

30 April 2025

Dear Sirs

Re: Objection to Fenwick Solar Farm

Application Ref: EN010152

OBJECTIONS OF MR THOMAS MOYES AND MRS KATIE MOYES

I write to express our objections to the proposed application for a Development Consent Order for the 536-hectare solar energy farm known as “Fenwick Solar Farm”. If the application is approved and the consent order is granted Fenwick Solar farm will have a huge impact on the surrounding villages and local residents.

Many residents have expressed their concerns about the proposed solar farm, these concerns are summarised below for careful consideration.

1. Size and location of the development

The proposed site spans over 536 hectares, which is the equivalent of 662 football pitches meaning the proposed site would consume entire green spaces and countryside surrounding Fenwick. The open countryside is a feature which many residents in Fenwick enjoy on a daily basis, in particular many children and young families in the village.

Furthermore, many residents enjoy running, walking, cycling, and horse riding in the open countryside, this amenity is likely to be lost for residents as the open countryside would be surrounded by large solar panels and battery energy storage systems. Moreover, the Public Right of Way of Sykehouse 29 will be permanently diverted. In addition to this other Public Rights of Way may also be disturbed during construction process and it is likely that the Public Rights of Way will pass under or through large scale solar panels.

The visual impact of a large industrial solar development would permanently alter the tranquil rural character of the area, leaving many residential properties overlooking fields of solar panels mounted up to 3.5 meters high and sub stations up to 11 meters in height as opposed to views of the open countryside. This would permanently alter the residents' enjoyment of their own properties as the views that attracted them to the area would be lost.

Furthermore the degradation of the countryside environment will have a negative impact on the many people from surrounding areas that visit the area to go for walks, rides etc. to protect their mental wellbeing. This is an area of social deprivation which has been let down by multiple governments since the 1980s, and I would imagine that mental health issues have a high prevalence in these areas in comparison to other areas. Accordingly, it is of paramount importance to preserve the few areas that serve the surrounding community such as Askern. Fenwick is one of those few areas.

2. Environmental

The proposed site spreads over 1000 acres of open countryside which will have a huge impact on local wildlife. The residents consider there to be protected species such as bats, badgers, and newts living in the surrounding countryside, and the proposed construction works would threaten the existence of these protected species and potentially cause the destruction of their natural habitats. Furthermore, the destruction of natural habitats could have a long-lasting detrimental impact on biodiversity which is an incredibly important feature of the English countryside.

The proposed site will also result in the loss of agricultural land which has been successfully farmed by local farmers for several generations. This change would result in a loss of arable farming land which is in direct conflict with Government policy to protect and enhance domestic food production in the UK.

The solar farm is proposed to last for 40 years before being decommissioned in 2070, meaning that local wildlife and farming land would be disturbed for a whole generation

and it is unlikely that the land would return to its previous state as a result of the decommissioning process. Furthermore, it is likely that the land that once was open countryside would be permanently damaged and the character of the area would be changed forever.

3. Local infrastructure and economy

The proposed development is estimated to take 24 months subject to working conditions. Throughout this time there will be an increase in road usage by HGVs and abnormal load vehicles through the small neighbouring villages, many of the roads through these villages are **highly unsuitable** for these types of vehicles or high volumes of traffic.

The roads in Fenwick and surrounding villages are single track and would be unable to cope with the traffic from construction vehicles in addition to existing local traffic and farm vehicles. This poses a significant highway safety risk as the roads through Fenwick are not designed to accommodate the additional traffic that will be generated from the construction of the solar farm.

Residents are concerned about highway safety and the increased risk for pedestrians because of high volumes of traffic passing through the village. Fenwick is home to many young families with children who often walk through the village and are able to do so safely due to the low volumes of traffic. Both the construction vehicles and increased traffic levels increase the risk of accidents and pedestrian fatalities on narrow roads which are not designed for more than local and farm traffic.

Furthermore, many residents are concerned about the upkeep of the roads as the roads surrounding Fenwick are often in states of disrepair and a dramatic increase in use will have a negative impact on the wear and tear of the roads.

Fenwick is home to several farming and equestrian businesses which rely on the ability to access local bridleways and the open country road network. The increase in traffic would have a damaging impact on these local businesses ability to operate, leading to

a loss of income and in some cases closure. There is an additional risk to local people employed by these businesses.

As you will be aware, there are three railway crossings in Askern and Moss. These are already very busy due to one servicing the London Edinburgh line. The addition of industrial trucks will cause excessive pollution and I am of the view that it will be dangerous. I am aware of fatalities that have occurred at these crossings and would aver you would need to undertake research before a decision can be fairly made.

4. Noise and visual pollution

Construction of the proposed solar farm is estimated to last for approximately 24 months which is a significantly long period of time in which residents' quiet enjoyment of their homes will be disturbed by noise and visual pollution from the construction. Many residents also work from home and will be directly impacted by the construction noise in core working hours.

In addition to this the constant humming noise from the solar farm and the battery energy storage systems will also be close to residents' homes and will impact their ability to enjoy the peaceful tranquil nature of their homes in the countryside. This is noise that will last for over 40 years and will be a permanent disruption for residents.

The visual pollution from the construction of the solar farm and the solar farm itself will have a significant impact on residents' ability to enjoy their homes. The character of the village is rural which often attracts residents to buy homes in Fenwick for this reason. The consultation brochure states that the solar panels will be as close as 250 meters from residents' homes, thus changing the character of the area forever. Many residents fear that the visual pollution of the solar farm would diminish their property value, leaving some residents unable to move or with mortgages exceeding their property value.

