

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Springwell Solar Farm
Hearing:	Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) - Part 2
Date:	07 May 2025

Please note: This document is intended to assist Interested Parties.

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The video recording published on the Planning Inspectorate project page is the primary record of the hearing.

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:06:08 - 00:00:08:23

We will be resuming the hearing. Please.

00:00:22:10 - 00:00:26:09

Okay. If you could all be seated, please. We are. We have resumed the hearing. Thank you.

00:00:31:14 - 00:00:36:20

Okay. Thank you very much. Uh, our next speaker is, uh, Martin Elwin, please.

00:00:44:10 - 00:00:52:22

Okay. Is he not? Not quite ready. Okay. We'll move on to the next one and come back to Mr. Elvin. Uh, Digby Parish council. Mr. Baum, please, would you like to come forward?

00:01:04:21 - 00:01:05:23

Good afternoon, gentlemen.

00:01:05:25 - 00:01:09:12

Okay. Thank you. Your your ten minutes will start when you're ready. Thank you very much.

00:01:09:18 - 00:01:39:27

My name is. My name is James Bourne. I'm a farmer and also chairman of Digby Parish Council. Digby Parish Council strongly objects to the application proposed to cover 4200 acres of our surrounding countryside in glass and steel. The proposed industrialisation of our rural area is not the answer to the government's need to rush to achieve net zero. In the time it takes to build these huge sites on good agricultural farmland.

00:01:40:08 - 00:02:16:21

This form of power source could be outclassed by more efficient sources, and we were left with massive amounts of our country's good food producing land smothered in glass and steel. As well as looking at producing power. We need to look at the bigger picture and protect our own food production security in this war torn world. The power could be produced on brownfield sites and rooftops and would be a more efficient use of the land. The parish council is not against green power, but these solar plants, as they are not farms, are not the answer.

00:02:17:17 - 00:03:03:28

The loss of good farmland to the proposed solar plants covering the same area as cities is not acceptable. It's a shortsighted government as it not only affects our food production, but the loss of land also affects energy crops. Animal feed crops. Currently in production, farmland is being deliberately downgraded so it qualifies for solar plant development. London 12 months ago was good enough to supply food for this country. The area of Lincolnshire that Springwell Energy Farm are proposing to industrialize is our home The disruption to the way in life and loss of open countryside will affect the mental health of our residents.

00:03:04:09 - 00:03:34:16

It will affect their livelihoods. The economy of our county having vast areas of countryside being industrialized. Steel and concrete will just drastically reduce tourism, as no one will want to visit and walk around fields of glass and steel. Local farmers, residents, public house landlords, small villages that have had to diversify to survive will lose. Customers at Airbnbs and restaurants have managed to attract.

00:03:35:17 - 00:04:08:21

The parish council is also concerned about our house prices, and some local estate agents say prices have already dropped by 7% where the plant is being proposed. Unfortunately, this country does not have vast areas of wasteland and open spaces like the USA and in Australia, where solar panel plants on this scale can easily be incorporated into landscape with little effect on residents. We should not copy them, but develop a green power source more suited to the country.

00:04:09:12 - 00:04:47:21

Lincolnshire, although rural, is the home and livelihood of thousands of people. This application and several other solar farm plants also being applied for this area, will greatly affect the local economy and the lives of people in a negative way. The residents are very worried that the fertile soil will be destroyed because of possible chemical leakage, leakage from the solar panels being washed into the ground. The lack of attention to the soil around the equipment for the duration of the solar panels, then at the end of the life of the solar plant.

00:04:48:11 - 00:05:33:23

If there is, if there are actually dismantled and returned to agricultural land as promised by the applicant. The soil will be too full to produce. Too poor to produce any crops, and may be left with a classification of brownfields, which will then be open to land for further industrialization. The rural way of life will be lost forever. The associated battery energy storage systems Bess planned with the proposed scheme are a great worry, particularly in light of a recent fire in January in America as a battery storage plant, which took over 15 hours to control and emitted toxic fumes, so the area had to be evacuated.

00:05:34:16 - 00:06:10:00

It is our understanding that the current fire service guidelines do not define instructions on how to deal with lithium battery fires on the scale of units that are planned within the Springville side. The area is rural and the amount of water needed to control a fire at the location site will be far more than what is available. The local part time fire services would struggle to maintain a vertical water barrier to prevent the toxic smoke and fumes spread into neighboring villages.

00:06:10:06 - 00:06:41:03

In some cases only a mile away, the lithium cannot be put out with water and will burn for hours, possibly days. It's an extract for a paper on safety of grid scale lithium ion battery storage systems. Lithium ion batteries can fail by thermal runaway, where overheating in a single fault cell can propagate to neighbors with energy releases, popularly known as battery fires.

00:06:41:22 - 00:07:16:21

These are not strictly fires at all, requiring no oxygen to propagate. They are uncontrollable aboard except by extravagant water cooling. They evolved toxic gas such as hydrogen fluoride and highly inflammable gases, including hydrogen, methane, methane, and carbon monoxide. These, in turn may cause further explosions or fires upon ignition. The chemical energy then release can be up to 20 times the stored electrical chemical energy.

00:07:17:14 - 00:07:47:14

The parish council does not want our residents lives to be in danger of toxic fumes. The risk of runaway fires. This again shows this is not the answer to this country's power requirement. I would also like to point out that the site is only a mile away from a primary school, with lots of small children there. And when I was very young, there was Aberfan disaster, where a lot of children were killed.

00:07:47:18 - 00:08:07:13

And it's had a great effect on me and my family, actually, all thinking about those poor little children. Well, the same thing could happen with a toxic fume from this, uh, chemical fire. And you yourself are going to be the person responsible if you agree to have these batteries in this particular location.

00:08:10:09 - 00:08:44:05

Aquifer. If the fire occurs, the chemicals from the battery units mixed with the suppressants used to try and control the fire will leak into the aquifer. The aquifer in this area is the most important in the county. The possible contamination of this water source would be catastrophic. The proposed best pressured fuel line that serves the proposed best Navy to serve Springville will be one of the largest in the country. It is also cited near a high pressure fuel line that serves modern airfields in the area.

00:08:44:18 - 00:09:30:14

Any accidental fire in the best could become a major incident. Conclusion. It is understood each development is looked at individually, but the bigger picture needs to be looked at. Currently, there are 14 solar plant developments known to us at various stages of planning in the Lincolnshire Nottinghamshire area. If all approved, will cover 34,400 acres, which is 53mi². Although this application is for 4200 acres, there are the two other major applications for solar plants in extreme close proximity, and they plan to flow all their power through the proposed Navy substation and battery site.

00:09:30:29 - 00:09:42:03

One is fast green for 2400 acres and the other is louder for 2400 acres. The industrialisation of this part of Lincolnshire is a serious issue.

00:09:44:27 - 00:09:46:08

That's it. Thank you very much.

00:09:51:17 - 00:09:58:17

Thank you very much, Mr. Baum. Thank you. Okay. Next up, uh, Martin. Alvin, if you'd like to come forward. Thank you.

00:10:07:19 - 00:10:10:08

Please start whenever you're ready and your five minutes will begin.

00:10:10:10 - 00:10:42:03

Thank you. Thank you. Um. Yes, Mr.. Alvin Digby. Uh, a lot has been said already about, uh, agriculture in, uh, Lincolnshire, and quite rightly so. I just want to hammer home a few points in relation to that. As far as food production in the UK is concerned, one county, Lincolnshire, accounts for about 12% of that production. That's one eighth in one county.

