

**Please find below my comments to ‘Responses to Examination Authority’s First Written Questions (ExQ1)**

**Q1.1.9**

**Comments on planning benefits outlined in Q1.1.9.**

As a resident living close to the proposed Great North Road Solar Development, I want to express how deeply concerned I am about the scale of this project and the lasting impact it will have on my home, my surroundings, and the community I’ve been part of for years. This isn’t just a development on a map — it’s something that will reshape the place where I live every day.

**1. Renewable Energy**

The development is presented as a major step forward for clean energy, but the reality is far less convincing. The proposal overstates its contribution to renewable energy generation

- The site selection appears driven by land availability rather than strategic suitability. The sheer size of the site means losing vast areas of productive farmland that have shaped the character and purpose of this area for generations at a time when food security is becoming increasingly important.
- The intermittent nature of solar generation means the scheme offers no firm capacity, meaning the benefits are uncertain while the impacts on residents are guaranteed. The disruption from construction, heavy machinery, and land disturbance will be felt directly by those of us who live nearby.
- The carbon footprint of construction, transport, and land disturbance is brushed aside, leaving us unsure whether the project will ever deliver a genuine environmental benefit.

The carbon payback period is unclear, particularly given the scale of land disturbance, construction emissions, and the embodied carbon of **imported panels**. Overall, the renewable energy benefit is presented without sufficient transparency or robust justification. This is not the kind of renewable energy solution that strengthens our future — it simply shifts the burden onto our community. It feels as though the community is being asked to sacrifice our landscape and peace of mind for a project that doesn’t even offer reliable energy in return.

**2. Biodiversity Net Gain**

The land at Great North Road is not empty space waiting to be filled. It is a living, breathing ecosystem. I’ve watched wildlife thrive in these fields for years — deer, birds, insects, and countless species that rely on open, connected habitats. The application fails to demonstrate that genuine biodiversity net gain will be achieved.

- The baseline ecological assessment appears limited in scope, with seasonal surveys missing and several priority species insufficiently assessed.
- The proposed mitigation relies heavily on habitat creation that will take many years to mature, with no guarantee of long-term success. Promises of “future habitat creation” don’t comfort those of us who know what will be lost the moment construction begins. It cannot replace what will be destroyed immediately, nor can they guarantee that displaced species will return

- Wildlife that depends on open fields, hedgerows, and connected habitats will be pushed out or cut off by fencing, access tracks, and dense rows of panels undermining ecological connectivity. This development will fence off huge areas, cut through wildlife corridors, and replace living land with metal and infrastructure.
- The development risks turning a thriving natural landscape into a sterile industrial zone. Once the natural balance is disrupted, it may never return.
- The management plan lacks detail on monitoring, enforcement, and accountability. As submitted, the scheme risks delivering biodiversity loss rather than gain.
- True biodiversity gain means protecting what already exists — not destroying it and hoping it grows back later.

As someone who walks these paths and sees this wildlife daily, the idea of losing it is heartbreaking.

### 3. Economic, Educational and Sustainability Benefits

From where I stand as a resident, the benefits being advertised feel like marketing than reality, are distant and uncertain. The economic and educational benefits are speculative and unsupported

The long-term jobs are minimal and largely limited to short term construction roles with no evidence of sustained local employment.

- Educational opportunities are vague and seem more like talking points than real commitments. The proposal offers no binding commitments to local supply chains or training opportunities
- The sustainability claims don't match the reality of losing farmland, increasing traffic, industrialising a rural area and the absence of a clear plan for recycling or decommissioning the panels and infrastructure.

Educational opportunities are mentioned but never explained, leaving us with nothing more than vague promises.

The benefits presented are aspirational rather than demonstrable. The community is being asked to trust benefits that are uncertain, while the harms are immediate and permanent. The economic and educational benefits are speculative and unsupported.

### 4. Landscape and Public Access Legacy

This is the part that affects me most personally.

- The views I see every day — the open fields, rural character that defines this place, the changing seasons, the sense of space — will be replaced by a vast industrial installation.
- Views that have shaped the identity of the area for generations would be lost behind metal, fencing, and infrastructure. The tranquillity that drew me to this area will be lost to industrial noise, construction traffic, and a landscape that no longer feels like home.
- Proposed screening measures are inadequate, relying on planting that will take many years to establish and may never fully mitigate visual harm.
- Public access isn't being improved in any meaningful way. The tranquillity that people currently enjoy and the character of the area will be changed beyond recognition.

The so-called “landscape legacy” is not an enhancement — it is a loss of the very qualities that make this area special. This development would take away the very qualities that make living here special by fundamentally changing how the area looks, feels, and is experienced. The landscape legacy is more accurately described as degradation rather than enhancement.

