

Tillbridge Solar Ltd Open Hearing: representation on behalf of Springthorpe Parish Meeting

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I speak on my own behalf having worked as a GP in and around Gainsborough and within Offender Health in Lincolnshire since 1991 before retiring in May 2022.

I also speak as Chair of Springthorpe Parish Meeting which has over the last eighteen months deliberated the arguments for and against the building of the solar farm proposed by Tillbridge Solar Ltd. There are a total of one hundred and forty people who live in the Parish across nearly seventy households.

Our Parish lies on the northwestern boundary of the proposed site. The panels and battery stations will encroach onto land belonging to all three farms that lie within the Parish boundary. Two of these are agricultural tenant farms, one a farmer-owned dairy farm.

On behalf of myself and the Members of Springthorpe Parish meeting I wish to request the National Inspectorate NOT to grant planning permission for this development.

Our reasons are as follows:

A If our country needs a cheap renewable energy in a timely fashion the source of this should be wind power

B the longer term consequences of the change of land use will change Lincolnshire for ever. There are long term consequences not often discussed that make the equation even more lopsided, that aren't often discussed, that it is our responsibility to point out

WIND energy is cheaper and more efficiently produced than solar energy and the technology to generate it is manufactured just up the road on the Humber Estuary

Wind generation masts would occupy less of our arable land than the solar panels to generate as much energy including energy in the winter and at night. Choosing wind power would help protect our food security at the same time as improving energy security.

Both types of renewable would pose problems during construction for our local infrastructure - our lanes can hardly cope as it is with the demands of large farming and domestic construction. But if one wind mast can supplant many hectares of panels there would be no need for landowners to disenfranchise our tenant farmers and make them look elsewhere for a living as has happened to one farm in Springthorpe : a living that was forged over 5 generations

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But I really want to talk about IMPACT, not the science.

Not just about the family displaced after five generations from the land that I have already mentioned

If the solar behemoth is approved the loss of land from our farming community will affect the rest of us over the sixty years the panels are with us. The supply chains that support farms and the merchants that buy their goods will move away: there will be none of the usual work for them and there is no other work locally to replace that work with. Property prices will fall as the exodus happens. What are now carefully balanced social structures will have the driving engines – the existing wealth generators - removed from them. Imagine the social turbulence, the anxiety, the unrelenting demands made of a social support system that already creaks and groans.

If the renewable energy source is wind the farms can remain and our social structures will survive.

Past sixty years the solar sites will be useless for farming. They will become brownfield sites. Perhaps to house the homeless from all over England? In a Lincolnshire or a Lindsey where agriculture has gone forever? And if the landowners (who bear the cost of redeveloping the spent solar farms) are unable to attract the builders will the panels waste forever in the fields they have destroyed? Who will rebuild the countryside then when the stewardship of thousands of years has been lost forever? When all we who can remember it as it is now have to look at is a spent solar factory ? How will we cope with the sadness of watching it happen? What consolation will we offer our grandchildren: we had to spoil it all to save it?

All this is true even if you believe the never had it so good fictions proposed by those with vested interests in solar farm construction.

Tillbridge Solar Ltds' proposals are a thinly veiled attempt to make money for national and international actors clever enough to spy a grid connection and buy it before energy security became a subject of public debate. They ransom our national infrastructure, they act against our interests.

The craven self interests of past government and their failure to debate the need for energy and food security mean that we are at a point where there is a temptation for the government now to pick the low-hanging fruit offered by Tillbridge Solar Ltd.

If they are wise they won't bite this poisoned apple

Please Mr National Inspector, say 'No'.