00:10:42:21 - 00:11:14:24

And I'll just back up a few other figures that have been mentioned today. 30% of all vegetables produced in the UK in Lincolnshire. 18% of all poultry products produced in Lincolnshire. The Lincolnshire agricultural economy is reckoned to be worth about £1.8 billion per annum. So it's not insignificant.

00:11:15:09 - 00:11:59:26

And what I find people have referred already to food security. We are looking at criminal irresponsibility at the moment, in a world which is war torn, bloodshed and conflict ridden, the need for a good, uh, home supply. have reliable home supply of food is as important now as it was in 1939, where the country very nearly lost the war, not because of for lack of, uh, equipment or weaponry, food.

00:12:00:08 - 00:12:37:06

People were getting hungry and there was a serious problem. And that doesn't need to happen. Whatever happens with the world at the moment, we need to have food security, and that needs to be a strategic issue. And I think it's important enough for that to be taken into account. When I heard someone this morning saying that it wasn't a planning consideration, well, it should be a planning consideration as far as planning the future of the country is concerned. Um, now, just as far as Lincolnshire is concerned, it's got all the ingredients that you need for agriculture.

00:12:37:08 - 00:13:08:06

It's got a climate which in the summertime is favorable. It's got a topography, a landscape that makes it easier than farming the Welsh mountainsides and places like that. And it's got the soil of which Blankley and I don't even agree with 42%. I would say far more than 42% of blankness states where this spring. Well, uh, monster is to go is, uh, is top quality.

00:13:08:08 - 00:13:45:10

Now, what's going on? Why are we seeing this scourge, this menace of all these, uh, solar complexes, uh, around the area in North Kesteven, which describes itself as the heart of Lincolnshire. And it's got nothing whatever to do with selling, uh, or producing rather electricity for homes in Lincolnshire or even the UK. Springwell talks about their complex would be enough to provide electricity.

00:13:45:12 - 00:14:13:28

180,000 homes in Lincolnshire. About half the number. Yeah, but they won't. It won't go there. Those, uh, complexes are on a 400 kilovolt, uh, transmission line that comes from, uh, the Trent on the Trent Valley around Cottam Power station area. It's going down to Vic often, uh, further south and east in Lincolnshire. And then it's going to connect up to an interconnect.

00:14:14:00 - 00:14:15:00

One minute remaining.

00:14:15:02 - 00:14:49:15

Across the North Sea to Jutland, to Denmark. They are about selling electricity abroad. That's what it's about. It's about selling electricity as an international commodity, and therefore its prices will be international commodity prices. It'll be in the summertime when we need at least, and where air conditioning and industry in Europe needs that electricity and they will sell it at the going price, and we will be expected to pay for it at the going price here.

00:14:49:19 - 00:15:19:18

So on that basis, I really ask you to take those two strategic issues, food security and the big business of selling of electricity. It gives the lie to what we're told that it's going to be cheap, green, stable and and all the rest of it. It won't be cheap, it won't make any difference. And there's an example of that. Norway went through the roof over their prices of their electricity because they were exporting it to Germany.

00:15:19:22 - 00:15:22:10

Sorry, Mr. Albin, that's that's five minutes.

00:15:22:12 - 00:15:28:12

Now throw this out. I ask you to reject this scheme. Thank you.

00:15:29:06 - 00:15:30:07

Thank you, Mr. Albin.

00:15:32:13 - 00:15:33:24

Thank you very much, Mr. Erwin.

00:15:35:20 - 00:15:40:07

Okay. Next is John Money, please. If you'd like to come forward.

00:15:55:28 - 00:15:59:03

Fantastic. Whenever you're ready to begin your five minutes. Thank you. Chairman.

00:15:59:05 - 00:16:40:12

Thank you. My name is John Money, and I have lived on or adjacent to the blank estate for 50 years. I will be more specific tomorrow. But today. My question is why? My first why stems from the well known hemline. We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land. By doing so, a thing of useful excellence has been created not just by God's almighty hand, but by the skill, Foresight and hard work of generations of agricultural experts who have answered the call of the hen.

00:16:41:20 - 00:17:18:10

These fields have been fed and watered over centuries. Land has been reclaimed on the Lincoln Heath and on the fen, and developed by local skills and knowledge to feed our country. There are examples

of beauty in themselves, as the wind gently rustles through golden fields of corn. They also are presided over by one of the religious beauties of England, our wonderful Lincoln Cathedral. Nonetheless, they have a productive quality which ranks in the Premier League of English agriculture.

00:17:18:28 - 00:17:55:28

So my question is, why are some people asking us to destroy these broad acres by promoting this project? They propose to destroy the beauty Of a horde like a horde of vandals. These broad acres where men and God have. For decades have managed to feed us. Now that it is proposed to lay waste to this fertile land by carpeting these fields with an army of foreign made, inferior and potentially harmful solar panels.

00:17:56:28 - 00:18:30:26

Why should this work of years of local endeavor be trashed? This high grade, now irrigated BMV land which can grow absolutely anything, will be wasted for the foreseeable future. Possibly it will never come back into agriculture production. Why? What will replace our present rolling fields? An army of inexperienced on an unsupervised.

00:18:30:28 - 00:19:01:12

Labors from wherever, with no lasting skills, will replace our local workers who have become skilled over time in all aspects of our agricultural resources. Will these people be imported like the dreadful panels from wherever? Why, they will descend like locusts to strip these fields of their bounty, and plant fields of metal and glass on a desert that will leave the desert.

00:19:01:14 - 00:19:34:29

They will leave behind. Our county will be destroyed by this ravaging march, and will leave us with the dreadful legacy for generations to come. The point I am making in this is this BMV land should not be considered for this type of development when there are so many viable alternatives in different land, rooftops and brownfield land which is not suitable for building houses.

00:19:36:03 - 00:20:00:26

But we know the reason geographically, why it is where it is. And the locality of the 400 kV power line leading to Beta Fen. And as the previous speaker said, that substation and onward to the via the Viking link to power German industry. I implore you.

00:20:01:11 - 00:20:02:27

To take one minute remaining.

00:20:03:04 - 00:20:13:12

I implore you to take into consideration the MPP f appendix. And I would like to think that you will consider refusing this application. Thank you.

00:20:17:02 - 00:20:17:18

Okay.

00:20:18:05 - 00:20:21:16

Once again, thank you, Mr. Mani, for taking the time to speak to us this afternoon.

00:20:23:03 - 00:20:26:04

Um, Andrew Welsh is up next, please.

00:20:36:09 - 00:20:37:05

Good afternoon.

00:20:37:24 - 00:21:12:24

Uh, my name is Andrew Welch. I'm a farm manager on a farm that borders Blakeney Estates. Uh, I'd like to just sort of cover probably lots of points that have already been mentioned about, uh, land use and food security. This vitally important area of land asset will be irreversibly damaged by the solar project, resulting in very, very large amounts of locally produced food being lost forever. According to the EDF paid for land reclassification, which I would say is probably not terribly accurate.

00:21:13:09 - 00:21:57:03

42% of the land in the project has been classified as best and most versatile. So this is grade three A and above. Again, I would say this this um percentage should actually be much higher. The land will never be returned to food production with concrete, wires, etc. left in the ground. We will be left with a Chernobyl like wasteland forever. Using the information from my report submitted to the consultation. R 109. It can be assumed that around 100 000 people could be fed from the area each year, and according to the 2021 census, the population of Lincoln was just over 100,000, multiplied by the 40 years of this project.

00:21:57:05 - 00:22:01:01

This would be the equivalent of being able to feed 4 million people.

