

Fosse Green Energy_ISH1_Session 5_07.01.26

Wed, Jan 07, 2026 4:45PM • 1:39:32

00:04

Well, it is two o'clock, so the hearing is resuming. Can I ask everybody to take their seats

00:14

before we continue with agenda? Item, 3.2,

00:19

yeah. Three, two, sorry. Can I ask Mrs. Foster if you're able to give an update on the weather situation? We won't hold you to it.

00:29

No problem at all. We did. I did at lunchtime, forward the latest forecast that have been received by the highway authority to the case team, which they have acknowledged. So they have, they have got those. Obviously,

00:43

you're welcome to have a look at those. There is an amber warning in place now for parts of the East Midlands, and the yellow warning in wider areas. Lincolnshire doesn't fall within the amber warning.

00:56

They do seem to be sort of getting less, predicting less snow here over in Lincolnshire tomorrow, but other parts of the East Midlands are expecting much more significant amounts of snow, which is set out in the amber warning, which I've sent to the case team.

01:14

It's sounding like locally, there might not be so much of an issue, but it's for those who are traveling further afield. I think then, as we discussed earlier this morning,

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I think the hearings will proceed tomorrow, but anybody that needs to travel

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and but needs to then attend tomorrow can do so online. I've checked with

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case team, they can set up invites, and they're going to do on a blanket basis. Everybody will get an invite to attend online. So even if anybody locally decides that they don't want to travel because of the weather, and as long as you've got a device or a phone, because I think

02:04

phone access will also be possible. You will have the option to attend, in effect,

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outside of the room, wherever the room end up, ends up being, because it's just possible

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that

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both I and Mrs. Wilkinson will also, in effect, end up being online somewhere. It is also possible, because of Mrs. Wilkinson's travel arrangement, she may not be with me wherever I am tomorrow, but we just have to play that by ear as TOMORROW, TOMORROW develops,

02:43

and we'll just then have to try and make the best that we can. But as I said earlier, both she and I are used to doing online

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events. It's not as if we're suddenly being thrown in into it at the deep end. So

03:03

Mr. Taylor.

03:05

Ruben Taylor, for the applicant. So can I just clarify? There's a possibility that that neither of you will physically be in in the room tomorrow. I'm I'm pretty certain that I will be in the room tomorrow, unless, for whatever reason, traveling conditions locally become so difficult I can't leave the hotel, or that message Wilkinson can't leave a hotel, but one of us will definitely. The expectation is that one of us will be in the

03:39

room. Is there anything anybody else wants to raise on weather and possible effects for how we conduct things tomorrow, before we go back to agenda. Item three, two, anything from North kesterman?

03:53

I think John Hunter on behalf of North Coast Stephen District Council. So I think I liaise with my side. I think we haven't quite reached a settled view either on what we'll be doing. I would just flag up it's it's possible that I will not be able to be here because of the impacts on transport and consequential matters, but I will liaise with my side and provide you with an update once we've considered a bit further. Thank you. Anything from Lincolnshire county council on that in that regard,

04:23

think at this point I will defer till tomorrow morning and review, but it's myself, sorry. Justine foster for Lincoln County Council. This is myself attending tomorrow, and my colleague, Amy Charles, who was here yesterday. Both of us who live outside of Lincolnshire do

04:43

anything from anybody else, from the IPS not seeing anything? Okay, then I think we'll, we'll resume with agenda item 3.2

04:55

and give the app, the applicant the opportunity to respond to what we heard before.

05:00

Lunch. If there is anything you wish to say at this point,

05:05

I think that there was one thing arising out of what we heard this morning that might assist both Mrs. Wilkinson and I,

05:14

is an understanding of of the process for securing the good connection in terms of what steps are involved in it. I'm guessing that although an offer was secured on whatever date prior to that, a fair amount of discussion takes place with National Grid before the formalities, in effect, for want of a better way of describing, an application is made to them, and then they then confirm yay or nay or what they're going to do in response

05:48

rib and Taylor for the applicant, I'm going to ask Mr. Snedden to just come back on that particular point first, and then, as Kretschmer is going to address some aspects of the approach adopted to the site selection process that's been undertaken, and then I'm going to make some some further remarks.

06:14

Hello, you and Sneddon for the applicant, from my understanding of the grid connection process on this particular project was that the applicant made an made an application to national grid showing an initial land area that they had

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at Morton Manor and housham Grange,

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and their request was for a T into the overhead line to the north, close to Wisby Hall.

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National Grid's response to that application was to state that that was not their preference for where a site like this would connect, and they suggested that

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the new navenby substation would be a more suitable point of connections or project of this scale. And as such, that is where the initial offer

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for the connection was received in 2022

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I'm aware and national grid at that time had proposed that a new substation would be located in the navenby area, but had not yet identified exactly which site that would be, and that's where they proceeded in the latter year to do a site selection process.

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Obviously, the 400 KV overhead line that comes from Wisby hall area comes down around navenby and

08:01

continues south from there. So National Grid had already established the needs case for a new substation in that area and offered the grid connection to the applicant there.

08:31

Thank you

08:33

Mr.

08:37

Thank you sir and Naomi Kretschmer on behalf of the applicant. So I'm just going to provide some context the site selection and just a walkthrough of the methodology that was undertaken. So just to recap slightly what Mr. Snowden said. So land was secured at Moreton Manor and Hasham Grange by the applicant, and following the confirmation of the point of connection at the proposed National Grid substation near navonby. Further land was secured to the south of the A 46

09:09

so subsequently, the site selection process seeks to verify the location of the proposed development by considering whether the site is the most suitable taking into account operational requirements, national and local planning policy and environmental constraints.

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So just moving on to the process for site selection, this was undertaken in several steps. So firstly, as explained in the site selection report, which is Annex A of the planning statement as 098

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an area of search was identified that was based on the point of connection at the proposed National Grid substation near navonby. The applicant considered that a 15 kilometer area of search from the point of connection was a viable maximum.

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Distance for a project of this scale,

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this took into account the cost of the infrastructure and construction and the preference to limit the extent of environmental impacts and disruption, which increase as the length of the cable corridor does.

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Secondly, planning and environmental constraints were excluded from initial consideration in order to identify unconstrained land, including areas of best, most versatile agricultural land, areas of flood risk, ecological sites and heritage assets.

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Thirdly, potential sites were then identified on this unconstrained basis.

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The next step, the fourth step, the potential alternative sites, were assessed against a range of criteria, including land use, grid connection, ecological and geological sites, landscape and visual cultural heritage, access for construction, traffic, flood risk, solar array shading, topography and site size.

11:07

Fifthly, constraints were then introduced to enable consideration of further sites identified against the criteria above.

11:17

Land availability was also considered in order to examine whether a deliverable site could be assembled, since this reduces, or potentially avoids, the need for compulsory acquisition powers to be used. And essentially, the applicant sought to identify a site in as few land ownerships as possible within the area of search to aid with deliverability of the proposed development.

11:42

I'll just pass over to Mr. Taylor.

