

Formal Objection to Proposed Solar Park Development

My name is Tricia Price, and I have operated my equestrian training business from [REDACTED] for the past [REDACTED] years.

I am writing to formally raise significant concerns regarding the proposed solar park development, particularly in relation to its impact on my business, the welfare of horses, and the wider equestrian use of the local area.

Construction Phase Disruption

My business centres on the training of young horses and the development of up-and-coming equestrian athletes. I also provide full livery services to local riders who compete at grassroots level and ride for pleasure and exercise.

The construction phase of this scheme is likely to cause severe disruption to these activities. Training schedules will be significantly affected, and the safe exercise of horses on local roads—an essential component of their development—will become increasingly difficult and dangerous. Access to the network of local bridleways is also likely to be restricted or adversely impacted.

My daughter currently competes within the youth ranks of Team GB, and roadwork forms a critical part of maintaining her horses' fitness. The presence of heavy construction vehicles and increased traffic movements poses a serious safety risk. Many horses are highly sensitive to large vehicles, and such exposure can cause extreme distress, potentially resulting in injury or even fatal incidents.

Importance of the Local Road Network

Road riding is fundamental to both competition horse fitness and the education of young horses. Since relocating to Little Staughton, the quiet rural nature of the surrounding road network has been integral to the success of my business.

By way of example, the Brazilian Olympic eventing team based themselves with us in the lead-up to the 2012 Olympics specifically because of the suitability of our rural setting and road network for maintaining their horses' condition.

Economic Impact

The proposed development has already had a tangible negative impact on my business. I had been due to take on a member of the Indian equestrian team in preparation for the Asian Games in Tokyo, with a longer-term plan extending to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. This arrangement has now been cancelled due to concerns regarding disruption associated with the solar park, particularly during its construction phase.

Noise and Vibration

The anticipated noise and vibration from construction activities—especially piling operations—are of serious concern. Young and sensitive horses are particularly vulnerable to such disturbances, which can negatively affect their behaviour, training progression, and overall welfare.

Operational Phase Concerns (Glint, Glare, and Visual Impact)

Even once operational, the solar park presents ongoing risks. Glint and glare from solar panels, along with the presence of large and unfamiliar structures, may cause horses to spook. This creates a continued safety risk for both riders and horses, particularly when using nearby roads.

Horses, as prey animals, are inherently sensitive and unpredictable when exposed to unfamiliar or distressing stimuli. Standard mitigation measures often fail to adequately address these risks.

Inadequacy of Proposed Mitigation

I have little confidence in the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation measures. Screening associated with similar developments has often proven insufficient and, in some cases, wholly inadequate.

There is also broader concern regarding the long-term management of such sites. Solar developments are frequently sold on to investment funds after construction, and there is limited assurance that these entities will maintain landscaping, screening, or overall site standards over time.

Should this scheme be permitted, it is essential that robust and enforceable planning conditions are imposed to ensure that all mitigation measures are not only implemented but properly maintained throughout the lifespan of the project.

Animal Welfare Considerations

While considerable weight is rightly given to the protection of wildlife in the planning process, it is equally important to recognise the welfare of domesticated animals.

Horses are highly sensitive to environmental change. Their welfare, safety, and the livelihoods that depend upon them must be given appropriate consideration. I am also aware that other local animal-based businesses share similar concerns regarding the potential impacts on the animals in their care.

Conclusion

In summary, I believe this development poses a significant and unacceptable risk to my business, the safety and welfare of horses, and the character of the local area. I strongly urge that these concerns are given full and proper consideration in the decision-making process.

Yours faithfully,
Tricia Price