00:22:04:29 - 00:22:38:21

This food lost will need to be replaced, which will mean importing from abroad. Many of the supplying countries do not have the same high production and welfare standards as the UK. Genetically modified crops are widely grown in other parts of the world, and will be imported into the UK in higher volumes than they already are. Deforestation still takes place in the rainforest areas of South America to enable the farmers to grow more and more soya. Indonesia and Malaysia are farmed predominantly as a monoculture, accounting for 85% of the world's palm oil production.

00:22:39:04 - 00:23:01:01

Deforestation and extreme reliance on one crop is incredibly harmful to the local and global environment and wildlife, with such levels of monarch in the potential to have a pest or disease, wiping out the crop in the whole area or country is very high risk, resulting in no or reduced imports into the UK of food already lost to the solar area.

00:23:04:06 - 00:23:34:19

In recent years, we've seen what happens when the world begins to shut down the supply chain, firstly with Covid, then the Suez Canal was blocked and finally the war in Ukraine. Food becomes very expensive and in short supply. It is amazing what short memories the decision makers have. We were assured during these periods that food security was of the highest priority. That is now a distant

memory. And yet again, it is believed by the deluded minds of the powerful few that everything can be imported without risk for eternity.

00:23:35:12 - 00:24:03:11

Lincolnshire is the breadbasket of the United Kingdom. Soon there will be nothing left. We will become a nation that has little or no food security, completely unable to support ourselves in times of volatility, another pandemic or similar worldwide issue. Lincolnshire farmers did not stop producing food during Covid, but with no land left to farm, this ability to produce world leading, high quality food will be lost forever. Thank you.

00:24:06:05 - 00:24:09:06

Thank you very much, Mr. Welsh. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

00:24:12:03 - 00:24:14:12

Okay. Sarah Jackson, please.

00:24:24:10 - 00:24:25:10

Do I need to press a button?

00:24:25:22 - 00:24:28:24

No, your microphone's on, so your five minutes will start when you're ready. Thank you.

00:24:28:26 - 00:25:00:21

Okay. So, Jackson, um, Scott, resident, a member of Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, farmer's daughter, worked in agriculture for 34 years. Very little research has been carried out on biodiversity. And that's what I would like to talk about in the UK in relation to large scale solar farms. Most research has been done abroad on large scale farms and found devastating results of wildlife and biodiversity. Even on small scale solar farms in the UK. All the data available is sobering at best. I'm going to talk about Scott Beck.

00:25:00:23 - 00:25:37:21

It's biodiversity, it's importance as at the heart of the proposed development. Fact English talk streams are one of the rarest habitats on Earth. Yes, Scott Beck is a considered a chalk stream. It is fed by springs from the Lincolnshire Limestone aquifer, and it has clear water characteristic of calcareous conditions. Scott Wick Back is a biodiversity hotspot and classified as a priority under the government's Biodiversity Action Plan. Solar cells have we, as we have heard, contain metals, organic compounds and even radioactive products.

00:25:38:14 - 00:26:17:11

If any battery storage caught fire or when any solar well, not if when any solar panels get broken, toxic metals will run into this back at the centre of the village, causing significant, if not catastrophic effects on the wildlife of the back and further up the food chain for many years, making it fatal for wildlife and for residents too. Scott Beck also has a significant population of native waterfalls and endangered species, and on the UK Red list waterfalls are protected under several acts of legislation, and the government website says to protect these mammals in all planning decisions.

00:26:17:18 - 00:26:49:17

The Bec also supports freshwater invertebrates such as caddis fish, shrimps and other critically endangered species which flourish along with eels, brown trout. Bullhead fish. Minnows. Sticklebacks. Flatworms. BAP. BAP. Which species of beetles. So therefore very important beetles and important freshwater plants such as marsh marigold and watercress. I dip this this jar in the back as I left Scott work today. Just literally dumping it in. I picked up five different species.

00:26:50:20 - 00:27:24:19

Very sensitive. Sensitive indicator species will not tolerate broken solar panels, nor even the chemicals that they use to wash the panels with you, which will then filter down into the back all water from broken panels. Battery storage accidents will end up in the springs or spring well clues in the title development in our streams and becks devastating the indicator species and consequently the entire food chain. Further up the food chain, as well as the waterfalls, otters, eels and various bird species like kingfishers, small egrets and herons reside daily along the backside.

00:27:25:05 - 00:28:03:17

The Heritage Lottery funded project, which also involves the East Mercia Rivers Trust, the Environmental Agency Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Project and the Wild Trout Trust, is restoring limestone backs in Lincolnshire. On five backs is one of them. Not only will poisoning the beck and other water bodies be fatal to research, but research has shown aquatic insects to mistake solar panels for water bodies and lay eggs on them. This insect behavioural disruption is caused by horizontal polarized light from the panels, attracting certain insects and thereby altering their natural behaviours and affecting local ecosystems.

00:28:03:27 - 00:28:47:21

I'd also like to include people in the diversity of species. The beck is the centre of our village. Children and dogs play in the back at Scott and Kirkby Green forward. Not just villages, but people from all over Lincolnshire come to Scott Peck to catch minnows as little bats and return them before back to the water. The bet brings customers to the Royal Oak, which has tables along the backside where customers paddle and dogs drink water. Brownies and local primary schools use the back as educational purposes. The centre of communities with boats racing on our church fetes and traditional village shows birds breeding songbirds, owls, red kites, harriers, buzzards, skylarks, yellow hammers, black caps, three types of finches to name a few.

00:28:47:23 - 00:29:26:14

Cuckoos return to Scott every year we have recordings. They are a red list species. Other red list species Swifts and swallows are abundance sweeping over the fields within the order of limits, reason, woodlands or buildings and ponds within the proposed area of development give shelter to the large amount of insects. Bloxham Woods Nature Reserve adjoins the boundary. 14 notable bat species are bred within the order of the limits. The big issue with solar panels in field disorientation and collisions, sudden glints can confuse birds backs and insects, increasing the likelihood of collisions with the panels.

00:29:26:18 - 00:29:46:08

Misinterpretation as water bodies triggering inappropriate behaviors such as misguided egg laying and drinking attempts. Research has shown panels in fears to be too narrow for owls and other birds of

prey to hunt between increased predation risk. Disorientated birds are more vulnerable to predators. Mitigation.

00:29:46:10 - 00:29:47:10

That's five.

00:29:47:12 - 00:30:25:09

Minutes. Must include. Just let me summarize. Yes. Um. Notice of installation on adders, grass snakes and slow worms. As long as all of the animals. They are very shy and less alone. Not even talking about the inbreeding of hedgehogs, hares, and the fragmentation of population populations. I could go on in a rich, diverse this area full of springs? Or good farmland? This is not sustainability. We all know that it must not happen, even if we all have free electric and money poured into the local villages, it would never be worth the disruption to the habitat, the farmland and the village life.

00:30:30:07 - 00:30:32:15

Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Jackson. Thank you.

00:30:38:09 - 00:30:40:28

Uh, next we have John Anderson, please.

00:30:51:15 - 00:31:23:18

My name is John Anderson. I'm a resident of Wick, and I would like to talk about the damage the proposed industrial Springwell solar development will have on the fragile soils on the Lincoln heathland. Soil is a finite resource and is not an inert medium, but a living ecosystem that is essential to all life. It takes over 100,000 years to form 25mm of topsoil, and many more centuries after that, before it becomes fertile soil.

00:31:23:20 - 00:31:33:28

Degradation is a process usually caused by human activity. It's caused by intensive farming practices, fires, and construction work.

