

Steeple_ISH_12 NOV_PT4

Created on: 2025-11-12 16:16:56

Project Length: 01:07:46

File Name: Steeple_ISH_12 NOV_PT4

File Length: 01:07:46

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:04:24 - 00:00:36:28

Welcome back everyone. The time is now 5 to 4 and time for this issue. Specific hearing to move to resume. Could I just check with Mr. Berryman whether the live stream has record? Yes it has, thank you very much. Um, just before we move on, there's, um, there's. And we've been informed that somebody wants to say something in respect of the last item. Um, somebody from Sterling, the Steeple Parish Council. Would you like to just, um, just say what you wanted to say before we break?

00:00:37:05 - 00:01:09:13

Thank you very much. Yes, it's Lynn Clapperton from Stoneleigh Steeple Parish Council. I think it's important to just give an overview of Sterling Steeple as we live in it and see it. Um, I just want to firstly say we fully support fields for farming as a parish council, our community community group, Many of our residents are involved and we thank them. My role today, as I said, is to bring an overview of Stanley Steeples place in history and historic environment.

00:01:10:12 - 00:01:46:03

With Stirton, there's certainly a lot of history. It's not only important locally, nationally, but in some cases world affecting history that cannot be and must not be denied and ignored. As a parish council, we have been very active in promoting tourism for this immediate area. A large scale, inappropriately located solar farm will, alas, become the focal point for our village. Rather than a welcoming place for visitors and a celebration of our world changing heritage.

00:01:46:25 - 00:02:19:23

As the power stations come down and the large chimneys are removed, we are at an important juncture where historic landscapes and vistas will be restored, and our nationally important and special medieval church tower will once again be the high point of the village. Seen from so many viewing points, in particular, as you come down the main Retford road, you'll see the Levitan Windmill, followed by Stoughton Steeple, Saint Peter's and Saint Paul's Church.

00:02:19:25 - 00:02:55:02

As vocal features, we've been partnering with tour guides, historians, hosting history talks, area walks that take in the landscape and historic vistas. We are looking to boost the tourist attractiveness and economy for this area. We have a lot to offer as a village and play a larger role in this area as part of various pilgrim trails, including Bassetlaw District Council's Pilgrim Trail. The combination of significant figures that people have not gone into yet.

00:02:55:19 - 00:03:28:26

all from Stirton, make this of unparalleled importance. John Lascelles was burnt at the stake with an amnesty for standing up for his beliefs against Henry the Eighth. He emerged as one of the most significant leaders and martyrs of the English Reformation. John Smyth, the very first English Baptist, was born and educated here. He stood up for religious freedom, for liberty, for whatever you believe. He's so important within Baptist circles here and in America.

00:03:28:28 - 00:03:42:07

John Robinson, a good name, the spiritual leader of the Mayflower Pilgrims, was also born in Stoughton. He's very important in American history, with memorial plaques in Leiden and in the Netherlands.

00:03:43:22 - 00:04:19:09

Catherine White, who married John Carver, was born in Stirton. Lee steeple went to New England. John and Catherine traveled on the Mayflower, and he was the first governor in America and signed the Mayflower Compact with the local tribe, which is actually the origin of Thanksgiving and how it started. Our wonderful commission commissioned original piece of sculpture in our community reflection garden. Paid for through rural England funding and Pilgrim and Prophets tours reflect the importance placed on our village.

00:04:19:28 - 00:04:49:28

Rural England funding gave us £10,000 which shows their faith in this. We're a stop off point for modern day pilgrims. I don't know if anyone else has been watching the BBC TV show pilgrimage, now in its six series where celebrities walk various trails, but this concept has become really current again. Americans are particularly interested in visiting with links with the Mayflower Compact, and we do have porch parties coming.

00:04:51:18 - 00:05:24:20

A local historian and tour guide, told me that travelling through this district of Bassetlaw, they often comment that they've reached the real England with its pattern of small villages and fields. He commented that the landscape will be destroyed by the proposals and the attractiveness of the area. Views across the fields to the Stourton church tower, familiar to Smythe and Robinson in their day, will be destroyed. Indeed. I have another accompany an email from another tour guide that wrote to me as she heard I was coming here.

00:05:25:16 - 00:05:55:23

I wanted to tell you that I strongly oppose the proposed solar plan. Apart from the loss of prime agricultural land, this area is of great importance historically both to America, Holland and ourselves, as it was the birthplace of John Robinson, the minister of the separatists who travelled to Amsterdam, and his congregation, some of whom travelled on the Mayflower to America. It's also the birthplace of John Smith, who founded the Baptist faith. Stoughton is where the Congregational Church began.

00:05:56:05 - 00:06:00:29

This area should be protected and should have special historic status.

00:06:02:19 - 00:06:34:03

The Burton round and its lost village. I'm not hearing talks about that. It borders the parish it had. It has links to Shakespeare. The West Burton round is the paleo channel of the River Trent that was significant enough to be mentioned by Shakespeare. The Burton round was historically a lengthy meander which enforced a detour on all boats using the Trent. Shakespeare was not particularly happy about the Burton round and wrote a short piece of verse.

00:06:34:16 - 00:07:17:20

Methinks my mighty north of Burton, here in quantity, equals not one of yours. See how this river comes me cranking in and cuts me from the best of the land. A huge half moon, a monstrous cancel out ad of the current in this place dammed up. And here the smug and silver Trent shall run in a new channel fair. And even it shall not wind with deep intent to rob me of such so rich a bottom here. Why am I quoting Shakespeare? And I know it's probably not the right place, but I just want you to get a sense of the history and how much we care for our village and our area.

00:07:18:14 - 00:07:55:09

There's so much history here that I don't have time to cover it all. We have archaeological history, as I said, including a significant Roman landscape with a major road led to use by King Harold and a major Roman site at Littleborough. So many walkers and ramblers come through our parish, including spurs off the famous Trent Valley, where, as we've discussed, it's a 154 mile footpath through Nottinghamshire and In Lincolnshire with open views. I want to stress open views across the Stirton, as well as from the nature of a tunnel.

00:07:56:17 - 00:08:30:09

Walking in the outdoors amongst nature has been proven to boost our mood and improve our mental wellbeing. Consideration needs to be given to our community and their mental wellbeing. It's not on policy, it's not on agenda but our people are suffering. Our walk is using a surviving network of green lanes public rights of way. And as I've looked at the various walks, a quote from one of them states, as you walk through the fields along the country lanes, you cannot help but notice the far reaching views.

