

Cottam Solar Project. ExAs 2nd Questions.

2.5.4 The ExA notes that the Applicant has concluded the visual effect on residential receptor R63A (North Farm) would be significant during construction and at year 1 of operation, reducing to minor/moderate (not significant) at year 15 of operation. Can the Applicant provide details of when it considers the mitigation will become effective (ie for how long does the Applicant consider the receptor would experience significant effects)

After speaking at the CAH1 and afterwards having a brief chat to Eve Browning from IGP, I made the following comment on my CAH1 submission.

“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.”

Unfortunately after reading the Applicants response to my CAH1 submission it appears that they are not prepared to accommodate us at all, We ask for the panels to be moved northwards to provide an fair and acceptable break between the apparatus and our property and to use the topography of the land to provide immediate impact relief and even suggested the moving of scheme’s non solar array fields to help accommodate this.

The Applicant’s response to part of my Deadline 2 submission shows the lack of understanding over visual impact, both locally and personally. See below.

“With regard to views to the north, there are views from the secondary elevation at ground floor across a small lawned rear garden towards a small paddock bordered by a hedgerow, then with an area of deciduous woodland beyond. The woodland forms an ‘L’ shape and is a very strong feature in closing down visibility to the north and east of the property.”

As you know, this area of woodland is our own property and is an important and much used part of our home. It should not be treated as mitigation for a large scale solar scheme. There would be no mitigating effect offered by the Applicant’s planting for many years, thus ruining the enjoyment of this amenity. This is why the solar infrastructure must be moved northwards as discussed.

Our outbuildings are also mentioned as providing a screening effect, again these are part of our property and vital for our intended B&B accommodation plans. Overlooking a large solar plant would hardly attract custom.

The Applicant is failing to act responsibly by not addressing the concerns of affected residents and is treating this application as if it does not need to. This is not a done deal, surely?

Below is my email from the 1st of January 2024 to Eve Browning and the cottamsolarproject@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

“Dear Eve,

Having seen the notes attached to REP3-036, It appears that you are not willing to improve mitigation on our property as indicated at the CAH1.

I hope this is not the case and these notes are just a summary of a previous position.

As stated in my own submissions and during our chat, moving the panels back behind our trees the same as the adjacent field would make a significant difference to the visual blight on our home and our wellbeing.

This would be a more acceptable buffer distance and would bring parity with other isolated properties. A small compromise that would be much appreciated.

Please let us know your intentions.”

I have not yet had a reply.

I do not consider 15 years for mitigation to be acceptable. As mentioned in previous submissions I have firsthand experience of native hedge planting here, and 15 years is not enough time to mitigate industrial structures of 4.5m in height, even if the planting is a success.

The potential need for the replanting of failures and losses means that the mitigation clock could be reset to year 1 many times over. The proposed solar panel height and configuration means that significant visual impact and associated loss of landscape would continue indefinitely to the north and south of my property.

The priority for us, Sir, is that the panels are at least moved back behind our trees so that we do not need to wait the rest of our lives for the impact to lessen and as stated before this is what was initially agreed. I would like definitive feedback on this please?

EN-3 states that:

Proximity of a site to dwellings

2.10.27

“Utility-scale solar farms are large sites that may have a significant zone of visual influence. The two main impact issues that determine distances to sensitive receptors are therefore likely to be visual amenity and glint and glare.”

We are the worst affected private property with arrays sited N, S, E&W. We require protection. The Applicant’s idea of acceptability is far removed from the majority’s view, with visual aids such as Photomontages being seriously flawed.

Please understand the life-changing impact this proposal is having on us.

Lastly, what consideration has been given to Statutory Blight in the event that a DCO is granted, and we need to sell?

We have valuations from when we marketed last year. A considerable drop in interest and value would occur from this scale of industrialisation and the visual impact on our home.

Thank you.