00:31:35:14 - 00:32:08:16

I believe the installation of this large industrial solar facility on the fragile soils of the Lincoln heathlands will not just damage the soils during the construction phase, but by depriving this soil from natural sunlight and nutrients for 40 years will irretrievably damage it and may take many, many, many years to remediate. These actions disturb the soil structure and leave it vulnerable to water and wind erosion, which in turn damages the complex systems below the surface.

00:32:09:13 - 00:32:41:08

These practices cause the decline in soil health, biodiversity and obviously productivity, leading to issues at all levels of many ecosystems. The consequences of which are floods and wind blown away. Erosion. Soil compaction occurs when there is a combination of wet soil and heavy weight, and an example is the heavy, unwieldy construction machinery, which is used for percussion pile driving and concreting.

00:32:41:27 - 00:32:55:25

These works cause all the natural tunnels and pores created by earthworms and various organisms to get compressed below ground. With this pressure threatening underground habitats and availability of nutrients,

00:32:57:10 - 00:33:30:09

without this underground life, the land becomes barren and can lead to desertification. Soil is damaged beyond repair, and nothing grows except a few scrub type plants that you see in deserts around the world. Soil degradation is the largest threat to our future food security, which is associated to the loss of soil productivity. When the land is covered by structures such as solar panels, soil husbandry by various crop rotation practices are impossible to undertake.

00:33:32:10 - 00:34:03:18

When arable land is farmed in a crop rotation system, it allows different plants to be grown in different areas, and they in turn affect the soil differently. This practice allows the soil to replenish itself with the nutrients that are lacking within the soil. This soil damage will occur when land is left barren for long periods of time. With the lack of tillage. Only one type of plant will grow over and over again. When rainfall is not evenly distributed over the land.

00:34:03:24 - 00:34:47:03

The rain runoff from structures such as solar panels will create channels for the rainfall to either accumulate in, or it will run to low points around these areas. You will get some vegetation growth at the end of its growing cycle. It will seed and regrow the next year under the structures without the benefit of direct sunlight to promote photosynthesis and the lack of moisture. Over the lifetime of this proposed project, I believe it will become a barren area of desert desertification, which, especially on the Lincoln Heath, will suffer from wind promoted soil erosion unless, of course, the surface is covered with netting or other types of protection.

00:34:47:29 - 00:34:54:05

We've all seen soil dust storms blowing across the A15 trunk road from time to time.

00:34:55:25 - 00:34:56:23

One minute remaining.

00:34:56:25 - 00:35:30:06

During the life of a large solar facility. No artificial nutrients will be applied. Not any tillage will take place. Presently, both grass and arable lands are subsoil, ripped to a depth of 150mm. Periodically, to break the pan after the piling and substructure, works are completed. This proposed site will have become a hard pan where no methods to break it up to introduce air into the soil to improve the natural drainage can take place for 40 years.

00:35:31:00 - 00:36:02:10

After spending 40 years in a barren state. I believe this land will be unable to be remediated. Certainly so on the Lincoln Heath, on the heavier land below the B11 88 and southeast of the B11 91, the hollow clay pipe land drainage systems will have been decimated by the vibration from the piling operations in the construction phase. Irrespective of the state of the upper soils. The affected lands would all have to be re under drained.

00:36:02:14 - 00:36:08:03

After spending 40 years as a soggy mess in the winter time and baked hard in the summer.

00:36:08:05 - 00:36:12:00

That's five minutes. If you could draw to a conclusion.

00:36:12:15 - 00:36:13:11

Can I finish?

00:36:13:16 - 00:36:14:12

Yes, yes. Thank you.

00:36:14:23 - 00:36:52:06

A vision which must promote runoff into the lower lying communities causing flash flooding. Especially in Scott Wick when in encountering thunderstorms in the summer. This land has been under drained in some form or another since the enclosures. I believe the Internal Drainage Board's, the Environment Agency and Defra would all be concerned by this potential loss of arable land and the subsequent damage it will have on the wider environment. I believe the proposed development, if approved as submitted, is in contravention of the following, which is the National Planning Policy Framework.

00:36:52:22 - 00:37:10:27

Paragraphs one eight, three, one eight, seven, eight, E and F, National Policy Statement, Environment statement, paragraphs five, 11, 12 and National Policy Statement. Environment statement three two 1229.

00:37:11:02 - 00:37:15:26

Mr. Anderson, I do need you to to thank you very much. Thank you very much.

00:37:22:02 - 00:37:24:15

Okay. Next up is Ashley Brown.

00:37:28:23 - 00:37:30:00

Sorry. Ashley Brown.

00:37:32:28 - 00:37:36:08

Hello? Can you hear me? Yeah, man.

00:37:36:10 - 00:37:37:23

Oh, there we go. Yes. Hi, there.

00:37:38:12 - 00:37:40:16

Hi. Yeah. Give me one second.

00:37:40:22 - 00:37:41:08

That's okay.

00:37:41:29 - 00:37:48:23

I this is my phone logging on. Um, but obviously I'm obviously with Laura. So obviously I'm just on her phone now.

00:37:49:09 - 00:37:52:12

Sure. No problem at all. Your five minutes will start whenever you're ready.

00:37:53:06 - 00:38:26:08

Cool. So, uh, obviously, I'm from Wellington Heath with Laura Lord McGregor. Uh, obviously we want a very small business there, but I just want to talk about, um, you know, the amount of farmers that are in Lincolnshire in general. Um, basically, and, you know, these farms are going to be there for the next 40 years with solar on them. Where's the next generation of farming coming from? You know? Um, the food, the crops that's going to be taken out of production, I think. You know, it's just devastating for the local community as well as the country.

00:38:26:23 - 00:38:30:20

I just think, um, you know, it's just, uh,

00:38:32:08 - 00:39:02:09

it's basically impacting the whole community, the environment itself. And, um, I just think, you know, it needs. It needs to stop the amount of money it's going to cost. Um, you know, after the 40 years to, to put it back into, um, land that you can grow crops from. But obviously with the land being contaminated, that's not going to happen. I just think it's, uh, you know, the energy company is, uh, profiting from greed. And as a country, we're not going to profit from any of this.

00:39:02:21 - 00:39:33:09

Um, as as a lot of people have mentioned, the Viking link all goes to Denmark and France. I think people need to look into that. Um, I just think, you know, in, in all honesty, um, it's just not the right way to go about, you know, clean energy. Um, and it's just madness on the net zero projects that are coming up more and more. Um, and I just think we should all reject this. And, uh, I don't think it's, um, viable for our community and our country, and that's it.

00:39:33:11 - 00:39:40:29

That's all I want to say, really? It was just a short, um, you know, um, comments that I would like to send a short few words. Really.

00:39:42:04 - 00:39:45:24

Okay. Thank you very much for taking the time this afternoon to speak to us. Thank you.

00:39:45:26 - 00:39:46:11

Thank.

00:39:46:13 - 00:39:46:28

You.

00:39:51:29 - 00:40:08:03

Thank you. Um, okay. Um, I'm pleased to say that there are a few people which asked to speak, which we said we couldn't confirm depending on times whether they could or not. But, um, we do have time to, to hear from you. So, Cheryl Johnson, would you like to come up?

00:40:10:06 - 00:40:18:16

No, not virtually either. Can't see anyone else. Okay. Uh, Dennis Harkin.

00:40:30:04 - 00:41:00:17

Uh, my name is Dennis Harkin. I'm a resident at Scott Wick. It's difficult to know where to start and how to convey comments regarding Scott. Well. Uh springwell. Uh, solar farm, or more accurately, identified as the Springwell Solar Industrial Complex. I live in a grade two listed barn diagonally opposite and adjacent to the proposed Opposed Springwell East site, and I'm very concerned about this project from personal, local and national points of view.

