

Tillbridge Solar Project

Examination Stage 4 – Submission on behalf of Glenworth Parish Council

This is a written submission that summarises the comments I made at the Open Floor Hearing held on 14 January 2025 and is submitted on behalf of Glenworth Parish Council and the residents of the village and parish.

The Parish Council has consistently expressed its opposition to the proposed development on several grounds, which are summarised in this submission. I want to start, however, with the vision statement from the Glenworth Neighbourhood Plan (formally adopted in December 2019):

Glentworth will continue to be a peaceful rural village, an enjoyable place to live with a thriving, safe community. Glentworth Parish will protect the highly valued features of the natural environment, such as green spaces and the open landscape, preserving the village atmosphere and character for future generations.

Glentworth is a peaceful, rural, cliffside village of around 120 households. It is sited within an Area of Great Landscape Value. Residents live in the village to enjoy and have access to the quiet countryside and being remote from the ‘hustle and bustle’ of town life and excessive traffic. Many residents enjoy walking, cycling and horse-riding on the quiet roads and bridleways of the village and surrounding area.

It is also worth highlighting that the Glentworth Neighbourhood Plan, in setting its vision, reflected the Central Lincolnshire Green Infrastructure Study (November 2011) which identifies the Lincoln Edge North, running across the Parish of Glentworth adjacent to the village, as a **Strategic Access Link**.

Our objections to the proposed solar industrial estate: - this phrase is deliberate, calling it a farm is a misleading and frankly dishonest attempt to divert attention from what this actually is. Calling it a ‘farm’ or a ‘park’ conjures images of a rural idyll, when in fact this is an industrial estate that will destroy, forever, productive farmland and a way of rural life that has existed for hundreds of years.

To be clear, building this industrial estate will result in:

The industrialisation of the countryside and rural areas

Loss of open space and productive farmland

The disruption to, in fact destruction of, a way of life in peaceful villages affected by the development

The blight that will be caused through the long construction period, impact of noise, massively increased traffic volumes with the risk of air pollution, damage

to buildings, noise, road hazard, and then the operation of the solar farm over its lifetime, and beyond

In summary: scale, cumulative impact, blight, detrimental effects on health and well-being – all of which happen with absolutely no benefit to the residents of the village and surrounding area.

The Parish Council believes that approval of the Tillbridge Solar Project would be contrary to the principles set out in the adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, specifically relating to policies S1, S5, and S34. Furthermore, policy S14, whilst supporting the principle of permitting the development of renewable energy sources in rural areas, emphasises that:

Proposals for renewable energy schemes, including ancillary development, will be supported where the direct, indirect, individual and cumulative impacts on the following considerations are, or will be made, acceptable. To determine whether it is acceptable, the following tests will have to be met:

- i. The impacts are acceptable having considered the scale, siting and design, and the consequent impacts on landscape character; visual amenity; biodiversity; geodiversity; flood risk; townscape; heritage assets, their settings and the historic landscape; and highway safety and rail safety; and*
- ii. The impacts are acceptable on aviation and defence navigation system/communications; and*
- iii. The impacts are acceptable on the amenity of sensitive neighbouring uses (including local residents) by virtue of matters such as noise, dust, odour, shadow flicker, air quality and traffic;*

Glentworth Parish Council believes that by any measurable and reasonable criteria, the Tillbridge Solar Project fails to meet the criteria set out in the CLLP, and whilst we acknowledge that this is being treated as a NSIP, we would firmly request that the Examination reflects on the impact the proposal would have in the context of the locally determined policy framework.

Cumulative Impact

The scale of this development and the cumulative impact of all the solar industrial sites as well as the iGas oil field extension, which is in the same area, cannot be underestimated. Although we understand that this Examination is specific to the Tillbridge Solar Project, we are pleased to note that the Examiner has already acknowledged that the cumulative impact of other solar industrial sites, approved and in the process, should be considered. If all are approved and proceed, the area of land that will be taken by these sites will be greater than the area of the City of Lincoln.

In the case of the Tillbridge Solar Project, the Parish Council believe the Examination should consider the combined impact of this with the iGas oil field extension, both in

respect of the impact during the construction phase and beyond. The combination of the Tillbridge Solar Project and the iGas field extension exacerbates the cumulative impacts of this industrialisation, and together they amount to a massive loss and detrimental impact. We are unconvinced that this combined impact has been properly assessed.

