

ID: 20037189

COTTAM SOLAR PROJECT - DEADLINE 1 – 17TH OCTOBER 2023

OPEN FLOOR HEARING TUESDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER 2023 – LINCOLNSHIRE SHOWGROUND

ORAL SUBMISSION SUMMARY

See Part 1 – APPENDICES 1A & 1B – Flood photographs attached which forms part of this submission

I have witnessed flooding of my village again and again including the main A1500 where the River Till runs beneath it. The primary school has had to close during such times. When the fields and roads around the Cottam 1 scheme were last flooded residents, including me, had to abandon their cars on the outskirts of the village, as the police closed roads. All driveable routes to our home, which is on high ground, were inaccessible. There is much photographic evidence to validate such flooding over the years included with this submission.

Bransby Horses Home, also on the same flood plain was severely affected when a number of fields belonging to the charity were under flood water in November 2019. They had to move 100 of the 450 animals to an alternative site, a number of planned fundraising events were cancelled and they suffered losses of about £200,000. The flood water rendered these field unable to support grazing for the horses.

There is the emotional distress when a home is flooded, the wildlife lost, the River Till, fields and roads no longer visible as they become part of the flood plain. Hedges under water, the village seat at the junction of Fleets Road/Thorpe Lane under water as the River Till and dykes fail to cope with the volume. Refer to four aerial view images attached, A, B, C and D at Appendix 1B above.

The River Till is classified as a main river although a tributary of the River Witham. It runs through the villages of Bransby, Thorpe le Fallows and across the fields to Ingham Road on the outskirts of Stow but, more importantly, right through the centre of the Cottam 1 scheme. Island Green Power, at their Consultation phase, said the brownfield land at the site of the decommissioned Cottam Power Station was unsuitable for their Cottam / West Burton Solar Projects because of the risk of flooding, yet they are proposing the Cottam 1 solar project is situated on land with a long flood history in the village which I live and adjoining villages. WHY ?

Following flooding of the High Street and properties in Sturton by Stow during 2007 the Internal Drainage Board installed a flood relief dyke to the immediate east and north of the village in order to combat flooding and hold water for slow release into the River Till. However, this did not prevent flooding of the village, surrounding villages and Bransby Horses Home fields and stable yard during 2019.

See Part 2 - APPENDIX 2 - Hedgerows and photographs attached which form part of this submission

The Cottam scheme alone indicates in the draft DCO the removal of 55 kilometers (35 miles) of hedgerows or more and the same for West Burton Solar. WHY ?

It is folly to remove established 30+ year old hedges and replant with bare root whips that will take 15 years or more to establish in an attempt to disguise or mask millions of solar panels. Neither could it lessen our awareness of the whole scheme when driving, walking or cycling and generally just enjoying nature, the peace, the inner calm and feeling of freedom the countryside brings. Once the leaves have dropped from the native hedgerows the entire scheme would still be a visible eyesore for half its lifetime. Pray tell me where does the word 'screening' actually fit into the narrative ? On the one hand we have the Government seeking to improve hedgerow protections with a Consultation launched in June 2023 to help meet commitment to support farmers to create or restore 45,000 miles of hedgerows by 2050 and on the other these four NSIP solar schemes removing them.

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Hedgerows make an incredible contribution to halting biodiversity decline and tackling climate change. They are crucial for climate adaptation and storing carbon. Hedgerows are the very essence of our countryside, they are important boundary features, help to manage livestock, slow soil erosion and water run-off, and support crop pollinators for food production. They also provide vital resources for mammals, birds and other species. They act as wildlife corridors – allowing species to move between isolated habitats and can also harbour beneficial insects that predate crop pests, thereby supporting an integrated approach and they add to the beauty of our Lincolnshire countryside. They are the countryside.

There is so much wildlife in this area – local residents have photographed / witnessed - Barn Owls, Tawny Owls, Long tailed Tits, Kestrels, Great Tits, Red Kites, Chiffchaff, Linnet, Brown Hares, Long-eared bats, Pipistrelles, Hedgehogs, Roe Deer, Muntjac Deer, Butterflies, Dragonflies, Moths, Common Toads, Frogs, Lizards, Grass snakes, resident Swans, Canadian Geese, Badgers, Fox the list is never ending. The fields and hedgerows are their homes on the proposed Cottam and West Burton solar project sites. WHY destroy the habitat and wildlife already there ? The swans reside on the fields for several weeks every year.

We must protect and regenerate their existing habitat for the wildlife to prosper into the future not remove and replant which would lead to a bio-diversity net loss not net gain. Hedgerows are the 'reservoirs of life'.

