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Sent: 04 June 2025 23:46
To: Springwell Solar Farm
Subject: Evidence to Planning Inspectorate

Categories: Deadline

Interested Party Reference number: 20054658

Dear Sir/Madam

As discussed earlier with your department I have had great trouble with our internet connection in the village. Hence I apologise for this delay in submitting my evidence with regard to food security if Springwell goes ahead.

Evidence to Planning Inspectorate regarding Springwell and Food Security

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Lincolnshire produces 12% of all the food grown/ produced in the United Kingdom. Almost one 8th of food grown in this country therefore comes from one large county. This includes 18% of UK poultry products and a massive 30% of all vegetables grown in this country. Agricultural production in Lincolnshire produces £1.8 billion of earning per annum. Variously described as the breadbasket of Britain and the nations veg box there is no doubting that Lincolnshire makes a major contribution to the UK's food security as things stand, at present.

Lincolnshire is blessed with a number of characteristics that have helped to make agriculture, farming, and food production what it is today.

The county's climate, particularly during the spring, summer and early autumn is favourable to cultivating cereals, vegetables and soft fruits. Overall, sunshine hours are sufficient to enable crops to grow and ripen well. That sunshine, whilst high by UK weather standards, is far below the amounts that would make large scale solar energy production efficient. That is especially the case when looking at the total annual sunshine hours for Lincolnshire. But they are very suitable for arable farming during the growing season.

Lincolnshire as a whole has the lowest average rainfall of any county in Britain. But again during the late summer and early autumn this greatly assists the ripening and harvesting of cereals and other crops.

Secondly, despite a relatively low rainfall, the nature of the ground water across large parts of Lincolnshire is beneficial for agriculture. In some parts, even in the driest of summer weather, the water table remains as little as three or four feet below the surface. Underground reserves of water are readily accessible and are abstracted for farming use to off-set dry periods of weather. Several rivers particularly the Trent, which forms the western boundary of Lincolnshire, and the Witham,

which flows west to east across central Lincolnshire, continue to flow well in the summer and provide water for agriculture.

Thirdly, the quality of land and soil across much of the county is excellent for food production. The so-called best and most versatile (BMV) land includes some of the finest, most fertile soil in the UK and beyond. Regrettably, land and soil classification has become mired in controversy and subject to manipulation and misleading claims, particularly since the scramble to develop huge solar projects on quality agricultural land has gathered pace.

The reality is that much of the so-called poorer soils across Lincolnshire are capable of producing food and/or being sufficiently improved to do so. The plain fact is, most of the land across the county is good to grow.

That is because the forth factor in making Lincolnshire agriculturally productive is a large work-force of famers and agricultural workers and related businesses who are highly knowledgeable and skilled and good at what they do. They have accumulated, passed down and further developed a wealth of knowledge and experience in land management, soil improvement, crop cultivation and food production over decades.

Finally there is topography, Lincolnshire is not just a flat county as sometimes its characterised. But, significant parts of it certainly are and many parts slope gently with little in the way of hills. Such a landscape again contributes, allowing vast uninterrupted fields enabling efficient crop production and the use of big machinery for tilling, planting and harvesting quickly on a large scale.

All of the above mentioned favourable characteristics apply to Blankney Estates (Springwell solar's chosen site) in country spades and bucketfuls. Situated in large part above the Lincoln Heath, the climate is as favourable in the spring, summer and early autumn as anywhere else in this county. Rainfall across the Lincoln Heath and neighbouring areas is pretty close to the average for most of central Lincolnshire, and therefore favourable for the growing of a variety of arable crops.

Although it is pointed out from time to time that Blankney Estates grows large quantities of maize (sweetcorn) for use in biodigesters to produce gas and also lucerne, a type of grass, grown to extract chlorophyll, that hasn't always been the case and needn't be. Whatever may be grown now, it is always possible to plant other crops in the next season and those crops could and should be for consumption in the domestic, human food chain.

