

FOSSE GREEN ENERGY EXAMINATION

COMMENTS ON DOCUMENT REP1-047 – THE APPLICANT'S RESPONSE TO RELEVANT REPRESENTATIONS

ANDREW KEELING (IP Ref: [REDACTED])

I am a resident of Bassingham and wish to make the following comments on Section 7 of document REP1-047 – the Applicant's Response to General Public Relevant Representations.

1. Planning Policy and Site Selection

Tables 7.11 and 7.12 summarise Relevant Representations from the General Public regarding planning policy and site selection. A consistent theme is that the initial selection of the Fosse Green Energy site was contrary to the site selection priorities for solar deployment as set out in NPS EN-3, in terms of the preference for sites that utilise brownfield, previously developed, industrial and contaminated land, and sites that can achieve a POC to the existing grid infrastructure. The applicant responds to these representations by referring to the Site Selection Report (Appendix A of the Planning Statement) as the justification as to why the chosen site was selected. The Site Selection Report does not however relate in any way to the initial selection of the site. It represents an attempt to retrospectively justify the selection of the site, assuming that the now proposed Navenby substation goes ahead. It is clear from the Site Selection report that there was no existing or proposed substation for the Fosse Green Energy solar farm to connect to at the time when the site was initially selected. It is also clear from the Site Selection Report that the site was not initially chosen following a search for sites that could utilise brownfield, previously developed, industrial or contaminated land. It clearly states that the site was chosen in response to the approach from the landowners.

I do not believe that the applicant has addressed the Relevant Representations from the General public on this matter therefore.

2. Grid Connection

Tables 7.11 and 7.12 also summarise the representations that members of the public have made regarding the unsuitability of the Fosse Green Energy site due to the lack of an existing grid connection, and the fact that the mooted Navenby substation is not yet the subject of a planning application. The applicant's response to these comments is that 'there are no obvious reasons for the substation not to be granted consent' either by NKDC or by the Planning Inspectorate at appeal. The applicant provides no analysis of the planning policies that the substation application will be judged against to support this contention. I do not believe therefore that this is a sufficiently robust response from the applicant to adequately address the General Public Relevant Representations on the issue of the grid connection.

3. Public Rights of Way

Table 7.18 summarises the significant number of concerns raised by members of the public regarding the impact of the Fosse Green Energy project on the enjoyment of local footpaths and walks. In response, the applicant claims that the design of the scheme has sought to minimise the siting of solar panels on both sides of a PRoW, and incorporated an offset of at least 10m where solar panels or associated infrastructure are proposed adjacent to a PRoW. I contend that there are a number of examples of where the design of the scheme will significantly impact footpaths and walks that are enjoyed by local people:

- The stretch of the Aubourn and Bassingham Long Walk to the south of Aubourn Moor, where the footpath will have solar panel arrays on either side;
- The footpath at Aubourn Moor, which will be significantly impacted by the substation;
- The stretch of the Aubourn and Bassingham Long Walk that runs further south from Aubourn Moor to Fen Lane, which will have visible solar panel arrays to the east of much of its length;
- The footpath to the west of Bassingham/ east of Clay Lane, which will have solar panel arrays immediately to its west.

The applicant also claims that the design of the scheme includes enhancement measures in terms of the provision of a number of permissive paths to supplement the existing PRoW network. The applicant provides no evidence however of the rationale for these permissive paths, and no evidence of attempts to assess whether local people will welcome and use them. They cannot really claim them as enhancements unless this is the case, particularly when set against the negative impacts of the Fosse Green Energy project on the existing country walks that local people currently enjoy. As an example, the proposed permissive circular path off Clay Lane to the west of Bassingham is an a piece of flat, featureless land, and will have solar panel arrays on its northern edge, and distant views of solar panels to the west. I contend that it will have limited recreational appeal, and doubt that it will be used much by Bassingham residents, who currently enjoy a circular walk around the village using the footpath to the east of Clay Lane and the recreational opportunities and countryside views offered by the Holmes Parish Woodland. Furthermore, the applicant gives no consideration to more attractive enhancement opportunities, such as the creation of riverside walks, green corridors and nature reserves.

For these reasons, I do not therefore believe that the applicant adequately addresses the General Public Relevant Representations in relation to the negative impacts of the Fosse Green Energy project on Public Rights of Way