

Mainwood Farm  
Kneesall  
Newark  
Nottinghamshire NG22 0AH

Elements Green

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20 February 2025

Dear Sirs,

### **Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park**

We are writing to formally object to the proposed large-scale solar farm development. As part of the statutory consultation, We wish to express our serious concerns regarding the impact this development will have on the local environment, residential amenity, agricultural land and infrastructure.

### **Background**

It is over 20 years since we viewed a run down farmhouse together with some redundant farm buildings and had a vision to create our forever home. Our home is set in the middle of nowhere in rolling landscape and on our first viewing the oilseed rape was in flower – it reminded us of Tuscany which is where we had just returned from being on holiday. Our nearest neighbour is 0.5km away. Visitors to our home are often struck by the peace and tranquility, the local wildlife and birds and the beauty of the open countryside.

Our property is listed on the heritage register and all the renovation works we undertook had to be undertaken sympathetically with conservation rules in mind. Its historical and architectural significance is intrinsically linked to its rural and isolated setting. The proposed development would cause substantial harm to this setting, contravening established national planning policies.

We have made a huge emotional and financial investment in designing and building the family forever home we now have. Our home is more than a home as we also chose it as a place where we could live yet feel like we were on holiday and also have a separate area to work from. We are here 24 hours 7 days per week

We are not averse to renewable energy. As part of our renovation works we have installed:

- A 4kW roof-mounted solar array, generating a significant proportion of our energy needs.
- A biomass heating system
- An electric vehicle reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
- Solar hot water panels.

Far from opposing renewable energy, we consider ourselves examples of how it can be implemented responsibly and sustainably. There are, however appropriate places for renewable energy. Our view is the plans for the solar park and biodiversity park represent an industrialisation of the local landscape and do not respect the heritage or conservation rules and they are removing valuable farmland from the food chain. Within 1 mile of our home over 300 acres of productive farmland are planned to be part of the park

The definition of a park is “an area of natural, semi natural or planted space set aside for human enjoyment and recreation or for the protection of wildlife or natural habitats.”

We are one of 9 properties where it is stated that the park will have a significant impact on the visual amenity. The detrimental financial impact on our property will be significant and the mental and emotional toll these consultations are having on us is far beyond the financial impact.

Turning to our concerns in detail:

### **Landscape and visual amenity**

The scale and density of the proposed solar panels will dramatically alter the rural character of the area. This industrial-scale project is inconsistent with local and national planning policies that seek to protect the countryside and landscape character. Given that our property has been identified as significantly impacted by the development, We are particularly concerned about the loss of visual amenity, excessive glare, and the devaluation of the surrounding natural environment.

#### **North Aspect DB027**

The field directly north of the house falls away from the house to the stream in the valley where there is a small planting. The field beyond the planting rises up and it is these fields that are planned within the development. The small planting in the valley offers minimal screening during the winter months and some screening in summer. Distance to these fields is ~ 250m. Our kitchen and lounge have large floor to ceiling windows which were specifically designed to take in the views of this aspect. **We would respectively request these fields are moved as we consider the visual amenity magnitude is severe.** The fields themselves are long and narrow and would experience shade from the current plantings so their suitability for the project is questionable.

The field north west rises away from us and is currently white on the maps – our view is this field lends itself to grassland biodiversity and would provide enhancement for the wildlife and birds in the local area.

#### **East Aspect DBO29**

Panels are planned to the east on land that rises up from us. This is highly visible from our upstairs landing and the stairs within the house, together with the picture windows were specially designed to take advantage of this aspect. Beyond the land included in the development is a large area of tree planting. **We respectively request that a large area of large tree planting is put in place on the western side of this land thereby bringing the current wooded area 1 field closer to us and screening the panels and reducing the visual impact of this aspect.**

#### **West Aspect DBO26**

Panels are planned on land that sits elevated above our property a mere 25m from our property. A small area has been identified as greening. **Our view is this area needs to be increased substantially and additional screening where panels are.** This field also needs to be considered under flooding implications (see below).

### **Electromagnetic fields and health**

We have significant concern regarding the electromagnetic fields that the extensive solar panels will generate and the associated health impacts that could arise. We find ourselves in a circle of panels and feel very uncomfortable about this.