## 5. Community Benefit Fund (NG+)

The Community Benefit Fund is being presented as a major positive, but as a resident, it lacks clarity, transparency, enforceability and certainty and feels like a token gesture than a genuine attempt to compensate for the disruption and harm the development would cause. The Community Benefit

- There's no guarantee it will be delivered or maintained.
- The scale of the fund appears disproportionately small relative to the long-term impacts on the local area.
- The amount offered doesn't come close to compensating for the long-term impact on our daily lives.
- There is no clear explanation of how decisions will be made or how the community can ensure the fund is used fairly.

As currently proposed, the fund functions more as a promotional tool than a meaningful community benefit.

## Conclusion

As someone who lives here, walks these fields, and cares deeply about this area, I cannot support a development that will permanently damage our landscape, disrupt our wildlife, and change the character of our community. The Great North Road Solar Development demands too much from our community and gives far too little in return. This isn't just a planning application to me - It threatens our landscape I see every morning, our wildlife I've watched for years, the peace and identity of the community I'm proud to be part of, our farmland, and our sense of place — all for benefits that are uncertain, unproven, or exaggerated.

The Great North Road Solar Development demands that residents like me give up our views, our tranquillity, our farmland, and our natural environment for benefits that are uncertain, unproven, and in many cases overstated. The harm is immediate and irreversible; the supposed gains are distant and speculative.

Solar farms are typically installed with an assumed operational lifespan of around 40 years. Yet energy technology is advancing at extraordinary speed, and it is widely recognised that far more efficient, less land-intensive solutions are already emerging. By the time these vast installations reach even the halfway point of their projected life, they risk being technologically obsolete—locking our landscape into outdated infrastructure long after better alternatives become mainstream.

Renewable energy is important, but not at the cost of the very things that make this area worth calling home. This proposal is simply too large, too intrusive, and too damaging to justify. For the sake of our landscape, our wildlife, our wellbeing, and our community's future, I strongly urge that this development be refused.

## **Q11.1.12**

### **Comments on Cumulative Landscape and Visual Assessment outlined in Q11.1.12**

#### **a. Baseline and Treatment of Other Consented or “Reasonably Foreseeable” Projects**

From a resident's perspective, the applicant's approach to the baseline feels fundamentally misleading. Treating other consented schemes — and even projects that are merely “reasonably foreseeable” — as if they already form part of the existing landscape is not an honest reflection of reality. These developments do not currently shape the character of the area.

By absorbing unbuilt schemes into the baseline, the applicant effectively hides the true cumulative impact. This approach downplays the scale of industrialisation that communities like ours are being asked to absorb. It creates the impression that the landscape is already degraded, when in fact it remains largely rural and open.

Residents experience change incrementally, not as a pre-packaged future scenario. The applicant's interpretation feels like an attempt to normalise large-scale landscape transformation and minimise scrutiny of the combined effects of multiple solar schemes.

This approach is particularly problematic in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, where there is a clear and accelerating proliferation of large-scale solar proposals. Residents are already facing the prospect of multiple overlapping schemes, and the cumulative effect is not theoretical — it is a lived reality. We experience these developments collectively, not in isolation.

For this reason:

- Existing and consented schemes should be assessed cumulatively, not absorbed into the baseline.
- Proposed or “reasonably foreseeable” projects should be treated as cumulative developments, not as part of the existing landscape.
- The assessment must clearly show the combined effect of all solar projects on rural character, visual amenity, and the day-to-day experience of residents.
- The baseline must remain grounded in present reality, not a future scenario that conveniently reduces the apparent impact of the applicant's own scheme.

Failing to treat these developments correctly results in an assessment that underestimates the scale of industrialisation across the region and fails to acknowledge the genuine cumulative burden placed on local communities.

If the intention is to understand cumulative effects, then these other projects should be assessed transparently as cumulative additions, not absorbed into the baseline in a way that masks their combined impact. Residents experience these changes sequentially and cumulatively, not as a single, pre-existing condition. Treating future schemes as “given” risks underestimates the true cumulative impact on our area.

#### **b. Failure to Consider Wider Landscape Character Areas**

If the applicant's LVIA has not assessed the potential impacts across the wider landscape character areas beyond the immediate development boundary, then the assessment is fundamentally incomplete. The landscape around the Great North Road is not experienced in isolated fragments; it forms part of a much broader rural setting that residents travel through daily.

