

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Fenwick Solar Farm
Hearing:	Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1)
Date:	19 March 2025

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:04:27 - 00:00:11:07

Can I just check that you can hear me? Yes. And are we now recording of the livestream started?

00:00:16:20 - 00:00:48:19

Yes. Thank you. Well, it's now 2:00, and I'd like to start by welcoming you all to this open floor hearing for the Phoenix Solar Farm project. My name is Rory Cridland. I'm the lead member of the panel of examining inspectors, appointed by the Secretary of State to carry out an examination into the application and then report back with a recommendation. Now, I know we do have some people here this afternoon who weren't present this morning, and so I'm just going to run through a few general housekeeping matters. Um, as I mentioned at the start, the digital recording is being made and that will be retained and published on the national infrastructure website.

00:00:48:21 - 00:01:19:00

And so I'd be grateful if you could clearly identify yourselves before you speak. It will be held on the website for five years following the Secretary of State's decision on the application. So can I ask you all to avoid mentioning anything that you wish to be kept private and confidential. We participate in today's meeting. As with all of the. Sorry in today's hearing. As with all of the other hearings, you will be recorded and that recording will be placed online. We are also live streaming the event this afternoon as well. Now, the fire alarm was tested this morning, so we're not expecting a fire drill.

00:01:19:02 - 00:01:27:25

If it does go off, we should leave the room immediately. There are fire exits to at both ends of the room and the meeting point is out the front on the racecourse near the pavilion.

00:01:30:09 - 00:01:49:27

Can I ask you all to turn off your mobile phones or switch them on to silent, please? And finally, if you're watching on the live stream and we do break or adjourn at any point, you may wish to refresh your browser to view the restarted meeting. I'm now going to hand over to my colleague, Mrs. Murphy, who will take us through the rest of the items on the agenda.

00:01:51:17 - 00:02:22:18

Thank you. My name is Smith Murphy, and I'm the other panel member for the examining authority alongside Mr. Cridland, and we've been appointed to examine this application on behalf of the Secretary of State. As this is an open floor hearing, there is no formal agenda because the purpose is to hear representations from interested parties who have registered to speak today. The purpose of this

hearing is to provide you with an opportunity to raise anything directly that you feel is relevant and important, and you think we should know about and consider.

00:02:22:21 - 00:03:01:11

It is not specific to any location or topic and the subject matter is up to you. Once you have spoken, I might have some questions and the applicant will have an opportunity to respond. Once all speakers have been heard. Towards the end of the hearing. So we will move on to parties who've given notice to speak. And so we have Mr. Stephen for, um, registered, who I believe is yourself. Um, if you turn the microphone on when you begin to speak and then turn it off at the end, um, and I invite you now to come forward and speak.

00:03:03:02 - 00:03:33:09

Um, chairman of the trustees of Morton Fenwick Village Hall. I'm also a parish councillor for Mostyn District Parish Council and also a resident of Fenwick. As, uh, my role as chairman of Moss and Fenwick village trustees and would like to point out, uh, our concerns of the impact on the village hall. Our biggest concerns at this moment in time are traffic impact.

00:03:34:07 - 00:04:07:20

Um. Fairly common. Lane is a 60 miles an hour speed limit on it. Uh, we are basically a single track road. However, it was modified in the 70s to allow, uh, bus buses to use Fenwick Common Lane up to the junction of shoreline. Uh, we rent the village all out. Um, the history of the village all derives from Mostyn Fenwick Children's Institute.

00:04:08:06 - 00:04:43:00

Uh, we managed to rebuild and get planning permission to rebuild the village, all in 2015. Uh, our revenue income is mainly renting the all out to various groups, farmers groups, parties, predominantly children's parties and, uh, things like that. Um, obviously with the increase in traffic, uh, heavy goods vehicles using Fenwick Common Lane, um, it is of great concern.

