

Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP  
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero  
55 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2HP  
United Kingdom

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

Firstly, congratulations on your appointment. From this first couple of weeks, it is apparent you have stepped into the role with real intent to make rapid progress. I wish you very well as you take up the huge responsibility of the Department for Energy and Net Zero at a critical moment for the country, as well as for our region.

I am writing on behalf of 7000Acres, a campaign group of concerned residents in West Lindsey, Lincolnshire, with around 2000 followers. We face an unprecedented situation of 6 large NSIP-scale ground mounted solar farms proposed within a small area. These are the recently approved Gate Burton Energy Park, plus Cottam Solar Project, West Burton Solar Project and Tillbridge Solar, also currently within the NSIP process, with One Earth Solar and Steeple Solar (also NSIP-scale schemes) in earlier stages of development. We believe the scale of these developments are significantly larger than the UK has ever seen and the cumulative effect of these schemes, within such a small area (a six-mile radius), would completely transform the character of the region, by installing solar panels 3.5m to 4.5m high, impacting the lives and livelihoods across 30 villages in the area. (See maps included).

By the principles of a “Just Transition”, where people are not disadvantaged by the switch to a low-carbon economy, placing so many large-scale ground mounted solar facilities within such a concentrated area is grossly unfair on the people who live in the villages that would be surrounded by these schemes. While we all must take responsibility and make sacrifices to achieve net zero, the burden should not fall so heavily in one area alone.

We do understand the need to act with urgency to meet the challenge of climate change and understand the important role electricity will play in decarbonising our economy. It is also clear that, while wind is expected to contribute over 70% of the UK’s electricity and to become the backbone of UK supply, solar will make only a fraction of this contribution, particularly in winter. Considering this limited benefit, for any community facing such extensive development, it is untenable to assert that extensive installation of ground-mounted solar must be accepted, while domestic and commercial rooftops continue to be constructed without any solar panels.

We do recognise you have inherited this current landscape of policies and applications and welcome your enthusiasm for a “Rooftop Revolution” for solar, but it is galling is that there has been so little traction for rooftop solar, and so, with every rooftop built without solar, a crucial opportunity to quickly decarbonise, with no adverse impacts, is lost. Rooftop solar has appeared frequently in Government strategy and planning, along with effective land use and these issues were highlighted by last year’s Skidmore Review, which also called for a “Rooftop Revolution”.

Regardless of this, current arrangements have driven development of ground-mounted solar ahead of everything else, despite its adverse impacts. The pipeline of such schemes in the National Grid connection queue is overwhelming and could render any “Rooftop Revolution” completely redundant. As a result, the opportunity to install solar in a way that minimises adverse impact on communities will be lost.

During information events and examinations, developers have repeatedly made the argument that these large-scale solar schemes are the only way for the UK to achieve rapid solar installation. This is simply not true. As a very credible reference of rapid solar deployment, by the end of 2023, Germany had already successfully installed 80GW of solar capacity, the majority of which is on rooftops, and without a single scheme even half the size of any of the 4 (or 6) proposed NSIP schemes in the West Lindsey area. Within 2023 alone, 14GW of solar capacity was installed in Germany, with 70% on rooftops. Similar scale potential is available on UK domestic and commercial rooftops. This summer, with Germany now opening a solar park at Witznitz, at a scale similar to Gate Burton, it is notable that this is on the site of a former open-cast coal mine, with over 70% of the development on brownfield land, rather than farmland.

For the West Lindsey area between Lincoln and Gainsborough, the cumulative effect of installing solar panels over such a vast area of productive farmland (larger than the city of Lincoln and Gainsborough combined) would radically alter what it means to live in the area, leaving people with a diminished quality of life, removing access to open views and green space, and resulting in a detrimental impact on their health and wellbeing. 7000Acres strongly believe this important aspect has not been adequately explored in examinations to date, with reports focusing on the impact on health provision, not the direct effects on health and wellbeing associated with people finding themselves having been forced to live in an industrialised landscape.

West Lindsey is not an affluent area of the UK, and Gainsborough has some of the most deprived wards in the country. The proposed schemes provide no local benefits, yet the impacts of development at this scale are exclusively felt locally, which will negatively impact a cluster of small communities for decades.

