

1. UNFAIR CONSULTATION PROCESS:

The planning system for solar farms and the Battery Energy Storage Units – ‘BESS’ - appears to be heavily tilted in favour of the applicants, who come with deep pockets and teams of expert legal support; knowing the financial return is guaranteed and highly lucrative.

The planning process appears to be deliberately breaking down barriers of resistance methodically & ruthlessly. Using enforcement through speed of action and incomplete reporting, to unfairly distort the consultation process. I would call this ‘Unfair Trade Practices’.

Applicants’ reports are written by smart, expensive lawyers, who fail to include opposing opinions or justifications against their developments; while local residents and groups are hugely amateur in comparison.

At the same time, Local Government intervention, through local planning policies, is excluded due to the NSIP nature of the planning process.

Objections appear to be deliberately muted.

With Central Government’s control over the planning process, understandably, the general public feel powerless; unable to make a difference. Instead placing faith in their MP’s and local government representatives, to respond to such inappropriate applications.

At the same time however, Local Government is given no power, to protect their own planning & environmental policies. Coincidentally, being kept extremely busy with the re-organisation demands, from Central Government; with extreme, impracticable timescales.

It is vital to consider all related applications as a whole, to fully understand the true impact; the total scale of which is unprecedented and unreported by Central Government. However, the NSIP planning policy states that only a single application can be considered at a time. This policy is totally outdated and needs to be amended to reflect the enormity of the cumulative effects of multiple applications.

Through-out the consultation process, there has been a lack of available information, including:

- Detailed economic justification – Business Plans, Budgets, Forecasts, net Climate Change predictions, or Benefit Analysis.
- The totality of the development profile – how many hectares are to be used in total, across Lincolnshire?
- The diligence of the evaluation measures – why are alternatives excluded?

For example: The advertised ‘houses to benefit from solar energy’ figures.

- How are these figures actually calculated?
- Are these annual, or do they represent a single sunny day?
- What inherent efficient rate, is assumed for the solar panel?

We simply don’t know.

Common sense screams, 'the figures relating to both finances and carbon', do not add up - Is this why we have not seen any concrete evidence which justifies and proves the economic viability and net gains, from either Central Government, or the developers?

Our PM calls his net zero plans 'a golden opportunity'. If sacrificing agricultural land, to prioritise solar is such a 'golden opportunity', why are the details proving the justification, not being shared with the general public?

Are there alternative motives behind the proposals, which has nothing to do with the UK's economies, or net carbon? Motives which are not being shared with the general public?

How can such plans be passed, with so little information, with no proven justification provided?

Instead, we are given glossy promotional brochures, which actually say very little, and use deceiving photoshopped images (an insult to our intelligence).

We are witnessing:

- More and more solar farms, joining the long list already in the system.
- Talk of additional BESS applications.
- The lifespan of developments, being extended from 25 to 60 years.
- The seemingly late introduction of Compulsory Purchase measures; and reference to connection points included within current plans; bringing site boundaries into question.
- Connection points included within the plans.
- Adverts are being seen on social media, which continue to seek new landowners to come forward; even offering rewards to non-land owners for suggestions.

Are we seeing 'phase 1' of a much larger footprint?

Follow on applications rarely get refused – what additional plans are in place to increase the size of those currently in the planning system?

If you look at the current maps, they highlight many irregular areas. Will these irregular areas be 'tired up', via the powers of Compulsory Purchase in the future? Afterall, it would not be economic to secure thin and irregular areas of land.

Looking at agreed and proposed developments to date, I believe the opposition group '7000 Acres', who seek solar on roofs not land, are missing a zero at the very least.

It appears we only have sight of a small proportion of the Governments' intentions. As such, we don't have a true understanding of the complete picture, as regards the solar invasion of Lincolnshire.

At the same time, the information we do have, does not provide us with any confidence:

- The initial proposals stated a lifespan of 25 years; this very quickly increased to 40 years and then again 40 to 60 years. All in a few months!
Is this deliberate, to wear us down, or incompetency?
When the panels are decommissioned in a mere 60 years - who is likely to own the land then? It would seem extremely naive to assume they will return to farmland; as included in the misleading promotional material.
With energy generation being such a fast-moving field; 60 years is a long time to be able to upgrade.

- Using the word ‘temporary’ is exceeding the definition without question. Fleeting, brief and short lived, these developments are not! Relying on the ‘reversible’ argument is hugely misleading, when there will be no ‘young farmers’ and no farming skills remaining. Farms will be unviable – lost forever.
Calling the solar invasion ‘Temporary’ is simply not true!
- Huge payments relating to subsidising renewables, called ‘Constraint Payments’ made by the National Grid, for not producing power are being made! Because they either can’t use it or can’t transport it.
Are such costs in the Business Plan?
- Scottish windfarms, which lack a means of allocation the energy produced, because they were built in the wrong place!

Why are we be asked to respond to an incomplete project outline?

How can this be viewed as a fair, and just consultation?

2. BESS

BESS application(s) will follow those for Springwell.

BESS bring an array of specific fire and safety concerns.