By restricting the assessment to the development boundary, the applicant has ignored:

- The wider rural character that will be eroded
- The cumulative industrialisation of the landscape
- The experience of neighbouring villages and road users
- The visual dominance of large-scale solar infrastructure across multiple character areas

This narrow approach significantly underestimates the real-world impact. A proper LVIA must consider the full extent of the landscape that will be affected — not just the area the developer chooses to focus on.

To address this properly, the LVIA must be expanded to include:

- Assessment of all relevant landscape character areas that the development would influence, not just the area within the red line boundary.
- Analysis of how the solar farm contributes to the cumulative industrialisation of the wider rural corridor, particularly given the number of consented and proposed solar schemes in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.
- Viewpoints and character assessments from neighbouring villages, public rights of way, bridleways, and rural roads, where the development will be visible and will alter the sense of place.
- Consideration of long-distance views and transitions between character areas, which are essential to understanding how the scheme affects the wider landscape fabric.

Without this broader assessment, the LVIA significantly underrepresents the true scale of change and fails to reflect how residents actually experience the landscape.

#### c. Inadequate Consideration of Sequential Views and Movement Across the Landscape

Although the applicant and NSDC agree that sequential views have been considered at the site level, the LVIA does not reflect how people move through the wider landscape.

Residents do not experience the area from static viewpoints; they encounter it continuously — driving, walking, cycling, and riding along routes where multiple solar developments may appear one after another.

GLVIA3 is explicit that sequential views occur when an observer moves between viewpoints, and these can be:

- Frequent sequential views, where developments appear repeatedly along a route
- Occasional sequential views, where they reappear at longer intervals due to distance or speed of travel

The applicant's LVIA does not reflect:

- How multiple solar farms will appear repeatedly along key routes
- The cumulative sense of enclosure and industrialisation
- The erosion of rural character over long stretches of road and footpath
- The real experience of residents who will face these views daily

This omission is not minor — it undermines the credibility of the entire visual assessment.

To correct this, the LVIA should include:

- Route-based sequential assessments along key local roads (including Moorhouse Road, Weston Road, the Great North Road), footpaths, bridleways, and cycle routes.

- Evaluation of how multiple solar farms — existing, consented, and proposed — combine to create a repeated or prolonged visual presence across the wider area.
- Assessment of the cumulative effect on residents' day-to-day experience, including the erosion of rural character, increased sense of enclosure, and the transformation of the area into an energy corridor.
- Consideration of travel speeds and distances, which influence how frequently developments appear in sequence.

Without this, the LVIA fails to capture the real cumulative visual burden placed on residents, walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorists who will encounter these developments repeatedly as they move through the landscape.

#### **Q4.1.10**

##### **Comments on Consideration of Mitigation Measures outlined in Q4.1.10**

As someone who lives right on the edge of this proposed development, I find the Stage 1 Screening (AS-020) deeply unsettling. I know this landscape — not from maps or technical reports, but from years of walking it, watching the seasons change, seeing the wildlife move through it, and feeling the quiet that makes this place home. That's why it matters so much to me that the assessment is done properly and transparently.

What troubles me is the way the screening talks about “project-wide” or “design-related” measures as if they are simply part of the baseline. To me, it's obvious that these are actually mitigation measures — choices made to avoid or reduce impacts on protected sites. And under the Sweetman judgment, those kinds of measures cannot be used to screen out likely significant effects. If the project needs them to avoid harm, then an Appropriate Assessment should be carried out.

What worries me is that the screening appears to rely on exactly these kinds of measures to downplay the risks. The report never openly acknowledges this, but the implication is there: the project has been shaped to avoid impacts, and then those shaped-in measures are used to argue that no further assessment is needed. That is not how the process is meant to work.

For a development of this scale—one that will reshape our countryside for decades—residents deserve absolute clarity and honesty. We deserve to know whether the project has been screened out because it truly poses no risk, or because mitigation has been quietly folded into the design and treated as if it were part of the baseline

I can't shake the feeling that the screening has quietly leaned on these built-in measures to justify a conclusion of “no likely significant effects”. But that isn't how the law works, and it certainly isn't how residents deserve to be treated.

So I would like to ask directly:

Has the Stage 1 Screening (AS-020) relied on any form of mitigation — whether described as embedded, inherent, standard, or design-related — to rule out likely significant effects on European sites?

If it has, then the screening is not lawful, and the community is being denied the full, precautionary assessment that should protect the places we care about.

I'm not raising this as a technical point for the sake of it. I'm raising it because this is my home. Because I see the wildlife that depends on these habitats. Because I know how fragile

this landscape already feels. And because I believe that decisions of this scale should be made with honesty, clarity, and respect for both the law and the people who live here.