CSP Site Visit and Hearings w/c 4th December 2023.

Firstly, thank you both for visiting North farm on the 4th of December. Although the visibility was poor, I hope you were able to see how close and dominating this proposal would be for us and the undeniable blight on our family home and the unfair treatment of a rural minority. If you could not instantly see this then visibility was indeed too poor, and I invite you back at your convenience. Please see my WR for photos and more information.

Below. Figure 15.9: Sensitive Receptor Location Plan from the June PEIR document.

What this map also shows are areas of solar panel exclusion as agreed during consultation and considers our home (R24) equally with other isolated properties in the area, such as Fillingham Grange to the East (R28) and Low Farm to the Southeast (R35 & R43). <u>However, this is not the reflected in the final plan!</u>



Hearings

Firstly, I must comment on the Applicants numerous "impartial specialists" and their blatant and consistent narrative, which was that this and the other 3 solar NSIPs in the immediate area would bring significant benefits and be of no detriment to the area. This solar utopia was promoted by all without exception. I am sure these people would argue black is white!

In the real world, the truth would in fact be dystopia. On a scale never seen before in this country. Selling vast industrialised areas in this way for such little gain makes me doubt some people's humanity. In fact, the stark difference in judgements has been clearly highlighted during the week's hearings. If Ground mounted solar on this scale was so fantastic, then why the overwhelming opposition? The applicant and their allies are delusional about both impact and capabilities of this scheme.

My Comments and submissions.

ISH2.

Agriculture and soils.

The Applicant stated when discussing BMV classification, that the land being wet during Autumn and Winter meant that the ground could not be accessed by heavy farm machinery which would cause an untold number of soil problems including compaction and smearing, resulting in increased flooding issues etc... and cultivation would increasingly have to wait until Spring. I understand this and I have no doubt this can indeed happen. However, crops are often sown directly after the harvest and other soil types suffer similar seasonal issues of which the farmer would work around.

My reply to this weak argument, is that for the exact same reasons mentioned, would the construction and maintenance work on this scheme also halt during the wetter months to safeguard the soil structure and prevent increased flood risk?

The heavy and wet land in this area, as stated by the Applicant's impartial soil expert, would not be conducive to sheep welfare, areas for livestock need to be chosen carefully in this region, requiring frequent rotation. Hence this being an arable landscape, famed for growing cereals. Lincolnshire is after all "the Breadbasket of the UK." It is madness even to contemplate using arable land for sheep grazing. We have enough grassland on poor and free draining soils already in this country.

Any meaningful agricultural practice would obviously cease at the CSP. There is no requirement for three thousand or cumulative ten thousand acres of extra sheep grazing in this area.

The notion of serious sheep farming should not be given weight here and using sheep as a tool to keep the brambles at bay is <u>not</u> a sheep farming business.

Land lost to solar here and across the country will be of catastrophic proportions, solar plants are not an appropriate use of land. The 3a BMV threshold is stated in planning policy and is given serious consideration but so is Brownfield site use and this seems to be given little consideration? High quality 3b land is being ridden over roughshod. The loss of any arable land puts undeniable pressure on what remains. With around half the UK's agricultural land located on flood plains which may be lost to permanent or intermittent flooding either by extreme weather events or by rising sea levels. It seems hypocritical to be wasting good farmland on solar and at the same time exacerbating local flooding issues with solar panels covering the size of a city. The solar panels would be like a metropolis of un-guttered rooftops with the concentrated rainwater falling straight to the ground. The flash flood risk would be compounded many times over.

Claiming that after 60 years the land could return to agriculture is nonsense. I doubt after six decades there will be a renewed need for agriculture. This will be classed as previously developed land with a Grid connection. I think we all know this land will be used for industry in perpetuity, in essence a very large brownfield site.

Another comment made by the Applicant about the solar scheme's land returning to agriculture, whereas land used for housing could not. My issue with this statement is that affordable housing is a national requirement, but 3000 acres of solar panels generating an unreliable and tiny amount of electricity is <u>not</u>!

Landscape and Visual.

The Applicant bizarrely stated that the landscape would be enhanced by the mitigation measures and not one property would be negatively impacted by solar apparatus after year 15.

I can tell you and hopefully you will have seen, even with the best growing conditions and no planting failures this would not be the case in this landscape.

