

In principle I have no problem with solar development in the area.

I have been involved in community development of renewable energy projects for the last 25 years and chair of two successful projects.

I attended each round of the public consultations for the Fosse Green proposal.

From my experience I have 4 concerns about this project:

Cumulative effect of neighbouring solar projects. I am concerned that no account was taken at consultation about the considerable number of other similar projects that are being planned that would be very close to this project. If all the projects went ahead, they would form a land coverage over a large area, totally changing the landscape. When I have submitted wind turbine applications, one of the considerations was whether any other turbines could be seen from my proposed site. A similar cumulative effect is very worrying here.

Community financial involvement. I was disappointed to see that there is no offer of a community financial stake in this project. There is a national successful track record of community financial involvement in renewable energy projects that have enabled local communities and individuals to have a financial share in such projects. Models can be found at www.energy4all.co.uk

Community financial benefit. I was disappointed to hear of the pitiyngly low level of financial benefit envisaged for the local communities. I compare this to the vastly higher level of benefit that has been offered over several decades through community owned renewable energy co-operatives and Community Benefit Societies. For brevity I offer an example of Westmill wind and solar co-operatives that share a site in Oxfordshire. Their modest solar installation on 30 acres has 21,000 panels and is 5MWp. The wind installation has 5x1.3MW turbines giving 6.5MW total. As well as giving financial returns to investors, the project has just passed a milestone of donating over £1 million to good causes and community initiatives. This level of contribution should be scaled up to the size of the Fosse Green project and enshrined in a planning condition.

Biodiverse use of the land. At consultation there was no sympathy or understanding for the use of the land around the solar installations. At co-operatively owned sites I have seen excellent examples of the land around the panels being used for sheep grazing and as wildflower meadows. If enshrined in a planning condition, this would partly offset the loss of the agricultural land that has been a significant local issue with this application.