00:04:43:18 - 00:05:24:07

Um, how we can mitigate and slow down, uh, extra vehicles and traffic using this road. Um, it is a straight. It is a very fast road. Um, we also have the North East main railway line at the junction of most common lane, which, as you can imagine or is a very extremely busy railway line. We get massive tailbacks of traffic at times. Uh, recent surveys, uh, for road traffic on Moss Road at the junction of Fenwick Common Lane is circa 4000 vehicles per hour.

00:05:24:28 - 00:06:05:04

Uh, and in east and west, it doesn't take a lot for a couple of agricultural vehicles, uh, lorries, commercial vehicles, articulated lorries backing up to create tailbacks. This can also be compounded by the railway lines and crossings that we have in Askern and on the A19. Uh, so vehicles potentially coming down to supply. um, the proposed the proposed, uh, solar farm could create a backlog of traffic, which is going to compound and make things very dangerous for us on Fenwick Common Lane.

00:06:06:00 - 00:06:38:15

Uh, we have, through the parish council, made numbers of representations to the MBC about reducing the speed limit on Fenwick Common lane. And even in places, the road is very, very dangerous condition and is in a very grave state of disrepair. Uh, unfortunately, this moment in time, uh, we have had no luck in persuading the council to upgrade the road at this moment in time and reduce the speed limit.

00:06:39:14 - 00:07:14:27

It would be nice if this planning application does go ahead. That consideration is taken into account, uh, for this, um, Safety concerns then about the battery storage unit, which will be visible from the village hall and any potential fires or accidents or spills, uh, with prevailing winds could affect parties or children at the village hall. This again then um, brings into, uh, access and egress for emergency services.

00:07:15:16 - 00:07:19:27

Uh, the speed of response and obviously, uh,

00:07:21:16 - 00:08:03:00

the actual response time for, uh, can be affected by the railway in the crossings in asking itself. Uh, there is a feeling that this, uh, battery storage unit should be classed as a separate application. Uh, there's massive battery storage just being passed or agreed with. LED to believe at the power station. Um. So why do we need this one as well, on the doorstep when we're already succumbing to a massive solar field or solar farm or solar power station, whichever way you wish to describe it.

00:08:04:01 - 00:08:40:04

Um. Public footpaths. And another big concern that we have, there's a lot of people pack up, use the public footpaths in the systems of the countryside to walk around. Uh, we have in place at the moment a number of diversions on public footpaths due to lack of maintenance. I've had a number of meetings with representatives from Doncaster Council, uh, about repairing some of the public footpaths, which unfortunately to this date are still not, uh, being achieved.

00:08:40:06 - 00:09:11:26

Uh, I believe that you were having a site visit. At some time, you'll be able to see how much the public footpaths are used and in Warn and where people have taken divergence because of the unsafe nature of the present public footpaths and most residents. And we are all hoping that, uh, public footpaths kept open and, uh, can't see the need to permanently close public footpaths after all.

00:09:12:04 - 00:09:12:19

Um.

00:09:14:22 - 00:10:05:19

It's a solar farm. It's solar panels built on steel frames in fields. You know, we're not having thousands of tons of concrete. We're not, uh, you know, we're not reconstructing HS2 away, you know? So, um, this does feel that there is a need of a scattered, um, approach to the planning application, uh, grossly over exaggerated for what works that they are actually carrying out. Um, also, we are a little concerned that when construction or if construction does start, if, uh, uh, the application is passed,

um, that we can have some form of residents committee to meet regularly on a regular basis with the contractors and any concerns raised.

00:10:06:07 - 00:10:36:10

Uh, either a seesaw or desist notice of some sort, uh, or some committee arranged where if concerns are not sorted out, that we can arrange, uh, for a governed by Doncaster MBC or an authority to come in and say, well, look, get your acting order. Um, we need to, uh, sort this to stop you from working until it is sorted. Um.

00:10:39:00 - 00:10:58:19

At the moment, there is a review in the village that it's a foregone conclusion that this planning application is going to go ahead. Um, there's a feeling that, uh, you might as well cpo the village and give the keys to to to boons contractors and, uh,

00:11:00:12 - 00:11:16:11

you know, it's, uh, it's something that, uh, we hope that a little bit more at this moment in time, consideration to the local community is taken into account. Um, and that's all I can say at this moment in time. Thank you for your time.