We would like a full understanding of the research that has been carried out regarding the electric and magnetic fields arising as a result of this planned proposal. You will observe from the maps that it is

being planned to surround us by panels and we are significantly concerned about the impact of being in the middle of a ring of panels.

### **Footpath / recreation**

A new footpath is planned to the west and north of our property. **We respectfully request that the footpath across the fields is all at the northern side of the planting and not the southern side of the planting to minimize the increased threat of security to our property.**

### **Flooding risk**

Water run off down the fields to the field on the western elevation is a serious concern and consideration should be given to the suitability of this field for panels and whether it is better utilized being 100% greening. We provided videos and photos during the consultation events we attended in February 2025 of the run off issues that arose in October 2023 which resulted in dykes overflowing the road flooding and water heading towards our property. Without the quick intervention of a local farmer our property would have been flooded. With climate change extraordinary weather patterns are occurring more frequently and the inability of the dykes to move the water away quickly enough from the area is a significant concern. **We respectfully request a full risk assessment on this matter and detailed analysis of how the risks will be mitigated.**

### **Noise and vibration**

Within a 1km radius of us over 300 acres of land are planned for solar. **We would like to have a full understanding of the build time and noise research.** We live and operate a business from our property so we are in occupation 24 hours per day. **If the proposal was to go ahead an alternative working environment would need to be provided.**

### **Fire safety**

The proposal gives rise to an enhanced risk of fire and associated toxic fumes which would have a significant impact on residents. We are concerned this has not been addressed and the measures to mitigate this risk have not been assessed in the documentation published.

### **Security**

We have serious concerns about the increased threat of security to our property posed by the creation of a footpath in close proximity to our home which will result in increased numbers of people in the local area which has historically been negligible.

The following raises specific questions regarding the proposal as it has been documented so far.

**Residential Visual Amenity:** The placement of solar panels in the fields close to our property will severely degrade the visual character and tranquillity that define our home and its setting.

### **Heritage Value**

Mainwood Farm is a recognised **non-designated heritage asset**, with historical and architectural significance tied to its origins as an 18th-century agricultural dwelling. Established in 1774, as evidenced by original detailing in the property, it has been a prominent feature of the rural landscape for over two centuries. Its heritage value is intrinsically linked to its **isolated and tranquil countryside setting**, which contributes significantly to its character and significance. The proposed development would cause substantial harm to this setting, contravening established national planning policies.

## Omission of Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Despite the well-documented heritage importance of Mainwood Farm, the methodology for assessing heritage impacts appears to have **excluded non-designated heritage assets** close to the project boundary. This approach is inconsistent with best practices observed in other solar development projects, including those classified as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). 4 National Policy Statements (NPS EN-1 and EN-3) explicitly state that non-designated heritage assets should be considered in impact assessments, recognising that their **significance derives not only from their physical presence but also from their setting**. Specifically:

- **Paragraph 5.9.3 of NPS EN-1** emphasises that the setting of heritage assets is integral to their significance.

- **Paragraph 2.10.118 of NPS EN-3** warns that large-scale solar developments can cause substantial harm to heritage assets and their settings if not carefully planned. The omission of Mainwood Farm and other non-designated heritage assets from their assessment methodology is both inexplicable and contrary to these policies.

## Heritage Impact Assessment

We have identified the following with respect to the proposed developments impact on the heritage of our property and the surrounding area:

1. **Intrinsic Heritage Value:** The property has historical provenance, as evidenced by its inclusion in historic OS maps dating back to 1774 and its classification as a **non-designated heritage asset** by the local planning authority.

2. **Impact on Setting:** The proposed placement of solar panels on the following fields:

- Within 25 metres from the south-westerly boundary
- Within 250 metres of the northern boundary; and
- Within 1km of the eastern boundary

of our property would cause **substantial harm** to its setting, undermining its isolated rural character and degrading the wide-ranging countryside views integral to its heritage value.

3. **Policy Violations:** The proposal overwhelmingly fails to meet the requirements of **Paragraphs 2.5.2 and 2.10.97 of NPS EN-3** and **Paragraphs 5.9.13 and 5.9.25 of NPS EN-1**, which demand good design and sensitivity to heritage assets. The failure to integrate this into the methodology is surprising. Ignoring such evidence not only undermines the credibility of the consultation process but also risks legal challenges under the Planning Act 2008, which mandates a thorough and transparent assessment of heritage impacts.