Broader Impacts

Policy S34 (Non-designated Employment Proposals in the Countryside) in the CLLP states that:

In locations outside of the settlements named in the Settlement Hierarchy in Policy S1, proposals for employment generating development will be limited to the expansion of an existing employment use and development proposals that support the growth of the agri-food sector or other land-based rural businesses and buildings in accordance with relevant parts of Policy S5, and only where the following criteria are satisfied:

- a) It would be consistent in scale with its rural location, without unacceptable environmental and/or visual impacts; and*
- b) It would not adversely affect existing local community services and facilities; and*
- c) It is designed to be compatible with the landscape in which it would be situated; and*
- d) It would not cause undue harm to the open nature of the countryside, or any site protected for its natural or heritage qualities, including designated and non-designated sites; and*
- e) It will not impact unacceptably on the local and/or strategic highway network; and*
- f) In the case of a conversion, the building is not in such a state of dereliction or disrepair that significant reconstruction would be required.*

Clearly, the Tillbridge Solar Project fails to meet the criteria in sub-paras (a) to (e). We have already highlighted the scale and adverse cumulative impact on the rural location, the harm to local countryside and the incompatibility with the existing landscape.

The opening paragraph of S34 also refers to the expansion of employment opportunities as being a mitigating factor in permitting new development, albeit in limited circumstances. To be clear, there is no economic benefit to the village of Glentworth or its residents arising from this development. On the contrary, there can be little doubt that the scale of the construction over the extended period will blight the village, the impact on the highway network alone will very significantly and detrimentally affect the residents in the area.

It is estimated that during the development phase, considering the other plans already approved, up to 1000 vehicles a day will be using the road network through and around the village. Many of the roads are single carriageway, already in a poor state of repair.

And this volume of traffic, much of which will be HGVs, will effectively gridlock the village, adversely affecting residents access to GP services, local shops and services. In fact, it is likely there will be a negative economic benefit.

There will be considerable negative impacts during the construction phase – noise, a massively increased volume of traffic on a road network that is inadequate for the amount of traffic that will be generated, dust and other airborne pollution that will adversely affect residents' lives and their health for an extended period. There is evidence from solar industrial sites under construction in other parts of the UK of these adverse impacts, damage caused to buildings by the constant HGV movements, greater air pollution, light pollution from site that are floodlight 24/7.

Some of the residents will be surrounded by solar panels, where they currently have green fields, hedgerows and wildlife, the industrial site will change the nature of their lives and the quality of their lives to the detriment – it is inevitable that there will be adverse impacts on mental health and well-being.

Turning to sub-para (d) of Policy S34 the removal of hedgerows and trees and the scale of the construction will inevitably and undeniably impact on wildlife, in all likelihood a massive loss of the wildlife that is currently seen in the fields surrounding the village. The developer has, we know, promised 'wildlife corridors' but in truth once the habitats have been lost during the construction phase they will have been lost for generations. Furthermore, the creation of 'corridors' and new habitats will be irrelevant given that the noise, light pollution and general disturbance will righten wildlife away from the site. The promised re-planting of trees and hedgerows to screen the development will, by the developers own admission, take 15 years to reach the stage of maturity so that they fulfill their purpose. Again, evidence from other sites that have been constructed is that often the planting is so poor that the trees and hedgerows die off. The wildlife corridors, replanting and supposed habitat protection is mere window dressing to hide the extent of damage the development will cause.

The impact on health, physical and mental, during the construction phase and beyond has not been properly and independently assessed and I think it would be irresponsible to rely on the applicants' assertions that these impacts would be minimal. A proper assessment, by an independent health professional or agency, should be undertaken and be available to the Examination before a recommendation is made.

Similarly, there is scant regard for the impact on the landscape value of the area, which will be lost when the current pattern of fields, trees and hedgerows is lost. The plans show a thin strip of protected landscape, yet the Lincoln edge and escarpment, stretching north-south is of historic importance as well as having a critical landscape value. This should also be independently assessed.

The studies that have been submitted as part of the application are at best desktop reviews and lack independent examination that a development of this scale warrants. Moreover, they contrast fundamentally with the lived experience of residents in the village and Parish and how that will be adversely affected by the development

Conclusion

Once built, the solar industrial site will intrude on the quality of life for the people living in the village.

The scale of the blight is impossible to understate.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I will conclude with the analogy I drew at the Open Floor Hearing.

Were this a proposal for new reservoir, were the area about to be flooded to create a water supply for a much wider area to meet an agreed national need, then households would be compensated, properties purchased, and residents would have to be provided with the opportunity to move. There would be an acknowledgement of the massive impact a reservoir would have, what flooding an existing landscape and communities would mean for that landscape and the people living there.

The scale and extent of the Tillbridge Solar Project is akin to the creation of a massive reservoir; the area is being flooded with panels, battery storage units and the associated infrastructure but we are being asked, in fact expected, to live in the midst of this. For all the policy reasons and impacts set out in this submission, Glentworth Parish Council urges that the Examination rejects the application.

John Latham

Chair, Glentworth Parish Council

27 January 2025