My home would be thoroughly degraded by the current proposal and all that have visited are horrified by the scale of the plans and agree.

The sloping nature of the land surrounding us would require hedges of up to 10 metres in height. This would never happen in my lifetime and the character of the area would be unsympathetically changed. Today we had the Applicant saying **significant benefits** and the Council's specialist across the floor saying **significant harms**! Which one is in the real world? No amount of billowing hedges or saplings planted could counter over a million 15 foot high solar panels. It is a ridiculous argument. Visual impact would clearly be immense and should be of utmost concern on a land use change of this magnitude. I do not think waiting 15 years for mitigation is acceptable either. If this period is required it surely shows poor site selection and design. The 4.5m panels are not helpful in this process, covering such vast areas of the countryside will be impossible to screen and the visual impact significant and increasing during the Winter when foliage is lost. A fundamental concern is that due to increasing numbers of browsing animals in the area, saplings would not stand a chance. I have hands on experience of 20 years trying to establish hedgerows and scrubland here. Unless the area has extraordinary mammal exclusion provisions, new planting with tree guards will not be a success. This must be fully considered.

The Sunnica scheme in Cambridgeshire propose 2.5m/8ft high panels. 4.5m/15ft proposed for the CSP is nearly twice the size, this just cannot be allowed. The Secretary of State has recently raised concerns over the visual impact of Sunnica. The CSP would be a far more imposing scheme.

I left the hearing today quite depressed. The Applicants arrogant claims that the industrialisation of our region could only enhance it, implied that we live in an unattractive and ecologically deficient area and these projects would considerably improve this. I wholeheartedly disagree and I think that the people that live here and without a financial agenda will be the true judges of that.

I, for one wish to maintain this wonderful natural and productive semi natural agricultural landscape that I chose to live in, I do not wish to lose vast and unproportional swathes of farmland to an energy folly promoted without context and backed by Net Zero threats.

10,000 acres is the size of Lincoln and its boroughs, a criminal waste of land!

The Applicant states that the solar panels shown in photomontages are worst case scenario 4.5m. They are evidently closer to 3.5m and do not represent the immense environmental impact larger panels would have.

Below, Photomontage C6.4.8.14.76 (year1) Showing North and South sides of Willingham Road. The panels are not even close to 4.5m in height, which would be very close to the height of the pole transformer. (see photos below)







Above is a photograph of me with a 4.5m gauge stick in two separate positions, one to the North of Willingham Road and one to the South of Willingham Road. This represents a stark difference to the Applicants photomontage C6.4.8.14.76, which clearly shows panels a good metre shorter.



Photomontage C6.4.8.14.33 Showing unrealistic hedge density and background tree sizes. This would not happen in a 15-year period. The 4.5m Panels would be still clearly visible.



In the same field as C6.4.8.14.33. Myself with a 4.5m high gauge stick in the same position as the proposed hedgerow. Clearly showing the true horrors of a 4.5m panel. 4.5m would block almost everything behind it when viewed from eye level, as clearly shown. 4.5m is nearly 3x the height of an average person.

Sir, I hope this shows how deceptive the Applicant has been about how these photomontages represent worst case scenario... true 4.5m would be significantly worse than shown, panels of this size are not fit for the British countryside.

I am sure the Applicant will continue to argue as they did in the hearing, stating worst case scenario panels are shown. This again shows disrespect for the countryside and the public and I ask for this serious issue to be addressed?



IGP consultation booklet shows solar arrays of proportions many would consider acceptable and typical of a UK solar farm. The use of low level panels as recommended by both BRE and Solar Energy UK are a world apart from the 4.5m behemoths being imposed on the West Lindsey countryside. The unsuspecting public have been deceived again and many will still think this is what they will get.

ISH4.

Cumulative effect, climate change.

There is no national urgency for an extra **0.17%** electrical generation from the CSP or an additional **0.15%** from the West Burton, Gate Burton and the Tillbridge solar schemes.

When Cottam and West Burton power stations finally closed, the UK lost **8%** of its generating capacity. These contextually small amounts of solar generation are a mere drop in the ocean and therefore are of no critical importance. We cannot continue on this trajectory.

The tiny contribution by these solar projects would further diminish over time due to increasing national demand and the forecast of further peak solar curtailment. Small power outputs mean small carbon savings and long carbon payback periods.