**Heritage Setting Impacts** The significance of Mainwood Farm's setting cannot be overstated. The property is:

**Isolated and Conspicuous:** Positioned within an undulating landscape, it is prominently visible.

**Integral to the Landscape:** The property is seamlessly integrated into its rural environment, with open fields, low-maintenance hedges, and wide-ranging views forming a key part of its character.

**Highly Sensitive:** The placement of solar panels within close proximity to the property, particularly on the fields detailed above, would visually dominate its surroundings, fundamentally altering its historic and rural character. We strongly recommend the removal of solar panels from the fields to the northern and south-westerly boundary of our property, a minimum mitigation measure to preserve the heritage value and setting of the property.

## Visual Amenity – Misrepresentation

### Neglect of Key Aspects of the Property

Your analysis fails to account for several defining features of our property, including:

- 1. Upstairs Sitting areas :** The north, east and west facing sitting areas of the property offer expansive views over the countryside. The placement of solar panels on sloping ground to the north and east would be intrusive on the views, creating a visual barrier where none currently exists.
- 2. Downstairs Living areas:** The north and east facing aspects directly impact the kitchen and lounge where we have floor to ceiling windows specifically designed to take advantage of these aspects.
- 3. Garden and Lie of the Land:** The analysis does not adequately consider the positioning of our **property**, which amplifies the visibility of the proposed solar panels on the sloping ground directly facing our property which to the north is not addressed by the woodland currently in situ and to the east could be addressed by the creation of a new wide wooded area and to the west is not addressed at all. This oversight diminishes the accuracy of their conclusions regarding the visual impact.

## Visual Amenity – Legislative Context and Baseline Impacts

### National Policy and Baseline Considerations

National planning policies, including **NPS EN-1 (Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy)** and **NPS EN-3 (Renewable Energy Infrastructure)**, highlight the importance of safeguarding residential visual amenity, particularly in rural areas. These policies emphasise:

- The importance of good design in mitigating visual impacts on residential properties (**NPS EN-1, Paragraph 5.9.13**).
- The need to avoid substantial harm to views that contribute to the significance of residential and heritage settings (**NPS EN-3, Paragraph 2.10.118**). At Mainwood Farm, the **baseline views**—defined by the absence of substantial boundary vegetation and unobstructed vistas across open countryside—are critical to both the heritage and residential amenity of the property. However, the plans fail to respect or accurately represent these views.

### Baseline Views from Mainwood Farm

The **historic environment record for Nottinghamshire** describes Mainwood Farm as benefiting from:

“A farmstead with farmhouse and buildings arranged around a farmyard consisting of 1. Red brick farmhouse with gabled pantile roof 2. Red brick stable with gable and hipped pantile roof 3. Red brick barn with gabled pantile roof, raised gables, diamond breathers and segmental headed opening 4. Red brick Granary over cart shed with gabled pantile roof, dovecote to gable with 28 flight holes and brick sunning ledges.”

The property enjoys:

- **Open 360 degree views** from the garden and ground-floor to ceiling windows, enhancing the rural charm of the property.
- **Expansive vistas from north, eastern and south-facing floor to ceiling windows**, providing a panoramic connection to the surrounding countryside. This peaceful, rural character remains a defining feature of Mainwood Farm today.

### Impact of Current Proposals

Under the current proposal, the introduction of solar panels would:

## **1. Dominate the Landscape:**

Solar panels placed on sloping ground to the north and east would visually dominate the setting, particularly given the position of Mainwood Farm. The approach to Mainwood Farm from the south-west along Kersall Road would see a significant array of solar panels. This would magnify their impact, creating an industrial intrusion into what is currently a tranquil rural environment.

## **2. Diminish Residential Amenity:**

The cumulative impact of these changes would fundamentally alter the residential experience, replacing open and natural vistas with a restrictive and visually oppressive setting. The southern approach route is not merely functional; it is a vital part of the property's setting and experience. The proposed changes transform this welcoming and open approach into a visually enclosed, industrialised corridor, reducing the appeal and amenity of the property.

