

Comments on submissions for Deadline 4

Applicants' response to 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)

Applicant's response:

The details of when the mitigation will become effective are set out below: 1. Mitigation: The implementation of the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan Revision E (the 'OLEMP') [EX4/C7.3_E] sets out at section 4.12, how the Scheme will introduce changes to the existing hedgerows by allowing them to grow out and reach a height of 5m within 1-2 years, at which point they will have begun to provide screening of the panels. The introduction of new hedgerows will provide screening of the panels within 5 years and intermittent trees will also provide softening to the skyline within 5 years. The OLEMP sets out this commitment, at section 4.12, relating to how the implementation of this mitigation will be secured in advance of the commencement of the construction of the Scheme. 2. The detailed assessment for North Farm concludes that the visibility of the panels is mainly focussed from first floor windows of the main farmhouse to the south overlooking Willingham Road. To the south, the panels are offset by at least 240m within a landscape that supports a good network of hedgerows and tree cover, which assist with their integration. Visibility to the north towards the panels is curtailed by existing woodland and Applicant's Responses to ExA Second Written Questions January 2024 34 | Page ExQ Respondent Question Applicant's Response to east, the panels are distanced at 870m, with the panels distanced at approximately 380m to the west.

The Applicant's response is inconsiderate to those who would have to live within this proposal and barely answers the question. It is also inaccurate.

The existing hedgerows will not begin to screen 4.5m panels within 1-2 years. Their current height is only about 3m and have been flailed extremely thin offering very little screening even in Summer. Many years of growth and filling in will be needed to provide even minimal screening.

These hedges being deciduous are transparent for 6 months of the year. New hedge planting will have no effect in 5 or even 10 years and combined with the losses from the abundance of hare and deer, a sparse hedge will clearly have little impact on 4.5 metre steel and glass structures.

I have recently applied for a tree planting grant from the Woodland Trust, and they categorically ask if deer are present in the area, as costly extra protective measures will be required. I see no mention of these measures by the Applicant.

The significant impact of this solar scheme would be indefinite due to our home's elevated position, the rising topography of the land chosen and the close proximity of the panels to the North.

I have extensive experience of hedge planting in this area and new hedges could take 10 to 15 years to achieve even 2 metres of screening. See my North Farm WR.

Hawthorn will only grow 50cm per year at best and would require several hard prunings to encourage bushy growth.

We are again being misled on the effectiveness of new hedgerows as mitigation. These office based assessments of our home and the impacts of the industrialised nature of giant solar installations are wrong and insulting. We expect the Applicant to listen and offer compromise on this huge land grab. My constructive suggestions of moving mitigation fields or skylark plots to around our home or cutting back on "overplanting" as a solution to create a buffer, has disappointingly fallen on deaf ears.

We will be the ones left to endure planting failures and the visual horrors of this scheme.

There is just too much land, spread over a vast area to maintain high mitigation standards, when the business of the operator is electricity trading and generation and not the running of a nature reserve, things will quickly slip. I fear local residents will be the ones left to police these sprawling and numerous developments, and this is not right!

There is too much reliance on new hedge planting on these developments. The cumulative impact of plant failures on these 13,000 acres would mean industrial blight on our landscapes for a very long time, and probably continue in perpetuity.

This amount of development will destroy our countryside and the rural fabric of this already deprived area of Gainsborough.

No one would want this to happen around them, so why is so much being forced on us?

13,000 acres plus. What else could demand this much land in one area with such limited benefit. We are truly "robbing Peter to pay Paul".

The bottom line is that we have proposed in this area the equivalent of over 13 Longfield solar Farms with larger infrastructure to boot, and all within a 6 mile/10km radius. The consequential harm to the area is patently clear.

Sir, as we approach the latter stages of this examination, my wife and I are desperate that our concerns are resolved. Our home, North Farm, needs the buffer reinstating as agreed during consultation, making it consistent with other isolated properties within this proposal. This easily solved issue is of utmost importance to us and would make a world of difference if consent was granted.