These schemes using grid connections available near the end of the decade, make them neither urgent nor part of a clear energy/land use strategy, we need more power.

Mining operations exploiting the poor and the coal fired generation powering up the solar production line abroad is nothing but a backwards step for humanity and the climate.

What it is, is an over simplified attempt at decarbonising the electricity sector with shortcomings furtively glossed over. The lobbyists have done their job well.

I do not think climate change, the energy crisis or feeding the nation are being addressed seriously here and therefore I do not think this approach to solar development has a justifiable case, the harms caused being far greater than the benefit.

With a further 56GW of installed solar capacity on the horizon (at an average 10% yield) and a blatant disregard for rooftop and brownfield site use, means that the UK would lose a further unacceptable 280,000 acres of land to these ineffective schemes and this would still only provide about 4% of our future electrical needs. We will run out of land first if we follow this reckless path!

The criminal land use inefficiencies of solar would hamper more important Net Zero and domestic projects that can only be realised on land. Not to mention increased imports and their associated carbon footprints.

Solar plants would industrialise the UK on an unprecedented scale.

Britain's exposed position in the north-east Atlantic makes it one of the best locations in the world for wind power generation, and the shallow waters of the North Sea host several important offshore wind farms yielding up to 50%.

Britain, however, is not suited to ground mounted solar due to the land competition of a small island and its low solar irradiance.

One size does not fit all!

Lastly, to achieve this large increase of electrical generation required for the UK to decarbonise and to play its part in the climate change issue, we need to use higher yielding methods, which is likely in part to come from small Modular nuclear reactors and potentially nuclear fusion. Tying the Supergrid up with ineffective low yielding solar schemes for 60 years is shortsighted.

It is clear that when looking at the bigger climate change picture, which must be done. That large scale ground mounted solar has a negative effect in this country.

I cannot seriously comment on the Applicants cumulative climate change claims compared to the other West Lindsey solar scheme's more realistic stance.

I found it confusing and extremely contradictory, as many of the claims have been this week.

Cumulative effect, general.

With 11 solar NSIPs proposals covering 26,000acres of land in this county is disproportionate, but 4 in West Lindsey alone and covering 10,000 acres is totally unreasonable on communities and on the open landscape chosen. It is the equivalent to 10 "Longfield's" within in a 10km radius!

600,000 acres could be lost to solar nationwide, as indicated on the National Grid TEC register...I realise this figure is just a potential but within this vast number of applications there will be acceptable sites and others that are just a massive land grab such as this one.

Visual impact would be immense here, both from viewpoints and when moving through the area. We would be getting the largest and tallest combined solar complex forced upon us, and one that is the furthest away from any grid connection.

The 4 giant solar schemes in this small part of West Lindsey would mean 15% of the farmland and therefore our countryside would be gone, and the landscape ruined. This is the size of Lincoln and its boroughs and is unacceptable for one region.

This intensive level of land and landscape loss surely cannot be justified in developments that offer such poor returns. This is surely a fundamental planning requirement on projects of this scale.

11/12 solar NSIPs in Lincolnshire.

Gate Burton Energy Park Cottam Solar Project West Burton Solar Project Tillbridge Solar Project Beacon Fen Energy Park One Earth Solar Project Heckington Fen Solar Park Mallard Pass Solar Project Springwell Solar Farm Temple Oaks Renewable Energy Park Fosse Green Energy

Steeple Solar, adjacent to West Burton power station in Nottinghamshire.

Cumulative effect, transport.

Again, I have to disagree with the Applicants statement that construction traffic for 4 schemes possibly spanning a 5-7 year period, would be of low impact! Isolated homes and country lanes have been given little consideration and this again shows unfair treatment of the rural minorities that would be affected the most.

Travelling through the area during the construction period on a 10,000 acre building site would be a logistical nightmare and a serious safety issue on roads without footpaths.

ISH5 Draft DCO

Hedgerows.

As mentioned in my WR Important Hedgerows H154 and H155 bound my property on the South and West sides, they would provide visual screening from construction traffic and ultimately the potential industrialised nature of the surroundings, if this DCO were granted.

