Submission ID: 36574

Objection to the Proposed Springwell Solar Farm

I wish to register my formal objection to the proposed Springwell Solar Farm (EN010133). While the transition to renewable energy is essential, the current proposal is not appropriate for the chosen location and presents serious concerns related to public safety, environmental impact, and planning integrity.

The Planning Inspectorate has already requested the applicant to submit significant further information and revisions to the application, which highlights major deficiencies. These omissions, combined with broader risks to health, infrastructure, and the rural environment, are cause for refusal of consent.

1. Battery Storage Over a Limestone Aquifer

The proposal includes a battery energy storage system (BESS) directly above a limestone aquifer. Limestone is a highly permeable rock, meaning that any chemical leakage—whether from fire, coolant failure, or structural breach—could quickly contaminate local groundwater supplies. There is no effective method to remediate such contamination. The Environment Agency and peer-reviewed studies have consistently warned against placing hazardous infrastructure above sensitive hydrogeology.

The applicant has not provided sufficient hydrogeological evidence or justification for siting such a risk-laden facility on this landscape.

2. Fire Risk and Inadequate Emergency Response

Large battery systems have been linked to numerous fires and toxic gas releases. This is of particular concern in a rural area like the Springwell site, where local fire stations are part-time and emergency response capabilities are limited. The National Fire Chiefs Council has issued guidance on the need for enhanced fire mitigation, planning, and safety infrastructure for BESS projects—none of which have been guaranteed or secured in this application.

A fire at this site would risk not only loss of life and property but also environmental damage and prolonged exposure to toxic substances for nearby residents.

3. No Confirmed Substation or Grid Connection

This project depends entirely on a proposed new substation at Navenby, which has not yet been approved. The Planning Inspectorate has already requested that the applicant provide evidence that there are no likely barriers to that substation being approved or connected. Until this is resolved, the Springwell project remains speculative and cannot be deemed deliverable.

Strategic infrastructure projects must be grounded in certainty and viability—not conditional or aspirational proposals.

4. Lack of Brownfield Consideration

The applicant has been required to demonstrate whether brownfield land was considered during site selection. No such evidence has yet been submitted. In the absence of this, the proposal appears to prioritise the use of productive greenfield land despite national planning guidance encouraging renewable development on previously developed land.

This omission weakens the planning justification for the proposed location.

5. Cumulative Impact of Other Energy Schemes

Springwell is not an isolated project. Several large-scale energy schemes are proposed or approved in the immediate area, including Leoda Solar Farm, Fosse Green Solar Farm, Coleby and Navenby BESS, and the Navenby Substation. The applicant has been directed to revise their cumulative environmental assessment to include these schemes.

Without such a revision, the full landscape, infrastructure, and social impacts of this development remain unassessed.

6. Flood Risk and Failure to Justify Flood Zone 3B Siting

Part of the proposed solar panel installation is located within Flood Zone 3B—the highest-risk flood zone. The applicant has not yet provided the required updated Flood Risk Assessment or demonstrated that the development could not be located in Flood Zone 1.

Placing infrastructure in a functional floodplain without justification contradicts national planning policy and introduces avoidable long-term risk.

7. Loss of Productive Agricultural Land

The development would remove significant areas of arable land from food production for decades. At a time when food security and climate resilience are national priorities, this is unjustifiable. DEFRA and the National Food Strategy have underscored the importance of retaining agricultural land for future food supply.

8. Impact on Rural Amenity and Mental Health

The scale and industrial nature of the proposed development will fundamentally alter the local landscape. Security fencing, artificial lighting, and battery units will replace natural views and degrade the rural character of surrounding villages. Such visual change is not merely aesthetic; research shows that rural industrialisation can negatively impact mental wellbeing and community cohesion.

Conclusion

The Springwell Solar Farm proposal fails to meet critical safety, environmental, and planning requirements. Key elements of the application remain incomplete or unproven, including flood risk mitigation, emergency response planning, cumulative assessment, and infrastructure viability.

I urge the Planning Inspectorate to refuse development consent on the grounds of environmental risk, speculative design, loss of agricultural land, and failure to adequately address cumulative and infrastructure impacts.