Dangers posed by BESS have been as reported in Parliament recently, by Lee Anderson MP, to name just one. Our local MP Caroline Johnson has been active in opposing solar in Lincolnshire too, but no support is forthcoming.

With a lack of laws governing the fire safety and a lack of engineering standards preventing Thermal Runaway, the major cause of electric fires, there are severe misgivings in any BESS proposal.

The control of ‘battery fires’ would seem beyond the knowledge, experience and capacities of the local fire and rescue services. No consultation report, with the local fire services has been forthcoming.

The application for BESS in Navenby is imminent, if Springwell is approved. As a follow on application to solar farms already agreed, less stringent planning reviews can be expected because the approved, relies on the proposed. With such huge implication associated with BESS, this cannot be right.

Although BESS are promoted as green energy, this is simply not true, due to limited storage capacity; meaning even on sunny days, only a few hours of energy can be stored. When it is not sunny, and the energy created by solar, has been used, BESS are used to buy and sell energy produced by a mixture of other sources including gas and nuclear. However, the benefits of this ‘industrial trading operation’, fail to be promoted.

BESS pose significant fire risks. With a barely regulated industry, the battery containers intended for Navenby, will be an ‘emergency situation waiting to happen’.

3. AGRICULTURAL LAND

The primary reason why these plans should be stopped, is the use of prime agricultural land and the need to maintain Food Security; which is fundamentally important to the UK economy; and the future health of the nation.

Lincolnshire produces approximately one-eighth of all food grown in the UK.

Reduced domestic food production will increase the UK's reliance on imports; generating a negative carbon footprint, inflating prices and increasing the risk of 'food supply disruption'.

Lincolnshire's agricultural land and the need to maintain Food Security is fundamentally important to the UK economy – this is undeniable.

Lincolnshire is one of the UK's most important agricultural areas – called the "breadbasket of Britain".

Reducing agricultural land will lead to an increased reliance on imports, making the UK more vulnerable to global events that disrupt supply chains, such as natural disasters, political instability or indeed war.

It is completely irrational to industrialise prime farmland. So, why are these proposals not being rejected instantly, for this reason alone?

Alternatives are available, but seemingly dismissed – why?

- Why use the green belt, when brown field sites are hugely preferable?
- Why not use roof space?
- Windwards?

We need to support our farmers, to secure our economic and stable future, now.

I feel that the UK's Economic stability is being threatened.

4. FLOOD RISKS

In addition to food security fears, flooding Risks, already a major problem within Lincolnshire will be increased by the industrialisation of farmland, due to surface water runoff and the lands' reduced ability to absorb water naturally.

Lincolnshire County Council reported recently, that the solar developments would damage the clay pipes used to control the water flow currently.

The lands' reduced ability to absorb water naturally will also be reduced.

I fear a lack of adequate flood risk consideration.

5. ROAD USERS

I also feel there is a danger to road users in the area, namely glare from the glass and 'eyes off road'.

No confirmation of screening trees has been seen to date; nor any recognition that screening miles of roadside panels, will take decades to establish.

6. JOB LOSSES

I foresee that local businesses will suffer & Job losses will result; - impacting our rural communities and economies.

It is not just hard working farmers who will suffer – currently seen harvesting every evening until dusk; but the services that support them, including agricultural contractors, garages, transportation and suppliers.

In addition, as our beautiful countryside becomes industrialised, our tourist numbers will inevitably reduce, impacting tourist attractions and hospitality.

Without doubt, Local businesses and tourism will suffer, & Job losses will result - impacting rural communities and economies.

7. MENTAL HEALTH

Sadly, Mental Health issues within local communities, would seem inevitable for the following reasons:

- Watching our productive and beautiful farmland be replaced with industrialisation; with huge negative visual impacts.
- The impact on the housing market, plus cultural heritage and farming traditions
- The presence of security fencing, lighting & personnel.
- The impact of Compulsory Purchase.

I fear [REDACTED] and mental health issues will result; impacting NHS services.

8. CONCLUSION

In short, I am strongly opposed to Springwell Solar Farm, and have genuine fears for the cumulative impacts of multiple, related developments.

There is no argument that would justify the damage caused by large-scale solar farms in Lincolnshire.

The UK has less than 1% of the global carbon emissions. Any contribution by solar will have a tiny impact, while any net gain is called into question (when at the cost of rural Lincolnshire).

I fail to be convinced of a justifiable net carbon gain; or that the negative impacts are fully understood, and wholly integrated into the proposals.

In addition - the country cannot afford the costs associated with Net Zero policies; £45billion pounds per year to the tax payer between 2025 to 2030 (as estimated by the Institute of Government).

Central Government appears to be using a 'bulldozer approach' to get these plans approved as quickly as possible; approving applications in quick succession, regardless of the costs, or impacts.

Current Net Zero plans will become a National Disaster at some point in the future.

Our whole way of life is at risk, and our future in danger.

It is only when things go horribly wrong and a public inquiry is constituted and properly funded, that the tables are turned, and the truth is finally dragged to the table - Think back to the Grenfell disaster.

We need to be calling for a public enquiry now, because these proposals are a disaster. An independent, formal investigation to scrutinize, not the past, but the future impact of the decisions currently being made.