11:47

William and Taylor for the applicant we've heard today so many comments relating to the site selection process, but none of those comments were placed in the context of the relevance of alternatives, either by reference to the full suite of policy, or in terms of the law,

12:07

the applicant has explained how it has applied the full suite of relevant policy in the site Selection report, which is annex eight of the planning statement as 098

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the applicant has explained in that report how it has considered brownfield land in preference to Greenfield land. Have a look at paragraphs four point 3.3 to four point 3.7

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in terms of site size, the report at 3.4 point two to 3.4 point five explains the rationale for the maximum and minimum sizes adopted

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in terms of the law alternatives are only exceptionally relevant, as I explained in the 10 minute presentation earlier, There are three elements that have to be present for a

13:04

need to consider alternatives as a matter of law to arise when determining a DCO application. Firstly, the scheme must give rise to significant impacts. The applicant doesn't consider that the degree of impact from its proposals reaches that threshold. Secondly, the scheme must be justified by reference to a need. Well, plainly, that is the case in the circumstances of this application. But as Mr. Gillette explained yesterday, the number of schemes required to meet the national need require schemes of the same size as the proposed development in this application to come on stream on the basis of two a month between now and 2030

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or one a month between now and 2050

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so even if there was an additional site that could deliver The same amount of electricity on the same time scale as the proposed application. It too would be needed in addition to the proposed development.

14:10

The third element of the law is that there must be a defined alternative. It is not sufficient to make a vague or inchoate suggestion of an alternative, vague assertions relating to unidentified brownfield sites and brownfield land is insufficient to give rise to any weight to that as a consideration.

14:32

Other than Mr. Weiter, no party today has identified any defined alternative. Mr. Weiter's Alternative was carefully considered by the applicant in chapter four of the environmental statement, but the applicant set out in in that document, paragraphs four, point 9.5, to six,

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for example, why the applicant doesn't prefer it? What.

15:00

One of those reasons is, for example, that the access in Mr. Wheatons Alternative is directly onto the strategic road network and national highways raised safety concerns about it. Mr. Wheaton will, no doubt, put his points in writing, and the applicant will respond in more detail at that stage. So in summary, the applicant's position is that it's content that he has undertaken a process which verifies that there is no preferable site that proposed in this application. Further, since the scheme is acceptable and doesn't give rise to significant adverse impacts, as a matter of law, there is no obligation to consider alternatives any further.

15:45

And in the context of paragraph 4.3, point 23, of npsc and one which explains that the Secretary of State should be guided in considering alternatives by whether there is a realistic prospect of the alternative delivering the same infrastructure capacity, including energy security, climate change and other environmental benefits in the same timescale as the proposed development in that context, even even if you conclude that there is an obligation to consider alternatives, there is no alternative to the proposed development that delivers those same benefits on the same timescale.

16:28

So thank you very much. Those are all the points that the applicant wished to make in response

16:52

Thank you, Mr. Taylor,

16:55

right, I'm going to turn now to

17:00

my questions,

17:02

a goodly number of which were actually

17:09

Albert. Ms, sweeter.

17:15

Thank you, sir. Mark weeter, resident of Thorpe on the hill, yeah, just

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taking those points, perhaps on mute.

17:25

Oh, sorry. Is that any is that

17:29

sorry? Can you hear me now,

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with we're still not hearing you,

17:35

right? Can you hear me any better? Now?

17:41

No.

17:45

So it may help the examining authority that online we can hear Mr. Weiter, I don't know if you can hear me now. Excellent. Thank you.

17:55

Yes, who's obviously coming through, but not sorry, Mr. We're still not hearing are you on mute at your end? No, and I think the others can hear me online. So I don't know if there's an issue.

18:07

Technically,

18:12

sorry, I think the text is saying that he can be heard, but we can't. I'm not sure there's some up on our end.

18:21

Tweet, it seems there might be an issue with the technology at this end, if you can just hold when technicians have a look and see whether there is a problem at this end, I

18:55

if that's any better, I

19:16

Mrs. So you're just so you're aware that the technicians are still having look at the matter in Yeah, okay,

19:22

thank you.

21:29

No notice you you indicated. I'm reluctant to do anything in case we lose

21:35

those online with whatever is going on to try and resolve the issue with Mr. Eater,

22:51

I getting an indication we're ready to go again.

23:00

Can somebody other than Mr. Wita, perhaps, who is online, try and say something and see whether we we get them coming through it. Williams, right. Miss tweeter, can you now have a go? Please? Yep, hello. Can you? Can you hear me? Brilliant. Thank you. Unfortunately, we didn't hear anything that you said. So if you are able to start from the beginning again, yeah, thank you sir for bearing with me on that. Yeah. I'm Mark Wait a resident of Thorpe on the hill, just picking up the applicant's points on the alternative design that was submitted. It's my view that there are significant adverse impacts to Thorpe on the hill.

23:41

The alternative design,

23:44

basically the difference with the scheme that's submitted is panels all around Thompson wood, which is an ancient woodland, all around Thorpe on the hill. And it makes a significant impact, which, because we are located on a hill, can't be mitigated against easily or at all for the life of the development. So I think that's a significant impact, and therefore it's worthy of looking at that alternative design.

24:07

The point that was mentioned was number four of my I went through the four points that were in the applicant's document section, 4.9

24:16

and the last one was the A 46 which is basically not a key point from my side, because you can avoid access through the village with the alternative scheme in a similar way to what's proposed. So that isn't a deal breaker on that, and I accept that. But there were three other points that I discussed,

24:35

in my view,

24:38

a good design in accordance with the NPS document is one that takes into account the adverse effects for the village. And, you know, a community minded developer would be welcoming discussions, really, to try and avoid this. And I think,

24:54

you know, a proactive approach would be welcome to discuss designs further.

24:59

But it's my.

25:00

Clear view that the alternative design will work subject to some design adjustments within the scheme. Thank you.

25:11

Thank you. Mr.

25:13

Tweeter, one thing I've noticed, and I meant to raise it probably actually, during the PM, the transcripts sometimes

25:23

don't get people's names correct. There is, please don't take any offense. It's the software and the way it picks up. But I did see Mr. Wheat, his name, I think, came out as ITER.

25:35

I hope no offense is taken by any party. I

25:49

right now going to move on to what will now be quite a limited number of questions, and in fact, may only be one question now from

25:59

the examining authority in respect of alternatives.

26:04

I did have some others, but I think I'm switched those to writing

26:10

and turning to,

26:13

well, Lincolnshire county council first, but I think North Kesteven, potentially may also need to respond. And And this question is about the availability of previously developed land in the vicinity of the proposed site.

26:32

Can either or both of the Councils give an indication, as you understand it, of just how much previously developed land is available.

26:43

Now it might be that you need to take take this question away and deal with it in written submissions,

26:50

but I think it would certainly assist the examining authority to have a better understanding of the quantum of brownfield land that is available in the area, what that quantity is versus the scale of the proposed order limits

27:11

Justine foster for Lincolnshire county council, I think so we'll have to take that away, because I don't have any figures to hand on that, and it may be more appropriate for the district council in the context of they have the relevant local plan in the area. But what I will say, I do recall that this was looked at as part of this spring more solar application, and there may well be some figures that were submitted as part of that examination, but will respond in writing, if that's okay.

27:42

Take the point that the site is predominantly in North Keston area. But of course, when you apply the 15 kilometer radius, presumably that does then bring in other local authorities.

27:54

I don't know whether North Kesteven and or the county can liaise with neighboring authorities to perhaps get a wider picture of what's out there,

28:05

because, of course,

28:06

borough boundaries or district boundaries, county boundaries follow funny lines,

28:12

and this site is quite irregular in shape.