00:41:01:09 - 00:41:35:27

Personally, the visual impact of the proposed for the proposal during its construction and its lifetime will be highly detrimental to my well-being. Not only will the site be constantly in view of my property, but the loss of amenity, increased traffic, construction, noise, light pollution and safety concerns. Where I walk daily with my wife and family are of great concern. The construction of this complex, which I believe will take four years, will prevent me from my daily walk through Lincolnshire countryside.

00:41:36:01 - 00:42:26:28

By the time the project is completed, I will be nearly 80 years old. Not exactly the right time to take up long, pleasant walks through a blighted former rural landscape. So much for my continuing mental and physical health. The above comments, of course, apply to all the local population and indeed visitors who enjoy beautiful walks in the countryside. The sheer scale of this project, and many other projects being foisted on Lincolnshire is staggering, and I have a feeling that it is the deliberate ploy by the project leaderships to qualify for Nip status and thus circumvent local democracy and the affected population from access to the decision making process.

00:42:27:18 - 00:43:03:18

Frankly, in spite of cosmetic consultation with local people, the government minister responsible will be the final arbiter no matter what locals think about these industrial projects. The impact of Springwell project will likely have a deleterious effect on local house prices. Possible Increased flood risk in Scotland village and loss of habitat for the local wildlife. The increase in local road traffic in and around the village of Scott Wick will become a serious safety concern for every local.

00:43:03:26 - 00:43:05:21

And it's bad enough already.

00:43:07:14 - 00:43:42:23

Lincolnshire provides some 12% of the nation's food. The loss of good quality agricultural land at a time of increased international tension is very short sighted. It is said that only 1% of land will be used for solar projects nationally, but that is not 1% of agricultural land. Springwell is used in grades two to A, two B and three agricultural land quality land that will be out of commission for 40 years, and no idea when that land will be useful again for growing food.

00:43:43:01 - 00:44:21:14

If ever there are hundreds and of thousands of acres of industrial roof space that could be used to provide solar based electricity. There are brownfield sites in our cities that could be used for solar power generation. The government wants to build 1.5 million new houses in this parliament. Why not mandate solar panels be constructed on those new homes? Of course, the big multinationals behind these giant solar industrial projects would miss out on large profits, as the gains would be for local people.

00:44:21:25 - 00:44:34:01

Just think what that would mean for electricity bills and for food security for the UK populace. Sadly, joined up thinking is something UK plc is not very good at.

00:44:34:03 - 00:44:35:20

One minute remaining fine.

00:44:36:12 - 00:45:09:19

Our government claims these projects are necessary to achieve net zero by 2030. But what is really happening is that we are exporting our CO2 pollution abroad. Chinese solar panels made in Xinjiang province in northeast China by the Uyghur population, powered by coal fired energy and transported to UK in diesel powered ships, should not easily sit without Western ideals of human rights and messianic predilection for lecturing the world about climate change.

00:45:10:07 - 00:45:24:13

In conclusion, I do not expect anyone to take a blind bit of notice of my creed occur above, but thank you for the opportunity to add my interest to the oncoming disaster about to befall us.

00:45:30:29 - 00:45:43:12

Thank you, Mr. Harkin. Thank you for your comments just this afternoon. Um, finally, I think it was it. Uh, Mr. Williams, did you wish to say something on behalf of yourself rather than one of the organisations you've already spoken for? Four.

00:45:50:15 - 00:46:24:03

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Um. I'm. Talking on behalf of myself and my partner and my children. We bought property in from Blakeney States in 2019, a property that was inhabited by Mr. Eric Parker. We've been told by those who knew Eric Parker, including those who were his friends and neighbors and those who worked alongside him, that he was a man who generally cared about the land. A man of real integrity, who also cared about the community he lived in.

00:46:24:17 - 00:47:00:06

A man who would never have allowed this monstrous development to go ahead. He was forward thinking. I'm sure the thought of his land being covered in solar panels made by slave labor in China would destroy him. It is certainly destroying the Parker family legacy. Eric Parker was ahead of his time and worked hard to cultivate this land into fertile, productive farmland. And as we have heard the estate in recent years, all has benefited from different grants paid by the taxpayer to help with irrigation.

00:47:00:18 - 00:47:37:07

How can just how can justifying trashing? How can it be justified to trash this land? Those few who have been fortunate enough to inherit the estate have a responsibility, as custodians of the land, to consider all who live there the residents, the community, but also the diverse and abundant wildlife that thrives in this area. Huge profits for landowners, shareholders and and energy companies drives this industrialization under the pretense of advancement of green energy.

00:47:37:11 - 00:48:10:04

But in reality, these developments carry huge risks and potential harms, and will undoubtedly render the land unfathomable and undo all Eric's good work. This is pure environmental vandalism. How can we make such a huge sacrifice for such little return? As we know from the recent European Banking Report and studies from Stanford University. Solar is only truly effective in certain climates. The UK climate ranks as second worst only to Iceland.

00:48:11:01 - 00:48:46:06

This solar industrial factory won't benefit the immediate community, and the little energy generated is likely to be used to help power Europe via the Viking Link interconnectors. We know that the panels are largely ineffective in our UK climate, and their technology is likely to be outdated by the time this project is complete. The real risk of permanent toxins leaching into our soil and water sources. Fires that take days to distinguish and harmful to wildlife is just too great a risk. We owe it to our children, but also to those who farmed the land before to do much better.

00:48:46:20 - 00:49:19:16

I have three children in their 20s. By the time this project goes ahead, they will. Sorry. By the time this this project comes to its the end. They will be nearing retirement before this land can ever be considered farmable again. We look around at many old industrial areas and have been that have been abandoned. And this is what awaits Scott Wick and the surrounding villages in our in our changing political, political landscape and the and the very real concerns about this country's food security.

00:49:19:19 - 00:49:55:09

It is reckless and shortsighted to be using up swathes of productive, good grade farmland in an experiment and rush to an unachievable net zero. This is a political driven agenda. Our politicians should be more focused on net zero than net zero. This current agenda will only destroy huge swathes of farmland and beautiful countryside. The government should be legislating for new buildings and construction to encompass green energy where possible, putting panels on unused industrial rooftops and car parks instead of this madness.

00:49:55:27 - 00:50:31:27

This community is totally against the Springwood project. Those who object have been accused of being NIMBYs, but this is a group of informed, intelligent people who have researched the data and taken a great deal of time to study the subject and speech professionals and academics. We are great. We are against this practice of using good grade agricultural land for industrial solar factories anywhere in the UK. We do not have to have the funds to fight this multinational million dollar machine, but we hope you will listen to the wishes of the people who will have to live with this scar on the landscape.

00:50:32:03 - 00:50:48:00

Most of all, we hope you will listen to Common Sense Since, as the planning inspector, you need to do the right thing. And this does not mean do what Ed Miliband dictates. I urge you to reject this totally irresponsible application.

00:50:53:16 - 00:51:05:14

Thank you, Mr. Williams. Um, Miss Elvin, we've probably got time to run through the statement that you wished to read earlier. If you would like to. Still. Okay. Yep. Please come forward. Thank you.

00:51:14:21 - 00:51:58:06

Okay, so this is a mental health report contributed by Councillor Amelia Bailey. She's a royal registered mental health nurse and has a BSc in healthcare. And she's a Ncdcc district councillor. Mental health issues in the UK are rising sharply across all age groups, placing significant pressure on individuals, public services and the NHS. In 2023 alone, 5 million mental health referrals were made, a 33% increase since 2019, with mental health related spending set at 16.8 billion for 2324.

