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Dear Sir/Madam

PLANNING ACT 2008 – SECTION 89 AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE RULES) 2010 – RULE 8 APPLICATION BY COTTAM ENERGY PARK LTD FOR A DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER

Following the Planning Inspectorates Rule 8 letter dated 19th September 2023 the County Council submits its written representation in respect of this application. The Council provided initial comments in relation to this application in its Relevant Representation response in March 2023.

This written representation provides an updated position following consideration of the application by the Council's Planning and Regulation Committee on 2 October 2023. It has been prepared in accordance PINS advice note 8.4 and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Local impact Report submitted by the Council on 17 October 2023. The Local Impact Report was brought to the Council's October Planning Committee who resolved to approve the Impact Report for submission and based on the findings of this impact report the Council resolved to submit a **formal objection** to the application on the following grounds.

"The County Council notes whilst the project would produce clean renewable energy that would support the nations transition to a low carbon future and deliver significant biodiversity net gain benefits through the creation of mitigation and enhancements as well as other more limited positive impacts (as identified within our Local Impact Report), these positive impacts are not outweighed by the negative, some significant, impacts that arise given the overall size and scale of the development both on its own and in combination with the three other NSIP scale solar projects proposed in this geographical area as follows:

- A permanent and negative impact upon the landscape character and the appearance of the area as a consequence of changes to the current arable agricultural land use. In view of the conclusions from the Council's assessment of the landscape and visual impact of the development negative impacts have been identified for the site some of which may be mitigated by the production of further evidence but the cumulative

impact when combined with the other proposed solar farms in this location is negative which results in a conclusion that the scheme would be contrary to Local Plan Policies S5, S14 and S16.

- There is a tension in relation to Best and Most Versatile(BMV) agricultural land given that a proportion of the energy park area comprises land in Grade 3a. The National Policy Statements direct that previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land, industrial land and non-BMV land should be developed as a preference, and policies S14 and S67 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan seek to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land so as to preserve opportunities for food production and the continuance of the agricultural economy. National food security is equally important as energy and the Council has grave concerns about the removal of large areas of agricultural land out of food production for solar farms. This loss is not only at a local level but significant when considered in-combination with the loss of land from other NSIP scale solar developments that are also being promoted and considered across Lincolnshire contrary to Policy S67.
- Negative impacts on the users of Public Rights of Way in and around the proposed development as a consequence of changes to the visual appearance of the area and views from these routes and uncertainty around the disruption that will be caused resulting from the diversion of footpaths and the re-instatement treatment proposed contrary to Policies S48 and S54.
- Due to the level of uncertainty as a result of the restricted amount of trial trenching that has been undertaken across the Order Limits there is a distinct possibility that archaeological remains of more than local/regional significance could be disturbed and damaged. Consequently it is not possible to adequately assess the impacts on such assets and therefore the requirements of Policy S57 have not been met.
- That if the Secretary of State grants the Development Consent Order this should be time limited to 40 years as is currently proposed to be unrestricted, although the Environment Statement that accompanies the application, only assess the impact of the development for a 40 year period. If consented a comprehensive and appropriate package of Community Benefits is secured and delivered to compensate for the identified negative impacts that the proposed development would cause to the communities affected by this project.”

Yours faithfully

Neil McBride
Head of Planning