28:16

Does North Kesteven Council, District Council want to comment? Thanks. Ben Hunt from North Coast, even District Council. Could I just clarify over what scope of area you're looking I may miss something within the site selection report.

28:36

May even be we were satisfied that there's very little available in the area, mostly at Highcomb, and with them, St Hugh's, you're looking over a broader area, I think a broader area just just to get a feel because lots of interested parties have raised the issue of, well, couldn't this scheme go to alternative brownfield sites?

29:01

And it might be that if you were to look further south, which presumably is another local authority area, there might be some brownfield sites available. But again, they may not be of a kind of quantum needed to accommodate what the applicant is proposing. I think it just be of assistance,

29:22

and it might be the applicant can also

29:26

help, just trying to establish what the quantum is out there. Miss Krechler,

29:33

thank you, sir Naomi, on behalf of the applicant, just to clarify, as part of the site selection process, the relevant brownfield land registers were consulted for North Kesteven District Council, South Kesteven

District Council, East Lindsay District Council, West Lindsay District Council and the city of Lincoln Council, because all of those councils were within the area of search and.

30:00

The conclusion was that there were no

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sites suitable for the purposes of the proposed development that were within those previously or sorry, within those brownfield land registers.

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And just to sign post you to the relevant section, if you look at four point 3.3

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to four point 3.7

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of the site selection report, which is at Annex A of the planning statement, which is As 098,

30:58

yep.

31:00

Thank you, sir. Nick Feltham, development manager at North Kesteven District Council, and the council has very recently updated its brownfield land register. We have added a couple of extra sites to that so that is in the public domain. We'd be happy to cross reference to the Brownfield land register. In response, it would be helpful, though, to have an idea as to the search area that you're asking. I'm assuming that you're thinking about a 15 kilometer radial search point from the site. And also, sorry, the second point is that

31:31

out with our brownfield land register, we don't the District Council doesn't hold any records of registered brownfield land. We don't have any way of verifying the status of particular sites as previously developed land, whether they're agricultural land, the degree to which they are. PDL, the curtilage is associated with that. So it's just a point about the

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detail that the district council might be able to provide you with as a reliable record outside of what's in our brownfield land register.

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Thank you, sir.

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Thank you. Mr.

32:13

Feltham, it might be think if the applicant, as part of the technical guide that we talked about, can

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put in extracts, or whatever you've got from the various registers that you've used to search with the

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councils. Can then review that, and then potentially, I think, possibly as part of the statement of common ground that you're each working on,

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perhaps a section could be added

32:48

that deals with availability of brownfield land, and then certainly the two councils that are actively participating in this examination can comment on their understanding of the position.

33:04

And in that respect, I suppose the county council has got slightly wider oversight, because if it's involvement with all of the districts that still remain in the county of Lincolnshire, excluding the two unitaries, which I think are up in the north at the moment, but that, I think perhaps at this stage is the best way of getting information presented if, as and when we see that information, we think we might want to see something further we can request it at that point is, does that sound a sensible way to go forward?

33:37

Written Taylor for the for the applicant, certainly from our side of the wind. We're happy to take that forward in that way. And it looks like the council signed Gribble in that respect. Yes, sir.

33:49

Can we have a mic, please?

33:58

David Crampton, president of North Coast, evening, a small point. I'm not quite sure why we're considering brownfield land in a predominantly agricultural area. This is a nationally significant infrastructure project. Surely we should be considering brown fields across the UK and particularly in areas close to where the power will be needed in such large quantities. I cities. Thank you.

34:38

Thank you, sir. Thank you sir. I was going to raise similar point. The point to be made by the applicant, there is a national need for this energy. And my understanding of en one and en three is they should be looking for sites with existing grid connections. There's lots of brownfield sites around the country, particularly at.

35:00

Being mothballed and scaled down. Power Station sites. In Lincolnshire, we have rather a lot of ex RAF sites, of considerable sites, and also in this area specifically, I don't know if you can advise me if it counts as Brownfield. But quarry sites, it's a big area of quarrying, and there's vast areas of quarry sites around which would presumably count as brownfield and previously developed. So even locally, there are alternatives, RF sites, mot sites, quarry sites. But surely this is a national significant project, and it should be done for that.

35:38

The other point I was going to ask, I need some advice from you. When we talk about alternative sites, are we purely talking about alternative sites for this scale of solar installation? Are we talking alternative sites for the generation of this quantity of carbon neutral electricity

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for the purposes of the consideration of this application, an alternative would need to be comparable,

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because that's that's how it needs to be assessed.

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And there are practicalities when you start looking at potentially lots of smaller sites, as to how you can then secure connections

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the generation the electricity. So for instance, small modular reactors, which would go on existing power station sites. Small Modular Reactor takes up to about three acres, generate six times the electricity of this proposal, and you can do it. 24/7, 365, of the year, we have power station sites nationally and locally where these SNRs could be situated. To me, there are viable

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alternatives for your advice.

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It's not just about availability of sites. There is also timing issue

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involved as to whether an alternative is a genuine alternative. At the time a project is being considered,

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my perception is the SMRs are started when an ANC is going in and where they put them, where there's existing grid connection, obviously you're saving time.

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So I accept there is a condition there, but I believe there is a proposal. SMRs are one of the quickest ways of developing over ask if you want to put that into your written representation,

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the applicant, and no doubt, any other party that sees it can Make responses

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do

38:20

uh Mrs. Williams, online.

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Mark Williams, spring also Action

38:29

Group,

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yes, we can hear

38:41

Yeah. Mark Williams, spring of summer Action Group. I'm glad for the clarification from several people in the room. And I've also just checked the documentation. I

38:50

was getting the feeling that this was an L set for a minute, a Lincolnshire strategic infrastructure project, rather than an N set. So if it's an N said it's national, and because it's national, we should be broadening, as people in the room said, this shouldn't just be looking at a 15 mile kilometer radius around this development. It should be national. And there are plenty of brownfield sites all over the UK which could be suitable and going further than brownfield there, there are loads of old industrial areas that are contaminated, and that is the type of land that should be used for this type of development. We should not be using prime agricultural land for this type of development. And to the point that I think it was Michael that just said it around things like small modular Modular Reactors. The footprint of a small modular reactor is tiny in comparison to what so the solar industrial developments are looking to absorb, and the, you know, the outputs.

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Versus footprint is shocking on these, on these solar developments. So you know, if we are looking for for energy security, we should be looking for

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applications that can actually provide secure long term 365 day power, we know and now, and it's quite clear when you look at the solar development, the outputs for probably six months of the year is dire. So it's not, it's not a Secure power source. Thank you. So

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councilor Overton, Thank you.

41:12

Councilor Marianne Overton from the cliff villages solar Action Group, just a few responses. Firstly, this is a very significant impact. It changes the whole nature of the landscape, from rural countryside with attractive villages setting that to solar lens. Can I just significance? What's the point? Yeah, we've heard a lot from various parties. We understand, okay, like the case you'll be you're making, and a lot of other residents, no doubt we'll also be seeing in written submissions. The same point, there is no point repeating over and over again the same sort of argument we get it okay. Points I would like to pick up is that one of the let me just pick this up summary. In the

42:02

Summary, A, P, p1, 80, paragraph, 4.1, point 2c. The applicants sought to avoid urban areas. And the problem, from our point of view, is by excluding rural areas, you're excluding the very areas that should be used, and then by having a limit of 1000 hectares. To find a brownfield site that's 1000 hectares all

in one place is clearly going to be extremely difficult. So I think the they don't need 1000 acres has been pointed out. So I think it's vital that this actually looks more carefully at a number of sites. Lastly, on the point raised by Mr. Wheaton, I think it was explained about it might the access would then be directly onto a major road, but why not? Actually, you know, why not put it onto a major road? And I think those aspects shouldn't be discounted just because of that. I think it's worth a thorough look.