00:51:58:25 - 00:52:47:27

Scientific evidence consistently shows that access to natural environments improves emotional, cognitive and physiological wellbeing. However, the loss of green spaces due to industrial scale developments like solar farms raises serious concerns about future impacts on community mental health. Studies highlight that landscape disruption, construction stress, environmental degradation and weaken social cohesion can all contribute to increased Increase psychological distress, it is essential that future projects protect natural environments, engage meaningfully with communities, and integrate mental health impact assessments into planning processes to safeguard public wellbeing.

00:52:49:14 - 00:53:23:20

Mental health issues are a major and growing concern across all demographics in the UK, heavily impacting societal well-being, the NHS and public services. 20% of children aged 8 to 16, and 23% of those aged 17 to 19 had probable mental disorders. In 2023, 1.76 million people were referred to talking therapies. In 2223, 3.58 million people were in contact with mental health services.

00:53:23:22 - 00:53:54:11

In 2223. In Hull, 10.8% of adults were accessing mental health services. 5 million referrals were made in 2023. A 33% increase since 2019. NHS plan spending on mental health services for 2324. 16.8 billion, up from 12,000,000,000 in 1718. The importance of natural environments.

00:53:54:13 - 00:54:17:10

Exposure to green spaces and natural views significantly, significantly enhances biopsychosocial wellbeing. Scientific evidence strongly supports that visual contact with nature, real or through images, reduces stress. Enhances positive emotions and restores cognitive functioning.

00:54:18:28 - 00:54:50:26

Um. Viewing nature indoors leads to psychological relaxation and reduce stress. There's a lot of, um, sort of references their concerns over solar farms. Large scale solar farms pose a potential threat to mental health. Health through loss of green spaces reduces access to restorative natural environments. Landscape industrialization damages residents sense of place, causing anxiety and distress.

00:54:51:09 - 00:55:30:20

Construction disruption, noise, dust, and traffic can increase community stress. Environmental degradation violations e.g. stormwater mismanagement, erode trust and raise anxiety. Community tensions. Lack of proper consultation can create social friction and collective stress. Although direct studies linking solar farms to mental health outcomes are limited, evidence from environmental psychology and community case studies strongly suggest potential negative impacts In the wider context, industrialization.

00:55:31:00 - 00:55:31:21

Remaining.

00:55:31:23 - 00:56:03:20

And mental health in rural areas leads to disrupted social structures and community isolation. Economic stressors from shifts away from traditional agriculture. Environmental harm, increasing stress and anxiety, and health risks linked to pollution and change in working conditions. Long term psychological impacts from industrial changes have been observed historically and continue today. Promote preventative strategies and recommended via nature based interventions.

00:56:03:22 - 00:56:13:29

Reject solar farms. Reject community solar farms across linked countryside and country areas.

00:56:15:17 - 00:56:17:06

Yeah. Um.

00:56:17:10 - 00:56:19:00

Okay. Thank you very much for that.

00:56:31:22 - 00:56:35:05

I put it all away when I thought I wasn't going to be too.

00:56:49:05 - 00:56:49:21

Good.

00:56:52:25 - 00:56:57:06

Okay. If you could just make clear for the record who who the statement is for.

00:56:57:16 - 00:57:04:18

This is Richard and Alison Duran's hilltop farm, Ashby de la land.

00:57:06:21 - 00:57:45:13

And I'll submit this as well, if that's helpful. Um. Thank you. Firstly, I'd like to apologise for not being able to attend the event today, either in person or by teams, as I'm away this week with work. The points detailed in the next few minutes are from both me and my wife, Alison, and this is being kindly read by some local friends. Firstly, I would like to state I am not against solar energy production. However, it needs to be in the right location and that is a rooftop on brownfield sites or an industrial locations like his used on the continent.

00:57:46:00 - 00:58:20:12

We moved to our current home ten years ago for the country, community and rural life, and the landowners estates were more than happy to sell these properties and market on that basis. Our home will lie in the central section and subsequently will be within the proposed mass industrialised area. I understand the need for renewable green energy, however, I really do. Do not see the logic in allowing this type of development on Prime. Best, most versatile irrigated farmland that surrounds us.

00:58:20:29 - 00:59:00:10

We have operated a registered microlight airfield for private use of light aircraft, microlight ultralight and para motors. During our ownership of the property we have never had any concerns from our neighbours whilst doing so. We have several concerns over the area going forward if the proposed industrialisation is allowed to proceed. We approached Springwell from the very early stages and the team visited our site. We have had several discussions and the Civil Aviation Authority on how we can remain a safe operation with the proposed solar development.

00:59:01:01 - 00:59:20:11

Our site for some reason was missed on the initial glint and glare study. The site is detailed in our 5.5 aerial sporting and recreational activities. Entry from the inner 5.5 document detailed for reference if needed. Uh.

00:59:22:25 - 00:59:53:17

Some progress and mitigation were made. However, the introduction of large scale solar in the surrounding area makes the operation less safe than the current status with the rural agricultural landscape. The proximity of the solar arrays will cause glint and glare concerns. The proposed fenced areas also have a safety impact on the operation of this airfield site, compared with the open fields around us today. Effects of engine failure on takeoff.

00:59:53:21 - 01:00:33:16

Thermal plume turbulence and effects to rescue and firefighting. Uh 100 or 1000m of aerodrome are areas as detailed in Karst Documents 21. The potential of EMI electromagnetic interference and effects upon CNS communication, navigation and surveillance need to be considered and addressed fully by Springwell. All these items are fully detailed in the Cast Combined Aerodrome Safeguarding Team support by the Civil Aviation Authority, with reference to renewable energy developments.

01:00:33:25 - 01:01:11:06

Solar photovoltaic developments. Guidance notes dated July 23rd. In line with the Cast guidelines, the developers should provide the aerodrome operator with adequate technical and safety assurance documentation, which fully addresses the safety impacts provided in section 3.1 to 3.6. Developers should apply the same principles for safety assurance for unlicensed aerodromes and airfields, as required by the Cast policy that are not officially safeguarded, such as our example here at Hilltop Farm.

01:01:11:19 - 01:01:19:13

In a non-technical summary from Springwell in section 1.2.5, it states no area of Springwell.

01:01:19:15 - 01:01:21:02

With one minute remaining.

01:01:21:11 - 01:01:59:21

Would be used for solar panels within one kilometre of the runway thresholds at Hilltop Farm. This we do not believe to be correct, as the panels to the north are only 350m from the runway. We would also like to highlight our concern with runoff water, as even with current agricultural land. We had an issue in 2324 that we hope has now been addressed by the landowner. However, with the rapid runoff from acres of glass solar panels, it must put a greater flood risk issue against the properties and land around the downstream villages of Digby, Ralston and Scott Wick.

01:02:00:03 - 01:02:06:18

Many thanks for your time to listen to my concerns, and feel free to contact me directly to discuss in detail.

01:02:10:02 - 01:02:10:19

Okay.

01:02:12:03 - 01:02:22:21

Thank you very much for that. On behalf of the family. Thank you. Um, okay. Uh, is there anybody else at all that, um, we haven't heard from already who wishes to speak?

01:02:24:23 - 01:02:41:05

Okay. Thank you. That brings us on to agenda item number four, which is the responses from the applicant. Um, so I now invite the applicant to respond. Um, whether you could confirm if it would be orally or in writing. Um, that would be useful. Thank you.