These hedges do not require inclusion into the DCO as there is no access required through them onto the proposed scheme and the verge width is adequate to accommodate wide loads. The access track to our property only has hedging on one side, so there is also ample space here. The inclusion of these Important Hedgerows in the plans is granting unnecessary powers to the Developer that would cause further harms to our lives and the environment. Knowing that hedges may be tampered with before any alternative steps are taken is just part of a lazy "carte blanche" approach to listing all hedgerows.

I ask for hedges H154 and H155 to be removed?

Summary.

This week's hearings were frustrating, with the constant false narrative of urgency, improvement, and significant benefit from start to finish from an army of "specialists" trying to distort the planning balance in their favour at every opportunity, on every topic and at every level.

I believe the case being made by the local communities against this solar scheme is a compelling one and the case made by the Applicant is not!

Firstly, the need to decarbonise the electricity generation sector and ultimately the whole of the UK is fully understood, but this has not been addressed correctly by the Applicant, yet it forms the basis of their "statement of need".

With the UKs annual electrical demand of 300 TWh, means that the estimated annual output of around 0.5 TWh for the CSP would only give a 0.17% contribution. With a predicted 3-4x increase of electrical demand, meaning this could increase to 1200 TWh, so the 0.17% would become a 0.04% contribution, combined with inevitable seasonal curtailment of solar, this infinitesimal amount would reduce even further. The effective generation of the CSP would be like a grain of sand on a beach that just keeps growing.

This tiny amount of low carbon generation is directly proportional to its decarbonisation contribution. It is therefore clear that this is minimal and that we need higher capacity electrical generation with greater benefit and land efficiency.

The Applicant may say that is why we need many more of these schemes. Indeed, they do say this, but at 2500+ acres each we would simply run out of land and still not address energy security and the daily and seasonal shortfalls of solar.

These shortfalls are over simplified, solved by the promotion of batteries, but with currently only around 2GWh of BESS in the UK and only about 50GWh worldwide, means that batteries will not and cannot realistically be the answer to solar's many shortcomings.

The UK alone would currently need up to 50GWh of batteries just to satisfy one hour of peak demand and around 1000GWh to provide 24hrs of backup. Batteries are not the Panacea. They are, however, a totally separate entity to the PV sites and a significant cash cow for the operator. Who will be buying low and selling high.

Limited batteries along with a vast and wasteful fleet of installed solar capacity on farmland, that is many times greater than its generating capacity, is more fingers crossed than a real solution. This quick and easy route is not even part of a wider strategy. It is a handicap to national aspirations.

BESS should be brownfield mounted or next to the Grid, as this is where for the majority it would be charged from.

The Applicant has no intentions of using/buying any brownfield land for this proposal.

EDF, who are the Cottam power station site owners, replied to an email about the potential use of the 600 acre brownfield site for solar. Their head of Thermal Generation replied with.

"There is still no sale agreed at Cottam and we have had no approach for land by any Solar companies."

Cottam has been for sale since 2019, with an obvious power generating legacy and adjacent to the Grid connection. Surely a priority site for electricity generation?

On 8 December, the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee published a report on the UK's preparedness and resilience to future food supply stresses or shocks caused by climate change and biodiversity loss.

The report calls on the Government to implement the following key measures:

- Publish the Land Use Framework and integrate food security as a central principle.
- Designate food security as a public good.
- Provide more clarity on its plans for baseline metrics in food sustainability.
- Publish a strategy for innovative food production technologies.

This report recognises the value of UK farmland and how it must be used effectively. The land use framework is to be published later this month.

The loss of between 280,000 and 600,000 acres of farmland to solar is insanity and has clearly been driven by solar lobbying of many years.

Land is a valuable and finite resource and people are starting to see that solar on farmland at this scale is wrong and that land use inefficiency at this level is unsustainable.

Low carbon thermal power plants of all types, together with wind turbines utilise a fraction of the land and generate many times more power. This is clearly the way ahead.

Loss of farmland and landscape destruction was blatantly argued as not to be an issue with this scheme. As mentioned earlier, the Applicant's delusional narrative backed up by so called professional opinion, tried to tip the planning balance in their favour at every opportunity.

The negatives of utility ground mounted solar are becoming more evident by the day, there is clearly still time to change the current trajectory and offramp to rooftop for the majority of solar schemes.

Key points of a compelling case to reject the Cottam Solar Project.