43:03

And in terms of other sites that are available, we've also got, of course, apart from the Brownfield ones, the other point was to have industrial land, and Newark, for example, might be included, which is another district council area. Thank you. Do

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Thank you. Andrew, keen resident of buzzingham, if I've understood Mr. Taylor correctly, he's telling us that there is no legal requirement for the applicant to consider alternatives, which they clearly did not do when the site was initially selected. And yet, I am mystified then as to why the applicant then goes on to produce a site selection report which does consider alternatives and discounts those alternatives. The evidence we had for Mr. Snedden yesterday was that the principal site for the solar panels

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is 453 hectares. So I'm confused then as to why the total site area is 1070 hectares for the site. Why is another 600 hectares needed for this solar farm development, and if a smaller site is needed,

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then that surely brings into play other sites within the area, including potentially parts of site six and seven, perhaps in combination with part of the cable corridor.

45:00

Is to provide a suitable site that could be just as if not more acceptable than the FOSS green site. So if there is a requirement for a smaller site,

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then the FOSS green site is not necessarily the only and most suitable site for a solar farm of the scale proposed. And although all alternatives for a smaller site have not at this stage been sufficiently explored, the

45:58

I think We'll do it through a written question. We will ask the applicant to clarify,

46:06

in effect, what the minimum land requirement is to produce for the proposed development. Because, as Mr. Said and explained earlier, I think it was Mr. Snedden some of the land that's identified

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on the works plans, for instance, shows both,

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I think, biodiversity net gain or some mitigation work, but also

46:33

potential cable connections between the virtual for the arrayos, then in the cable corridor, for instance, of course, you're showing the maximum extent, but within that, there will then be a lesser area that you would actually take once you've done the micro designing. And I think that exercise might assist that if we know what the minimum is actually required in terms of the array area the cable corridor and some of the other mitigation that might assist, because the global headline figure of 1300 hectares, and that that's something

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that various parties may have picked up through our

47:17

draft

47:19

written questions, is something that we have been, in part, struggling to get to grips with.

47:26

Mr. Sven is nodding, so it looks like Mr. Sven will pick up as part of the technical note, a fuller explanation,

47:35

but I say we'll confirm precisely what we're looking for in one of the written questions, but that will end up in the technical note Reuben Taylor for the for the applicant, so that that would be very helpful, because then we we know exactly what target we're we're shooting at, in terms of giving you the information that you require. So

48:48

okay, I think because of where we are, and we've got a number of agenda items still to look at, we'll move on from agenda item, 32233, three, three,

49:05

and I'm going to hand over to Mrs. Wilkinson. It wasn't by design that I got the first three agenda items in terms of the running order. It's because we took one out of order.

49:17

Sorry. So you've got your hand up, yep.

49:20

Can we have a mic? Please?

49:30

Conclusion to the previous item, I just wanted to remind everyone, as I'm sure everyone's aware, that the A 46

49:39

is a major gateway into Lincolnshire and Lincoln and some of these panels will be well visible on that route. What does that say for Lincoln and Lincolnshire? Could that

49:55

we're going to look at vision. We will be looking at visual matters, as I explained yesterday.

50:00

Later on, on an examination, once we've got the LIRs from both the councils and we've also got their written representations. Thank you,

50:12

Mrs. Wilkinson, are you set? Is it has the applicant done a handover?

50:19

Is other councils also got their hand over, sort of okay. I'll hand over then.

50:27

Thank you, Mr. Gould. We'll start, as we've been doing with all the other topics. We'll start off with the applicant's summary of the points that we set out in our agenda for this issue specific hearing. So I'll hand over to the applicant now. Thank you.

50:47

Thank you, madam. Neil Titley, on behalf of the applicant, I will cover a summary of the agricultural land classification effects on farming activities, the consideration given to the use of non farming land and food production and the approach to soil management and restoration.

51:05

The assessment of soils is reported in chapter 12, social economics and land use of the environmental statement as zero 16, supported by appendix 12, B app 161

51:16

the use of best and most versatile land, BMV land, which is grades one, two and three. A was carefully considered for the proposed development as set out in appendix A site selection report of the planning statement as 098,

51:29

in the project's infancy, the applicant team referred to natural England's provisional agricultural land classification, ALC mapping, which showed the land north east and south of the pointed connection near navenby is expected to be grade 1b, and V land, while the land west of naven B is likely grade three. This verified the choice of site in terms of b and V land, following voluntary option agreements with landowners. Saw surveys were carried out across the principal site, approximately 1019 hectares, using hand auger ball sampling at a ratio of one sample per hectare to a depth of 1.2 meters, in accordance with math now Defra guidelines and natural England's technical information, information note on soil monitoring. The soil survey for the principal site shows 72.2%

52:18

of the site is non BMV land. There is no grade one or grade two agricultural land within the principal site, with the BMV land all being grade three. A three a land, therefore makes up 27.8%

52:32

so about 283 hectares of the principal site of this grade three a land, only 43% is under panels. 41% will be retained arable or grassland that's about 160 hectares, and therefore has the flexibility to be used for arable farming, while the final 12% is managed arable for bird mitigation, that's about 34 hectares,

and therefore will continue as arable use. The applicants are sorted to deliver a scheme that minimizes impacts on BMV land but has not omitted BMV land altogether. The complete avoidance would result in a smaller scheme which would not maximize the renewable energy generation of the connection agreement or deliver the well documented, much needed renewable energy for the UK. In total, when considering both the BMV and non BMV land, a total of 489

53:22

hectares, or 48% of the principal sites can continue to be used for arable farming during operation. The proposed development is long term and reversible. All Above ground infrastructure will be removed on completion, including, for example, tracks, battery storage and the on site substation, the cable corridor will be available for arable farming immediately after reinstatement, meaning only a small area of the cable corridor, approximately 30 to 40 meter working with, is affected for at worst, one growing season. The overall effect on soils is considered minor, adverse and not significant. Moving to the effects on farming activities. Chapter 12, social economics of land use as 16 explains, it has been confirmed by all landowners that no job losses are expected because of the change of use to solar farm. In fact, the landowners say that when rent revenues from the solar farm start, there will be additional jobs created on their other land holdings as they diversify their land further with the underlying financial stability of the rental income. This matches a survey of farmers by solar energy UK and its farming sustainability report, 2025

54:33

the intent by the applicant is to also introduce sheep grazing within the solar farm to manage the grass under the panels, which would allow a form of farming activity to continue on site. The design of the PV array, with the base of the panels being a minimum of nought point eight meters above ground level, allows for grazing as an agricultural solution for vegetation management under the panels regarding the consideration given to the use of non farming land, this was discovered discussed earlier.

