles of the Trent Plain. The four projects completely surround 30 villages and therefore should be considered together as a complete entity by the inspectorate, rather than separately. It is predicted we will lose hundreds of square miles of arable land in Lincolnshire from the Wash and low-lying areas of the East Coast due to rising sea levels, despite the UK's efforts to reduce CO2 emissions of which we contribute only 1% globally and therefore unlikely to make a significant difference. The fertile farmland in North Notts and West Lincs has fed the nation since Roman times and has become known as the 'Breadbasket of Britain'. The estimated loss of grain production from the areas being taken by the entire solar projects would easily exceed 50,000 tonnes. Although the quality of the land has been claimed by the developer to be of lower agricultural classification, which I understand has been disputed, the clay content retains moisture during periods of drought, often resulting in higher crop yields than land in the highest category. During the darkest days of WWII, when every available acre was under the plough and every square foot of land was under the spade, we almost starved when the UK population was around 20 million less than it is today. Events in Ukraine have demonstrated the UK's vulnerability to supplies of imported grain and the effect the conflict has had on the price of cereals. I am also concerned about the negative visual impact on the landscape due to the huge areas of glass covered land involved and the height of the panels, which at 4.5 metres high are impossible to hide with a hedge. These structures would not only be visible nearby but also from the viewing area on the high ground at the side of the A1033 and from the B1398 which have commanding views over the Trent Plain. The development would change the whole character of the environment from a rural and pastoral landscape into one of the largest industrialised areas in the world, with a significant negative impact on the rich wildlife which currently inhabit the fields, ditches, and hedgerows. The land being appropriated is owned by landlords, many of whom do not live in the area and rent their land to tenant farmers, who stand to lose their livelihoods if these schemes are approved with a consequent loss of farming skills and agricultural output. There will thus be a reduction in employment in the area and an upheaval and migration of the resident population. Along with many of my neighbours, I take regular walks along the country lanes where these solar arrays are being considered and I anticipate there will be a negative effect on our welfare and wellbeing, which for many was the very reason we chose to live and remain here. The reflected glare from the solar arrays would be a hazard to motorists travelling on the B1398 and A1033. Aircraft such as the Red Arrows who use the airspace above the Trent Valley along with commercial and private aircraft and gliders flying from local airfields would also be at risk. Sturton by Stow is only 1 mile away from the picturesque village of Stow, where St Mary's Minster is one of the oldest Saxon Churches in England. The home of St Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, who commenced the building of Lincoln Cathedral, lies at the side of the A1033 old Roman road only a short distance from our village. The scale of the Cottam project would dwarf and surround much of our local and national cultural heritage. I understand at northern latitudes, Solar panels have an average annual load factor of only 9% to 11% of the maximum designed output used by the developer to justify the scheme. Due to its low contribution to electricity capacity, even with battery storage it is questionable if the net benefit to the nation is worthwhile when the loss of productive agricultural land is considered. By comparison, wind turbines have a far smaller footprint and a load factor at least 3 times that of solar. Surely, Solar PV Power Generation is most effective and efficient at the point of use on the roofs of domestic, commercial, and industrial buildings, where it can be utilised to reduce power consumption, thereby avoiding power loss due to transmission and transformation to 400kv. The upheaval of installing an estimated 0.3 million tonnes of solar panels, together with cable connections, inverters and transformers will be extreme and cause a great deal of inconvenience with access to local communities and restriction of essential and emergency services along roads which are already challenging. Also, using the connections to the 400kv grid at Cottam and West Burton would take up the spare capacity for any later installation of continuous uninterruptible sources of power such as the Roll-Royce Small Modular Nuclear Reactors for which these two power stations are ideally positioned and already provided with the necessary infrastructure and cooling water. The sourcing of an estimated 0.3 million tonnes of solar panels from countries such as China also raises ethical considerations. It is estimated that the amount of global carbon dioxide released during material sourcing, processing, manufacture, and transport of the panels to site would amount to 0.4 million tonnes CO2. The surface water runoff from the huge areas of solar arrays also is a source of concern considering that the landscape is flat and relies on land drains to deliver water into small streams and rivers. Sturton by Stow already suffers inundation of its access roads during periods of heavy rain when the transfer pumps from the River Till into the Fosdyke Navigation Canal are shut down by the Environment Agency and the North Witham Drainage Board. This is done to prevent water in the Fosdyke Navigation Canal flowing back into the Brayford Pool in the centre of Lincoln contributing to flooding when the River Witham is in spate. During heavy rain, the runoff from hectares of solar panels inclined at 35 degrees will be spectacular, entering the land drains leading to the River Till without the natural attenuation of the soil and exacerbate an already serious flooding problem on Fleets Road which becomes impassable. I have serious concerns about the restriction of access to remote communities by emergency services due to the increased flood risk. Although Cottam and West Burton Power Stations cover a huge surface area when land reclaimed from the disposal of its fly ash is considered, no effort has been made by IGP to approach the owners to site Solar arrays nearest to the connections to the National Grid, although in every sense these are brownfield sites. I understand there have been incidents with fire and explosions of large battery storage units much smaller than those being proposed for the Cottam Project and the other three Projects and therefore wish to express my concerns regarding the safety, fire risk, release of toxic fumes and environmental pollution from these huge installations. There appears to have been a complete lack of a suitable and sufficient environmental assessment of the effects on the animals, birds, amphibians and reptiles in the surrounding fields and hedgerows. Neither has there been any study done to quantify the effects on the aquatic invertebrates in the agricultural drains and rivers such as the River

Till, which form part of the food chain for fish, wading birds amphibians and reptiles. Migratory birds such as Canada Geese and swans use the fields in this area and there is a risk that the huge areas of glass may be mistaken for water by the birds who would injure themselves by attempting to land as has already happened in other parts of the world. Roger Jones, CChem, MRSC