- The electrical output and corresponding decarbonisation contribution is far too low.
- The loss of so much farmland for 60 years is too high.
- The effects on visual impact and landscape would be significant.
- Mitigation would be ineffective and the maturation period far too long.
- Mental wellbeing risk is significant.
- Local opposition is extremely high.
- Rooftop and brownfield use has not been prioritised or seriously considered.
- The BNG is purely a theoretical exercise, with no guarantee of success.

Finally, please also consider the 3 current solar NSIPs of **Cleve Hill** which covers just under 1000 acres, **Little Crow** covering 600 acres and **Longfield** covering just over 1000 acres. All 3 are on contiguous sites instead of the sprawling, fragmented and more damaging nature of this project. Their size is large but not massive and the site selection means the Grid connection point is far closer than the 20km for this scheme. I believe these to be fundamental and important differences.

Thank you.

Cottam OFH2

The Cottam Solar Projects use of a high capacity 400kv grid connection in **2029** goes against the nations need for more electricity.

The use of one of the four spare connections at the Cottam Grid substation is a negative and restrictive move in the quest for more power to decarbonise the UK.

The UK could require **4x more power** in the coming decades.

This solar project's electrical output would become a mere **'rounding up'** error within these enormous figures and will do very little but selfishly displace many thousands of acres of much needed land.

As mentioned before, the Cottam Solar Project would inefficiently use one of four Grid connections, by utilising only about **15%** of the connection's full capacity. This would be a retrograde step that must not be understated. It is a waste of important national infrastructure at a time when generation levels need to increase at a rate never seen before.

These valuable high-capacity Grid connections need to be used effectively.

Nuclear energy for example would offer the large quantities of low carbon electricity we seek and would use brownfield sites or only cover a small footprint of land. I agree with the Atomic Energy Authority's comments regarding this matter. (24GW of installed nuclear power is 3x more generation output than 70 GW of installed solar.)

Promoting solar on farmland and using up all spare Grid connections is threatening the country's future ability to produce sustainable and reliable energy and food.

All forecasts clearly state much more power, not less or staying about the same!

Cottam power station in Nottinghamshire generated massive amounts of electricity and offered flexibility that supported the country's fluctuating demands over its 50 year life.

It also employed thousands of local people and provided well paid and highly skilled jobs.

It outperformed the CSP in all aspects and at all levels.

We would get none of this vast output from solar nor will we get generation demand response, both of which we inevitably need.

This solar plant would provide very little regarding employment. One of the many reasons why solar is promoted so readily is because it does not have the cost associated with paying local salaries. It is all for operator profit.

It provides no socioeconomic benefit to the area.

I take offense from consultation literature and promotion misinformation stating that the CSP would replace **30%** of the generation capacity of Cottam power station.

It would be a far smaller figure, at around **4% of the generation on 6x more land**. The public and the nation have been deceived.

I am certainly <u>not</u> suggesting the continued use of coal, but I object to being preached at for the urgent need for more power when low yielding solar is all that is being offered.

Solar power plants engulfing vast areas of farmland really are the "Emperor's new clothes."

But we see the truth and not the solar propaganda.

Sir, I hope it will be demonstrated during this process the many fundamental flaws regarding this proposal.

If our efforts do indeed fail and the local and national harm remain unseen, I do not think the following points are too much to ask. There must be a compromise.

- I suggest that we do not create high impact 'Solar Industrialised Zones' in the UK countryside. Such as the disproportional 10,000 acres proposed in this one area.
- We do not foolishly use up all the high-power Grid connections on Solar.
- We do not allow unprecedented 15ft high solar panels into our landscape.
- We introduce fair exclusion zones around all residential property.
- And that BESS, which is a totally separate entity. Shall be located safely and sensibly on brownfield sites or adjacent to the Grid connection that serves it.

Thank you.

Note.

I hope that by speaking today at the OFH2 does not dilute the commitments made by the Applicant earlier at the CAH. This is not personal; it is just my professional opinion of 37 years working in the Power industry.

As stated in my CAH submission we are grateful for the understanding shown by IGP after the CAH.

"Our home has not been afforded the same protections that other property and settlements in the area have been given. The close proximity of solar infrastructure around our isolated farmhouse together with a landscape change dominated by a sea of industrial solar panels would undeniably blight our home on a massive scale.