The communities of 30 villages will be affected, (including mine which will be completely surrounded and overwhelmed North, South, East and West for miles) whichever road I travel daily and also along the narrow, inter-twining country lanes between these villages. It is unimaginable having to consider living with this level of industrialisation of 10,000 acres of countryside for 365 days of the year for up to 60 years. No escape, encircled, imprisoned by four solar projects of this enormity a few miles from each other with all the horrendous hardware, whichever direction we look as Cottam, West Burton and Gate Burton are going through the examination process now and Tillbridge solar soon to follow. These four schemes are collaborating on the cable route, possibly more and really should be considered as ONE.

Notwithstanding any of the aforementioned there is loss of food and crop production when there is food scarcity both Nationally and globally, loss of amenity, cultural heritage impact and tourism, effects on the economy including jobs and those businesses associated with agriculture and much more. As not all of the land in the UK is suitable for growing crops we should be protecting the land which is.

No-one has ever lived with solar long term where they are surrounded with 7,000,000 panels, security fencing, CCTV, dangerous BESS batteries the size of shipping containers, sub stations and associated paraphernalia in a populated area – what do we really know of such EMF effects or other effects on people and wildlife on this scale. How can any of you here today be absolutely certain we will not be harmed ?

Solar farms on the immense scale of these four projects combined are away from populated areas in other parts of the world. Many are in deserts – Bhadla Solar Park in India - the largest solar park in the world in 2023 and covering an area in the region of 56 square kilometres (13,838 acres) is in a remote area of desert, quite inhospitable for human habitation. India is a huge subcontinent compared to the United Kingdom, yet in a race to net zero we are proposing to use 10,000 acres of our finite land for ground mounted solar panels, 3,838 acres less than India's Bhadla Solar Park !! We are a tiny island - but there has been a mad rush to destroy Lincolnshire's agricultural farmland and the countryside with inefficient, colossal scale, ground mounted solar. There are eleven NSIP solar schemes coming forward for examination in Lincolnshire amounting to 26,000 acres of agricultural land.

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With the right initiatives from the government, we can turn the rooftops of warehouses and car parks across the country into clean power stations, cutting carbon emissions, slashing energy bills, and protecting our countryside. A government target to ensure that a significant portion of newly generated solar power comes from rooftops will be critical to generating power closer to people's homes and businesses, which is also a key way to ensuring the transition to net-zero is more local thus avoiding large swathes of the UK's countryside being used for ground-mounted solar. Cottam, West Burton, Gate Burton and Tillbridge Solar will cover an area the size of the City of Lincoln and beyond.

It is vital that the government supports a national rooftop solar target - ensuring that at least 60% of the national target of 70GW of solar by 2035 (as recommended by the Net Zero Review) is delivered through the lowest cost opportunities for rooftop solar installations on new build homes, commercial buildings, hospitals and car parks.

What I and others know is Cottam 1, 2 and 3, and the further three solar projects, are causing mental anguish, stress and in turn physical harm to residents in these affected communities already.

I raised the question of Protective Provisions at this Hearing which the Applicant did not respond to. See Part 3 – APPENDIX 3 attached which forms part of this submission.

I concur fully with Interested Parties (IPs) in attendance at this Open Floor Hearing who spoke so compellingly against the Cottam Solar Project and cumulative effects of Gate Burton, West Burton and Tillbridge Solar projects. I support fully the relevant representations submitted by IPs to the Examining Authority, including 7000 Acres and Mr Roger Jones who oppose this solar scheme and believe the statements they have made are factual and honest. I strongly object to Cottam 1, 2 and 3.

P A Mitchell

9 October 2023

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COTTAM SOLAR

**Part 3 of Oral Submission raised at Open Floor Hearing on Tuesday 5th September 2023 –
APPENDIX 3 – Protective Provisions
Deadline 1 – 17 October 2023**

I, and no doubt many other Interested Parties, wish to know the full extent of the collaboration between all four solar schemes named below that we and the examination process should be made aware of ?

It has been confirmed during the examination process that the schemes Cottam, West Burton, Gate Burton and Tillbridge Solar are all collaborating on the cabling route and all are retaining the same legal firm, Pinsent Masons to act on their behalf.

A reciprocal protective provisions arrangement is confirmed in each of the Applicants Relevant Representations for the Gate Burton Solar project. As the wording is ambiguous the following requires clarification :-

- (i) Does this reciprocal protective provision specifically relate to only the cabling route ?
- (ii) If no, does this mean that the four companies can collaborate on a number of different areas of their proposed schemes, without specifically setting out what these additional areas of collaboration are OR,
- (iii) If yes, is a separate reciprocal protective provision arrangement required for each and any additional area of collaboration between any or all of the four solar schemes either under discussion now or in future during the examination process and are these collaborations recorded in the examination process ?
- (iv) If so, then at what point does wide ranging collaboration of this nature between the parties of the four solar schemes activate these individual applications as ONE solar scheme ?

P A Mitchell

9 October 2023