

Whitlock, Melissa

From: Alistair Wood <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 15 December 2023 15:58
To: Cottam Solar Project
Cc: Philip Raven; Alan Mugglestone
Subject: Position Statement of Blyton Park Driving Centre/LNT Aviation/LNT Group: Issue Specific & Compulsory Acquisition Hearings, COTTAM SOLAR PROJECT (05 Dec - 08 December 2023)
Attachments: Blyton Park Driving Centre Layout.pdf; Illustrative Site Layout Plan Cottam 3A.pdf
Categories: Deadline

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Good Afternoon,

It was understood that the Inspectors asked for a summary of representations in writing from all Affected Parties attending and participating at the Hearing. Equally he requested confirmation of any commitments made verbally on the part of the Applicants at the Hearing on 07 December at the Lincolnshire Showground.

This is the statement on behalf of Blyton Park Driving Centre, as part of the LNT Group of Companies and follows representations made by LNT, at the Issue Specific Hearing No.3 under the heading of Social & Economic Impacts; at the Compulsory Acquisition Hearing; and latterly within the Issue Specific Hearing No.5.

Blyton Park Driving Centre & LNT Land Interest

On a point of clarification, the LNT Group (Blyton Park Driving Centre) have a lease in relation to its unhindered use of the former Blyton Airfield, as identified in the attached drawing, until 28 February 2046. The current lease was for 32 years from 1 March 2014 and is not contracted out of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, so the tenant has a statutory right to seek an extension of the lease. This lease has not been recently renewed, as asserted by the Applicants representative at the Hearing on 07 December. In confirmation, the lease was assigned from the original tenant to LNT Aviation Limited (but the lease was not changed), when LNT Aviation acquired the business in 2017.

For all intents and purposes, the use of the former Airfield by Blyton Park Driving Centre is on a 'permanent' basis and as such, all rights pertaining to its established operating conditions, are required to be respected by the Applicants and their current development proposals. This is not the case at present.

Over a long period of time and from the advent of motor vehicle activity on the former airfield in the late 1950's (formalised in planning terms in the early 1990's), the current driving circuit has been used continuously over all this period to the present day. Throughout this period vehicle run-off areas from the circuit, to the south and east have been facilitated by the respective landowners and used by the Driving Centre continuously over this long and significant period.

The Driving Centre & LNT representatives made their views known that they were laying claim to lawful use of the run-off areas within adjacent fields from a planning point of view and asserting prescriptive rights to the use of these areas for this purpose from a legal perspective. On this basis, it is claimed that those areas within the bounds of the proposed development area that interfere with this important element of the operation of the Driving Centre - are unacceptable.

Wider Presentation of Issues & Representations.

Blyton Park Driving Centre is a long-established business operating on the full extent of what remains of the former Airfield, north-east of the village of Blyton. It provides one of only three such facilities in the country, offering

opportunity for high-speed driver training and practice. It is active almost every day throughout the year and is attended by up to some 13,100 drivers/25,000 visitors per annum (based on 2023 figures).

Blyton Park is acknowledged as an important element of the local economy within this part of West Lyndsey, directly employing 15-20 local people and making significant contributions to the sustainability of other local businesses, given the number of people it attracts to the area – such as local hotels, hostleries, and shops and not just in Blyton but within a much wider area.

Representatives of Blyton Park Driving Centre and LNT Group attended all the Hearings 05 - 08 Dec because of the very severe and potentially devastating impact that the currently proposed solar panel arrays would have in relation to the long established and very active driving centre use/business. It is clear tha the applicants have failed to give due consideration to the Driving Centres operating conditions, within their current assessment and development proposals.

The Driving Centre & LNT have sought to raise concerns with the Applicants directly over a period of months and despite an initial site visit by one member of the Applicants Team in early September, over the period since, there has been no meaningful communication over the issues raised and no material alteration of the proposed layout of the development, the illustrative scheme for which, was only first revealed to us, at the site meeting in early September.

The issues for the operating conditions of the Driving Centre are very significant, with very real and potentially dire consequences for drivers using the driving circuit and/or for the future operation of the current Driving Centre use. What's more, these issues and concerns evolved over the course of the Hearings, as the full extent and nature of the development was confirmed and that the Solar Panels would be expected to stand to a height of up to 4.5 metres was appreciated.

The Driving Centre/LNT concerns are threefold: -

- i) Proximity of the proposed Solar Panels to the Driving Circuit and relationship of these to the whole of the driving circuit.
- ii) Potential deflection of Noise from the activities at Blyton Park that have been actively and successfully managed in this respect, over a long period of years.
- iii) Concern about the impact of glint and glare from the solar panels relative to driving conditions on the circuit.

Proximity Issues

The proximity of the proposed solar panel arrays, immediately up to the southern and eastern edges of the driving circuit present extremely serious implications from a health & safety perspective in relation to usage of the driving circuit. This could result in potentially fatal impacts (i) for drivers using the circuit and/or (ii) from an on-going business and licensing perspective. This impact goes way beyond the realms of what may be considered as unneighbourly development and as such the proposed development as proposed at present, must be considered unacceptable, in so far as it relates to the Driving Centre.