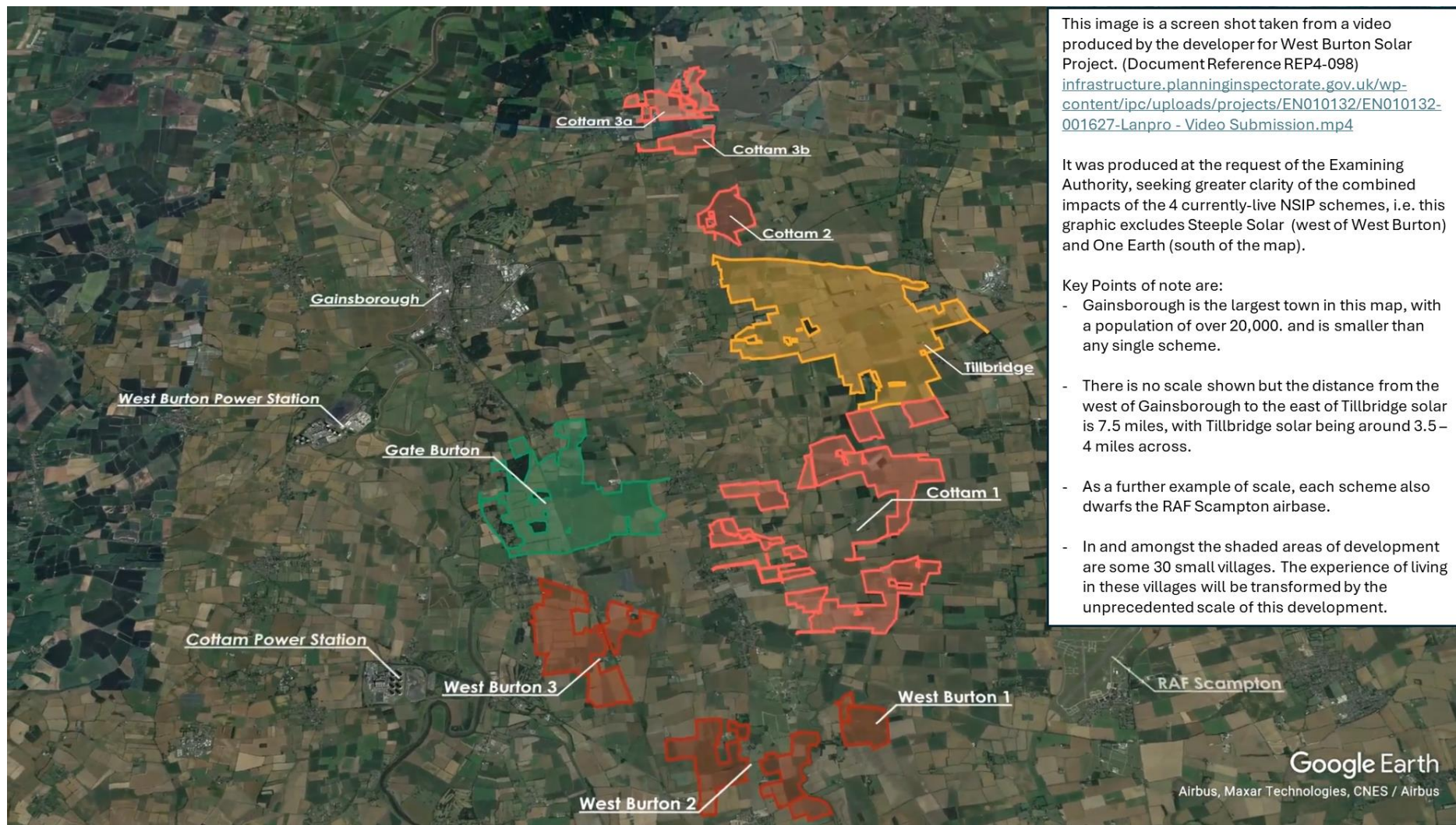
At a national level, 7000Acres believe that uncontrolled development of such schemes will quickly become a source of regret for the country, given the huge pressures on land use.

I therefore urge you to reflect on this letter when you receive the recommendations from the Planning Inspectorate’s Examining Authorities responsible for these schemes in the coming months. We do recognise the need for solar but would urge you to accelerate efforts to deliver rooftop solar in the first instance, in which case adverse impacts can be minimised. Then, where ground mounted schemes are considered at such scale, please consider the cumulative impact; it would be unjust for the harms of multiple extensive ground-mounted solar projects to fall so heavily on one region.