The quiet gated track that serves solely our property and the farmland beyond would become a busy and dangerous access road, with the privacy and security we currently enjoy lost along with it.

Giant solar arrays would be located right behind our house, using our own small woodland as partial screening, towering infrastructure this close would degrade this much used amenity and become an oppressive 15 ft wall of solar panels.

To the south, the vast expanse of sloping farmland would again be dominated by 15ft high solar panels virtually as far as the eye can see.

We built this house and home from scratch in 2004 using our own sweat and toil. We chose this area for its beauty; we certainly would not have chosen the centre of a vast dystopian energy folly. This was a life choice and has been a life's work for us. We are not millionaires but average people of average means.

As stated before, it is one thing to have a view spoilt in one direction but quite another to be surrounded N,S,E&W and having all views spoilt. This would be the destruction of the environment we chose to live in and an overwhelming blight on our homestead.

My family had taken some comfort in the fact that the Applicant had made mitigation promises. Most of these have now been broken.

Our home would be undeniably ruined by this scheme. I would rather be surrounded by houses than thousands of acres of posturing and ineffective solar panels.

At our lowest point we tried to sell, but when we disclosed the details of the proposed development, interest was understandably lost. We have now decided not to be driven out of our forever home! There is just no need for this victimisation when the Applicant has so much land at their disposal. We should not be financially compromised by this schemes impact. We currently live in beautiful isolation... Security fencing, CCTV, floodlights, warning signs, inverter buildings and monstrous panels would all be out of place here and are not a fair trade off for what we have today. Not to mention the aggravation caused by many years of construction. There seems no compromise from the developer. All our B&B plans are now on permanent hold!

This is nothing more than a land grab. I see no evidence of this land being selected on merit, more like a race to get ahead of the queue in this solar gold rush for grid connections. With solar panels an astonishing 20km from grid, the scheme clearly demonstrates poor design and associated mitigation. even the photomontages are inaccurate, and misleading.

Visual impact would be immense here and after 15 years would still be significant, quite possibly the same. I have planted native hedges nearly 20 years ago and they are still only a couple of metres high.

This is an unnecessary and crude proposal; it is not right for the country and certainly not right for residents. I do not see a compelling case!

I do not want our health and our much loved and heavily invested home ruining buy this truly insensitive proposal.

Cooperation with the Applicant has up to now not worked.

I expect at the very least that promises made during consultation are kept, as indicated in Map 2 of my WR, which also highlights fair solar free zones around other properties.

The lack of consideration has been deplorable. The total landscape change and associated blight on our home would be impossible to live with and nobody in this room could truthfully argue anything other!

Respectfully Sir, all I ask is that our home is protected as originally agreed during consultation and as indicated on the map below."



Above, Figure 15.9: Sensitive Receptor Location Plan from the June PEIR document.

What this map also shows is the areas where the solar panels to the North and South should have been removed as agreed during consultation and considers our home (R24) fairly with other isolated properties in the area.

This is not reflected in the final plans.

Our home would be the worst affected private property on this scheme. The farming estate properties have far better exclusion/buffers than us.

Summary

My wife and I are grateful that some of our concerns were acknowledged at the CAH and commitments made to finally address them.

The primary point acknowledged was the moving back of the solar arrays in Field A4 to align with Field A3 and thus "squaring off" the land parcel (see map) and providing us with meaningful and fair mitigation for our home and much used woodland area.

I also repeated my WR suggestion of possibly swapping mitigation areas around to accommodate this?

I would also like to highlight again our concerns regarding the track to our home, its surface maintenance and above all security issues. We have had almost sole use of the track with its lockable roadside gate, providing peace of mind for 20 years. Having much construction, maintenance, and security traffic at any time of day would be a massive reduction of this amenity and our standard of living.

Regarding the views to the South of our property which look directly over Willingham Road. These remain unaddressed. In this area, the solar panels would be mounted largely on sloping land of a 15 to 20 metre elevation, with a significant zone of visual influence. This vast expanse could never be effectively mitigated.

I am extremely grateful for Ms. Browning's understanding and compassion when my wife and I had a brief discussion afterwards.

I would appreciate confirmation of the Applicant's commitment to accommodate. After many months of despair, it would be a real weight off our minds to know that at least we now have a sensible buffer around our home.

Thank you.

Simon and Kate Skelton.