

4. Inter-Relationship with other projects

The interrelationship and cumulative impact of the Steeple Renewables project with other developments within a 15km radius (the study area for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)) are significant, varied and is being tagged as a Supercluster.

Whilst primarily focused on the inter-relationship of these projects and them fighting over the same access and land (and therefore disputes over project priority and CPO Protective Rights matters) we maintain that the Examining Authority should also consider the inter-relationship and thus cumulative impact of the projects listed below in terms of impacts on the wider community in the Trent Valley, Biodiversity, BMW land use, traffic, views, visual and landscape, and heritage. Each project is managing risks for its own project and infrastructure not holistically.

Immediately around Sturton le Steeple

• West Burton A	Demolition
• West Burton CGT	Operational
• West Burton Ash Recovery	Operational
• West Burton STEP	Phase 1 in Progress
• West Burton C OCGT	Permitted – not implemented
• West Burton CCGT BESS	Permitted – status unknown BDC
• West Burton B CCS Project	Planned - DCO Viking Project Phase2
• Steeples Renewables & BESS	Planned – DCO Application
• Sturton Quarry	Permitted – under construction NCC
• West Burton Solar Cable Route	Permitted – DCO variations in progress
• Great Grid Upgrade	Planned – DCO Application
• West Burton to Ratcliffe Grid	Ongoing Maintenance
• West Burton to Keadby Grid	Ongoing Maintenance
• West Burton to Sundon	Ongoing Maintenance
• Oil transfer pipelines	Ongoing Maintenance BDC
• Woodland Solar	Permitted – Implemented BDC
• BumbleBee Solar	Permitted – Implemented BDC

Within 15km to include

• Oakes Lane Solar	Planned
• Cottam A	Decommissioning
• Cottam Gas Development Centre	Operational
• Cottam Solar Cable Route	Permitted – DCO
• Gate Burton Energy Park Cable Route	Permitted – DCO
• Tillbridge Solar Cable Route	Permitted – DCO
• Cottam Nuclear SMR & Data Centre	Planned – DCO Application
• Torksey Ferry Road Solar	Planned – WLDC
• High Marnham Hydrogen Power	Planned – DCO Application
• One Earth Solar	Planned – DCO Application
• Stow Farm Park Solar	Permitted – Implemented WLDC

Fields For Farming (FFF) has included details of cumulative impact in its individual ISH Agenda Item submissions, but in summary

4.1. Cumulative Industrialisation of the Landscape

While each developer's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) may find only "minor" or "not significant" effects when viewed from specific, distant viewpoints, the sheer number of projects (solar arrays, new power lines, industrial facilities) fundamentally alters the character of the entire rural Trent Valley area.

This piecemeal approach bypasses a true understanding of the qualitative shift from a pastoral, agricultural landscape to a dense "energy landscape," resulting in a significant, unmitigated, and irreversible cumulative impact on local amenity and sense of place.

The combined effect of multiple solar farms and associated battery storage facilities within the radius is leading to the industrialisation of a rural, agricultural landscape, which fundamentally alters the area's character, an effect cumulatively that is significant and adverse.

4.2. Cumulative Heritage Impact

The applicant has assessed their impacts individually rather than collectively, thereby failing to capture the holistic, heritage landscape-scale effect finding only "minor" or "not significant" impacts on nearby heritage assets when viewed in isolation.

However, the combined effect of multiple projects fundamentally alters the historic character and setting of the wider rural, agricultural landscape that gives those individual heritage assets their significance. This results in an unmitigated, cumulative qualitative shift in the historic environment that the fragmented assessment process fails to address.

4.3. Cumulative Flood Risk

There are significant concerns that the combined impact of multiple projects on impermeable or altered surfaces in an area with heavy clay soils is not sufficiently modelled, potentially exposing communities to a greater flood risk over time.

The entire area is part of the extensive and complex flood dynamics of the River Trent valley floor. Local Authorities have already expressed concern regarding lack of a holistic, catchment-level evaluation of the combined effects of all the solar projects around the West Burton, Cottam and High Marnham grid connection points.

Assessing each project in isolation leads to an underestimation of the cumulative impact on the overall floodplain capacity by fundamentally altering how surface water flows and drains from the land. The Applicant has ignored the qualitative reality of the site's heavy clays soils and high-water table where standard mitigation may be ineffective.

4.4. Cumulative BMV and Socio-Economic Impacts

Government policy dictates that large solar projects should avoid BMV land where possible to protect food security, and that the cumulative impact of multiple projects in an area must be a material consideration.

The cumulative impact of multiple projects in the Trent Valley has not been adequately assessed or mitigated, leading to significant unaddressed harm despite the applicants' claims. A piecemeal approach masks the substantial cumulative loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land across county boundaries, threatening food security by bypassing policy intent.

This piecemeal approach bypasses the intent of the policy and creates an unmitigated, significant cumulative impact on regional food production and national food security.

The applicant has overplaying the benefits of temporary construction jobs while ignoring negative cumulative impacts on the local economy, such as the displacement of tourists and reduced quality of life for residents.

The only sustainable long-term economic benefits (jobs and investment) will come from separate nuclear, fusion, and hydrogen projects, with the solar farms offering minimal ongoing community benefit.

4.5. Unacceptable Traffic Burden

The cumulative traffic generation (both construction and operational) from multiple concurrent projects is underestimated and will lead to severe congestion and safety issues, which the developer's assessments do not adequately address.

The cumulative impact on traffic has not been adequately mitigated because developers assess their impacts using a limited, fragmented approach that fails to capture the true, combined strain on the local road network.

While each developer's Transport Assessment might claim minimal impact based on standard models and a specific list of "committed developments" at that time, this approach ignores the dynamic, continuous flow of construction traffic from all concurrent projects.

The result is an underestimation of severe congestion, safety risks (particularly for non-motorised users), and disruption to the wider community. This piecemeal assessment bypasses the need for a holistic transport management strategy across the region, creating a significant and unmitigated cumulative impact on local infrastructure and quality of life.

4.6. Effect on Biodiversity

The cumulative impact on ecology and biodiversity has not been adequately mitigated because, while developers for each project claim a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), these assessments are fragmented and fail to capture the holistic impact on the wider ecological network.

Each developer focuses on the minor gains or losses within their own red-line boundary, but the sheer number of large projects across the Trent Valley leads to significant cumulative habitat fragmentation.

This piecemeal approach bypasses the need for a landscape-scale strategy, failing to address how mobile species will navigate the newly developed checkerboard of land, ultimately resulting in an unmitigated, significant, and long-term adverse impact on regional biodiversity.

The cumulative impact on biodiversity has not been adequately mitigated because, like other aspects, the project-by-project assessment approach fundamentally underestimates the total, regional effect on ecological networks.

4.7. Conclusion

The Applicant and its consultants use standard methodology to classify impacts. This assigns a significance level to each individual impact based on its magnitude and the sensitivity of the receptor.

An impact classified as "minor" is often judged to be "not significant" in a formal planning context and therefore not requiring further mitigation and the Applicant has put too much reliance on this throughout.

The documentation is fragmented, and an overall cumulative impact assessment including other projects is not provided.

Project-by-project assessment misses the fact that our communities are bearing the full brunt of these "minor" changes, and the cumulative impact, while individually minor, creates a qualitative shift in our living environment.

FFF challenge this judgement. This quantitative assessment fails to capture the true life experience of multiple "minor" changes. When combined, these "small" change, such as altered views, increased noise, and changes to the rural character create a significant and adverse qualitative shift in our local environment and on our quality of life.

DCO should not be consented on the grounds of Cumulative Significant Adverse Impact.