00:08:30:11 - 00:09:04:03

And on a bright day, you can see Lincoln Cathedral perched high on the hill. The open landscape of the church is unique. Another quote says the word steeple, and certainly steeple, derives from the impressive pinnacles on the church tower, which can be seen from miles around. I'm concerned these open views should certainly never have security fencing planned around solar panels. These are going to block out open views, our historic open views, unique long distance views with public rights of way.

00:09:04:07 - 00:09:35:12

They should never have fences. Imagine the change in language for our walkers and ramblers. You can't help but notice the far reaching views of solar panels, fences and security cameras cameras. The current landscape represents a form that came into being from the 1770s with the development of the Lenham Drainage Scheme, including catch water drain and the major outfalls such as West Burton, to utilize further fields for farming.

00:09:36:00 - 00:10:09:01

Prior this was the River Trent floodplain. And just to conclude with representatives here and listening in from other national infrastructure projects, a Step project, the National Grid upgrade, I implore you, consider the visual impact of what you are planning as you surround our village. Make sure what you're doing sits carefully within the landscape. Consider our vistas. Work with our community. We are a unique community with a wonderful heritage.

00:10:09:08 - 00:10:15:03

We mustn't be forgotten and lost in an industrial landscape. Thank you very much.

00:10:17:09 - 00:10:29:24

Thank you very much for that submission. We've we've heard that loud and clear. And by all means, feel free. If you want to submit that at deadline one. So we've got a copy of it and that would be appreciated. Thank you very much.

00:10:34:07 - 00:11:02:22

I it's I'm going to I just want to move on now to agenda I the next part of the agenda. So I do want to talk about the left and windmill now. Um, can the applicant just explain how it's a process assessment on the effects of this asset and why you consider the magnitude of impact or change to the significant of the asset of this grade two star listed um, asset would be negligible.

00:11:05:03 - 00:11:06:00

Thank you.

00:11:07:21 - 00:11:31:00

Um, the North Laverton Windmill is firstly considered, um, a paragraph 6.47 to 6.51 of the baseline, which is, um, AP one two, two. And then the assessment of the effects is carried out at paragraph 9.7.18 of the s, chapter nine, which is app 057.

00:11:32:22 - 00:12:06:09

Um, the approach, the assessment of of this asset is how I would approach the assessment of of all the designated assets where the change is arising from a change in setting. Excuse me? Change in setting rather than a change to the physical fabric? I think it's agreed there would be no harm to the physical fabric of this asset. Um. The asset. So the assessment methodology is the staged process as set out in the Historic England GPA three Setting Guidance 2017 that advocates a five stage approach.

00:12:06:17 - 00:12:46:07

Um, the first stage being identifying the assets which may be affected. And then it goes on from there. It was identified at stage one that North Levertton Windmill could be an asset that would experience, um, effects arising from the scheme, so it was taken forward for further assessment. Um, the assets was, uh, researched by a desk based assessment, and a site visit was carried out to visually assess the assets. Both divisions assess the assets and assess its surroundings, its setting and the contribution made by that setting to the significance.

00:12:47:29 - 00:13:19:16

What that results in is what's set out. Paragraph 6.47 onwards. So it's a brief description of the asset and then goes on to, um, set out what the significance of the asset is. Understanding that that's

primarily derived from its built, um, historic fabric, which best displays its architectural, architectural and historic interest. Um, in particular, being a still working example of an early 19th century windmill as advocated by guidance.

00:13:19:18 - 00:14:07:14

We then go on to set out the key elements of the assets setting, which we've set out here as being the associated mill cottage, the surrounding yard, um, the Mill Lane and the surrounding agricultural surrounding arable landscape insofar as it had an historic connection. And then finally the the the contribution the site makes, if any, to the setting of this asset and the significance is set out. Um, it was decided that because there would be visible built form in the wider built form of the scheme, sorry, in the wider surrounds, which had an historic association with the asset and possible views to and from it would be taken forward for further assessment, which is what's at 9.7.18.

00:14:12:19 - 00:14:44:17

The distillation at 9.7.18 takes into account, um, so that that assigns the asset a level, a value which is high because it's a grade two star asset. So an asset of the highest significance in the language of MPs as well. Um, then the scheme was taken into account and the level of impact from the scheme was set out. It is the case that the immediate surrounding agricultural landscape around the windmill will not.

00:14:44:25 - 00:15:25:17

Will not form part of the scheme. So the immediate areas from which the key elements of the significance of this asset can be appreciated will not experience any change. That's the yard. Mill Lane, the agricultural field to the immediate immediate north will not experience any change again, nor will the physical fabric. Um, the historic association. The change of character of the field that had an historic association. An association which is ultimately no longer extant, um, was considered to have cause a slight change in the ability to understand the historic interest of the asset.

00:15:25:19 - 00:16:13:13

And that's why the change has been, um, considered to be negligible because the key elements of the significance, almost every single element of the setting that contributes to the significance would not experience any change. It's this slight temporary change I should note. Paragraph 2.10.160 VN three. The temporary nature of solar schemes. Um. The temporary change of character in the wider surroundings would cause a very minimal, um, reduction in the ability to appreciate the historic interest, the ability to appreciate the function of this asset, the ability to see, to to see it from various points in the landscape would not be changed to such a degree that it warranted a higher level of impact.

00:16:16:27 - 00:16:33:09

Thank you. So so you, um, don't feel that the areas where the Trent Valley way, for example, crosses the site are areas which Where the significance of that asset would extend to and part of its setting.

00:16:34:03 - 00:17:04:15

That's correct. Um, the Trent Valley Way is a modern is a modern but modern trail. Um, it's not a heritage asset in its own right. Views from that, um, and indeed, any public right of way are only important if they contribute to the understanding of the significance of that asset. I do not dispute that

this is an asset that can be seen from many points within the landscape. Um, because it is tall, you know, it is it is a tall element within this relatively flat landscape.

00:17:05:28 - 00:17:36:05

Historic England guidance is very, um, careful to separate out elements of views and landscape and elements of views that contribute to heritage significance. Um, because this it is it is again undoubted that this, um, windmill can be seen from a number of areas, but it becomes a matter of it's an incidental view of that windmill, um, from the Trent Valley. Yes, you can see it.

