

To the Examiner

I realise that you will have thousands upon thousands of pages of documents from the Applicant and those supporting the building of the Cottam Solar Farm. They will no doubt argue that the benefits of the green power to be produced will outweigh any negatives. That the battery storage units will be safe, that there will be net biodiversity gains, that there will be employment opportunities created, that the land will be returned to agriculture unscathed (and free of any scrap) at the end of the project, that the construction will be carried out with minimal adverse impact on the local communities. They will also quote regulations, statutes, government policies etc to support their stance and proposals. But the area they are proposing to use is not arid, uninhabited wasteland. It is farmed agricultural land in the midst of historic communities, and whatever arguments they make to justify their proposals, where do they consider the REAL effects on the current residents and the next two generations?

When you come to make your recommendation to the Secretary of State, I would ask that you consider that if this project is allowed to go ahead it will impact on the physical, mental, emotional and financial health of many of those who live in a large swathe of Lincolnshire countryside.

Our local primary school is on a construction and AL route,

local heritage sites could be damaged or lost for ever,

there is insufficient rental accommodation locally for residents - let alone those coming into the area to work on the project, exercise/ dog walking/ cycling/ horse riding routes that have been used for generations will be lost, stopped up, made into a quagmire, diverted or be surrounded by solar panels and thus lose the attraction that they have always had of places to get away from it all,

local traffic routes that have been shown to be unsuitable for large construction vehicles will be closed to locals, or temporarily stopped up, thus causing inconvenience, added time and expense for journeys - and diversions along roads that are unsuitable or add miles to regular journeys

the diversity of flora and fauna enjoyed along many back roads and farm tracks in the area will not survive the construction and operational phases

house prices in the affected areas are already dropping

the flooding that affects the area on a regular basis will be made worse if more land is covered with the panels and supporting equipment

The Applicant has not proved that the use of such a large area of agricultural land is the best way of producing a guaranteed commensurately large amount of green energy. With the hours of sunshine in this area, and the current technology, the amount of energy it will be possible to produce does not in any way justify the proposed devastation of our communities and the surrounding farmland.

Finally – despite the National Planning Inspectorate severely diluting the resources of locals to fully participate in the respective examinations by deciding to examine all of the local Nationally Significant solar farm proposals separately – the cumulative effects of all the projects surely should not be underestimated. Anyone only has to look at the plan showing the locations of all the projects to see the jigsaw of sites covering an unacceptably large area of rural Lincolnshire.

How can you in good conscience recommend that we and our communities and surrounding agricultural land should be sacrificed for profit, and our fields used to house potentially dangerous storage batteries and be blighted with mostly non-recyclable materials, shipped from China, to produce electricity during some daylight hours for not all of the year?

We don't have expensive lawyers to argue our case, but we have a love and appreciation of our surroundings, we care for all aspects of the health of those who live and work in our communities, and we have not been convinced of the veracity of many of the Applicant's claims and the enforceability of their promises & assurances. Many protesting locals actually support green energy projects. I would happily put solar panels on my house roof – and would advocate them on brownfield sites, warehouse rooftops, new builds etc – not on arable land in the midst of communities.

Please be remembered for being the examiner whose recommendation to the Secretary of State supported the interests of residents, not foreign investors waving a green banner.