

# Ruth Allarton objections to the Great North Road Solar Park photovoltaic system

## Footpaths and access to green spaces/ mental health impact

It has been accepted that mental health in rural and farming communities is a cause for concern. Equally, it is recognised that spending time in green spaces helps to improve poor mental health. Our small village will be dominated by solar panels and fencing if this development goes ahead. The majority of our public footpaths that currently allow us to walk from the village away from roads will be impacted by this development. No longer will we be able to walk surrounded by green fields and open space instead we will be hemmed in by high steel fences and black solar panels. No consideration has been given to the impact on our mental health and any provision of new footpaths would require car travel to access, a poor and less sustainable substitute for what we have now.

## Vistas

This development if it goes ahead is on top of many other solar projects in the locality leading to the mass industrialisation of the area. Each developer seeks to minimise the impact by screening with high hedges. Whilst they will take years to establish as effective screens they will completely change the landscape by foreshortening the distant views currently available over the traditional height hedging. For example, views of Lincoln cathedral built in 12<sup>th</sup> century on top of Castle Hill as a beacon affording pilgrims good views from miles away as they travel towards it, will be obscured by the high hedging.

Elements Green have only considered one viewpoint in our village and have concluded that the open view of rising countryside will be replaced by high hedging and so the panels will be obscured but no concern that our countryside views will also be obscured.

## Wildlife

The fields around our village are frequented by Barn Owls. Covering multiple fields with solar panels will destroy their ability to quarter the ground and successfully hunt in the area. It is difficult to see how with such a huge area covered by this development how they will continue to thrive here.

There are many Hares to be seen in the fields covered by the proposal, once security fences go up their ability to move freely across the area will be severely impacted. Leaving small entrances will significantly reduce their freedom and potentially lay them open to danger from predators.

## Food security

The land proposed for these panels is all classified as BMV (1,2 or 3a). Elements Green only reference not using class 1 within their application as if 2/3a was significant. All of the land is productive farmland. Currently the UK only produces 60% of the food consumed by the country. The East Midlands has 13% of the UK's agricultural land, but is responsible for 20% of its agricultural output. This project in conjunction with adjacent solar farms will cover 9% of Newark and Sherwood District. Any reduction in this means that more food needs to be imported pushing up the carbon footprint at the expense of achieving net zero. There are alternatives for solar panels such as brownfield, rooftops and car parks. National guidance suggests these options should be considered first. All of the options are available in the locality however there is no evidence in the application that any alternatives were given any consideration before resorting to BMV land. More than that, there is no evidence that the design of this proposal has sought to minimise cost of installation, maximise solar capture by selecting south facing fields or minimise overall impact on BMV land and residents in the area. Instead the layout and design appears to have been arrived at purely by happenstance with no real planning at all.

## Inefficiency of solar panels

It is well documented that this far north solar panels will not produce enough energy in their lifetime to offset the carbon footprint of their manufacture, transportation and installation. Siting panels on BMV land further compounds the damage to the environment rather than supporting the notion of reducing the human contribution to climate change. Equally, Contracts for Difference will ensure that domestic bills will not be reduced by the use of solar farms but simply provide excessive profit for the operators.

## Futility of Process

Many people in the area consider that this whole process is a waste of time and money since coming into power the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero Ed Miliband MP has signed off NSIPs regardless of the recommendation of The Inspectorate and has also raised challenges to decisions made by local councils against sub 50MW developments. We also feel that our views are simply disregarded despite any supporting evidence we might use by calling us NIMBYs. This insulting language and name calling has no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but is commonly used to denigrate our views.

Equally Elements Green have been dismissive of challenges we have raised as if they are so confident of success that they have not given the process adequate rigour. This was illustrated on 27<sup>th</sup> November during the open hearing when their representatives were clearly unprepared when asked to respond to points raised by speakers. Despite this I would urge you to not recommend this development