00:17:36:07 - 00:18:07:14

But does that contribute to the significance? I don't doubt that you will say that is a windmill, because this is extremely distinctive. But the height of the windmill primarily was for um, was to facilitate its function. It's it's not it was not originally built to be tall, to be to be a visible element in the landscape. Its primary function is the milling of flour. And that's why it needs to be that height. Indeed, it was raised to accommodate a different type of sail.

00:18:07:16 - 00:18:17:20

It was raised in height to make it, uh, not raised in height to make it more visible in the landscape. It's a sort of form follows function type of of asset.

00:18:20:00 - 00:18:54:20

Okay. Thank you. Um, I'm not sure whether you you heard from the open floor hearing. Um, yesterday there was comments made by the North Everton Windmill Trust who are who are in the room, but made the point that the windmill was actually seen and used to um, provide um, different signals in terms of for farmers and how they would effectively send messages was was the point that that was May. Have you considered that significance, that historic significance when you've, um, assessed the asset?

00:18:55:13 - 00:19:33:10

Um, I understand from my colleagues, they fed back to me that that piece of information that was was sent out yesterday, sent out, spoken about yesterday. Um, I would submit that that isn't the primary. Whilst that might have been a function of of the windmill, it's an ancillary function. The windmill wasn't built as a communication device. It was built to mill flour. And ultimately, that's ability to send signals far and far and wide, or even at close quarters, would not change my assessment of the level of adverse effects.

00:19:33:12 - 00:19:51:06

I mean, we do identify minor adverse effects less than substantial harm in the language of NPS, um, to this asset. So, yes, I understand that that was perhaps a function that flowed from what this asset is, but it wasn't built for that purpose.

00:19:53:05 - 00:20:00:28

Okay. And my final question is this an asset where views out contribute to its significance or not?

00:20:01:24 - 00:20:32:27

My submission. And it's in my evidence that it does not. Um, it's a functional building. It still is a functional building. Um, the windows are to let light in, to enable workings, to enable internal working of that. um, internal workings of the mill. The mill elements. It's not to to stand and observe the surrounding landscape. Whilst of course a window does allow that to happen.

00:20:32:29 - 00:20:42:25

One can't say that someone wouldn't look out. That's not the primary function of those particular openings in the north and south elevations of those of that windmill.

00:20:48:29 - 00:21:06:07

Thank you for that. That's that's all my questions for the time being. Um, if Historic England are still online, I believe you are. I know you didn't raise this asset in particular in your relevant representation, but is there anything that you would like to to raise or bring to our attention on, on this asset?

00:21:07:25 - 00:21:32:00

Um, no. James. Inspector of ancient monuments on behalf of Historic England. Um, I don't have anything specific to raise at the moment. Um, but I would be very interested to hear what the, uh, conservation officer from the council has to say. Likewise, if you have anything specific for us, I'd be more than happy to get one of our areas and buildings inspectors to provide written comment.

00:21:33:17 - 00:22:08:23

Okay. Thank you for that. For the time being. I will turn to Nottinghamshire County Council first for comments, and then I will let the North Leverton Windmill Trust come in. Hi Jason Morden, Notts County Council historic building conservation. Um, don't mean to steal the thunder from from the North Everton Trust because I think they're more than capable of responding. Um, but I would just say I, I disagree with the appellant's, um, own, uh, heritage advisor on the value of views out from the top of the windmill.

00:22:08:25 - 00:22:42:01

I think the significance here is, is not only based on what its original function was, but what its function is. Now. is one of three working windmills in the county of Nottinghamshire, one of only 40 in the country or thereabouts. That's a bad estimate. Um, it is used for educational purposes. It gets a lot of visitors each year. Its, um, its significance is, uh, is that it is more than just the longest working windmill in the country as well. It's the, uh, you know, that's a that's a factor here.

00:22:42:03 - 00:23:14:18

But yes, views from the upper windows are quite important. I think we have a landscape that obviously is rural with elements of, um, industrial power set within it. Um, solar will provide a similar sort of power based industry, but in a very different form and character. Uh, and at the somewhat at the expense of the agrarian and rural character that we presently have in which it includes the, uh, A tower.

00:23:14:20 - 00:23:39:12

So there is an impact on setting, which we would disagree is uh, with uh, with the es, um, cultural heritage chapter. Um, that said, it's it would, it wouldn't be in terms of, uh, uh, planning, it would be considered, uh, less than substantial harm. But there is harm.

00:23:43:29 - 00:23:50:05

Thank you very much for that. I'll turn to the Windmill Trust now for your comment. And based on what you've heard.

00:23:51:04 - 00:24:22:08

Uh. Thank you. Uh, James Barlow, North London Windmill Trust. Um, firstly, I'll refer everybody back to the presentation we gave yesterday. And if you listen to that, I don't want to reiterate what we said yesterday. Uh, but, um, firstly, the one important, a number of important things from yesterday, an asset is more than the structure. An asset is its surrounding countryside. A windmill, as I think has been said, is part of an agricultural community.

00:24:22:18 - 00:24:54:13

It still sits in an agricultural community that used the windmill to go into an industrial solar farm. Isn't an agricultural setting that a windmill would normally be in? Um. Secondly, level of impact. Impact, I would say, is on sustainability of the windmill. The windmill did, um, win an award for a top tourist attraction? I hear no mention of the windmill being a tourist attraction.

00:24:54:15 - 00:25:10:15

All I hear has it been mentioned of an asset that can grind corn. That is as it was built. But it's not the windmill today. Surely the windmill should be assessed as as it is today, not as it was 200 years ago.

00:25:12:29 - 00:25:49:23

Um, so it is a tourist attraction. Significance of the views. Um, we talked about Trent Valley Way, and we talked about the significance of all the people being able to see the windmill. And yesterday we talked about leaving the cells in different positions. I would say that to be sustainable. To be sustainable, we need visitors. We need visitors who pay money. Are those visitors going to come to the area to walk in a solar farm, as they do today in a rural countryside? If they do today, there is a very visual, um, notification that we are open.

