

Planning Inspectorate Statement - Springwell Solar Farm Proposal: Soil Contamination and Environmental Impact

Good morning/afternoon,

I stand before you today to **strongly oppose** the **Springwell Solar Farm proposal**, which threatens to industrialize over **3,200 acres of Lincolnshire's prime agricultural land**—an area **ten times the size of Hyde Park** or more than **2,340 football pitches**. While we all agree on the importance of **renewable energy**, this proposal is not the right solution for our community, our environment, or our future.

The Impact on Soil Health

The land in question, **Lincoln Heathland**, is a **fragile ecosystem** that has been carefully nurtured for over **90 years**. The proposed solar farm puts all of that at risk. The soils here are vital. They have taken **decades** to develop into fertile, productive land. And yet, the developers propose to cover it with panels that will deprive the soil of **sunlight, nutrients**, and any form of **agricultural management**. This will lead to **irreversible degradation**, turning the land **barren and unsuitable for farming**.

But the damage doesn't stop there. The proposal includes **13 million meters of electrical cabling**, and after 40 years, they plan to leave behind **1 million meters of it underground**. That's **500 tonnes of plastic**, plus **heavy metals** and **toxic chemicals** used in the insulation. This material, **Cross-linked polyethylene (XLPE)**, is **non-biodegradable**. It will remain in the soil **permanently**, rendering it **permanently contaminated** and unfit for future use. The developer's claim that the land could return to agriculture after 40 years is **not supported by evidence**—it's simply not true.

Construction and Long-Term Effects

When construction begins, it will involve heavy machinery—**pile drivers, concrete mixers**—that will compact the soil, destroying the delicate underground channels created by soil organisms like earthworms. This **compaction** will form a **hardpan**, which makes the soil incapable of absorbing water or supporting plant life.

Right now, practices like **subsoiling** are used to keep the soil

healthy, but once this infrastructure is in place, those practices will be impossible. The soil will be **locked down**, unable to breathe or drain.

For the next **40 years**, the land beneath the solar panels will be deprived of sunlight. **Photosynthesis** will be stifled, and vegetation will not thrive. This will leave the land vulnerable to **wind erosion** and **rainwater runoff**. The sandy soils in this area are already prone to **soil dust storms**, as we've seen along the A15 trunk road. Adding solar panels and infrastructure will only make it worse.

The Bigger Picture: Food Security and Ecological Balance

Let's talk about food security. The Lincoln Heathland is **vital agricultural land**. Currently, it's used for **rotational farming**, a practice that **replenishes soil nutrients** and fosters biodiversity. Replacing it with solar panels would not only take this land out of production, but it would also put our **national food security** at risk. **Lincolnshire feeds Britain**, and to replace fertile farmland with cables, concrete, and chemicals is simply irresponsible. This proposal isn't just about **renewable energy**—it's about **responsibility**. **We can't afford to sacrifice our fertile land** for a project that leaves behind toxic waste and leaves the land **forever** unsuitable for farming.

National Policies and Legal Considerations

This proposal also **goes against national policies** designed to protect our land. The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** in **Paragraph 183** stresses that developments should avoid risks from pollution, while **Paragraph 187** requires that developments be appropriate for their location and should not damage soil health or agricultural productivity.

The **National Policy Statement EN1** also emphasizes the need to protect agricultural land and ensure that large-scale infrastructure projects do not irreversibly damage land, water, or ecosystems. The Springwell Solar Farm fails to meet these standards.

Conclusion

Lincoln Heathland is a **national treasure** when it comes to agriculture. This proposal threatens to destroy over **3,200 acres**

of **fertile land**, leaving it **contaminated** and **barren**. The soil will be forever damaged, and its ability to support agriculture will be lost. The contamination of the land and the long-term impact on local ecosystems will affect our **food security** and the health of our environment for generations.

Solar energy is important—but it must be pursued in a way that **does not come at the expense of our land, our health, or our future**. There are other, less damaging alternatives for renewable energy. We **cannot afford** to sacrifice this land for a project that will leave it **permanently unusable**.

I urge you to reject the **Springwell Solar Farm application** and choose **smarter, more sustainable solutions**.

Thank you.