

Representation on behalf of Mr & Ms Hill

Location

Mr & Ms Hill are owners of agricultural land which is situated in open countryside, west of the A156 High Street, Marton, (Land Plan Sheet Nos. 12, Plots 12/9 & 12/18).

The Site sits within Flood Zones 2 & 3 identified by Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning.

Background

Mr Hill has held long-term plans since the age of 18 to have an agricultural business. Mr & Ms Hill bought this 15 acre area of land to realise this long held dream. They also bought a further 23 acre field in the area in tandem to help develop the agricultural business. Mr Hill is the 5th generation of his family to live in the village and wants to remain and grow the family business for the future and future generations.

The land currently has a crop of sugar beet growing in it which will go to the British Sugar factory at Newark. This is a much needed crop. During last year's weather conditions, the sugar beet crop across Europe was impacted. Locally grown food is needed by us all.

Mr Hill has worked this land to bring it back into food production. Prior to Mr & Ms Hill's ownership the land was not utilised for approximately a ten year period. Therefore, Mr & Ms Hill's agricultural business is viable and growing. Moving forward they want to develop and expand their agricultural business further.

To this extent Mr Hill sought planning permission for the erection of 2 agricultural storage buildings alongside the access to this field to house machinery and equipment. These buildings each have a footprint of 64 sqm together with a permeable hardstanding.

Planning Permission

Planning Permission was granted January 2023 by West Lindsey District Council.

Prior to this Mr Hill & Ms Hill met with the Applicants representatives.

Unfortunately, both Mr & Ms Hill have felt humiliated and intimidated by the Applicants representatives. On one occasion Mr Hill was laughed at by the Applicants representatives, saying 'You haven't got planning permission yet'.

They have also been repeatedly told by the Applicants representatives that the land in question will be compulsory purchased.

West Lindsey District Council received an objection from Pinsent Masons regarding Mr Hill's Planning Application in which they wrote that they met Mr Hill on site and that as such they and would seek an extension of time to his planning application.

Mr Hill, then wrote to the Case Officer to say he did not want an extension of time.

It appeared to both Mr & Ms Hill, that the Applicant sought to unduly influence the planning process without his consent.

Mr Hill & Ms Hill wishes to draw the conduct of the Applicant to the ExA's attention as it is intimidating and as such represents relevant evidence for the ExA to consider in terms of the agreements being presented to them and how they have been obtained by the Applicant.

Notwithstanding, Mr & Ms Hill have endeavoured to engage in dialogue with the Applicants representatives and to that extent have offered a Wayleave or Lease of their land by way of accommodating the Applicant's needs.

However, Mr Hill has been told that the Applicant is seeking an Easement only.

It appears to Mr & Ms Hill that if the proposed development is 'temporary' (albeit 60 years), then a wayleave or lease agreement would suffice. Mr & Ms Hill are unsure why the Applicants need a permanent Easement agreement.

The Gate Burton Solar Projects representatives are now considering offering a lease agreement to Mr & Ms Hill, in correspondence dated 31st October 2023. Therefore, Mr & Ms Hill request that this Applicant does the same. This will then enable them to have some long term assuery that the land in question is returned to their ownership.

In addition, Mr Hill & Ms Hill, intend (with the appropriate Planning permission) to apply for other agricultural buildings to develop their local business. The presence and extent of the cabling for all four NSIP projects will in reality prevent Mr & Ms Hill from carrying out their agricultural business plans and use of the land.

Finally, it is understood that, Tillbridge Solar are seeking use of an alternative field adjacent to Mr & Ms Hill's, therefore, they ask why this Applicant cannot also do the same and use this alternative available site.

Mr & Ms Hill do not want compensation, they want their land to use and enjoy.

Mr & Ms Hill believe their Human Rights will be affected by the proposals and that the Applicant does not have a compelling case.

Summary of Oral Submissions post Applicant's Response to statement

Mr & Ms Hill notified the Applicant and the Planning Inspectorate that they were not available for negotiation over a period of time due to a family bereavement. The Applicant inferred at the CAH1 that Mr & Ms Hill were not engaging in the process of the negotiation. This statement is entirely misleading and misrepresentative of the situation and is inaccurate and offensive to Mr & Ms Hill and as such should be redacted from the recordings and typescript of this Hearing.

Mr & Ms Hill do not want compensation. They want the free enjoyment of land they already own.

Mr & Ms Hill have long held dreams to develop their land and business for the future of their family and local community needs. However, to accommodate the Applicant, Mr & Ms Hill have offered a Lease agreement only. The Gate Burton Solar Project is negotiating with Mr & Ms Hill along these terms therefore they hope the Applicant for the Cottam Solar Project can do the same for consistency.

When they purchased the land at Auction, there were no details of the proposed scheme in the land pack and their solicitors did not inform them of the proposed solar schemes. Therefore, they had no prior knowledge of the Cottam Solar Project.

The Applicant recommended the use of a Land Agent or solicitor at which point the Applicant was advised that Mr Hill did not believe such representatives would be impartial if they were paid by the Applicant. (Subsequently, Mr Hill has also been advised by a Land Agent that they have to operate within the terms of negotiation as set by the Applicant). However, it was agreed in the Hearing, to pass on this recommendation and offer of paying for such an agent to Mr & Ms Hill.