00:25:49:25 - 00:26:20:21

The sails are turning. Everybody walking those footpaths, driving those roads can see the sails are turning. Should this application get approved, they can walk the footpath if they wish, which is unlikely. That signal to be there and open will have gone away. It will not be visible. We've also said about the how the asset sits, and we've only talked about really views from within the applications area.

00:26:20:23 - 00:26:50:22

If you drive down from Retford, you'll see many well, looking towards the windmill, you see the windmill with the backdrop of the power station. Lots of pictures are taken of that but that is a high impact one area producing energy. This will be a totally different backdrop for anybody entering the village of North Petherton. It will no longer be sitting in a rural area. It will no longer demand people taking photographs of the windmill at the minute.

00:26:50:24 - 00:27:08:21

There is a very much difference. And finally, the way the windows do not just give light to the windmill visitors. Yes, they need light to walk, but every visitor looks out of the windows to look at what is north Nottinghamshire's Nottinghamshire countryside. Thank you.

00:27:16:08 - 00:27:27:13

Thank you very much for that. Um, does anybody else in the room want to make any comments on the on the windmill? And then I'll go to the applicant to provide a final response to what they've heard.

00:27:29:17 - 00:27:50:13

I don't see any hands, so I'll let the applicant go about have the final say. But I appreciate that this will probably be an evolving discussion throughout the examination, so I'm certainly not closing it at this particular point. We will be happy to keep seeing the submissions as they come along, but at this stage, I'll just let you have the final, um, comments on what you've heard.

00:27:50:15 - 00:28:26:03

And thank you. Um, Laura Garcia, I keep forgetting to do that. Apologies appearing for the appellant. Um, I think in terms of the windmill being assessed today, not as it was. It. Absolutely. I can say it was assessed as it is today. It is it. It was a windmill. It still is a windmill. It absolutely it. There is that tourist attraction element to it, but it has been assessed as a windmill because it, it is, as has quite rightly been said, it's a fairly quite a rarity being still in operation.

00:28:26:08 - 00:28:59:28

Um, and, and therefore it's that primary function and that continuation of that where it derives a great deal of its significance from. And the proposed scheme won't affect that ability of it to function as a, as a, as a windmill. The tourism point. Um, I can only speak to that to a limited degree, but I don't have any evidence before me to show how that would be affected. Um, how visitor numbers, revenue, etc. I don't have any evidence before me to say how how that would be affected by a solar scheme.

00:29:00:06 - 00:29:00:24

Um,

00:29:02:10 - 00:29:05:13

just a point on on views and

00:29:06:29 - 00:29:39:09

setting is not purely about views. I think setting views have to contribute to the significance of an asset and that is key. Simply being able to see a development from an asset or in conjunction with an asset is not necessarily harmful. It has to. That view has to go towards the significance of the asset. So there are lots of instances where there might be a heritage asset in conjunction with this view, but it's not harmful because it doesn't reduce the significance of the asset.

00:29:39:20 - 00:30:12:05

Um, in terms of moving around the landscape, if you're moving around the roads, the panels are set well back. There will be no, there's no or very little appreciation of that scheme when driving around.

Um, the landscape, certainly not to the point where one might not want to, might not be able to see the sales of the of the windmill turning and similarly walking. You know, the scheme will not remove every single view of the windmill that is possible.

00:30:12:17 - 00:30:47:16

There may be views that are more affected than others, but there are still ample places within the surrounding landscape where the sails of this, um, of the windmill can still be seen and therefore can still be seen whether it's moving to indicate that it's open or still to indicate that it's not. Um, the windows point, as I said, of course, people, it's human nature. If you see a window, whether you're working or a tourist, you will look out of it. But it's what the function of that window was originally, and that was to let light in.

00:30:47:18 - 00:31:02:14

I accept that tourists now look out over it, but that is a view over, um, a very given the height of it. A very wide expanse of landscape does not help you understand the function of the windmill.

00:31:06:12 - 00:31:10:23

Okay. Thank you very much. I'll tell you one more quick question. Yeah.

00:31:12:19 - 00:31:20:23

Philip Parish, counsel to the applicant. What positive impact will the solar farm have on the windmill?

00:31:22:09 - 00:31:30:00

Please, I'll. I'll let you answer that briefly and then. Yeah. Thank you for the question, but yeah, I'll let you answer that.

00:31:30:02 - 00:31:41:08

Thank you. Um, I've identified a minor adverse effect arising from the scheme on the windmill. Less than substantial harm as agreed with by the conservation officer. So not

00:31:42:29 - 00:31:45:15

minor adverse effect. Less than substantial harm.

00:31:46:27 - 00:32:19:07

Okay. Yeah, it's a minor. I think we had minor adverse effects. I think that probably answers your question, but thank you. Thank you for your question. Okay. Um, obviously you'll be putting in post hearing submissions on, on on this. So and then once you get the post hearing submissions you'll be able to provide comments on those. A deadline to if there's anything that you want to further raise on this that will then, um, help us with our, um, further questions on this asset when we can, when we keep considering this going forward.

00:32:19:09 - 00:32:35:07

So at this stage that now will bring us to the end of item six. Um, and we're going to move on to item seven now, which Mr. Wiltshire is going to lead on. Thank you. I've effectively got.

00:32:35:13 - 00:32:39:23

Half an hour to do. Flood risk, groundwater and contaminated land.

00:32:39:25 - 00:32:42:21

Um, land use and agriculture.

00:32:42:23 - 00:32:53:15

And just allow us five minutes for running through the action points and closing. So I'm going to cut to a few specifics.

00:32:55:06 - 00:32:58:24

I'll give the gentleman a chance to sit himself down.

00:33:09:13 - 00:33:40:08

I was going to ask the applicant to describe its approach to assessing flood risk, but I think with the time left, I'd like to, um, focus the applicant on the Environment Agency concerns in respect of groundwater and contaminated land, which was in their relevant representation. Oh 25 and then when we've heard from the applicant, give the Environment Agency the opportunity to comment on what they've heard.

00:33:42:10 - 00:34:13:23

Is that okay? So thank you. Patrick Robinson for the applicant. Yes. Um, uh, who's going to be dealing with contamination is on line for us, so let's just check. We do have that, uh, connection. So that's, uh. Grant Richardson of Chivas. So, um, it's Colin Whittingham has just joined us here on RSC. Bit from RSC, but he's dealing with flood risk and developing in a flood zone.

