

Cottam Proposed Damage to East Farm Business

East Farm,
Normanby by Stow,
Gainsborough DN21 5LQ

[REDACTED]

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For the attention of Mr Cridland

Dear Mr Cridland,

East Farm is a small 60-acre farm of permanent pasture built up over 50 years in various locations in the parishes of Stow and Willingham. We produce high-quality grass-fed beef from our pedigree Aberdeen-Angus herd sold through our farm shop. We are not registered as Organic because the nearest abattoir accepting Organic animals is too far away, but we have followed Organic principles as far as possible since we came here in 1976. We can barely meet demand.

We are Farm Assured under the Red Tractor regulations, and our cattle are blood tested annually to maintain their Elite Health Status.

When the Cottam Project was first mooted, we were inspected by a group of ecologists. They were so impressed by our wildlife and biodiversity that they told us they would recommend that we be unaffected by the project. We have allowed hedges to grow, planted more hedge and trees, dug two ponds, and created a small copse.

We were shocked therefore, to learn from a friend that Cottam planned to put compulsory purchase orders on two parcels of our land. We have received no consultation about this.

When I contacted Cottam Solar, they told us their references for these are 10-220 and 14-290. They sent a map which is very difficult to read but shows that 14-290 is our land in Coates Lane where 4 heifers are currently over-wintering. This field is divided into three by sheep netting and/or post and rail. There are 3 water lines running across the field, and 3 locked gates. One of the ponds is here within a small copse which provides refuge for 3 species of owl, there are Red Kite overhead, Snipe over the wet areas, skylarks nesting and much other wildlife. When we bought this field in 1997, we had to inoculate the clover seed with Rhizobium to overcome intensive farming practices previously which meant that the clover would not fix nitrogen.

Cottam Solar have not responded to my request to know the location of 10-220. However, a friend has found a map. It appears to be where our water line comes into the Coates Lane field. That suggests they are wanting to cut off our water supply to the field. They seem they have no respect for people or their property. Please stop this. It would mean we lose 14 acres out of 60.

I will itemise below some other points, but I hope you will appreciate that loss of land for a small farm will seriously jeopardise the business or, worse, lead to its collapse.

Our neighbours, particularly Limestone Farming/Coates Hall, own thousands of acres locally, throughout the UK and abroad. If planning permission is granted, these works should go on their land. They stand to benefit most from the scheme and will not notice the loss of some land. Their land is arable land, not gated and fenced so more accessible.

Some other relevant points and further details

Countryside Stewardship. The Rural Payments Agency pay us by the metre for hedgerow management and by the hectare for grassland management. If this is altered, we would need to engage a land agent to amend our entitlement. This would be costly and reduce our income. Failure to do this would lead to us being fined.

Low stocking density is an integral part of our management system. Reducing the area means that at best we would have to keep less cattle. Grass-fed beef means we do not stuff them with concentrate.

Initial Wildlife survey. Cottam Solar Project needs to find the original report and not ignore it.

We hope that Cottam Solar will change their plans, or the planning inspectorate will not pass them as they stand. If not, we are in trouble, much of our good work on the environment will have been wasted.

Many people love walking their dogs down Coates Lane because our high hedge and the wildlife provide a relaxing, peaceful environment.

Thank you.

Your sincerely

Dr T. D. Organ