00:11:18:08 - 00:11:24:26

Thank you, Mr. File. Um, I don't have any questions to ask. Thank you. I think you're very, very clear.

00:11:24:28 - 00:11:25:22

Lovely. Thank you.

00:11:25:24 - 00:11:26:09

Yeah.

00:11:28:10 - 00:12:05:24

Thank you, Mr. Fowler. I just pick up on 1 or 2 of the points that you made. Um, if you can bear with me for a moment, I just know that I have it now. Um, the point on the, um, discussions between yourselves and the applicant, um, around the community, I think that the development consent order does make some provision for Community Liaison Group to be formed, and you may wish to take a look at that document. Requirement three in the development consent order, I'm not sure it will operate in the way that you suggested this morning, but it will give the community some feed in and a method to feed back to the contractors of any concerns that they have if their development were to go ahead.

00:12:05:26 - 00:12:21:15

Yeah. And then the other thing I'd just like to say is that I'm Mr. Murphy and I will be examining the excuse me, the application very thoroughly. It's certainly not a foregone conclusion. And our recommendation will be made, having taken into account all of the different representations that we receive during the course of the examination.

00:12:22:03 - 00:12:22:19

Thank you.

00:12:22:21 - 00:12:23:06

Thank you.

00:12:25:23 - 00:12:43:14

So I'd now like to, um. I don't believe we have any other speakers, and I don't believe we have any other speakers on line. So I'd like to invite the applicant whether they would like to come up and speak or if they, uh, would wish to respond in writing, if they can provide clarification. Thank you.

00:12:48:19 - 00:13:19:03

Thank you. I'll just say a few brief words. Um. Good afternoon. All. For those who weren't at the hearing this morning, my name is Taylor Power. I'm an associate at law firm Pinsent Masons, and I represent the applicant. Um, firstly, I'm on behalf of the applicant. I would like to thank Mr. Bell, uh, for taking time out of your day to speak at the hearing. Uh, we really appreciate people taking time to participate in this process, as it's an important part of the planning process that the examining authority hears from local communities.

00:13:19:18 - 00:13:54:05

Um, and we hope that a further open floor hearing can be held later in the examination, perhaps in an evening or online, so more people can participate, um, if they would like to. I won't be responding in detail to the points raised today. Um, mainly because the applicant team is in the process of carefully reading the relevant representations Annotations made and will be responding in detail to those, including those made by the village hall. Um, I would just note to hopefully provide some comfort and respect of the concerns about Scenic Common Lane.

00:13:54:15 - 00:14:31:15

Um, that there will be no HGVs routed through that scenic common lane. Um, so about 75% of the construction staff vehicles, so usual personal cars will enter the site via Fenwick Common Lane and they'll all exit via moss road and all HGVs, um will enter and leave by the Moss Road access. Uh, but as I said before, the applicant team, including its subject matter experts, will be providing detailed responses on the relevant reports, including providing comments on the battery storage and the safety controls for that.

00:14:31:22 - 00:14:58:25

Um, the management and maintenance proposed for the public footpaths and the community liaison group, and how we anticipate that can address, um, concerns raised by community and make sure they're swiftly addressed. So, uh, today's hearing is just about us listening. And I want to say thank you again. And also just note that the applicant team is always very happy to discuss things directly. So please, anyone here come and find us after the hearing and we'd love to talk. Thank you.

00:15:01:00 - 00:15:31:10

Thank you very much. So, um, all that remains then, is for me to say thank you very much for your assistance for attending today. Um, and we look forward to receiving, um, written submissions on information that's been raised today, uh, and also throughout the rest of the examination. The time is 215, and this open floor hearing is now closed. And, uh, just to remind that there will be an issue specific hearing held tomorrow morning here at 10:00. Thank you.

00:15:32:20 - 00:15:33:05

Thank you.