55:00

This afternoon, so I don't propose repeating this

55:03

moving to the consideration given to the effects for food production. The key document on UK Food security is the Defra UK Food Security Report 2024

55:13

this considers the government's aspirations for net zero, of which ground based solar is a key part, and concludes that food production levels can be maintained or even moderately increased, alongside the land use change required to meet our net zero targets and commitments.

55:30

Paragraph 12, point 7.43, of chapter 12, social economics and land use as 16 notes, the principal site constitutes naught. Point naught. 9% of the total farmland in the East Midlands. That was naught point naught 9% and is therefore unlikely to result in an impact on food production. It is estimated, in Section 12, point 10 of the same chapter, that all the consented and currently proposed solar and sips in Lincolnshire, together with the proposed development, account for an estimated 1.4%

56:01

of the BMV land in Lincolnshire. All these developments are reversible, except perhaps for relatively small areas used for habitat creation to reach the government target of 90 gigawatts of solar by 2050

solar energy UK estimates, we will require 1% of the UK's 9 million hectares utilized agricultural area, given the above context, the effect on food production is considered to be negligible.

56:26

Moving to the approach to soil management and restoration, the application includes many soil management principles to protect the soil quality. The framework, soil management plan as 100 is the key document in this respect, and sits alongside the framework, construction environmental management plan, framework Operational Environmental Management Plan and framework decommissioning environmental management plan. And they are documents, A, P, p1, 891, 90 and 191

56:54

section five of the framework soil management plan deals with soil management during construction. Includes commitments around soils being handled in accordance with good industry practice such as the Defra guidance on sustainable use of soils and construction sites and the Institute of quarrying. Supplementary note, a detailed soil management plan will be developed post consent during detailed design, working alongside the host councils, and requirement of 15 of the draft DCO has been updated to include Natural England as a named consultee, and as such, Natural England will now also have the opportunity to field feed into the detailed SMP to provide additional reassurance. The framework construction Environmental Management Plan at 189 commits to returning the soil to its current agricultural land classification and the mitigation measures in the framework soil management plan are written with this in mind, the soil will therefore be handed back to landowners in its current state or better following removal of infrastructure. And as such, the effect on soil quality following restoration is considered to be negligible. Thank you.

57:58

Thank you for that summary.

58:07

So turning then to the councils, and what I didn't do at the start of this was ask who would be speaking on behalf of both councils. So can I turn to Lincolnshire county council first and ask who would be covering farming and soils for you, please, Justine foster for Lincolnshire County Council. We would, in the first instance, if it's okay, ma'am, to defer to North Duncan District Council, as we they have a consultant specialist here with them. And if there's any other points that we would like to pick up, my colleague, Mr. Andrew Barton, will pick up on those afterwards. That's okay.

58:45

Thank you. Okay, turning to the District Council, then thank you. John Hunter, North Coast, Stephen, District Council, it will be Mr. Franklin to my right, from landscape, dealing with this matter. Thank you. I Duncan,

59:06

thank you, Madam.

59:08

We have a number of questions, some of which I think have been partially addressed today, but I'd like to just run through them very quickly, if I may,

59:19

to seek clarification the there

59:22

was a appeared to be a discrepancy between the total areas of Best of most versatile, between the ALC report and the ES chapter.

59:33

I just like clarification on what is the correct figure for best and most versatile.

59:42

This second issue, and again, there has been some clarification, because you've actually given us some figures today, but there is quite a lot of land within the order limits that wasn't specifically identified for either panels or any other use. And I.

1:00:00

You have given us some percentages in terms of what would be available for grassland and arable but again, we would like to see that, I think, in writing, so we can better understand where that is, perhaps with a plan to identify

1:00:19

a specific point. This is something that Natural England picked up on in their commentary with regard to

1:00:27

the impact on best and most versatile, specifically grade three A, which I think they've identified as having a high impact, whereas you'd only described it as medium.

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And so I wonder if you could give us some commentary on that,

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just to clarify that point, because I think it is differently described in the IEMA guidelines

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than The way you've referenced it.

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The fourth point is is a little bit more nebulous, and really is with reference to decommissioning and the restoration.

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My reservations are whether the site can properly be decommissioned and the land restored back to the same grade of agricultural land quality, both the best and most versatile and indeed the non BMV land. There is obviously some concern that after 60 years, the land quality could actually have deteriorated if there is compaction and in the removal of the metal piles. Also, some of the piles, quite a considerable amount, are currently described as to be concreted.

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And again, there is some concern as to whether those will how realistic it is that that land can be restored back to agriculture, effectively, with the removal of

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the piles with concrete on

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again, there are other areas, the best area the solar stations, of which there are about 80, and the compounds, as to whether they will be adequately restored back to agriculture. I really would like to hear some some detail on

1:02:24

the way that land will be restored, and what kind of guarantees or sureties we can have that it will actually happen. At the moment, the frameworks or management plan is, is lacks the detail of this sort of information. It's stated that it will be provided, but it isn't actually there at the moment,

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and so just it's really detail, madam. Thank you.

1:02:53

Thank you.

1:03:02

I think I'll ask the applicant to come back on some of those points, because that actually tallies with a number of the questions that I have,

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and then, because they're quite specific questions, and I'll then open it up to the wider floor following those responses. Thank you.

1:03:21

So I think, I think it's a bit that explanation about the differences between the agricultural land survey report and what went into the ES chapter.

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I think also about that ai yima guidance in terms of the classification of grade three a land as medium sensitivity rather than high sensitivity, and then around the decommissioning point, and how you would go about actually managing the soils,

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especially that under, for example, the bears you know. Have you got any examples or any evidence that you can draw on for us to substantiate and what you said about that? Thank you. Thank you, Madam, and thank you for your comments. Mr. Franklin, I'll talk my way through I made a few notes, but do do let me know if I've missed out anything in particular in terms of the discrepancy on the BMV numbers, and this will become clear in our written responses

1:04:18

the ALC survey, which is appendix 12 B that the app 161, covers a slightly different area. The numbers in chapter 12, socio economics and land use as 16 are the numbers to rely on, and we'll make that clear in our response. So the number specific, the precise number, 282.9

1:04:38

hectare is the correct number, and that comes from chapter 12, social, economic and land use as 16.

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Moving on briefly to your query about

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the area not used for panels you mentioned I answered that in part, you're right in that the proposed development has a combination.

1:05:00

Location of areas with solar infrastructure, but it also has areas for bird mitigation as well. So that was required following the ecology surveys in order to mitigate adverse effects on birds.

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There's actually looking at the numbers. There is 308 hectares. Sorry, it's 181

1:05:26

hectares of managed arable for bird mitigation. And there's an additional amount for bird mitigation in grassland. I don't have that number in front of me, but there's a substantial amount of land within the site that will be managed for bird mitigation, part of it arable, part of it grassland. There's also areas which we call retained arable stroke grassland. So it's got the flexibility for arable use, but also grassland. So this will be part of future conversations with landowners and farmers with that the applicant would have, and that flexibility is in there, because they would have uses such as buried cabling under that land. So it may not be apparent from the layouts drawings, which tend to show the above ground infrastructure, but some of this land will have buried cabling to link up areas.

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In terms of your comment,

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natural England's that Natural England picked up on.