01:02:46:13 - 01:02:55:20

And if it is already, um, the examining authority, uh, of allocated 15 minutes, if that's, um, if it is already. Thank you.

01:03:13:03 - 01:03:13:18

Thank you.

01:03:13:20 - 01:03:44:27

Sir. says. Um, yes. So I will respond, um, in part, um, orally as best I can in the time of time available. But we'll also respond in writing. So my name is Alexis Coleman. Um, good afternoon to you and to everyone here. Um, I'm a legal director at the law firm in Saint Mason's, and I represent the applicant, Springwell Energy Farm Limited. Firstly, on behalf of the applicant, I would like to just thank everyone who has attended and spoken at today's hearing. We appreciate people taking the time to participate in the process.

01:03:44:29 - 01:04:15:17

It's an important part of the planning process that the public has heard, and that the examining authorities are aware of the local concerns. So thank you for your time. Secondly, we've carefully read all the relevant representations submitted by all parties. We're in the process of preparing detailed responses to those which we'll be submitting at deadline one, where points raised today overlap with those raised in the relevant representations. I don't propose to cover those in detail because the detailed and direct responses prepared by the subject matter experts.

01:04:15:19 - 01:04:57:11

The project will cover those much better than I can today. Today's hearing is very much about the applicant listening and hearing what is said and where new points have been made, not already covered in the relevant representations. We will also ensure we respond in detail in writing at deadline one. So I will briefly touch on some of the key themes that have been raised at the outset. I think it's just worth highlighting that there's almost always a tension with large scale, nationally significant energy projects. On the one hand, there are substantial benefits of schemes such as Springwell, in particular, a significant contribution to the urgent need for renewable generation, which contributes to the fight against climate change, which benefits us all.

01:04:58:07 - 01:05:38:18

However, we recognise that is balanced against more local impacts which may affect the local community, including community communities who are represented here today. In designing the Springwell scheme, we have done all we can to avoid and minimise those impacts, but it is unfortunately inevitable that with a scheme of this size there will be some adverse effects. With this in mind, we have been sure to do a thorough environmental assessment of the scheme's likely significant effects in order to ensure that we've identified them and tried to mitigate them where possible, but also so that the examining authority and the Secretary of State are aware of them, so they can be taken into account in the consideration of this application for Springwell.

01:05:39:21 - 01:06:10:00

Our position is that the substantial contribution to the urgent need for renewable energy, alongside other benefits such as extensive habitat creation and planting, the provision of a community growing area, as well as permissive paths and permanent public rights of way outweighs the scheme's adverse effects. Moving on to some of the themes raised, um, various people including Mr. Woodward, Doctor Johnson MP, Mrs. Elvin, Mr. Bourne mentioned um, impacts on the community, in particular on health.

01:06:11:02 - 01:07:02:08

The applicant appreciates the potential for the proposed development to create impacts on the community, including those relating to human health such as physical health, mental health and well-

being. The assessments we've undertaken consider elements of the proposed development which would affect mental health, for example, changes in landscape and visual amenity, noise and access to open space, as well as physical health, for example, associated with air pollution. We've worked hard to avoid, minimise and mitigate these types of impacts. For example, we've minimised impacts to public rights of way through the use of buffers to ensure they're not encroached on by the proposed developments infrastructure I've already mentioned, but we're also including a community growing area in response to stakeholder feedback and creating three new public rights of way, enhancing an existing public right of way, and creating for permissive paths as recreation and amenity improvement measures.

01:07:03:16 - 01:07:41:09

We have proposed measures aimed at assisting with keeping people informed and reducing anxiety around uncertainty during construction of the scheme should it be granted consent, such as a community liaison group during construction. We also know that the DCO process itself is confusing and can be worrying for members of the community. Amongst other actions that we've taken in this respect, community communication channels have remained open to a single point of contact. Rebecca Coleman, who's here today. Um, since 2022. And they continue to remain open through the process and people are able to contact Rebecca or approach any other members of our team should they need assistance with the examination process.

01:07:41:25 - 01:08:13:18

And following comments along those lines. In this morning's preliminary meeting, we're going to host a session to help people participate in the examination process, just to run through it and sort of explain it and to help people navigate that, because we do appreciate it is it is complex. So we'll be able to confirm details of that shortly. Um, it's understandably a lot of concern raised by people about the origin of the panels. Um, comments raised by Mr. Williams, both in his personal capacity and on behalf of the parish council. Springwell Sola Action Group. The Villages Social Action Group, Mr.

01:08:13:20 - 01:08:17:20

Crampton, Mr. Kendrick, Mrs. Elvin, Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Harkin.

01:08:22:10 - 01:08:56:01

I want to be very clear on this that wherever the panels are sourced, the applicant opposes the abuse of human rights and forced labour anywhere in the global supply chain. The procurement process for the proposed development has not yet started and would begin. Should development consent be granted. As part of this process, the applicant would take a rigorous approach to ensuring its suppliers comply with relevant legislation such as the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and its requirements as set out in an Ethical Procurement Policy. In its outline employment, skills and supply chain plan that people can see on the website.

01:08:56:07 - 01:09:22:18

I know you've asked us some further questions about that, which we'll be responding to at deadline one. The other suppliers of solar panels are subject to a rigorous compliance screening and certification process. Systematic audits of cell and module factories are also undertaken to ensure working conditions meet expected standards. EDF has also signed up to Solar Energy UK's Statement on Ethical Procurement, which applies the highest possible levels of transparency and sustainability

01:09:24:08 - 01:09:54:21

with respect to cumulative effects. So there's various concerns raised by Mr. Williams on behalf of the parish council. Springleaf Solar Action Group, Doctor Johnson MP, Cliff Villages Social Action Group and Mr. Bourne. We fully agree that cumulative effects should be considered as part of the application. The applicant, for that reason has assessed the cumulative effects with other existing development, including solar farms in the area and the neighbouring substation. This assessment considers the potential combined impacts of Springwell Solar Farm alongside those other developments.

01:09:55:03 - 01:10:32:24

Um, mainly, as I said, those large scale solar ones as well. Um, and outlines that no significant inter project cumulative effects are anticipated. There's been various concerns raised in terms of amenity points around noise and visual, in particular by Mr. Williams on behalf of the parish council, Mr. Cooper, Mr. MacGregor, Mr. Kendrick, Mr. Harkin, um, with proposed mitigation measures in place, noise from equipment is not considered to be significant. Our Construction Environmental Management Plan includes controls and working hours for high noise generating plant, with prior approval needed for specific works outside those hours.

01:10:34:04 - 01:11:06:10

There will be visual effects during construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases of the proposed development. While some visual impacts will remain at year ten of operation. They'll be largely screened or filtered by existing vegetation or proposed planting, thus minimising the impacts where the potential for adverse visual impacts has been identified. Landscape mitigation, including vegetative screening, has been embedded into the design of the scheme to reduce these effects as far as possible, and details of those are included in our outline Landscape and Ecology management plan.

01:11:07:22 - 01:11:38:20

Related to the wellbeing point, there's been various comments about, um, disruption and accessibility to green spaces, um, such as submissions made by Mr. Woodward, Doctor Johnson MP. Mr.. Mr.. Bourne, Mr.. Harkin um, all public rights of way will be kept open during construction as far as is practicable and safe. There may be a requirement for some existing public rights of way to be temporarily diverted or closed for the duration of the construction in the immediate area, um, for a maximum time of six months to ensure safety.