In the past Blankney estates grew some of this country's finest malting barley and regularly won awards for same. There is no reason why they can't revert to growing increasing volumes of crops for human consumption in the very near future and should do so. One sure way of preventing such a positive course of action and instead taking good, productive land out of use for decades into the future, if not permanently, is to allow the Springwell solar proposals to be implemented. That is a flawed strategy.

Blankney Estates is well equipped to cope with dry spells of weather through the spring/summer growing season. Much of the land sits above the Lincolnshire limestone aquafer. The aquafer in effect provides a vast underground reservoir of water stored within the pores of the limestone rock. This enables Blankney Estates in common with other farms hereabout, to access ready supplies pf water for crops in dry periods, via boreholes sunk into the rocks below. In addition, Blankney Estates has permission and the equipment to enable them to extract water from the River Witham.

In fact the Estate was in receipt of a sizeable grant from the European Union in the recent past, to enable them to connect water from the Witham to an extensive irrigation system installed in many of their fields. The percentage of farm land in the UK irrigated in this manner is in single figures. But the presence of such a system greatly increases the value of such land from a crop growing and food producing point of view. Yet, if Springwell's proposals are permitted, a significant acreage of this irrigated land will be lost for food production.

The past (and potentially the future) of Blankney Estates in producing good crops for food is based upon soils that vary from good to very good quality agriculture land. Even the most challenging parts of Blankney's vast acres have the potential to produce food fit for human consumption, or if not, certainly capable of contributing to the food chain by providing fodder for live stock.

One of the reasons for Blankney Estates good quality agricultural land is based upon the knowledge and abilities of its owners and the workforce during the interwar years. They embarked upon radical methods to improve the soil and to increase agricultural output from the land. Although questionable from an environmental point of view nowadays, their methods did succeed in raising agricultural output and productivity at the time.

To embark upon, in effect, the destruction of that land by taking it out of production by destroying the drainage and the soil structure, by then leaving miles of PVC cabling, possibly concrete and support posts in the ground after decommissioning of Springwell solar project in the future is a negative, counter productive and vandulous course of action, tantamount to criminal behaviour.

This is all too typical of the "scorched earth" attitude of the leaders of large industries in Britain for past decades and which have been allowed by successive governments to get away with it.

When these large undertakings have made their money and extracted whatever resources they can, they simply move on, leaving in their wake, a trail of destruction and decimation.

Land, although all too scarce a resource in Britain is not looked after or respected. It is as if the UK had a landmass the size of Canada and a population the size of New Zealand. It's time that this wasteful and destructive approach stopped and planners have a role to play if they choose to.

Blankney Estates today (as in the past)

has a workforce with knowledge, skills and expertise in agricultural and farming principals and practise which will not achieve its full potential if thousands of acres are to be lost to the solar project.

Blankney Estate's wide open fields, many of them fairly flat or on gentle gradients, lend themselves to the latest equipment and machinery to help maximise food production on a large scale and to make tilling, sewing, planting and harvesting efficient. Those advantages will all be lost if those fields are instead taken over by Springwell to produce some of the least efficient, most land hungry solar generated electricity in the world.

In a recent international study of the effectiveness of solar energy generation, the UK was rated second least efficient/ effective country in the world, owing to its low sunshine hours. Only Ireland came lower down the table.

The proposed Springwell Energy Farm, a subsidiary of EDF, is planned to have an electrical output of 800mW maximum, which they claim would be sufficient to power 180,000 homes. It is planned to cover approximately 4,000 acres.

Compare that with the average sized, formerly coal fired power station at nearby Cottam, in the Trent Valley. It just happened to be owned by EDF at the time of its closure a couple of years ago. With an output of 2,000mW, it supplied electricity to 3.7 million homes and covered an area of just 620 acres.

Many of the characteristics which have made Lincolnshire agriculture so successful and important to this country are the very things which are attracting the solar projects such as Springwell. The relatively long (by UK standards) sunshine hours (low by international standards) the wide open fields and the topography of the county are what interest the solar companies. But it is farming, agriculture, food production and food security which must take priority over producing energy across Lincolnshire's broad, rural acres.