5. Safety hazards

Solar farms are significant industrial developments which include transformers, inverters and battery storage units. The grid-scale battery storage systems can store massive amounts of energy which have the potential to be incredibly dangerous if there is a fault. These systems also pose a significant and potentially fatal risk to people if they catch on fire, given the proximity of the development to residential properties many residents are concerned about the increased risk of fires.

Furthermore, with the proposed location of the solar farm being over open countryside there will be safety risks for pedestrians using Public Rights of Way through the solar farm, and any farm animals that are allowed to continue to graze on this land.

Many young children currently use the open countryside to roam and play, there are risks that if the equipment is ill-maintained or has a fault then the potential risk to children and pedestrians using this land is increased.

There are also real concerns over any consequent hazardous toxic waste which may occur with the installation of large lithium batteries. The proposed site is in the open countryside which is used by residents, visitors and animals who could all potentially be at risk in the instance of any contamination from the solar farm. Furthermore, there are also concerns with any contamination as a result of the decommissioning process once the 40-year duration is over. This could potentially affect people for over 40 years.

6. Inefficiency of solar farms

UK ground solar is known to be inefficient. Research by Sheffield University shows that solar panels operate at 11% efficiency in the UK, meaning a huge loss of land that could be used for farming or retained as open countryside for little gain in terms of the size and scale of the solar farm.

Although residents object to the proposal of a large solar farm, they are supportive of sustainable renewable energy created by other means such as offshore wind farms or solar panels placed on roofs.

7. Devaluation of property

The 'elephant in the room' is that this farm as it is currently proposed will severely devalue properties. I have first hand evidence of this which I can disclose. Whilst I can understand arguments for renewable farms, there is absolutely no need for these panels to be so close to homes, with a battery storage unit (i.e. something of an industrial nature) to be so close and it will be the first thing people view as they come into the village. Whilst it is true that devaluation of some properties should not stop solar farms being built in their entirety, I can only view the plans as inflammatory and antagonistic given proximity of panels & storage to homes that have been built. Axiomatically, if the solar farm proceeds, then it needs to be adjusted and amended so the panels aren't in view and the storage unit is elsewhere.

8. Failure of representation by local MP

Mr Miliband clearly has a vested interest in these schemes going ahead and he has placed his views on record.

At the village hall meeting in Moss / Fenwick which was recorded, he made his views very clear that he was in support of it going ahead. He offered no support for the residents and resisted any argument against the farm.

Accordingly, we have been denied fair representation by our local MP, which has placed us at an unfair disadvantage in the planning process.

We hope that our concerns are carefully considered by the Planning Inspectorate when making a determination on the proposed development and what impact this will have on villages and residents impacted by the proposed solar energy farm. I attach a list of cases at Schedule One of this letter, which I would like to be reviewed in full and then taken into consideration when making this decision.

Yours faithfully

TOM MOYES

Schedule One

1. Impact on Renewable Energy Systems:

In "R. (on the application of McLennan) v Medway Council," it was established that the effect a development proposal might have on renewable energy systems, such as solar panels on an individual's residential property, is a material planning consideration that must be taken into account. Local authorities cannot dismiss the impact on solar panels as immaterial merely because they serve a single household (R. (on the application of McLennan) v Medway Council)

2. Loss of Agricultural Land:

In "Lullington Solar Park Ltd v Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities," the court highlighted the significant weight given to the loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. The planning inspector found that the loss of food production capabilities due to the solar farm outweighed the benefits of renewable energy generation, and thus the proposal conflicted with the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Overview Article: Planning policy framework) (Lullington Solar Park Ltd v Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, [2024] EWHC 295 (Admin))

3. Heritage and Visual Impact:

In "Save Our Greenhills Community Group v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government," concerns were raised about the landscape and heritage impact of the proposed solar park. The inspector allowed the appeal but recognized the importance of considering the visual impact and its effect on heritage assets (Save Our Greenhills Community Group v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government)[. Similarly, in "R. (on the application of Butler) v East Dorset DC," planning permission for a solar farm close to a conservation area was quashed due to the planning officer's failure to properly advise on the development's conformity with policies on heritage assets and renewable energy (R. (on the application of Butler) v East Dorset DC)

4. Adverse Environmental Effects:

"R. (on the application of Galloway) v Durham CC" involved arguments about the landscape harm and the impact on the amenity of recreational routes. Although the solar farm provided significant renewable energy benefits, the planning assessment needed to balance these benefits against the environmental harm (R. (on the application of Galloway) v Durham CC, [2024] EWHC 367 (Admin))

5. Material Considerations and Planning Policy:

Principles outlined in the "Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 s.38," which states that planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This includes the requirement that any conflict between policies must be resolved in favor of the most recent policy (s. 38 Development plan)

6. Procedural Impropriety:

In "Moakes v Canterbury City Council," the court considered whether the local authority had followed proper procedures, including public participation and the consideration of alternative sites, especially in areas designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (Moakes v Canterbury City Council, [2024] EWHC 1272 (Admin))

7. Potential Obstruction of Light:

According to "Emmet & Farrand on Title, Volume 3," the obstruction of light and light pollution are material considerations in planning decisions. The effect of a proposed development on neighbouring renewable energy systems, such as solar panels, must be taken into account (Emmet & Farrand)