

25 April 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Objection to Fenwick Solar Farm – Application Reference EN010152
Objections of [REDACTED] & Mrs Cathy Lindley

I am writing to formally object to the proposed Development Consent Order for the Fenwick Solar Farm, which covers 536 hectares of land. Should this application be approved, the project will have a profound and lasting impact on the surrounding villages and their residents. Below, I outline our key concerns for your consideration:

1. Size and Location of the Development

The proposed solar farm spans an area equivalent to 662 football pitches, covering substantial green space that is vital to local residents, particularly families and children who regularly use this open countryside for outdoor activities such as walking, cycling, and horse riding. The development would significantly alter the rural character of Fenwick, replacing scenic views with industrial-scale solar panels and energy storage units. The diversion of Public Rights of Way, such as Sykehouse 29, and potential disruption to other rights of way will further restrict access to this open space. This loss of countryside is not only an aesthetic concern but also one of mental and physical well-being for local residents, especially in this area of social deprivation.

2. Environmental Impact

The construction of the solar farm will destroy important habitats for protected species such as bats, badgers, and newts. The proposed development also threatens farmland that has supported local agriculture for generations. This is in direct conflict with government policies aimed at preserving agricultural land and enhancing domestic food production. Given the farm's proposed 40-year lifespan, this would have a lasting negative impact on biodiversity and the local economy, as it is unlikely the land would return to its original state post-decommissioning.

The rural development supplementary planning document ratified by Doncaster Council in April 24 categorise the area of Fenwick as part of countryside policy area and states that “care should be taken that proposals (for development) would not result in excessive expansion and encroachment of building development into the countryside”

3. Local Infrastructure and Economy

The development is projected to last 24 months and will result in significant traffic disruption through small rural villages. The narrow, single-track roads in Fenwick and surrounding areas are ill-equipped to handle heavy construction vehicles, posing risks to road safety and increasing wear and tear on already deteriorating roads. Additionally, local businesses, particularly those in farming and equestrian industries, rely on unimpeded access to local roads and bridleways. Increased traffic will disrupt their operations and lead to financial losses, job insecurity, and potential business closures.

4. Noise and Visual Pollution

Construction of the solar farm will introduce significant noise and visual pollution for up to two years. Many local residents, including those who work from home, will be impacted by

this disruption. After construction, the constant humming of the solar panels and battery storage units will continue to disturb the peace of the area for over 40 years. The visual presence of solar panels and industrial equipment will alter the rural character of Fenwick, diminishing the enjoyment of local residents and likely devaluing properties.

5. Safety Hazards

Solar farms, especially those involving large battery storage systems, present safety risks, including the potential for fires or other hazardous incidents. Given the close proximity of the development to residential homes, there is a significant concern for fire safety. Additionally, the presence of industrial equipment and large-scale infrastructure creates potential dangers for pedestrians, farm animals, and children who may use the land or public rights of way.

6. Inefficiency of Solar Farms

Research shows that solar panels in the UK operate at low efficiency levels, with Sheffield University estimating an efficiency of only 11%. Given the vast amount of land required for this project, the potential benefits in terms of energy production seem minimal compared to the irreversible loss of green space and agricultural land. We believe other renewable energy sources, such as offshore wind farms or roof-mounted solar panels, would be far more appropriate and efficient.

7. Devaluation of Property

There is a genuine concern that the proximity of the solar farm, particularly the large battery storage units, will severely devalue local properties. For many residents, the character of the area, with its scenic views and rural setting, is a key factor in choosing to live here. If these views are replaced by large-scale industrial infrastructure, the quality of life will be greatly diminished, and property values will inevitably decline.

8. Lack of Representation by Local MP and Mayor of Doncaster

Unfortunately, our local MP, Mr Miliband, has been outspoken in his support for the solar farm, dismissing the concerns of residents at a village meeting. This has left us feeling that our voices have not been properly heard or considered in the decision-making process, and we have been denied fair representation in this matter.

Lack of support from the Mayor of Doncaster who said at a Fenwick Solar Farm meeting in June 2024 it was not appropriate or applicable to object or for her to voice an opinion on an NSIP despite now joining a campaign objecting to a different NSIP in a different part of the borough. She is now promoting the Save our Countryside campaign and is quoted on 15th April 2025 as saying to Doncaster Free Press with relation to the Whitestone Solar Farm project:

"I fully understand the concerns that are being raised in relation to this proposed large scale solar development at Conisborough. I am a firm believer that solar panels should be on rooftops first and foremost and not on productive farmland.

"I am opposed to large landowners, most of which do not live in Doncaster or farm the land they own, taking productive farmland out of production that could blight vast swathes of our beautiful environment.

"It is important to remember that at this stage they are proposals, and I encourage everyone to put forward their views during the next phase of consultation which will be later this year."

Perhaps if we had had this validation at the start of our journey then we would be in a stronger position going forward.

We respectfully ask that the Planning Inspectorate fully considers these concerns when determining the future of the Fenwick Solar Farm application.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours faithfully,

 Cathy Lindley