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I just take myself

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to that very quickly. They referred to the guidance that was written by IEMA, the Institute of Environmental Management and assessment. So they're now I set

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and how we deviated from that slightly. So what we've done, you'll be familiar with trying to align it with the methodology in chapter five, EIA methodology, app zero 30, which doesn't have a category for very high sensitivity. Sometimes we find with that category, it can skew the effects so that if you do take the guidance literally from IEMA, for example,

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having grade two soil, which is disturbed for a few minutes, and it's perhaps one meter squared. Taking it literally, would come with a significant effect. So we had modified that to align with the general EIA methodology. But that aside, if working through the methodology as it is, given the methodology, and I believe Natural England, were referring to the area of what we called the permanent loss. So we had identified a permanent loss of 1.5 hectares of best and most versatile land. That's our terminology.

That's that's areas for planting, and it includes the community orchard, which orchards are a form of agricultural use, but

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it also includes hedges and trees that are planted. So this is all

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planting which could, in theory, be removed by the landowners after the project has been decommissioned, but the project itself may not remove that planting, so we've called it a permanent loss. It's not infrastructure associated with the solar it is planting that we had assessed and given that a high sensitivity and then concluded it was a minor effect. But if we apply the the IEMA guidance,

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I would argue, we still still come down to a minor adverse effect. Working that through with a very high sensitivity, we would attribute to that a trying

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to find it. Now in my notes, we would attribute the the

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magnitude of effect

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being low, I believe, which comes out as as it's defined, a slight or moderate. So the threshold in that guidance is five hectare loss and being only 1.5 hectare, three times below that,

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we would consider the load to be

1:08:44

sorry, the slight to be the appropriate effect, which, in our terminology we use, to be minor in terms of the general BMV that's used underneath the panels, I don't believe that's what Natural England are referring to. What the solar industry has done and been acceptable to the examining authority and the Secretary of State previously on other projects such as tilbridge, cotton, West Burton in Lincolnshire, for example, is not not considered that in the same way the IEMA I said guidance is a catch all for all developments, looking primarily where there's hard surfacing and sealing, things like Roads and and buildings, whereas solar, the soil is still there. It's not displaced, it's not damaged. In the long term, there may be short term damage from compaction, and we'll come on to that through monitoring and restoration. But it's not an effect in the same way as a building on top of that, so it's generally assessed in a different way and through these other previous projects, is there's the precedence there, where they've been assessed as very high sensitivity, but a negligible magnitude of impact, which then brings it to the minor adverse effect that we concluded in the chapter.

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There was a little bit of detail there, so we'll put that in written response in.

1:10:00

Response to the relevant reps and the written questions

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in terms of the restoration back to the same soil quality.

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There is a commitment in the framework, construction environmental management plan already to do that. I appreciate it can be challenging at times, there have been research now carried out in the last couple of years for a wealth of solar farms across the UK, looking at whether soil quality improves or is affected negatively by solar farms,

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and that does identify there can be compaction following construction, and also repowering decommissioning. The key is following good industry practice in terms of soil handling management, and we have those good industry practices built into the framework construction Environmental Management Plan and the framework soil management plan. If you do have further comments on those, please feel free to put them in writing, and we'll consider those and whether they should be added.

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Thank you. That was all the points I had at this time.

1:11:07

Thank you

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Lincolnshire county council.

1:11:15

Yes, thank you. Thank you, madam. It's Andrew Barton for Lincolnshire County Council. We did have a few points to make in relation to this topic on agriculture and land use.

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I think that some of the points we were hoping to make, we've already been made by North Coast Stephen. But there's a couple of extra bits I'd like to mention, if that's okay. I think just talking strategically, the sort of starting point for Lincoln, Chicago Council. It really is enshrined, sort of essentially enshrined, in the council's energy infrastructure position statement from 2023

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where the position position is one of objection to any proposals that are cited on BMV land. And this position really is an acknowledgement of the county having relatively much higher proportion of BMV land within its boundary compared to the rest of the country, and then building on that, building on those concerns, they extend to the cumulative impacts. Because, of course, you know, we're Lincoln's County has been dealing with many, many NCIP projects and other, you know, combined with other Town Country planning projects of this nature, with the increasing land take the impact on BMV soils, and that's a continuing trend, you know, continue to receive more and more. Hence it projects. I think some of those have already been consented, some are in the pipeline or examination phase, and some of them still, still at sort of pre examination consultation stage. So just to sort of put this briefly, into context, Lincoln's largest combinable crop output of any UK County, constituting about 12% of England's arable crop area. So that high level of production is vital to the county's economy. In 2023 that was valued at over 1500 million pounds total livestock output over 500 million pounds. So that's our high level position. And we did have some detailed queries, as I say, some of those have been covered off by by North Kesteven. But

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just to, if I may, just to sort of go trot through those quickly, we had the group we had. We did pick up on the grade three, a discrepancy, which

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I know the applicants just addressed there.

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One of the other points we wanted to raise, really, was about the alternatives. It sort of ties in with some of the comments that were made under the previous session in alternatives and design evolution. I know it was stated that BMV was considered in the site design and the layout, but it wasn't particularly clear to us as to how that approach had been approached iteratively, if you like, so sort of using the results from the ALC survey, taking on board those results, and then sort of seeking to ensure compliance, if you like, with the National local policy to seek to use poorer quality land in preference to the higher quality land and avoid BMV where possible. I think that, to our mind, that just needed a little bit more amplification.

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I think we one of the other points was about the quantification of the permanent loss, which, when we looked at it, seemed to be extremely low figure,

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except in the point about whether you know, where there's a debate about it temporary, temporary or permanent, but obviously a 60 year development timeframe is pretty exceptional.

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And based on some of the experience we've had with other ncips, there was a debate about whether hard standings, access, access roads, compounds, etc,

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whether those could be sort of encapsulated within that temporary or permanent. So

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that's maybe something that we'd like to explore a little bit further, because, I say the sort of different approach to some of the ncips that we've seen that have come come over our desks,

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we did pick up on the point about the IEMA guidance. I have to say we're not.

1:15:00

Entirely convinced with the reasoning there. I think we were sort of on the same page with with with northcurs Stephen in so far as the the significance of impact. And I think, you know, taking that more county level, if you like, and looking at the cumulative impacts, I think that becomes even more more critical. Then, when you're looking at the description of, I think in one of the documents, can't remember which one it is. Description of cumulative development on agricultural land was defined as not significant at county level. But I think if there is that,

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if there is that, further clarification on sensitivity and magnitude of impact, I think, you know, obviously that's going to have a bearing on on cumulative impacts as well, across across the board. So the final point I just wanted to make was about the reasonably reasonable likelihood, if you like, of grazing taking place beneath solar panels we accept. You know, the applicants stated that that's a possibility, but obviously that entirely depends on the availability of graziers. So

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again, it's perhaps something that needs to be explored. Because again, in our experience, I don't think that's always assured.

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I think that all the points that we wanted to raise at this stage, thank you.

1:16:17

Thank you. You.

1:16:23

So I appreciate there are quite a few hands up. So I'll open up to the floor, and then we'll come back to to the applicant. So if we work, maybe from the back of the room forward, I

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um, yeah. Andrew Keeling basingham, resident,

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yeah, I'd just like to understand what evidence the applicant has that the continued use of the remaining probably small, disjointed and unconnected plots of BMV land can continue in arable use, and is that realistically practical and commercially viable?