01:11:38:28 - 01:12:15:17

We've produced an outline, public rights of way and Permissive Paths management plan, which details how we would manage those, um, public rights of way to ensure the safety of their users. It also includes provisions around signage and things to try and minimise the impact on people. Um, as I've said or alluded to already. The applicant has worked hard to deliver enhancements and improvements during the operation of the scheme. With a focus as well to provide and support recreation and I have covered most of these already, but they include enhancements and improvements to the local footpath and cycle network, with the provision of three new public rights of way.

01:12:16:00 - 01:12:46:20

Creation of four new permissive paths um, the enhancement of two kilometres of existing public rights of way, and the new community growing area mentioned, which is an area of two hectares for community use. Um along Vicarage Lane, um adjacent to the Spires and Steeples Trail and stepping out um loop. So these enhancements are designed to support wellbeing by making green infrastructure more accessible to local residents and to tourists, as well by increasing connectivity and access.

01:12:53:03 - 01:13:18:26

There's been some comments, um, from Mr. Williams on behalf of the parish council and Mr. Elvin and others in relation to reduce energy bills, and also where the energy that's generated is used. The energy generated from the scheme will be exported to the National electricity transmission system and provided to consumers via third party electricity companies, which means that the applicant cannot commit to the provision of cheaper electricity prices for the specific community surrounding the site.

01:13:21:06 - 01:13:30:09

Sorry, just let me just stop there. Um. The applicants listened intently to everybody this afternoon, and the applicant deserves the same in return. Thank you.

01:13:33:11 - 01:13:56:21

Building large quantities of renewable generation UK is anticipated to keep consumer costs down by capturing and storing energy when it is abundant and therefore cheap, and releasing it when it's needed. And solar remains one of the cheapest forms of electricity generation available with current technologies. This also means that how and where the electricity is used is out of the control of the applicant, and that's governed entirely by National Grid.

01:14:00:23 - 01:14:46:08

There's been various comments in terms of the principle of solar development itself, including comments by Mr. Timms, Mr. Jenkins, Mr. Harkin and Mr. Williams. The application for this proposed development has to be determined in accordance with National Policy Statements for energy, and that policy is very clear that there's a demonstrated urgent need for large scale solar projects and that substantial wage should be given by the Secretary of State to this need. Therefore, whilst people may not agree in principle that large scale ground mounted solar is part of the solution towards net zero, such submissions go to the merits of the National Planning Policy Statements and therefore cannot be considered as part of the application and as the Tsar will be aware, this application is not the forum to seek to change government policy in that respect.

01:14:48:04 - 01:15:18:06

There's been many comments in relation to loss of agricultural land and food security by Mr. Williams on behalf of the parish council, Springwell Sola Action Group, Mr. Cocks, doctor, Johnson Aycliffe Villages Social Action group, Mr. Crampton, Mr. MacGregor, Mr. Jenkins, Mr. Bourne, Mr. Elvin, Mr. Manning, Mr. Walsh, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Harkin. I perhaps might have just mentioned the people who didn't mention it, but obviously there's a lot of feeling about that in particular and we appreciate that. But um, so I'll just address that briefly.

01:15:18:08 - 01:15:52:15

And I think we will respond in more detail in writing because there's quite a breadth of points, but I'll just try and hit the sort of key issues in that respect. Um, with the exception of the best and most versatile land proposed for ecological enhancements, impacts on BMV land will be temporary and reversible, and works would be completed in accordance with the outlined soil management plan, which we'll be discussing and are in discussions with Natural England on, and the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan, and upon decommissioning, the land would be returned to the landowner and able to be used for agriculture within the site.

01:15:52:17 - 01:16:35:00

During operation, the soil would not experience the usual effects from intensive farming practices. There's also the potential to use the open spaces between the infrastructure and the land beneath solar panels for sheep grazing. In terms specifically of food security, whilst we understand that food security is a big concern for people following amendments to the NPF in December last year, there's no need to consider food production in land use planning terms. And I appreciate people may not agree with that policy position. The applicable policy tests are those set out in section 511 of NPS and one namely, whether the use of agricultural land is justified and necessary, and whether the loss of BMV land has been minimised through site selection.

01:16:35:11 - 01:17:09:06

And the applicant considers that these tests have clearly been met in this case. Even if this were a relevant policy consideration, the applicant maintains that the impacts of the proposed development on food production will not be significant. The proposed development occupies approximately 1 or 3% of the BMB land in Lincolnshire, and would therefore not have a significant impact even when considering other large scale solar projects in Lincolnshire, including Springwell. On a precautionary basis, it is estimated that approximately 2% of the county BMV land resource would be temporarily used on a long term basis.

01:17:09:25 - 01:17:15:12

We also note that climate change is the biggest threat to agriculture, which is the very threat the project is aimed at addressing.

01:17:15:14 - 01:17:17:29

There's just one minute remaining. Okay, thanks.

01:17:18:09 - 01:18:01:13

Um, let me see what I've got left. I might cover I think I might be able to make it. Um, so I did just want to cover best safety. Um, because obviously various people have raised concerns in that respect. Um, we've produced a outline back for safety management plan, which I mentioned earlier in the day. We're in discussions with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue on it. Um, reflects all best practice and current guidance, um, including the new updated guidelines that Mr. Frost referred to. Um, we also propose, um, our protective provisions in our DCO in order to host and fund an annual site familiarisation exercise with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service, so that aim to basically assist and support them in being able to respond to any incidents.

01:18:03:23 - 01:18:34:12

I think just finally, if I can just touch on decommissioning, um, at the end of the 40 years, the site will be decommissioned and returned to its former condition and land use, um, with recycling of of um solar PV panels. There's a DCO requirement that um secures that we do decommission the scheme and that we do that in accordance with the decommissioning management plan that is approved by the local authorities. The applicant is very aware of its obligations in that respect. And as you'll know, breach of those obligations is a criminal offence.

01:18:34:14 - 01:19:12:09

So we take those very seriously. And, um, there are measures in place to ensure that we comply with those requirements. Um, so there's been various other quite detailed points that have been mentioned, quite a few around things like site selection, the scale of the scheme and grid connection, various points that we'll begin to touch on in tomorrow's issue specific hearing, and then some more detailed points around, um, irrigation, drainage, aquifers, contamination, um, some, uh, specific points around impacts on soils. Mr. Anderson, um, and Miss Jackson made quite specific points around impacts on various species and, and ecology and things.

01:19:12:11 - 01:19:37:05

So with their more detailed points, we will respond in writing at deadline one on those. And then I can make sure I've got the relevant experts who know far more about those issues than me to make sure the input to those, um, so that will cover everything that that's been said today. We've taken a detailed note. So to the extent I haven't been able to cover those in the time available, we'll definitely do that. Um, so I would just like to thank everyone again for their time and participation in the examination. Thank you.

01:19:38:13 - 01:19:44:24

Okay. Thank you very much. I'll hand over to my colleague, Mr. North, over to close the hearing. Thank you.

01:19:45:24 - 01:19:56:03

Thank you. I'll now move to close the hearing. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the speakers for your contributions and for the applicant for their attendance and contribution also.

01:19:57:07 - 01:20:14:26

And I just I'd also, as part, uh, on behalf of the exa. Um, thank you for the the well informed, constructive and, um, well mannered contributions this afternoon. It certainly wasn't lost on the examining authority. Uh, nor was the passion that they were delivered in. Thank you.

01:20:18:02 - 01:20:38:12

May I remind, um, everyone who has spoken today to provide a written version of your submissions at deadline one, which is Tuesday, the 3rd of June. Um, and so the time is now 5:20. And this open floor hearing for Springwell solar farm project is now closed. Thank you.

01:20:40:00 - 01:20:40:18

Thank you.