00:34:13:25 - 00:34:30:04

Just so we'll ask Mr. Whittingham to stay here just because, you know, it's possible the way these questions go, that something can bounce back onto that. But it sure given there. But can we just see if we've got, um, Mr. Richardson online. Hello. Hi. Yes. I'm listening.

00:34:34:29 - 00:34:38:06

And here you. I'm probably about to see you.

00:34:41:01 - 00:35:09:28

Yes. Hello. Uh, right. So, uh, so you'd like us to go straight to, uh, environmental agency concerns and respect to groundwater and contaminated land. So I asked Mr. Richardson to to and thank you with an eye to time. We're obviously going to deal with this thing. Probably if you give us the views and obviously and we do still have the Environment Agency online as well, because it's going to be a commentary between today. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Richardson. Okay.

00:35:10:08 - 00:35:47:20

I've received the Environment Agency comment on the geo environmental phase one death study, which we did for the land in question. And I'll just go through the points raised. Um, they were concerned about the potential of soil and groundwater contamination associated with West Burton Power Station, um, and that it cannot be ruled out without further investigation. And based on the

evidence presented, we consider this to be at least a moderate risk. Currently, we concluded a low risk, but that is for the site overall, given that 99% of the site is undeveloped farmland.

00:35:48:02 - 00:36:18:24

So we. We don't. We don't disagree at all with the Environment Agency about the contamination risk of the power station land. It forms about 1% of the land area. Um, and we would propose to put a subsection in the in the conceptual site model dealing with the power station, where, yes, it would have a moderate risk when you break the ground in that area of finding some significant contaminants that could affect, uh, the cabling routes that may need some remedial action.

00:36:22:00 - 00:37:04:03

Um, that would be the response to that then in relation to, uh, groundwater contamination associated with West Burton Power Station. Um, in the normal course of doing a ground investigation, if we were to find soil contamination or contaminants that we deem to be reachable, that that which can be dissolved by rainwater and then carried down to the water table or washed off to surface watercourses. We would always recommend something in the groundwater and if it was present in the groundwater, the same contaminants, we would then recommend sampling nearby surface watercourses.

00:37:04:05 - 00:37:38:14

If if we felt the surface watercourses were influenced by the shallow water table, which at this site they almost certainly are. So we we would not doubt that you would want to test both soil if there's mobile contaminants in the soil. Yes. You would test the groundwater. And if those contaminants are present in the groundwater at significant levels, you would also want to sample the surface waters, because that then determines the level of remediation required to deal with those contaminants. I don't think there's any question that you would deal with that process in a normal way.

00:37:38:16 - 00:37:42:09

In the part of the land that is West Burton Power Station.

00:37:44:10 - 00:38:07:24

I think just for context, it's important to note that that's proposed for cabling routes. And, you know, the level of disturbance of the ground would probably be, in general terms, no greater than a meter depth. So we wouldn't go and we wouldn't be going to any considerable depth. But certainly within ground level two metre, we could encounter some contaminants from the former land use there.

00:38:10:24 - 00:38:41:29

Um, the the next question raised by uh, Environment Agency was, uh, numerous records of historical tanks, both on and off site and ordered in the ground show reports they are the environmental search report. Some of these could be sources of contamination and should be in the conceptual site model. Uh, we've looked at the tanks specifically. There's there's two former tanks, possibly two tanks, uh, recorded on the site itself within the Red line boundary.

00:38:42:01 - 00:39:25:15

And those two tanks are both in the former power station area and the right on the north west boundary of the former power station area. It's beyond the huge transformer building, and I very much doubt that will be interfering or proposing to put any physical development in the ground there. But

there's no there's no question that if during the course of ground investigation, we found some evidence of former tanks, um, we would investigate them. Certainly if those tanks were on the line of proposed cabling routes, given that we haven't got a detailed design, we can't comment on that yet, but we would recommend a targeted investigation of that area at the relevant time when we come to design the ground investigation.

00:39:25:17 - 00:39:57:00

So yes, there's no question we would not investigate those historic tanks if they were deemed to be a risk to the proposed development, and that investigation would be, as I've said before. Soil if there's mobile contaminants such as hydrocarbon, we would then want to test the shallow groundwater. And if there's hydrocarbon in the groundwater, we would look at the proximity to nearby surface watercourses and, if appropriate, sample the surface watercourses as well.

00:39:57:19 - 00:40:08:21

In the course of completing the investigation, that would then all determine the extent of remedial action required around historic tanks to facilitate the development.

00:40:11:29 - 00:40:14:09

The next question was.

00:40:14:26 - 00:41:02:28

A bit of clarification for you, Mr. Richardson. I think, um, the next point is going to take you on to what are you going to explain to us of PFAS particular contaminants? I think that's the point at which you might take a break and allow environmental to come back on that and see whether any further points, because I think those are the key points to, um, uh, to stress. So if you cover the PFAS issue next. And and just so we are clear as you're going through for everybody the point at which, um, this testing will be done pre application or post pre or post consent, because I think that's obviously one of the key issues for the examining authority here is, um, when would that sort of testing be done.

00:41:03:00 - 00:41:11:08

So if you could just give us when on the things that we've just spoken about and do the PFAS and then we'll, we'll see where we're up to with the Environment Agency.

00:41:24:14 - 00:41:32:23

Appears to have completely stopped you. Um, are you going to deal with the question of sludge storage on site and how that might affect.

00:41:32:25 - 00:42:04:13

Yeah, sure. Sorry. I thought you were referring to somebody else. Patrick. Sorry about that. So, uh, yeah, there there's been a question which is, um, not one that I'm used to seeing, but I fully understand it. And that is, um, there's numerous records of sludge storage on site. These could be there could be contaminants associated with this, including PFAS. I'll come on to PFAS in a minute. I'll give you a very brief summary as to what that is.

00:42:04:16 - 00:42:35:00

Pesticides and herbicides. Um, appendix E does not list these as associated with farming, but consider it should we consider it should note the Doe industry profiles were written before PFAS was understood to be a concern. So briefly then, um, PFAS is a group of man made, hydrocarbon based chemicals, uh, where there is a strong bond between, uh, carbon and fluorine.