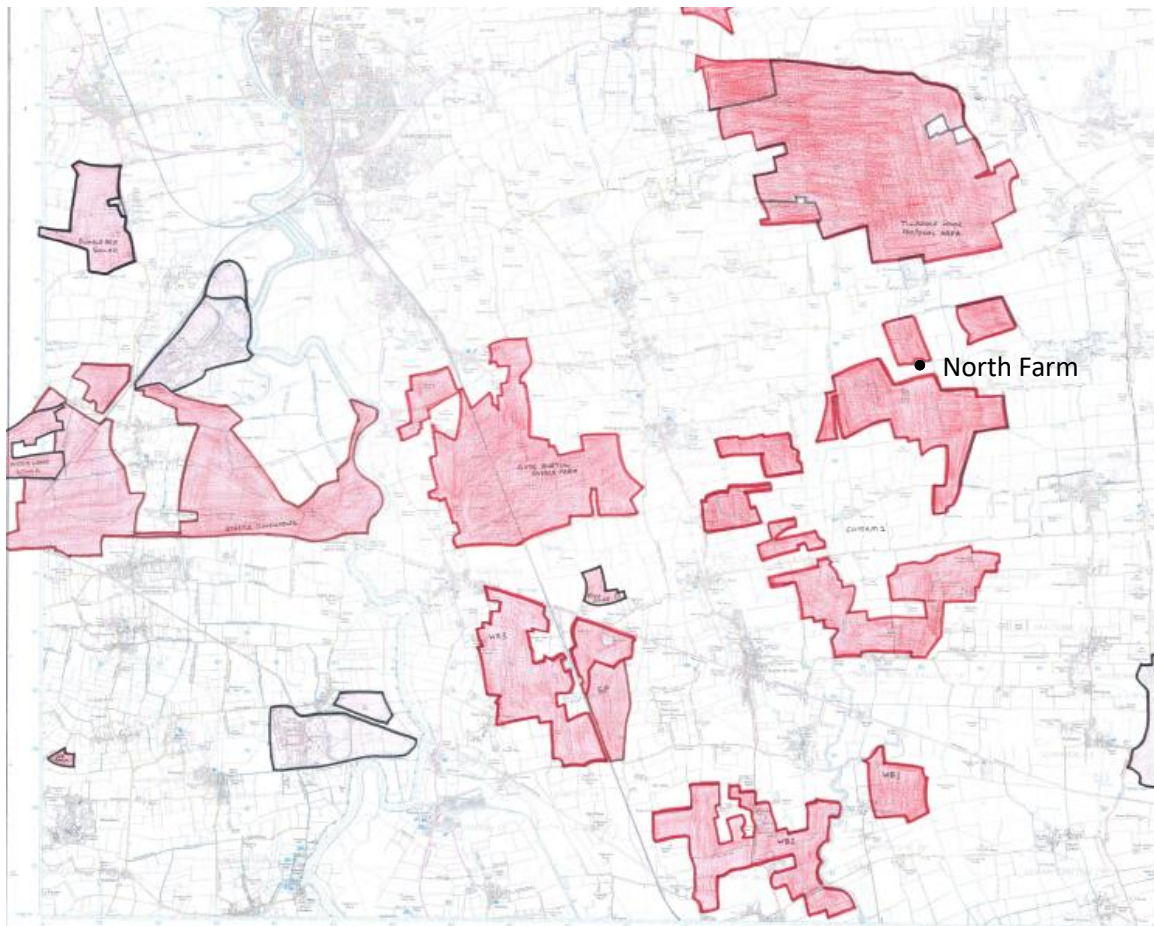
Could I direct you to Mallard Pass Solar Farm's "Residential visual amenity assessment". This seems to show a more responsible approach, offering low level panels and far greater residential exclusion zones.