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So I'd like to see the evidence from the applicant of that and picking up on the point that the county council just made similarly, what evidence does the applicant have that sheep grazing under the solar panels will be practically and commercially viable? I'm not an expert on sheep farming, but

1:17:34

to have some contacts in the industry, and my understanding is that relatively small scale sheep farming is not very profitable, and I just wonder whether farmers, the existing farmers, will be prepared to invest in buying flocks of sheep and developing the infrastructure needed for sheep farming, and whether it's practical to manage sheep flocks that the

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shepherds can't actually see because they're hidden under the solar panels. Thank you.

1:18:17

Thank you. I would immediately allude to the previous speaker, yes, roving flocks of sheep are like gold dust. I think every farmer would love to have them to come and graze his paddock for him to save either rushing around with some round up with his sprayer, which I strongly suspect the solar panels will need to keep them free of scrub growth as time goes on. So there's an environmental impact which none of us would like to see that's that issue coming back to a point I think was raised by the District Council,

1:18:46

and rather surprising to hear that we're still thinking in terms of using concrete blocks to underpin these solar panels. Please correct me if I'm wrong on this. Now concrete blocks, I'm rather surprised. They're not steel, but if they're going to be concrete, so be it. But they are no different from having the six inch thick layers of concrete that were laid down. And I allude back to my previous comments this morning. For the second world war airfields, they were relatively limited in extent. There were mainly perimeter tracks for access rather than for takeoff runways. But still, you only need to look around the county's 70 or 80 airfields to realize that most of that agricultural land, although still farmed in the middle, has not really recovered from the the impact of an industrialization process, which was the war. So I'm very suspicious whether the figures, given that only a very tiny percent of the land will be effectively put out of action permanently. Are realistic? I think in practice, it will be greater than that.

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And I think the the the other thing I did want to raise, I don't think anybody's mentioned tourism, yet, the two big industries that operate in Lincolnshire are agriculture and tourism.

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The impact on tourism is difficult to define, but nobody really believes that visitors want to visit an industrial landscape where, for generations, and I mean generations, they've come to Lincolnshire for its openness and its lack of industrialization. Thank you. Applause.

1:20:35

Thank you.

1:20:37

Michael Campbell, Selby, sorry, sorry to go into sheep, but I'm one of the younger ones, obviously present in this room. I remember when this whole debate started about climate, about greenhouse gasses, and the original culprits, where the finger was pointed at for methane, greenhouse gasses, etc, were, of course, ruminant animals. So has a calculation, or has the How can I put it? I'm trying to be polite, the output from these proposed broom on animals on the grass being taken into account in trying to assess the benefit of this of this installation. Because if they're going to put sheep in there, they're going to be doing exactly what the whole net zero carbon neutral agenda is trying to counteract. So I find it I'll be plight, somewhat ironic that people are suggesting putting sheep in into something that is meant to be carbon neutral.

1:21:37

Another quick point, and I'm probably being terribly simplistic, but I'm very I'm a bit thick, really. The figures earlier on BMV land, they seem to say was 27%

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and that seemed to be against the size of was it 1000 or 1100 hectares? We've had discussion that the amount of land probably needed is more closer to was it 460

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so does that mean the 27% of 1100 is actually something like 55 or 60% of the 400 maybe, I mean, I've missed the point entirely, but I would like that clarified.

1:22:20

Okay, we'll come I see Mr. Williams online has his hand up. So go to Mr. Williams, then we'll come back to you. Thank you. Mr. Williams. Williams Action Group, yeah, seven points. I'd like to raise first of all,

land classification. You know, if you're a farmer, yes, grade one, grade two, grade three a is your preferred level of classic, your soil type. But actually, good farmers can grow crops on on soils that are not three a or below. So I think that we need to be aware that any any land can be can be farmed, and farm farms successfully. The The issue here is, once that land is taken out of farming, it is taken it is going to be taken out farming for 60 years

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as a bare minimum. So if, if, for any reason, you know, we talk about security in the country,

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if we at some point have an issue where we need to be able to farm and grow, grow more food. Guess what? There are going to be 1000s of acres of our of what was farmland no longer capable of being used for farmland,

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the 1% number, or under 1% number that the applicant and many other applicants use is has been proven to be nonsense. And I think our local MP, Dr Caroline Johnson has done some analysis just in nkdc alone, and it looks like it's going to be in excess of 7% if all the ncips in this area are granted, so a significant impact within North gusteven,

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the quest of reversibility is really

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I question

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how anybody, whether You're against solar farms or pro them, how anybody can can sit here with a straight face and say that it's within 60 years, we can guarantee that that land will be returned to

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the the same level as it is today. No one can say that. No one could say that within 10 years or 20 years. So 60 years is I just find it really hard to believe. The other thing is, obviously within, within the scope of this, we've got a developer who realistically will not, is very unlikely to own this development in 60 years, it will have been passed over.

1:25:00

Were several times over by the time we come to

1:25:06

reverse the impact of this solar farm. So you know who is actually going to be culpable for, for, for remedying the land, because I question whether or not Canadian solar will be anywhere near this land in 60 years time.

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We've touched on the issue of sheep. Yeah, the two sheep that we're going to be grazing Scott work are going to be extremely busy because they're going to be transported to various other solar farms to graze. I think the other thing we need to look at, we've touched on tourism. We also have, within Lincolnshire, or within within Lincoln we have an agricultural college, that is, that is

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a successful agricultural college, which is producing young people to go into farming and associated farming industries. The more of these type of developments that come on stream,

1:26:01

means young people are getting less opportunities to move into the agricultural sector, and

1:26:09

that is a critical issue that we need to be aware of. Thank you very much.

1:26:14

Thank you, Mr. Williams, so we come back to the room. I've got the gentleman in the front row, and then we'll come to councilor Overton. I haven't forgotten about you.

1:26:24

David Crampton, resident of northcurs, even some of the points I was going to discuss have already been covered, so I'll stick to the ones

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that haven't. The applicant said that the owner of the land said that there'll be no loss of agricultural employment in their area. But of course, they need to consider the loss of

1:26:44

loss of employment associated with the wider agricultural suppliers, transport, people, all of that needs to be considered, and that clearly will be significant.

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The There was reference to the Defra report, and the defa report of 2024. Does also talk about potential risks to our food supply. Climate change being one, and of course, it refers to the conflict in Ukraine. And as we all know, the conflicts in the world are increasing significantly and deferred state, we only grow 60% of the food on our

1:27:18

public for our own consumption. My final point is, the applicant said that assets above ground would be removed, so assets left into the ground. So I'd question whether that is temporary planning permission, as identified in aim three, clause 310, 56,

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also, I think we need to understand if there's been any research done on what happens when these cables, particularly cables underground, degrade and PFAs and other chemicals, which the government are clearly aware of in their PME report, what effect they're going to have on ground, the ground itself, and indeed, the water, drinking water that sits under part of The area where these cables will go. Thank

1:28:03

you. Thank you. Councilor Overton,

1:28:06

not wishing to curtail you, but I'm just conscious of time. It'd be helpful if you could maybe focus on points that haven't been raised already, if that's as a priority. Thank you. Councilor Marianne Overton,

Cliff villages, solar Action Group, the points on the about the economy, it is the knock on economy that's important. And the proportion of the economy in Lincolnshire that comes from the knock on businesses is much greater than that. That comes it's actually the farmers. The employment is much greater outside of the actual farmers. So yes, the farmers have been interviewed, but actually the impact on the employment and the economy of Lincolnshire is much greater from the other sources, the knock on benefits, thinking of the decommissioning, the it's not just at the end of life, because I understand the cables have a shorter time scale requirements reading in the national grid from Scotland have just produced a document about comparing underground to overground. And they point out that the underground will need replacing, certainly within the 60 years. So they will need to be dug up, apparently, according to the technical people. And so that needs to be taken into account if they need to be dug up and replaced. Also the point about a bond, or how do we ensure that there is going to be funding to do this decommissioning, and also to make sure that there are replacements and repairs along the way? And you know, in highways, we normally do a bond, and that's how it works, but we do need some kind of mechanism to ensure that somebody is there to pick up the bill and not left to the public purse. Lincolnshire is known as a bread basket because we have the proportion of best land, high proportion of best land. But also has been pointed out 3b also grows very good food. And actually, when you look.