Where Lincolnshire's characteristics of climate, topography, land and soil quality, workforce talents and water availability favour agriculture and help to raise production and contribute to UK food security, solar projects actually squander these assets on a massive scale.

Proponents of solar energy on farmland argue that their industry will contribute to cutting carbon dioxide emissions, which will help to slow down global warming. Global warming and resultant climate change are, they state, the biggest threat to food security on a global scale. There is plenty of evidence from around the world that climate change is negatively affecting food production. There is already evidence of that process occurring, although in the UK so far, it is a less pronounced development.

A growing threat to food production in Britain nowadays comes from the encroachment of developments such as construction, house building and infrastructure on to farmland and of which the solar industry has become a very significant part. This, precisely at a time when the global effects of climate change on food production are being felt, and will have an impact upon the UK's ability to continue to import food, is not the time to allow thousands of acres of UK agricultural land to be given over to solar energy production.

The impact of the many proposed solar projects on farmland at present, for all their massive scale, will in fact have little or no impact in reducing carbon dioxide emissions on the global scale, thus failing to reverse the effects upon climate change and its international disruption to world food production.

They will make relatively little contribution to Britain's electrical energy production. But they will have a disproportionately negative effect on potential homegrown food production here in the UK. Whilst being championed as a way to tackle the environmental damage caused by climate change, the large-scale solar projects threaten major environmental damage in terms of degradation and wanton destruction of farmland. These projects further threaten pollution to soil, to watercourses, to ground water and to wildlife from the chemicals and materials used in the solar panels, their installation and maintenance, and associated cabling, battery energy storage sites (BESS) and so on. It's bad strategy that in order to tackle one environmental problem (climate change) many other environmental problems and hazards are being created.

A further threat to UK food security now looms, as the political and military situation becomes evermore unstable and volatile. Russia and Ukraine are not only at war but they are also two of the world's largest grain producers. The impact of that war has had a serious effect upon the availability and price of wheat and other foods. Continuing bloodshed in the Middle East has already spilled over into missile attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, some of it quite possibly food stuffs destined for the UK.

Growing international political and military tensions across the world have led to many countries, particularly in Europe and NATO planning to increase budgets for armaments and making plans for greater defence spending and the prospect or possibility of war. The British Prime Minister has had much to say about military security. The Energy Secretary frequently refers to his plans for energy security.

The government in Britain today does not seem to be taking food security anywhere near seriously enough. That food security needs to be, as far as possible, home grown to give Britain self sufficiency in food production and distribution. Infact the proportion of food being grown in this country has continued to decline over the years.

Government policy on energy production is actually exarcerbating the problems for food production and security at present. They are encouraging the loss of thousands of acres of productive agricultural land by supporting schemes such as Springwell. It is crimally irresponsible of the British government to be embarking upon and encouraging such policies and plans, which are undermining the UK's food security at such an uncertain and unstable time.

Britain's food security hasn't faced such a potential challenge since 1939 upon the eve of World War 2.. If recent comments from the Prime Minister and others are to be believed the country could find itself in a similar position sooner rather than later.

It should not be forgotten that by 1942 Britain was in a perilous position, not for lack of weaponry and arms, nor industrial production, but because of food shortages. Despite herois efforts by farmers and farm workers, people in Britain were going hungry.

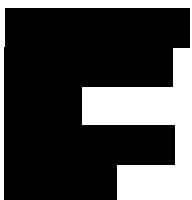
History will not judge kindly the governments, ministers or government and public bodies who create a similar position in the future by making the wrong decisions and ignoring the right ones; failing to prioritise what it most important. Food security is more important and fundamental than either energy or military security.

For all of the above reasons, I urge that the Planning Inspectorate refuses Springwell's development consent order (DCO), to build a major solar complex on Blankney Estates's land near Scopwick.

I hope this is the correct means of submission?

Yours faithfully

Mr Martin Elvin

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of Mr Martin Elvin.

Sent from my iPhone