

**7000 Acres**

**7000 Acres Response to the Tillbridge Solar Application on the subject of:**

**Food Security**

**Deadline 2 Submission – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

## **Food Security:**

If the world becomes short of electricity, then we will adapt to some other form of energy. If the world becomes short of food, then we will starve and die. Farmland must be used for food production not energy generation.

We have huge competing demands for the use of land in this country. We've got to consider new homes, growing food, space for nature, and generating the energy we all use in our daily lives. Putting solar panels on the millions of roofs across the country means that we don't need to use as much extra land to meet our energy needs. This saves land from industrialisation and paves the way for regenerative agriculture that will produce food and provide a much-needed home for declining wildlife species.

Placing solar panels on urban rooftops protects the beauty of our landscapes. After all, it is unspoiled views of green fields and rolling hills that make the English countryside so special. Whether the land outside a village or town is considered 'high grade' or not, the loss of green fields to metal and glass is so strongly resisted by local communities because it would transform a part of the countryside that matters intimately to them.

We are not against solar energy and propose for solar panels to be mandatory on all new build developments whether that be residential, commercial or agricultural and believe that there is room for larger scale PV arrays to be situated on some suitable brownfield sites. However, we also believe that we should protect our best and most versatile agricultural land to promote food security, help the rural economy and encourage agricultural practises to promote sustainable methods to tackle climate change.

The UN quotes that the global food security challenge is straightforward: by 2050, the world must feed 9 billion people. The demand for food will be 60% greater than it is today. Currently, 40% of the world's landmass is arid, and rising temperatures will turn yet more of it into desert. At current rates, the amount of food we're growing today will feed only half of the population by 2050.

Balancing the need for both food and energy security is a complex issue that requires a holistic approach. One way to achieve this balance is by implementing sustainable energy approaches that strengthen food assistance by providing people with activities that support local food value chains.

The UK Food Security Report 2021: Theme 2: UK Food Supply Sources updated 5 October 2023 states that 'In June 2020, 71% of the UK's land, or 17.3 million hectares, was used for agricultural production, of which 72% was grassland and 26% cropland, with the remainder being set-aside or fallow land. Trends in land use have been generally stable over the last 30 years, but climate change poses a threat to high quality arable farmland and competition for land use is increasing'.

Over the last 30 years land use has been fairly stable for most crops, allowing for fluctuations in prices and weather conditions. However, Defra-commissioned research suggests climate change impacts under a medium emissions scenario could reduce the proportion of 'best and most versatile' arable farmland (ALC 1, 2, and 3a) from 38.1% of agricultural land on a 1961 to 1990 baseline to 11.4% by 2050, with consequences for food production and meeting Net Zero. Meeting Net Zero, climate change mitigation, and biodiversity goals will increasingly add to existing, competing pressures on land use.

The UK Government Food Strategy underlines the crucial role domestic food producers play in national resilience. The land proposed to be developed for the Tillbridge Solar Project is productive arable land, as is the land associated with the three other large solar developments in the region. The impact of the Tillbridge Solar Project, and the cumulative impact of the 4 schemes on Food Security has not been considered, particularly in light of the circumstances of war, pandemic, crop disease and global warming (e.g. rising sea levels) on national and global supply chains.

Why do Tribus Clean Energy and Recurrent Energy believe that Energy Security is more important than Food Security? What is their explanation for this project apart from commercial gain?

The Secretary of State in his approval letter for the Cottam Solar Farm Project acknowledged that whilst these losses e.g., in arable food production would be temporary it would be for a prolonged period of time, and the cumulative effects over 60 years would heighten such losses. The ExA considered that for these reasons, the Proposed Development would not meet the requirements of the NPPF in this regard, which the Secretary of State agreed with. However, the Secretary of State agreed with the ExA that this should be classed as “little negative weight” rather than “significant negative weight” in recognition of the point that, whilst the use of arable farmland exceeds NPPF guidance, it is in line with the 2024 NPS. Why therefore is there no mention of Food Security and its impacts in the Tillbridge Solar Project documentation?

Next time you see pictures of adults and children suffering from starvation I hope that your conscience is clear that you made the right decision that food is more important than electricity.