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/EN010127/EN010127-000129-Appendix%2006.4%20Residential%20Visual%20Amenity%20Assessment.pdf>

Today, the 21st of February 2024 at midday the UKs installed 15GW of solar is generating just 0.65GW giving a 1.6% contribution to demand. This means that solar panels in this country are yielding at just 4.3% at midday. If consented the 600MW/3,000-acre CSP would only generate 25MW at today's midday peak, providing just 0.05% to electricity demand! This illustrates the reality of solar's poor daytime performance in this country, even before considering the zero output during the hours of darkness. Combined with solar's incredible land inefficiency, all Renewables are clearly not of equal value. Historically, inefficiencies of this kind would not have been tolerated within our national generating infrastructure, but solar's extremely limited generating profile and associated land loss is being ignored by selective and often inaccurate promotional information, net zero threats and lack of public awareness.

I think in our high impact case and on a scheme such as this, a bit of consideration is the very least that could be offered. The Developer is not listening to local people, yet they claim they are.

Map, showing most of the proposed 13,000 acres + of solar development in the area, and the encirclement of my home by the fragmented and sprawling Cottam proposal.



It is often stated that solar covers just 0.1 - 0.3% of UK farmland, but DEFRA states that croppable UK farmland (which is where these lowland solar schemes are situated) is 6.1 million Hectares or 15 million acres.

There are 600,000 acres of solar schemes on the National Grid TEC register, so this figure could be 4% of farmland. This is massive!

For some context, potatoes cover 1%, oilseed 2% and cereals 19% of croppable UK farmland.

4% is significant and wasteful. The solar industry is understandably playing down this scale of land loss by quoting inaccurate and out of date figures.

Response to Deadline 4 submission. C8.2.12 Aerial flyover footage.

Having just viewed this damning visual aid, I would like to comment on this sickening footage and the level of proposed solar development in one area.

Firstly, it fails to show the "Steeple Renewables" proposal, which is now the fifth NSIP for the area and is just across the river from the Gate Burton Energy Park. (See map above) This fifth proposal should be added to the flyover for the ultimate benefit of the Secretary of State.

These 5 NSIPs all fall within a 10km/6-mile radius and cover a staggering 13,000 acres of farmland, with not one rooftop or brownfield site being used.

The footage also fails to show the aggressive proportions of the 4.5m high solar panels. This giant infrastructure is not used anywhere else in the UK, and for good reason. (Heckington Fen abandoned their proposed use during consultation.) The footage does however highlight cumulative effect, poor site selection and bad design. It also shows an uncontrolled avalanche of solar applications in the neighbourhood.

It is evident that the Developer has underestimated the landscape with the sites chosen and their setting within this area of Great Landscape Value. There is a large body of evidence testifying to the value placed on this highly visible and unique landscape by local people.

This accumulation of 5 solar proposals also shows the Developer's lack of ambition for brownfield sites and rooftops. The Cottam site has been for sale since 2019 when it was decommissioned. Working for EDF I was party to the site's marketing and this previously developed land's continued energy contribution was a logical location for solar arrays and BESS, and would have been looked on favorably by planners. Planning policy to use brownfield sites first, has been breached by IGP.

Not one rooftop has been incorporated into this scheme. it is clear to me that the Government's push for a "Rooftop Revolution" is slipping away, and our small country is losing control of its energy and food industry, not helped by Solar Greenwashing, which will inevitably contribute to net zero failures, rising energy costs and economic decline.

IMPORTANT NOTE.

At the time of this submission, information has been passed on by local landowners that a sixth NSIP scale solar development is in the final stages of land acquisition. The Developer "Voltis" approached several of them for the last 500 acres required for their scheme. This would take us to well over 15,000 acres of solar development being imposed on this cluster of rural communities. That is 20% of the total land mass of the area and well over 30% of farmland lost to a landscape dominated by industrial solar apparatus. This is a far cry from the 0.1 - 0.3% of farmland quoted by the solar industry. (This sixth scheme must be included in the cumulative assessment of the area.)

The NSIP system looks flawed and out of date, with a planning loophole being exploited by the solar industry, as clearly shown by this alarming and disproportionate onslaught of solar applications here.