

The below forms the content of my oral representation on behalf of the six Affected Persons named below, at the Open Floor Hearing of 14th January, 2025.

“Good evening,

My name is Tim Elwess, and I am also representing Alison Elwess, David Elwess, Deborah Elwess, Simon Elwess and Victoria Elwess. I believe you have our details as interested persons; affected persons; residential receptors; land owners and occupiers within the principle site bounds.

I’d like to make four points regarding employment, food security and land use, developer engagement, and our changing landscape.

Employment

I represent 6 farmers, but actually 2 work off farm and 2 are receiving their state pension. None of us are losing our jobs. On the contrary, we view this as a positive change for our businesses and employment.

The solar scheme will bring in new jobs and opportunities for us and for others, in site maintenance and sheep grazing under the panels: my brother and sister-in-law, for example, have already grazed sheep successfully on a solar site in West Lindsey.

Food Security

When you made your site inspection, you probably saw a lot of fields but what were they actually growing? Mine for certain were not actually growing food.

In the main, our land is not used for food production. On my farm I grow wheat for biofuel. Wheat is generally in surplus in the U.K. whereas foods that we as a nation need to import, like avocados, would probably not enjoy growing on our Grade 3b clay.

I would suggest that low intensity grassland, capturing carbon, selectively grazed with sheep, and hens, under solar panels would be a better use of this land than the high inputs we are required to use to achieve economic yields of biofuel.....that isn't food.

Engagement

We understand many have concerns over noise and things like that, and there is no doubt that we are impacted as residential receptors. I think possibly the most impacted – you can make your own judgement.

Our engagement with the developer from early on has been positive with changes made to screening, and also to other aspects of the development of our land.

The developers do actually listen and take local knowledge into account, but only if one is willing to actually talk with them.

Changing Landscape

The landscape we live in is not static. I would argue its not entirely a natural wilderness. Ours is largely man-made; a product of agricultural reform in the 60s, land enclosure before that, and other changes *made by people*.

Although you can’t see them, we are criss-crossed with underground gas pipes taking energy in the form of gas to Cottam already, installed relatively recently. Could you tell?

What you see is not a natural landscape, but one that has always been changing to fit the needs of society. The coming of the train, power station cooling towers along the Trent valley, and now solar to assist in the UK’s binding Commitment to Net Zero.

Conclusion

In summary – Big Changes but Positive Opportunities. We are in favour of this change.

Thank you for your time. “

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The following is intended to support some of the points made, including references where appropriate.

Farms are businesses, and as such operate to make a profit however distasteful some people find this. As businesses, we have been encouraged to diversify and seek other forms of income. Government direct support, or subsidy, for growing food was progressively removed from 2003 in order that farmers would be “free to choose what to produce on their land [and state support] should not be conditional on production of any specific product.”¹ Despite this move towards alternate land use “the UK produces most of the cereals, meat, dairy and eggs that it consumes.”² There is an annual requirement to import specific grades of milling wheat which “come (predominantly) from Canada and Germany for milling wheats the UK does not grow due to differences in climate and soil.”³ I found no specific data on UK avocado production but the same report notes that “some fruits and vegetables can only grow in certain overseas regions due to climate suitability.”

Solar sites can still support food production, if the economic conditions are right, in the form of small animal grazing. Attached is a picture of sheep belonging to one of our farming businesses successfully grazing a solar site in West Lindsey in the recent past. While not having the same degree of impact on the economy as in the medieval period, total sheep numbers in West Lindsey have increased by 24% between 2010 and 2021.⁴ In its 2014 report, Dr John Scurlock states “free-ranging poultry have already been successfully employed to manage grassland in solar farms while demonstrating dual-purpose land use”, and that the environment provided therein is supported by current RSPCA Freedom Foods certification.

We remain highly impacted residents, and as such have a vested interest in engaging with the developer to ensure good design. We fully acknowledge that installing infrastructure can be brutal – recent underground gas pipelines were installed in 2003 and 1997, involving geophysics and a “watching brief”⁶ – but all you would notice now are the small, roadside markers. What can be seen today is a landscape changed over time to meet human need. Modern Harpswell and Heapham is a landscape of post-WW2 farming when “modern” drainage was installed. You would be hard-pressed to identify where a concrete runway used to be – a feature of the landscape in the 1940s that has been returned to fields. Similarly, the field layout in Heapham with straight edges was “planned on the surveyor’s drawing

board”⁷ during enclosure in 1775. Prior to that, the area within the red line in Heapham would be largely grazed in three large fields.

References

- (1) EC COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No1782/2003 of 29 September 2003 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- (2) (3) DEFRA (2024) “Official Statistics United Kingdom Food Security Report 2024: Theme 2: UK Food Supply Sources” ISBN 978-1-5286-5232-2
- (4) Lincolnshire County Council (2022) “Agriculture Across Lincolnshire. Analysis of the latest Defra Agricultural Survey Data plus additional data. Version 3” [REDACTED] (page 245)
- (5) BRE (2014) Agricultural Good Practice Guidance for Solar Farms. Ed J Scurlock
- (6) “Caenby Corner to Gainsborough Pipeline, , Lincolnshire. Archaeological Evaluation Watching Brief”
[REDACTED]
- (7) Russell, R.C in Bennett,S. & Bennett, N. (1993) “An Historical Atlas of Lincolnshire” ISBN 0-85958-604-9 pp82-5



Lleyn sheep grazing at Danes Farm Stow Lincoln LN1 2AJ.