00:42:35:02 - 00:43:17:15

I'm not going to get too much into chemistry, but it stands for poly or perfluorinated alkylated substances. And these are compounds which are very, very strong chemically and they're very difficult to break down. I give you all an example which you will know and have heard of, which is Teflon. Teflon is a is a typical PFAS compound. There are estimated 15 to 18,000, possibly more individual PFAS compounds. But there are some indicator parameters, probably for primary indicator parameters, and that will tell you whether or not there's a likelihood of other individual PFAS compounds to be present, which could be tested in the soils.

00:43:18:16 - 00:43:54:24

The application of sewage sludge. There is evidence for a numerous waste management exemptions for the storage of sludge on the farmland that are held by the farms on which the photovoltaic panels are going to be cited or proposed to be cited. Um, and my assumption is that is sewage sludge from, uh, sewage treatment works and that it's been spread for fertilizing and improving soil texture in a normal, traditional manner, I would say.

00:43:54:26 - 00:44:29:15

But PFAS is a group of compounds have really started to, um, gain a lot of attention and focus certainly in the last five years. But they're not as as of yet, a really standard contaminant that you would see or hear about in standard contaminated land assessment reports. Um, do I think PFAS could be present in sewage sludge? Absolutely. Um, do I think it's a it's a critical contaminant that would affect the development of a sort of. I'll take, uh, uh, a photovoltaic farm.

00:44:29:24 - 00:45:00:29

Not not really. And I really struggle then to think why? Why is it relevant? Technically, yes. It's a good point raised. Should we concern ourselves with it in the understanding that most of what we're going to be doing in terms of disturbing the ground where the photovoltaic panels are, is coming along in certain some driven piles. And as the Archaeology and Archaeology section said, they're sort of C-shaped piles typically, which just get a sheet piles just getting driven into the ground.

00:45:01:01 - 00:45:32:02

They don't dig up the contaminants. An alternative would be a screw pile. So again, that would just leave any soils in the ground. Bearing in mind, you know, keep in the context that this is agricultural land where we're growing things for for human consumption. Uh, so I would be deeply concerned if, if any PFAS compounds, which are normally present at parts per billion level, would actually pose a risk to anybody working or developing the farm.

00:45:32:20 - 00:46:03:18

Uh, the photovoltaic farm. Uh, because we're looking at its impact in terms of what what will be the impact of the contaminants on the development under the planning rules. So I really think that PFAS could be present. It could be tested for. But I think you'll find it's present at, um, parts pavilion levels,

and it will be a very diffuse contaminant. And, um, I don't want to completely discard it. I'm not saying it's just an academic point.

00:46:03:21 - 00:46:24:13

I'm saying that I don't really think it's going to have a material impact on the development of the site, and by a material impact, I mean any remedial action being required to address the presence of PFAS in the soils. That's that's my opinion. Of course, I would be open to a discussion with the Environment Agency on that.

00:46:25:25 - 00:46:44:23

Thank you very much for that. I think we can probably. Particularly tonight. At the time, I'd understood those with the key elements that we'd identified for discussion with Environment Agency. There are other points in the relevant representation. Fast forward pause now so you can take control of proceedings from here. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Richardson.

00:46:44:29 - 00:46:46:13

Thank you, Mr. Robinson.

00:46:46:15 - 00:46:47:03

Um, I.

00:46:47:05 - 00:47:28:15

Will turn to the Environment Agency. I'm sorry. You've come right at the end of the day and we have a time constraint on us. Um, I'll ask you to comment on or feedback on what Mr. Richardson said, but, um, particularly, um, he's described a number of, um, investigations and remedial actions that he has is suggesting in response to the points that you raised. Um, if we could sort of focus on have that, has that satisfied you, and if so, is it well enough secured, um, within the documentation that we already have before us.

00:47:28:20 - 00:47:32:06

So can I turn to the Environment Agency, please?

00:47:35:03 - 00:48:05:12

Hi. Susie Batson, um, the groundwater contaminated and specialist for the Environment Agency. Um, thank you for those comments. Um, especially the points about clarifying the conceptual site model. Um, in relation to West Virginia power station. Um, the point about groundwater testing and not including it unless you find any leach or contaminant in the soil. Um, I think we might need a little bit more, um, discussion about that, perhaps outside of this.

00:48:05:14 - 00:48:39:12

But, um, the West Virginia power station has been around for several years, so there is the potential that contaminants could have leached into the groundwater. Um, so I think we would expect some, uh, testing to be carried out in the first instance. Um, regardless of what's found in the in the soils. Um, and just quickly on the fast. I do appreciate that it. The difficulties around testing for PFAS, um, it kind of is a bit, um, ubiquitous in the environment.

00:48:39:14 - 00:49:02:08

Um, and assessing risks from it and remediating it are problematic. I think it's more just a case of being mindful of it as a potential contaminant. Um, in areas across the site where, uh, where it could be found, um, and especially in those areas where, uh, deeper intrusive works will be carried out.

00:49:04:07 - 00:49:04:29

Thank you.

00:49:05:01 - 00:49:19:01

Thank you very much. Um, I think I'm going to record an action point on the on this meeting for yourselves and, um, the applicant to, um, have hold further discussions on those points and, and feedback to us.

00:49:19:23 - 00:49:20:11

Okay.

00:49:20:15 - 00:49:27:22

Thank you. And I do apologize for skating over this, this item and bringing somebody in to wait all day.

00:49:30:10 - 00:49:52:20

Um, I will quickly turn, though. Um, I do realize that land use and agriculture is a is a bigger item, so I do apologize that, um, we're dealing with one aspect of it today, and we will no doubt have to consider more questions on this. Um, I'm going to focus the applicant here, please. Um, do you need to change?

00:49:52:22 - 00:50:19:23

So, yeah, if we're going to land use, we could just change. And, um, so just to change how we're in case it isn't realized by everybody, the the preparation that's done by the people here is supposed to deal with the hearings, but it is also to deal with written questions, and the written submissions go in. So, I mean, it's the it's frankly the same amount of work, whether you get to speak or how long you get to speak. The work is primarily a written process. So we we understand that from this side. So. to

00:50:21:17 - 00:50:22:02

vote.

00:50:23:21 - 00:50:25:08

Thank you. Um,

00:50:27:06 - 00:50:59:09

I'm going to ask you to describe your methodology for developing proposals with regard to the loss of arable land, its economic and other benefits and impact on farming. Um, and particularly to address the representations we've received regarding the extent of best and most agricultural land that is proposed to be used. Um, a second point that has, um.