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At the international competitions that are run. It's either New Zealand or Lincolnshire that's been running, winning those for a number of years. So this land here, it may be a small percentage of the whole country, but it's all here, and that's the problem. The last point is that the 60 years, over 40 years, I don't feel it's been adequately justified, and I think that's important as well, and the cumulative impact, I think, has been discussed, but that's a significant point. Thank you. Thank you very much. You

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Neil,

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does the applicant want to come back on anything that you've heard from the interested parties in the room and online?

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Neil Titley, on behalf of the applicant, I'll try and work my way through some of these points. Not all. I'll keep my answers brief. I appreciate time,

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and we'll expand on some of these in our written responses.

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In terms of Mr. Barker's comments on the

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why all the BMV land couldn't be avoided.

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It was, I mean, I'd refer to the environmental constraints figure, which is a good illustration of the other constraints from the different environmental topics. That's app 044, there was a balance while trying to achieve the 240 megawatt connection with other issues such as flood risk, the heritage impacts that were discussed earlier, landscape and visual and the need for bird mitigation land, which can't be

delivered on all the fields. It needs certain specifications. So that did lead to some of the BMV lands still being used on site, which I mentioned before,

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in terms of the grazing. I know there was a few comments on grazing, and whether that would be would happen, and where the grazers would come from.

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The applicant team has an intent for grazing. The applicant team doesn't commit to grazing because it's too early at this stage to sign contracts with grazers. There are companies now set up in the UK that match grazers with solar farms. It's a niche in its own so there was a gentleman who talked about whether it's viable with small scale farming, it's not on a similar level to farming we may see at the moment with sheep farming, where they're looking to

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make profit from perhaps the milk, the wool or the meat. The sheep farming here is has a grazing purpose, so it's a comparison between the cost of mechanical cutting and using sheep. And there's a benefit there for the developer, for the the applicant, to lean towards sheep grazing. So the design of the project proposed development therefore facilitates that, with the panels being raised at that minimum naught point eight meter height, which is higher than the first generation of solar panels.

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Moving through the other comments,

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there was a comment from a gentleman about concrete blocks being used potentially again, the applicant would prefer to pile, mini pile, or RAM, depending on the terminology used. The metal structures that the solar panels sit on straight into the ground

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that has a smaller footprint, the concrete blocks tend to be used where there's the shallow archeology. So this where perhaps the the archeology has led to a conclusion in agreement with the council that the solar panels shouldn't be piled into the ground where there's so slightly deeper archeology, and it's more appropriate for them to sit on a concrete block. There are other alternatives. So you could just choose to build slightly fewer solar panels in a particular area. And my colleague mentioned coming back to yourselves in a written response later. There's plenty of examples in the UK where solar arrays are built slightly shorter to avoid underground archeology. So it's there as an option in small, isolated areas where archeology needs to be protected.

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In terms of the tourism effect, I won't attempt to answer that. I'm not a tourism expert. I believe there is some reference in chapter 12, social economics, but I won't attempt to cover a discipline outside of my specialty. And likewise, in terms of the greenhouse gas calculations, I apologize I didn't quite catch all of the question there, but the calculations are presented in and discussed in chapter six, climate change, which is document, app, 131,

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and that takes into account change of use

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from arable to grassland, and incorporates the upstream so that's the manufacturing carbon, the embedded carbon, alongside with the transportation in those calculations.

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Mr. Williams mentioned, what if there's an issue and we need to farm, I wasn't quite sure in terms of what situation, but if it's a worst case situation in the UK, suddenly, needs to rapidly revert to farming. There are plenty of options and alternatives that no doubt were carried out in World War Two golf courses, for example, being reverted to and

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recreation areas to farmland. The solar panels can be decommissioned relatively quickly. So in that sort of extreme emergency, it would perhaps take a growing season, but it doesn't take year upon year to remove solar and allow that to be returned to agricultural use, you're removing those panels, you're effectively plowing, getting that soil ready so it can then be seeded.

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There was a reference as well of to these, to the studies that I mentioned earlier, and there have been some studies now, which is thankful on soil quality and how that changes. That was predominantly based, obviously, in the solar farms in the UK that are already built and been operational for many years. So those that came along in the early 2000 10s, and when you look at those, they tend to be more densely packed and overshadow the ground more and build closer to the ground. So not quite a like for like, but needless, very interesting the Welsh Government. So that was an Adas report for the Welsh Government. 2023

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looked at projects, and the key study looking at 32 UK solar farms in 2025 so only came out a few months ago by Lancaster University, working with the University of York, the UK center for ecology and hydrology, and Lancaster University

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did identify some issues, to be fair, where there were compaction. Some of those early solar farms were built during periods of very wet weather, and the soil was compacted. That's what our soil management plan seeks to avoid, and we have controls in place for that. But it does conclude that solar farms can be designed and managed to deliver positive soil outcomes. So it does recognize that,

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I think, in terms of, I think there's two other comments I was going to pick up on the underground infrastructure. So we talked about the above ground infrastructure being removed. That's not always the case on every solar farm, but for the proposed development, all above infrastructure will be removed. For the underground infrastructure where there is concrete used, so where

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there is the substation infrastructure, perhaps, for example, that would be cut to a meter below so it allows plowing to continue seeding, to continue an arable use. That's a commitment that's in the management plans, and in terms of the cabling as well. We leave that open, actually, because there's been changes in the

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preferences of councils and different regulators in terms of whether they prefer that to be removed or left in situ at the end of the project, but it doesn't prohibit farming. At the moment, what developers tend

to do is pull those cables back through to the joint pits and remove and that's because the cabling itself has a recycling value that justifies that as well as the developers wishing to remove the infrastructure from the ground.

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I think, madam, I may have answered the points I made notes on, but please do let me know if there's anything else there you wish me to talk around.

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Thank you. No, I think that was a comprehensive response to the points raised. I'm just conscious that a couple of people mentioned the issue of the funding for decommissioning. I won't touch on that today, because it is something that will probably get picked up on in issue specific hearing too, on the development consent order tomorrow afternoon, so we will leave that for now.

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Thank you for that. I'm conscious that we've been going for about an hour and well over an hour and a half now. Would people like a quick sort of comfort break before we progress

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1015, minutes?

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10? Is 10 minutes going to be enough for people? Okay? I'm seeing nods around the table. Okay, we'll adjourn for now and return

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at 10 to four. Thank you. You.