

SPRINGWELL SOLAR ACTION GROUP

20052314

Good evening,

Thank you for giving Springwell Solar Action Group the opportunity to speak tonight. We stand before you not as a group opposed to renewable energy — far from it — but as a group deeply concerned about the *scale*, the *location*, and the *consequences* of this proposed 3,500-acre solar factory and its accompanying BESS.

Let's start with one simple truth:

Not all green energy is good energy — not when it comes at the wrong place, at the wrong scale, and at the wrong cost to our community.

This application is a real Threat to Our Community's Identity

3,500 acres. That's over **5 square miles** — a footprint larger than many small towns.

We are talking about **industrializing our rural landscape**, blanketing thousands of acres of open space, farmland, and sensitive habitats with solar panels and battery containers. This is not a small project tucked into a remote area — it is a massive land-use transformation with permanent consequences. This will scar our community for at least 40 years

What do we lose?

- Productive **agricultural land** that feeds people and supports jobs.
- **Wildlife corridors**, pollinators, and ecosystems.
- Our **local identity** — our character, our landscape, and the rural quality of life we all came here to preserve.

This isn't just land. It's heritage, habitat, and homes. The applicants' experts from RSK seem to dismiss all of this from their air conditioned office spaces.

When you look at this application there is Environmental Irony: Green Energy, Brown Impact

The applicant through glossy pictures and very questionable sampling will try and convince the Inspector that this application is “**green energy.**” But **environmentalism is more than just electricity generation.**

The inspector needs to consider this:

- Construction will involve **massive land clearing**, grading, soil erosion and land drainage damage
- The panels themselves contain **rare earth metals** and **toxic materials** that are difficult and costly to recycle. And produced in China in the most environmentally contaminating industrial processes [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Then shipped around the world
- The real risk of significant damage to the Lincolnshire aquifer
- The BESS systems contain **lithium-ion batteries**, known to **catch fire** or **explode**, releasing hazardous chemicals and gases. These are **not hypothetical risks**. Just look at recent fires in California, Australia, and Arizona. The environmental impact in mining these minerals are not factored into any of the models.
- The cumulative destruction of thousands of acres.

We should also be very clear that the majority of the panels will need replacing at least once and the Batteries at least 2 times. If the applicant denies this essentially there will be an industrial complex abandoned in about 20 years.

If this project goes through, we are **replacing biodiversity and farmland with an industrial danger zone.**

Is that the future we want? Lets look at some of the risks

Let’s talk about the **battery energy storage system** — or BESS.

These are not benign boxes. They store **massive amounts of energy** in confined spaces. When something goes wrong — overheating, a puncture, a system failure — the result can be catastrophic.

In a study conducted by CEA on a significant number of BESS facilities 26% had quality issues relating to fire suppression and 18% had issues relating

to thermal management systems. If we shared statistics like this for the aerospace industry then all aeroplanes would be grounded.

BESS fires are known for:

- Being **extremely difficult to extinguish**.
- Releasing **toxic fumes** including hydrogen fluoride.
- Causing **thermal runaway** — where one cell ignites another in a deadly chain reaction.

If such a fire occurred we know **Lincolnshire fire departments are ill equipped to handle them**. There are only 3 fully manned stations in the area and these are all approx. 15mins away from the planned site

You cannot build this scale of risk into a community and call it “clean.”

In our first set of meetings the applicants legal representation pushed back on our groups questioning the competency of some of the applicants experts. It is interesting to see in Springwell Solar Farm Environmental Statement Appendix 1.1: Statement of Competence there is no mention of the expertise in BESS and Fire risk. We highlighted the detailed BESS concerns raised Dr Edmund Fordham Fellow of the Institute of Physics, Dr Wade Allison Professor of Physics, Fellow of Keble College, Oxford University and Professor Sir David Melville CBE Professor of Physics, former Vice-Chancellor, University of Kent. As you will note not a single Business Development Degree in sight from these real experts.

We need it recorded that there is not 1 independent expert. All of the people who are referenced are on the payroll. Over the next few days the Inspector will hear from people in this area who know this land and are basing their outputs on knowledge and not classroom based studies.

Who benefits from this project? No Local Benefit — But Plenty of Burden

Not us.

- The power will likely go **out of the region** or most likely out of country
- The jobs are mostly **temporary** and if we consider EDF record on other UK sites [REDACTED]. EDF want us to believe they do everything by the book. Well clearly they don't.
- The company reaps the profits while we shoulder the consequences.

Meanwhile, our community deal with:

- Destruction of the beautiful Landscape
- Traffic from construction and maintenance.
- Constant hums, glints, and security lights.
- The psychological toll of watching our open land become a fenced-off industrial zone.
- Increased insurance premiums. Declining property values.

Is this “progress,” or is it exploitation?

The reality is nothing submitted by the applicant is worth the paper its written on. The submission on BESS safety is laughable, the detail on Traffic management is just fantasy with zero consequence. We know there will a significant increase in traffic and we know this traffic will use any means available to reach the various sites. There is zero policing and zero financial penalty. Therefore just be honest and say it’s a pencil exercise designed to tick a box and yet again take the community for idiots.

There Are Better Alternatives

Let’s be clear — we are not saying *no* to solar energy. We are saying no to the scale of **this project**, in **this location**, at **this scale**. And the cumulative impact of the developments in Navenby, Coleby, Leadenham

There are sensible solutions that need implementing long before we destroy the best irrigated farmland in Britain:

- **Rooftop solar** on homes and businesses.
- **Brownfield solar** on already-disturbed or contaminated land.

Let’s put renewables **on the right land**, not the most convenient or cheapest for a developer.

There is no Accountability and Long-Term Risk mitigation. As we see in so many of these applications the ownership quickly changes hands.

What really happens in 40 years when the site is meant to be decommissioned?

- Who pays for decommissioning?

- Who restores the land?
- Will there be bonds in place to cover dismantling costs, or will we — the taxpayers — be left holding the bag?

We all know how businesses are structured to avoid liabilities. EDF Group are not putting parental guarantees in place, in reality EDF won't own this site in 20 years it will have been traded.

We've seen this story before — industry comes in, profits are made, and when the infrastructure fails or the money dries up, **the community pays the price.**

Without strong legal safeguards — which many projects like this lack — we're left vulnerable to **long-term environmental, economic, and public health consequences.**

The Springwell factory is not inevitable. The Planning Inspector **has a Choice — Please use It Wisely**

When an incident happens politicians won't take responsibility, they will need a scapegoat and sadly Sirs you 2 will be the fall guys if you grant consent.

We have the power — here, tonight, in this room — to make a better choice.

We can say:

- **Yes** to renewables in the right place
- But **no** to irresponsible development.
- No to sacrificing 3,500 acres of land for a project that offers us **nothing** but danger, pollution, contamination, noise, and regret.

We are not NIMBYs

We want energy projects that are:

- **Clean**
- **Accountable**
- **Respectful of the best farm land**
- **Equitable to the people who live here**

This proposal fails every one of those tests. It does not deal with Need and it certainly doesn't address the immense Harm it is going to cause.

In conclusion:

This project has nothing to do with megawatts. It is about mega millions of pounds going to a few vested groups.

Ed Milliband says we are being listened to. Where is he? Rural communities are being ignored and our communities are simply dumping grounds for this green gold rush.

We can do better. We *must* do better.

So I urge the planning inspector — and everyone listening — to stand with our community and dismiss this application

Say no to this solar factory and BESS.

Say yes to protecting our land, our safety, and our future.