### **Preliminary RVAA Judgement**

Your literature (R38) acknowledges significant adverse impacts:

- **"The development site rise slightly away from the road and solar panels are likely to be seen above the roadside hedges looking west from the garden. The most open view of the development would be from the large windows facing northeast, where panels would be seen on rising ground beyond tree along the stream valley."**
- **"There would also be open and close views of the solar panel when leaving the house via the drive way. Large scale changes to views would arise for a limited extent of the property (driveway). Medium scale changes for a localised extent (northeast facing windows)."**

Despite recognising these issues, the RVAA preliminary judgement concludes that the impacts would fall below the highest level of magnitude and effects would not reach the Residential Visual Amenity (RVA) threshold.

This conclusion is flawed because it does not take into consideration the overall impact the proposal has on the visual amenity of property and the area it occupies. The property would end up being a rural isle surrounded by an intensive industrial zone. There would be significant visual impact from the western and southerly first floor spaces. The upstairs lounge views would be significantly impacted to the west and north and to a lesser extent the east.

We therefore consider the effect on the outlook/visual amenity of our property is so great that it is not generally considered to be in the public interest to permit such conditions to occur where they currently do not exist.

As the property sits in a dip, ground floor views would be impacted to the north, south west and east. The judgement makes no reference to the extent of glint and glare from the panels.

The judgement makes no reference to the noise and the electro-magnetic impact the operation of the scale of solar panels will have on the occupants of our property.

The judgement makes no reference to the increase in traffic and members of public movement once the proposal becomes operational and nor does it consider the extent and periods of noise during the construction process. We consider these to be significant factors as we live and work from our property.

### **Impact on Local Wildlife**

Mainwood Farm is home to a population of bats, a protected species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. These regulations implement the EU Habitats Directive and prohibit

activities that harm or disturb bats, their roosts, or foraging habitats. The proposed solar infrastructure poses several risks to local bat populations, including:

1. **Habitat Disruption:** The placement of solar panels disrupts the open landscapes and hedgerow corridors that bats use for navigation and foraging.
2. **Reflected Light Interference:** Solar panels can generate reflected light, which may confuse bats' echolocation, disrupting their hunting efficiency
3. **Artificial Lighting:** Any lighting introduced during construction or operation could disturb nocturnal wildlife, including bats. A comprehensive plan to assess and mitigate these impacts must be provided to comply with legal requirements. Furthermore, no consultation has been undertaken regarding the bat populations at Mainwood Farm, and this must be factored into your planning to ensure compliance with wildlife protection regulations.

### **Light Pollution and Heat Island Effect**

The introduction of solar panels and associated infrastructure risks increasing light pollution and disrupting this natural environment. Additionally, the proposed solar park introduces a risk of a localised heat island effect, where dark, heat-absorbing solar panels raise surface temperatures. Studies have documented potential temperature increases of up to 5°C in areas surrounding largescale solar developments. The proximity of this dense solar installation to Mainwood Farm raises concerns about:

1. Increased ambient temperatures affecting the comfort and well-being of occupants.
2. Greater reliance on cooling systems, contradicting the sustainable aims of the project.

Mitigation measures must include:

- Moving the panels back from the house, including the fields to the north and south-west, and reducing the panel density within 750 m of the house to minimise impacts on local conditions and ensure a more sensitive integration with the surroundings.
- Avoidance of artificial lighting visible from our property.
- Detailed analysis of cumulative heat impacts within a 750m radius of the property.

### **Path Forward**

**The harm caused by the proposal could be mitigated by removing the solar panels from the fields surrounding Mainwood Farm.** This adjustment would preserve the visual, heritage, and residential amenity of our property while having minimal impact on the overall project. We urge you to engage meaningfully to address these concerns and implement reasonable changes to the proposal. Ignoring these objections risks undermining the credibility of the consultation process and may lead to further legal and financial disputes.

### **Conclusion**

Your own assessments identify Mainwood Farm as one of the nine most severely impacted properties by this proposal. By removing the panels from the fields surrounding our property, you would significantly mitigate the negative effects of the project close to our home but the industrialisation of the local area remains a significant issue. Given the vast scale of this project, it is reasonable to expect that these panels could be relocated elsewhere within the scheme without difficulty. Additionally, there is an apparent inconsistency in the treatment of properties similar to ours, where panel infrastructure has been kept well back to minimise impact. Ensuring consistency across the scheme is not only fair but also essential to maintaining the credibility of the consultation process. We urge you to re-evaluate the positioning of panels in light of these concerns. These proposed adjustments would address key

objections, demonstrate a commitment to mitigating local impacts, and uphold the integrity of the project as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

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