Yours sincerely,

Jamie Allan,

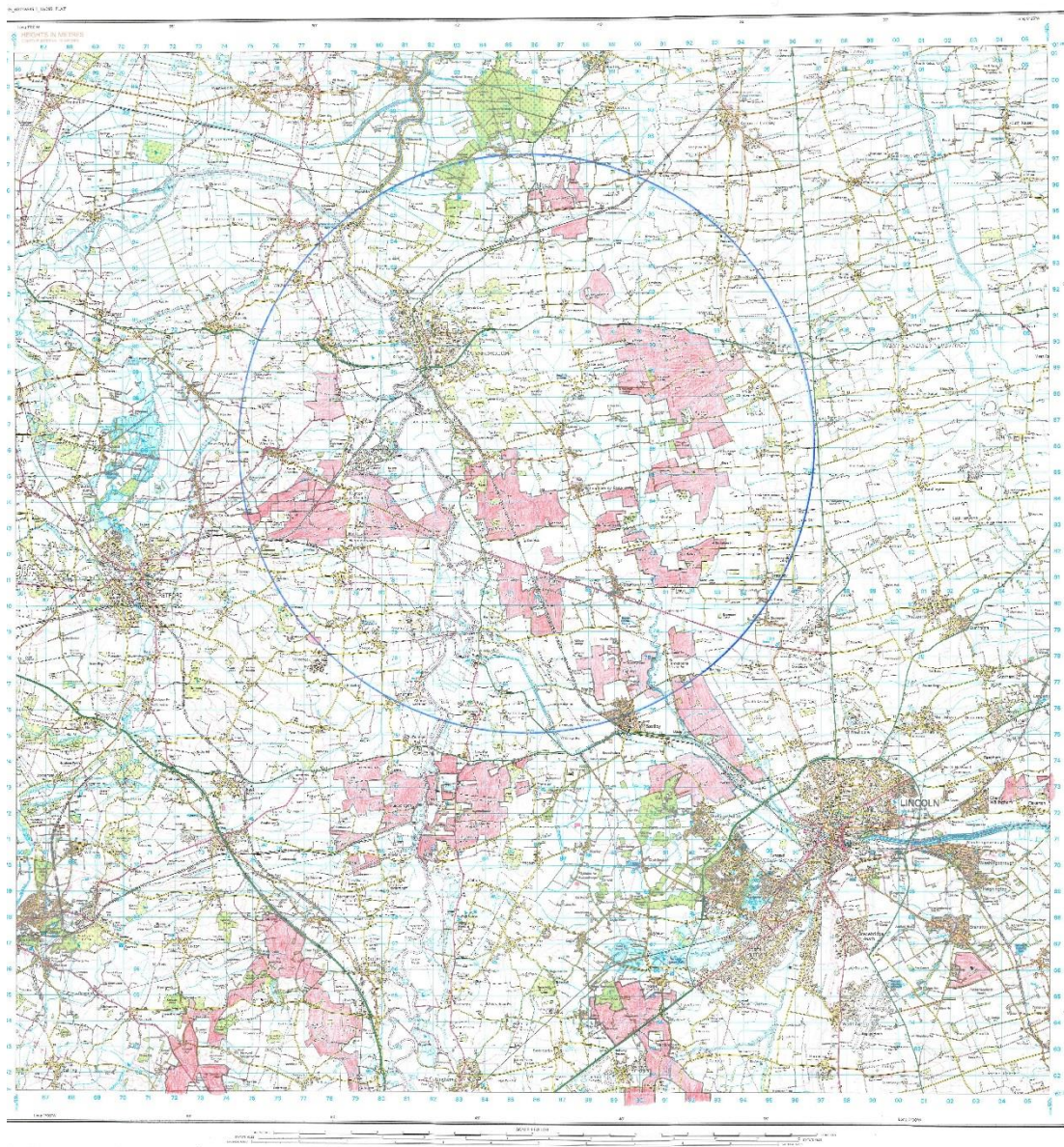
Chair, 7000Acres (contact through: [REDACTED])



This image is a screen shot taken from a video produced by the developer for West Burton Solar Project. (Document Reference REP4-098) [infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/EN010132/EN010132-001627-Lanpro - Video Submission.mp4](https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/EN010132/EN010132-001627-Lanpro - Video Submission.mp4)

It was produced at the request of the Examining Authority, seeking greater clarity of the combined impacts of the 4 currently-live NSIP schemes, i.e. this graphic excludes Steeple Solar (west of West Burton) and One Earth (south of the map).

- Key Points of note are:
- Gainsborough is the largest town in this map, with a population of over 20,000, and is smaller than any single scheme.
  - There is no scale shown but the distance from the west of Gainsborough to the east of Tillbridge solar is 7.5 miles, with Tillbridge solar being around 3.5 – 4 miles across.
  - As a further example of scale, each scheme also dwarfs the RAF Scampton airbase.
  - In and amongst the shaded areas of development are some 30 small villages. The experience of living in these villages will be transformed by the unprecedented scale of this development.



This Map shows within the circle the 4 current NSIP schemes in the above image and the development Steeple Renewables, this is all within a 6-mile radius.

One earth solar fall only just outside this radius.

- 1.COTTAM SOLAR PROJECT
- 2.WEST BURTON SOLAR PROJECT
- 3.GATE BURTON ENERGY PARK
- 4.TILLBRIDGE SOLAR
- 5.STEEPLE RENEWABLES all within the circle.

Other developments shown outside the circle are Fosse Green and Great North Road. Plus Voltis Solar which is a development currently in scoping. This is by no means the full picture for Lincolnshire.