00:51:01:18 - 00:51:20:10

Exercised our minds as we've gone around the site. Um, can you explain why the biodiversity mitigation areas and areas occupied by cable routes, as far as we can see, have been omitted from the Agricultural Land Classification Survey. And if that's correct, justify why you've not included these areas.

00:51:26:04 - 00:51:26:19

Thank you.

00:51:26:21 - 00:51:28:01

Afternoon, sir. Tony Kernan.

00:51:28:03 - 00:51:28:18

From.

00:51:28:20 - 00:51:33:18

Kernan Countryside consultants. Um, should I deal with those in reverse order?

00:51:33:20 - 00:51:34:11

Might be.

00:51:34:13 - 00:51:34:28

Okay.

00:51:35:05 - 00:52:06:24

Um, in respect of the, um, biodiversity and enhancement areas and the reason that the agricultural land classification wasn't carried out over those areas is because it's not going to physically affect the soils. So the, um, the proposals there won't be physical. They're not going to dig up the soils. It's a land management consideration. And therefore there was no prospect of the agricultural land quality being adversely affected.

00:52:06:26 - 00:52:45:08

So therefore knowing what the quality is doesn't really change the situation. It can't be adversely affected. I should just say so. I'm assuming that your comments would come based on Natural England's amber points, and I think they're easily resolved. And Natural England, from my reading of their comments, has agreed that, um, for the vast majority of the enhancement areas, there isn't going to be any physical impact. So therefore the land quality doesn't need to be assessed. They've focused on, um, some small areas of proposed ponds which are shown on the um, enhancement plans.

00:52:45:10 - 00:53:17:17

I think it's sheet six. So right out on the eastern edge. And those are very small areas. Um, it was intended that the soil would be investigated before they were built, because that's the soil investigation is in the outlined landscape and environmental management plan in table seven. So there was a and which I think is app 161. So it was in there anyway. But that wasn't a specific land classification requirement.

00:53:18:13 - 00:53:49:19

I think the intention with the ponds is that they remain, but there is always that potential that they could be restored at landowner request on decommissioning. So what we're suggesting is that we'll just put an extra section into the outline soil management plan that will cover the testing of those and therefore the the way the soil will be stored so that they could be the same soil can go back in should they decide to fill those in later on.

00:53:51:01 - 00:54:27:09

Um, similarly, in terms of the cable route, again, this is a very small length. It's only about a kilometre. At the time that the surveys were being carried out that wasn't refined. It has since been. But there are cables all across the country where there's buried cables, buried pipelines. So the soil will come off and will go back. And the intention was always that the land classification would be identified and the soil type would be identified. Before the pipeline, the cable went in so that we can restore it back and so on.

00:54:27:11 - 00:55:01:01

Both those areas, we're in complete agreement with Natural England. The intention is not to result in any permanent degradation and any loss of agricultural land. And I say that small areas, small amounts of work. So it's not anything to have a big argument over. Um, just the one other area in terms of, um, Natural England's comments about woodland. They have asked about, um, doing an agricultural land classification in those areas where trees are proposed.

00:55:01:03 - 00:55:35:19

We hadn't intended that. I don't think on any of the tree planting schemes that you get grant funded for. For example, anyone's ever asked or been asked to do it. It's not part of government's policy. If they grant funding to put in trees to do an agricultural land classification, because you're just putting the trees back in the ground. And so my opinion is that's not necessary. Um, again, it's not a big piece of work if, if others felt, um, differently. But the intention, again, with the trees is that they would stay, but there's always that potential that they would come out.

00:55:35:21 - 00:55:49:09

But if they were taken out, the same soils are there. So it's, you know, it's a physical removal. Um, and obviously most of the country was wooded at one time. So it's, you know, it's not a permanent impact in terms of the soil itself.

00:55:53:11 - 00:56:09:26

So hopefully, and I'm sure we'll be able to resolve those with Natural England fairly quickly over the next stage. I think we're going to do a revised couple of sections into the outline soil management plan, see if we can approach them and get those agreed, and then submit that hopefully once it's agreed by Natural England.

00:56:11:26 - 00:56:52:15

Coming back to your question then about, um, land use and, um, you mentioned it a couple of times there land or loss of arable land. I think it's very important to stress that and clarify a distinction between land loss and loss of use for arable purposes. So the land loss that would result from this scheme is very limited. Um, the intention is that the scheme is fully reversible, but as set out in the environmental statement, um, in chapter 15, that's app 72 at section 1517.

00:56:52:17 - 00:57:22:17

It's intended there'll be no permanent loss even from the bigger areas such as the best. So the the intention is that the soil will be removed from those areas retained in a way which will keep it viable properly, um, stored and looked after, and therefore there can be full restoration in terms of the areas disturbed. So those are areas which for the duration of the scheme, you won't be able to, um, because they're under the bus and under the substation or particularly also under the tracks.

00:57:23:01 - 00:57:39:17

Um, there's only 12.1 hectares of best and most versatile land if you add up all those areas. Um, and it's only about it's 13.2, I think hectares of all agricultural land, including the three B that's affected by those.

00:57:42:24 - 00:58:15:10

So that's there's very little land loss. What there is, it's obviously a change in that. The potential for arable cropping, um, won't exist once the panels are in place, as only obviously for the duration of the operational phase. Um, and it's obviously affects all the areas where the panels are involved. And I think realistically it affects the areas between the fence line and the hedges, etc.. So it's it's the whole really of the area that was subject to the ALC.

00:58:18:16 - 00:58:56:11

There's no permanent loss. Therefore it's a temporary, um, limitation on arable use. The um impact of that is on to do with food production. We don't have a food production policy in this country. We don't have a set out in the environmental statement. So there's no, um, concern from government on um or relating to food production. Government's position is that the biggest threat to agricultural production is likely to come from climate change and biodiversity changes.

00:58:56:13 - 00:59:31:08

So it's not food production. So that's a, um, I think the nips recently Till Bridge has looked in great detail at the impact of loss of arable production or reduction in arable production, and concluded that that doesn't carry as it shouldn't carry weight. I think it gave it neutral weight in that case and just put it in context. Um, the, the recent agricultural land use in England figures for the 1st of June, 2025 came out at the end of September.

