

Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park - Project EN010162

Open Floor Hearing - JPAG

Record of Submission of JPAG

Interested Party Reference [REDACTED]

I am Anthony Northcote, a Chartered Town Planner commissioned on behalf of JPAG which is an alliance of Parish Councils and Parish Meetings who have come together to respond to the Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park. As we are participating in issues specific hearings, for this open floor hearing we just want to make some headline points.

The sheer overall scale of the development and its cumulative impact with other proposals is clearly an issue of concern in many relevant representations. Notwithstanding the change in project title, the project is still a solar farm.

The local area contains a large amount of existing national infrastructure including Staythorpe Power Station, many overhead lines, the A1, the A46 and the East Coast Mainline. It is also a focus for major industrial development including the Sugar Factory as well as extensive sand and gravel extraction as well as brick clay extraction. The mineral activity contributes to infrastructure and housing construction. These existing elements already has a substantial land take, and additional land is approved or allocated for mineral extraction

The River Trent valley has long been home to existing and former power station sites, Staythorpe A was one of the first in the country and now Staythorpe C is one of the latest. West Burton is also going to be home to Nuclear Small Modular Reactors. The area already plays more than its part in accommodating national infrastructure, including energy generation.

The legacy grid connections are the focus for a concentration and clustering of a large number of approved and proposed solar farm projects, BESS projects together with other energy and infrastructure proposals. This needs to be very carefully considered as the Written Ministerial Statement emphasises.

Solar farms are generally described as temporary land uses, however, an operational lifetime of 40 years for this project is a generational lifetime. On average the coal fired power stations in this section of the River Trent valley were operational for 40.5 years. A power station would not be described as a temporary land use but would be considered to be permanent development. In the

same way a solar farm and BESS should be considered to be permanent development in the context of the average lifespan of power generation plants.

The scheme is predicated on a headline figure of producing electricity for 400,000 homes from 800MW. This estimation seems to be significantly out of step with other local NSIP projects. The figures suggest that Great North Road will have the potential to power double the number of homes as One Earth which is the closest NSIP scheme. The applicant is overselling the benefits. As acknowledged by the applicant yesterday no weight can be attached to any of the NG+ projects or the pre-existing flood alleviation.

The scale of GNR is disproportionate to host communities. The Development is a doughnut in shape that extends across an area of in excess of 18 thousand hectares, that's 181 square kilometres of which 1,765ha, is encompassed within the Order Limits. The majority of the land within the Order Limits is currently used for arable crops or is otherwise down to pasture.

The GNR project includes land within or immediately abuts a total of 22 Parishes. In the context of Newark & Sherwood District which has a total of 84 Parishes, GNR impacts on more than a quarter of the Parishes in the entire District.

GNR by its spread out circular nature has an impact that extends across a much greater area than a solar farm such which is more concentrated. This impact is particularly increased by other solar farms and BESS projects, existing and proposed that effectively fill in some of the gaps within the GNR circle. Other proposed NSIP projects also form part of the doughnut, as do existing and proposed quarries.

As an example of scale GNR is 85% the size of the built-up area of the Newark Urban Area (which includes Newark, Balderton & Fernwood and the Planned Urban Extensions of Land South of Newark, Land East of Newark & Land Around Fernwood). GNR is over 5 times the size of East Midlands Airport and is 31 times larger than Staythorpe Power Station. The proposal is too big and is proposed for an area which is already full of existing infrastructure and development.

I thank the Examining Authority for their time and attention this afternoon.