Over the course of the Hearing, the position of the representatives of the Driving Centre and LNT evolved, with their understanding of the height, scale and extent of the solar arrays proposed in proximity to the driving circuit. In particular, the solar panels proposed within both land parcels, extending into the Driving Centre's operation from the south, would intrude within the operational area to the east of the circuit and obscure line of sight/vision from the elevated central control facility, of a large part of the southern portion of the circuit. This obscuring of line of sight/vision would occur in a way that arable crops grown within this land, never has and never would do. This is a further impact of very serious concern, attributable to the proposals, as portrayed at present and would also have extremely significant impacts relative to the operational conditions of the Driving Centre. This would be from health & safety and on-going business and licencing perspectives.

Potential Noise Deflection

This is an issue that also has potentially very serious consequences for the Driving Centre's operation, unless it can be offered suitable re-assurance and reliance on an assessment on the part of the Applicants. Noise from the activities on the Driving Circuit has been an on-going and very sensitive issue over the years, however, through positive monitoring and management in recent years, a relatively balanced and agreeable position has been reached with the local community and Authorities.

It is not addressed by the Applicants anywhere, as to whether the introduction of the extensive arrays of solar panels (effectively hard surfaces) in lieu of noise absorbent arable crop/land, will result in any reflection or deflection of noise, in a manner to the disadvantage of the Driving Centre and its operation, if this issue is not fully and properly addressed by the Applicants, which to date, as far as we aware, the attention given by the Applicants has been negligible.

Impact of potential Glint & Glare

While it is understood that this issue may have been sought to be addressed across the whole of the proposed development, it is very necessary for this issue to be specifically addressed in relation to the operating conditions of the Driving Centre at Blyton Park. Due to the extent of solar panel arrays, immediately up to the driving circuit to south and east and in view of the scale and number of the panels themselves, this is again a very serious concern for the operating conditions of the Driving Centre, and must be addressed in the consideration of the any Development Consent Order.

Despite having raised this issue in our earliest of representations, this matter has not been addressed by the Applicants and communication and re-assurances on this issue remain unsatisfactory. Any issues capable of adversely affecting the operating conditions of the Driving Centre must be taken seriously by the Applicants. The potential of not doing so, may result in driver fatality or business fatality, neither of which are acceptable consequences of the proposed development.

Summary & Conclusions

In summary, the representatives of the Driving Centre & LNT believe that the Applicants, as "Agent of Change" have not demonstrated within the Hearings that they have given suitable or due consideration to the operating conditions of Blyton Park Driving Centre. As such, the extent of the development, in so far as it relates to the Driving Centre is not acceptable and cannot be permitted in its current form.

While it was claimed at the Hearing by representatives of the Applicants that discussions were on-going, it is advised that the presence of Driving Centre & LNT representatives at the Hearings, was deemed imperative because communication was not on-going. Commitments were given during the Hearings that site meetings and discussions would be entered into by the Applicants and resolution of all our issues sought to be achieved. It is believed necessary that this commitment form part of the Applicants response in writing to the Inspectorate.

It was noted also that the lead Inspector requested a specific Addendum Report from the Applicants dealing with the issues raised and matters of impact relating to Blyton Park Driving Centre. A commitment is made here that the co-operation of representatives of the Driving Centre and LNT Group, will be offered within reason, to enable the Applicants a proper understanding and assessment of the issues concerned, to enable conclusions to be reached.

Our position, as it has evolved over the course of the Hearings 05 - 08 December, is now to seek a reasonable 'buffer zone' around the Driving Centre, through a clear and necessary reduction in the arrays of solar panels in proximity to the driving circuit. This is reasonably required to safeguard and protect the established Driving Centres operating conditions and still subject to satisfaction on the matters of noise deflection and glint & glare.

Finally, and under 'any other business' at the end of Fridays Hearing it was advised by the Driving Centre representative that: -

"On two occasions this week, the applicant's representatives have given off the record assurances with regard to the continued operation of our business and a solution will be found to have no impact, physical or financial, on our current long-established business".

It was asked "Can the applicants give those same assurances on record at this Hearing, especially given that the effect on the affected area for the applicants is a very small percentage, but potentially affects 100% of our business?" Positive re-assurances were offered across the room from the Applicants representatives in this respect, therefore, we would be pleased for this commitment to be confirmed in writing within the Applicants written summaries to the Inspectors.

Thank you for this further opportunity to confirm our concerns in writing and grateful for the attention of all concerned raised on behalf of Blyton Park over the course of the weeks Hearings.

