

Cllr Peter Overton representing Swinderby and Witham St Hughs Ward (includes Thorpe on the Hill and Auburn) As a landowner and farmer and agricultural advisor I am writing to object to the proposed Fosse Green Industrial Development on agricultural land. I neither own nor farm land on any of the proposed developments in North Kesteven.

Agriculture
A frequently repeated claim is that the land affected represents only a small percentage of the UK's total area. In reality, this proposal would consume a significant proportion of one of North Kesteven's most valuable assets — its productive agricultural land and deeply rooted rural landscape. The 'beneficiary' of the Fosse Green development will be largely one single large farming estate. In addition we would be handing over effective ownership of our land to an international company with no interests in this land other than financial. Alongside this will be farmers who will lose part of their farming resource, which will add further pressure on their already depressed incomes and could be terminal for their business. The argument also misleadingly suggests that the physical footprint of solar panels is minimal, while ignoring the far greater visual, environmental, and cumulative impact created across the wider area.

Outdated land classification grades, developed more than 60 years ago, are being selectively applied to justify this development. In truth, virtually all of the land identified by the Fosse Green proposal is good-quality agricultural land. Much of it has produced food reliably for centuries, demonstrating its enduring value to food security and the local economy. Alarming, some of the county's finest Grade 1 farmland — particularly within the Lincolnshire Fens — may become unusable within the next 60 years due to saltwater intrusion from rising sea levels. This makes the protection of currently productive land even more critical. Once lost, such land cannot be replaced.

Agricultural productivity naturally fluctuates with weather conditions: land may be less valuable in wet years and significantly more valuable during dry ones. This variability does not diminish its importance — it highlights its resilience and adaptability. Every field within the proposed Fosse Green industrial site has proven its capacity to grow food effectively across generations.

If land must be repurposed for environmental benefit, lower-grade land planted with trees would provide a far more secure and enduring contribution to carbon capture than vast expanses of glass-and-steel industrial infrastructure — and without the long-term waste and recycling challenges such developments inevitably create.

All agricultural land has intrinsic value. The current grading system, which does not even support the Fosse Green proposal on approximately a quarter of the proposed site, should therefore carry limited weight in determining its suitability. The loss of productive farmland in this location would be irreversible — and entirely unnecessary.

Tourism

The impact of this proposed development on Lincolnshire's tourism economy cannot be overstated. Tourism is the county's second-largest contributor to the economy after agriculture, and it relies fundamentally on the quality of the rural landscape.

The Fosse Green proposal is located at a key gateway into Lincolnshire, forming the first impression for a significant proportion of visitors travelling from Nottingham, Sheffield, and other urban centres. In February 2020, Lincolnshire County Council refused permission for an animal processing plant on a nearby site for similar reasons. That proposal was found to industrialise a key rural approach to the county and to cause unacceptable harm to both the visitor economy and the open landscape that underpins it.

Fosse Green Energy has stated that the development will provide employment opportunities. However, recent experience suggests that these would be temporary, limited largely to the construction phase, and highly likely to be filled by non-local, itinerant construction workers, often from Eastern Europe. Neither has the negative impact on employment been included in the assessment, the loss of jobs, direct and indirect in the agricultural and tourism industry. The alleged short-term employment positive "blip", potentially lasting no more than two or three years, must be weighed against the long-term damage to local businesses, particularly those dependent on tourism. Such harm would endure for decades, or even permanently.

I therefore strongly dispute the conclusion that the effect on employment is 'neutral', as assessed by NKDC. On balance, the impact on employment is negative. The open landscape is what attracts visitors to Lincolnshire; it is the county's principal selling point and should not be compromised. Proposed mitigation measures, such as planting hedges or trees to screen the development, do not address the fundamental issue. Screening an inappropriate development does not make it appropriate.

The introduction of concrete infrastructure, wire fencing, security compounds, and artificial lighting would be visually intrusive and fundamentally alien to the rural character of the area. Furthermore, the fenced nature of the site would restrict public access and channel walkers into limited routes, depriving them of the freedom, openness, and tranquillity that define a genuine countryside experience.

The Solution

When considering a project of this scale, it is not sufficient to assess it through the narrow lens of current planning policy alone. Local planning frameworks have changed significantly in recent years and continue to evolve, making them an unstable and inadequate foundation for decisions with permanent consequences.

The large-scale transfer of agricultural land across Lincolnshire is, in effect, irreversible. Once sold and industrialised, this land will never return to food production. Moreover, the purchasers are neither local nor UK-based, and their priorities are almost exclusively financial. These interests inevitably conflict with the long-term needs of local communities, food security, and environmental stewardship. This is not a sound basis on which to shape public policy.

Public concern is understandably intense. Recent national debates around land ownership and strategic assets underline the wider relevance of these issues and demonstrate that such concerns are far from misplaced.

There is a clear and credible alternative. Land at Hykeham — located close to the National Grid — offers a far more appropriate site should the project proceed at all. This land is already industrial or allocated for development and would significantly reduce environmental harm, visual intrusion, and the permanent loss of productive farmland.

Furthermore, the project itself is becoming increasingly unnecessary in light of the latest government energy figures. If development is deemed essential, it should be located where it causes the least damage and delivers the greatest strategic benefit — not on irreplaceable agricultural land.