00:59:31:10 - 01:00:03:26

So we can put those figures in into the next representations. But at 1st of June this year, there was 444,000 hectares of arable land, which was in agri environmental schemes, not in production. So, you know, we're looking at something like 100,000 hectares needed for solar. We've got four and a half times that currently being paid not to be in production. So I think in that respect it's not a concern.

01:00:04:26 - 01:00:23:00

I think I've slightly gone off track in terms of your question came down to why did why, why have we looked at the land quality in this area? Um, the site selection sort of set out in the I think it's chapter three of the environmental statement. Um.

01:00:25:03 - 01:01:01:10

Agricultural land classification in this country, we have fairly poor, um, basic information, so we could call them up, if you like. So, but in the in chapter 15 of the environmental statement, um, you will see we've produced the provisional land classification maps, and that's something that was produced in the 70s. Um, that's the one. So that was produced in the 1970s. Um, the LC system has been changed twice since those maps were produced, but they've never been updated.

01:01:01:12 - 01:01:38:24

That divided land into five grades, with grade three being good to moderate. In fact, it was had three upgrades subsequent to that, and then in 1988 they changed it again. So it's now got two sub grades of three A and three B. Those maps don't give you any indication of what they are, but they showed this whole area as undifferentiated grade three. Then in 2017, this rather gaudy map that's just come up now was produced. And in that Natural England have identified areas where they think there's a higher medium and a low likelihood of best and most versatile.

01:01:38:26 - 01:02:21:29

So the lightest colour, which covers about half the site area, is the low expectation, where they think there's likely to be 20% or less then the what color in the middle is 20 to 60%, and then the purple color of which there's a bit over to the the west. There is where they think there's more than 60%. They've kind of put it in blocks. And if we can just go to the next, um, plan, which shows where we are in a sort of much wider area, you can see that that information would indicate that this is at least half the site is in the poorest category, um, that you can expect.

01:02:23:27 - 01:02:56:09

Unfortunately, I know it's the industry I'm in, but that these maps are so, um, difficult to work with because majority of the grade two is in the bit where they predicted it was less than 20%. But, you know, in terms of doing agricultural land classification surveys, which is the only way really to find out what land is you can do around about 20 to 25 points a day, and it takes the same time again to work out and map all the classifications. So, you know, you're crossing the country at 13 hectares per Monday.

01:02:56:11 - 01:03:31:02

It takes a huge amount of work, which is why it's never been done. So in respect of what information is available, this site has focused in and to the extent that it could on the lowest that was likely to be there. But once you get to that stage, you then really find out what you've got. Just a very quick one just to show how difficult it can be. Um, Mallard Pass was similar to this, which showed it came in in the 20% or less, and just over half that site was best and most versatile.

01:03:31:04 - 01:03:53:10

Once it was surveyed, Eckington Fen was shown as all grade one and more than 60%. And I know they dropped a bit of grade one off what they found to the side, but just under half of that side was the best and most versatile. So you know that it's just incredibly difficult to be able to hone in and pick a poorer quality side.

01:03:55:19 - 01:03:59:19

Thank you, Mr. Kernan. I'm conscious that this is a.

01:03:59:21 - 01:04:00:06

Topic.

01:04:00:08 - 01:04:28:06

That there's going to be a lot more questions. Um, and I can sort of feel them in the room, but it is 5:00. Um, I think I'm just going to have to draw a line under that. Do you have any particular question at this stage? Um, I am conscious, though, that, um, we've got a lot of farmers here who've probably got an opinion on that. And, um, we will return to this in, in further questioning. And I'll hand over.

01:04:28:08 - 01:04:28:23

To.

01:04:28:25 - 01:04:29:10

You.

01:04:31:04 - 01:04:54:24

Thank you, Mr. Wiltshire. We've we've made some, um, uh, action points. There's not many, but, um, I won't go through them. Them now. We will try and publish them as soon as possible after the hearing. Um, is there any any other business that anyone wants to raise at this particular time? I will. Um. Um, yes, on the.

01:04:54:26 - 01:04:55:11

End.

01:04:55:13 - 01:04:56:00

I think it's a.

01:04:56:02 - 01:04:56:19

Feel for me.

01:04:56:21 - 01:05:31:00

It's actually a procedural question, uh, because Mr.. Very kindly noted that there is obviously, uh, a large volume of information and, um, viewpoints that have to be gone through on this particular issue of land use and, and socio economic impact. Are you saying or was the implication of what you said, that we will be getting an opportunity to look at those things in the future? Or are you saying that it's going to be purely on written submission? I just didn't quite understand.

01:05:34:06 - 01:05:52:24

Thank you for your question. Um, I'm not going to promise anything at this stage. I've heard what you've said, and we're considering timetabling need for other hearings. Um, as part of what we walk away from here with. So leave it with us, please.

01:05:56:05 - 01:05:59:13

Just one final point on the end there. From North Leverton windmill.

01:05:59:15 - 01:06:26:12

It's an AoE. Sorry, it's an AoE. James Barlow, north of the windmill. It's any other business type question. Um, well, if there are to be further meetings, is it not possible that they could perhaps be in certain village hall? Certain. Is the village that's most affected by all this. So at least if the hall was hired, the village might get something out of it. And it would certainly be a lot easier for residents of Stirton to be there. Thank you.

01:06:27:07 - 01:07:03:05

Points noted. And when future hearings are scheduled, then, um, we will consider suitable venues. But I can't promise anything at the moment because there's various factors that go into choosing venues. But we've we've heard what you had to say. Thank you. Okay. So I'll now move to the closure of the hearing. And so I remind you that the timetable for this examination request that parties provide summaries of the oral submissions that have been made during today's hearing on or before the deadline, one which we've provisionally scheduled for Tuesday, the 25th of November.

01:07:03:26 - 01:07:40:00

And may I also remind you that the recording of this hearing will be placed on the Planning Inspectorate website as soon as practicable after this hearing, before we close. Um, I think both myself and Mr. Wiltshire would really like to thank all of today's participants for their time and assistance during the course of this hearing, and particularly for those of you taking time out to participate in the hearing, we really appreciate it. So thank you for that. Um, so the time is now 5:02. And this issue specific hearing for the proposed Steeple renewables project is now closed.