Yours sincerely

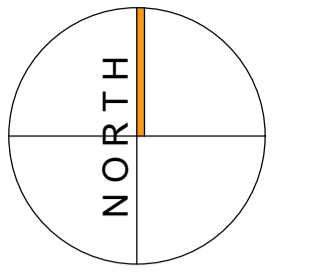
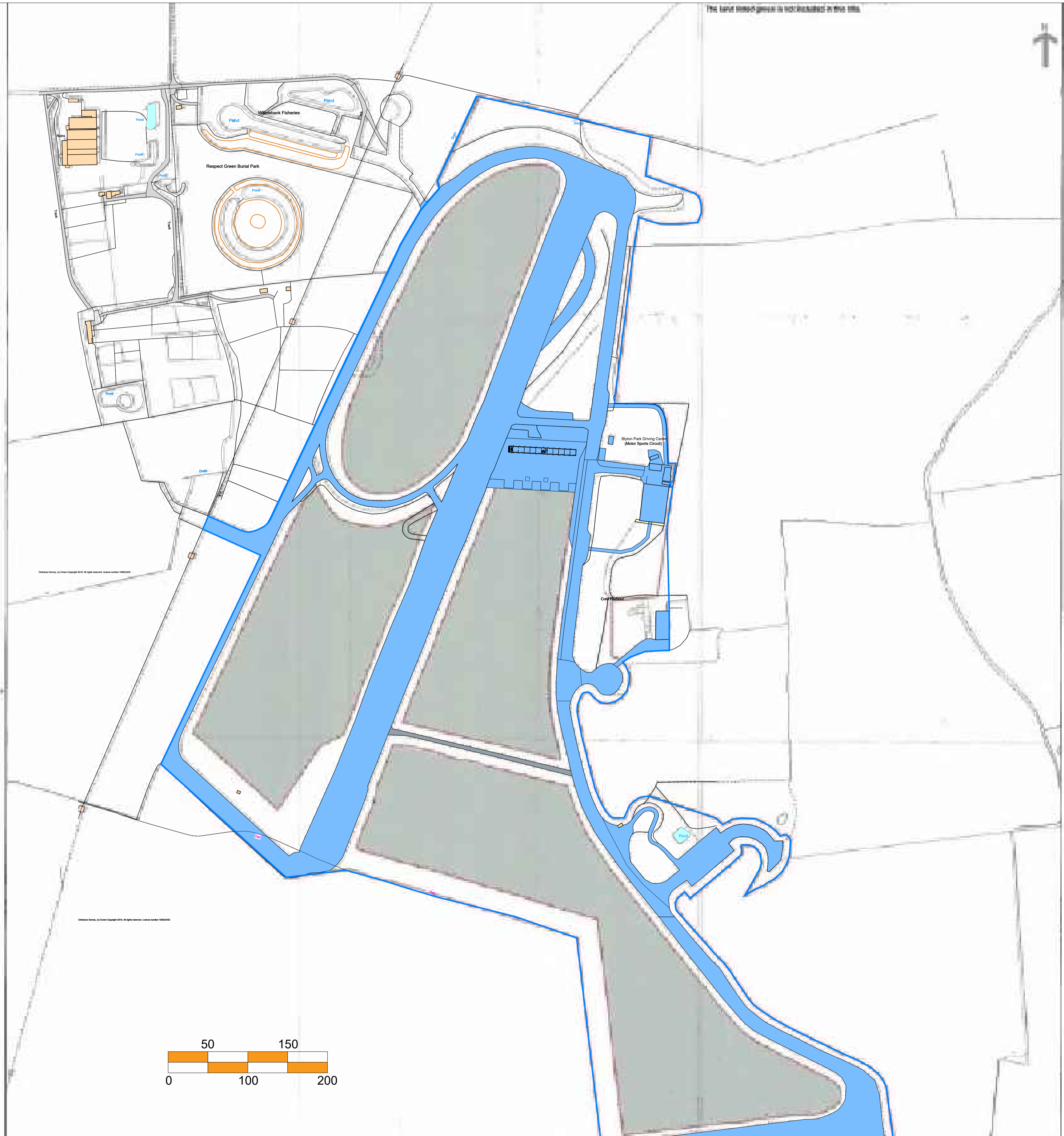
Alistair Wood MA DipTP MRTPI

Planning & Development Manager

Blyton Park Driving Centre/ LNT Group/LNT Aviation

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REV	DATE	DETAILS OF AMENDMENTS	DRAWN
REVISIONS			

ALL MEASUREMENTS IN mm - DO NOT SCALE - IF IN DOUBT ASK



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 UNIT 2, HELIOS 47
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 GARFORTH
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 Tel: 0113 3853858
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CLIENT
 LNT AVIATION LTD.

SITE
 OLD BLYTON AIRFIELD
 KIRTON ROAD, BLYTON,
 GAINSBOROUGH

TITLE
 LOCATION PLAN

SCALE	1:2500	DATE	29-09-20
DRAWN	GB	DWG NO.	BLY-01A
DRAWING STATUS			
FEASIBILITY		PLANNING SUBMISSION	
PLANNING APPROVAL		REGULATION SUBMISSION	
REGULATION APPROVAL		CONSTRUCTION ISSUE	
CHECKED BY		DATE	
APPROVED BY		DATE	

