

FC4 1EC FD6 North Leverton Windmill

Open Floor Hearing 11th November Afternoon

Introduction

Good Afternoon - My name is James Barlow

Please bear with me, as I am not a paid consultant or lawyer, and I am not particularly comfortable speaking in public but.....

I am a resident, a farmer and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Windmill and feel it is important to highlight the negative impact this development will have on the community and North Leverton Windmill.

I am speaking on behalf of North Leverton Windmill Charitable Trust which owns and operates North Leverton Windmill.

My family have lived in the area for many generations, and I am a descendant of one of the five people tasked with building the Windmill in 1813.

I undertook an apprenticeship at the Windmill when I left school and have been 'The Volunteer Miller' since 2008 when the charitable trust was formed.

The windmill is unique, it is the only windmill in the UK that has been in continuous working order, grinding flour and animal feed since it was built.

The Projects Conflict with Policy relating to Heritage

The parish councils have already filed submissions to demonstrate that the project materially conflicts with the Ward Plan. The plan that aims to

protect the rural landscape and historic settings.

But with specific reference to the Windmill and Policy :

The scale and visual dominance of the solar farm will fail to respect local character and important views, Policy 5.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 174 requires large-scale renewables to be assessed for their impact on landscape character. The setting of this designated heritage asset is a material consideration in this regard.

In addition, a designated heritage asset's significance can derive from its setting. Harm to this setting, even if less than substantial, must be given "considerable importance and weight" in planning decisions.

I feel brownfield sites or industrial zones could provide more appropriate locations for such a project, where the environmental and community impact would be significantly reduced.

This project will cause harm for over 40 years and is potentially irreversibly.

The Windmill Today

Today, the Trust is run entirely by volunteers and is reliant on donations from the community, visitors and tourists as well as grant funding.

Visitors to the windmill can see first hand what the original purpose of the windmill was and still is and how it fits within the rural and mainly agricultural landscape.

The Visitor experience is enhanced by our visitor centre, guided tours, and magnificent views.

The windmill is also a focal point for the community, hosting events and open days which raises funds and keeps our community spirit and pride of place alive.

Our objectives are critical to the windmill's sustainability and have direct relevance to the Steeples Renewables project.

We currently benefit from many visitors, ramblers, walkers, schools, tourists, families, individuals, groups, the list goes on.

This development threatens the sustainability of the windmill.

Visual Impact

The windmill 's visual setting is part of its heritage value and is a critical part of its appeal.

A large-scale modern solar farm in the surrounding fields creates a stark visual contrast, entirely industrialising the rural view and degrading the historic context.

Yes we have had the power stations on the horizon since the 1960's, however Cottam has all but vanished and West Burton is now being demolished.

The proximity of the Steeples Renewables project is too close, and is not comparable to the Power Stations which have a much smaller footprint.

A large-scale industrial installation of solar panels on greenfield land would fundamentally alter the rural character of the landscape surrounding the mill and impacting 180 degrees of its views.

Windmills by their nature are built on higher ground so it is difficult to

comprehend that screening would be effective, both in terms of how long it would take for the trees to grow to the height of the third floor windows.

Trees close to the Mill would also be counter production as we are trying to maintain the views over the wider Trent Vally from the tower, and trees may impede the wind flows which are critical to the windmill's operation.

The position of the sails also had and continue to have symbolic meaning as they can be seen from afar.

The sails at North Leverton are set at "St George's" as a mark of respect when someone with importance to the community passes. The Windmill was immediately set to this position on the passing of Queen Elizabeth II.

The proposed screening will interrupt these views from local villages, footpaths, bridleways etc.

The windmill is a unique historic asset that should be protected from industrial development in its immediate setting.

The visual impacts of the development have been greatly underestimated and the photographs used are misleading.

Examples being Appendix 6.2 refers to summer with dates on some of the photographs being taken 19th October, photograph taken from low level at the mill gate, many photos with the Power station cooling towers which dominate the landscape.

No pictures looking towards the Windmill that can be seen from the many footpaths and roads have been included in the proposal.

The proposed project would degrade the windmill's sense of place and historical context and destroy the Windmill's pride of place with the local

community.

This project will affect the visual experience for visitors, residents, and those who appreciate its setting.

A visit to the windmill and the views from Retford Road/Leverton Hill, Dog Hills Lane and Thornhill Land will make this obvious.

I suggest you visit the windmill and see the impact on the views from the Windmill Tower – I would be more than happy to arrange this for you.

Consultation and EIA

The Applicant made no contact with the Windmill or its Trustees during the consultation process.

When I attended a meeting as a resident of Sturton Le Steeple, I asked what mitigation had been considered for the windmill, the original response was there is no impact, when questioned about view, trees were suggested as mitigation.

It was the trust that invited the Applicant to see the impact after reading the Chapter 9 Environmental Statement – Heritage in early 2025.

The applicant's documentation is inaccurate, it states that Windmill Cottage is unoccupied, this is not true, the current tenant has been living there since 2013.

Windmill Cottage is owned by the Trust and is rented out to generate income.

The windmill has not been correctly described and certain impacts not addressed.

The impact assessment states “Whilst the height is an illustration of the function of the asset and makes some small contribution to significance, windmills were not designed purposefully to be seen from great distances.

The change would result in a negligible impact upon the significance of the asset, and would result in a minor adverse effect, which is not significant”.

This is simply not true, the sails as discussed earlier were used as a method of communication with the community.

The setting of a heritage asset is not limited to its immediate surroundings and can include important views towards and away from the site, which contribute to how the asset's significance is understood and appreciated.

The assessment of significance includes not only architectural and historical value but also aesthetic and communal values, which often involve the visual experience and appreciation of the asset from various viewpoints.

The original design intent (whether it was *intended* to be seen from afar or not) is less relevant than how the asset is currently experienced and how its historical significance is currently understood.

Many historic structures, regardless of original intent, acquire wider visual and communal significance over time. The Clifton Suspension Bridge was designed to cross the river, it is now a visual landmark and known as a feat of engineering.

Wider Heritage Context

The area is rich in heritage assets, Historic England has over 60 listings for the Parishes of Sturton le Steeple, North Leverton with Habbleshthorpe and

South Wheatley. The area is pivotal in our history, both in depth and breadth.

The area around Sturton le Steeple is considered an important heritage landscape due to its deep and continuous history, featuring Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlements, medieval open fields, and especially its pivotal role in the origins of the Pilgrim Fathers and Baptist movements. The landscape is rich in historical character, from its early use as a strategic river crossing to its later religious importance.

I am not going into detail on the wider heritage assets in this community but there are many and others will speak about them.

It is difficult to comprehend how informed decisions regarding this project can be made when the Applicant has given no respect or regard to the heritage and history of this area.

To Conclude

The applicant may have followed the required procedures, however the assessment's conclusions and the proposed mitigation measures are cursory and disregard the area's numerous important heritage assets.

We urge the Examining Authority and Historic England to ensure the Windmill and other heritage assets are protected. Simply proposing further mitigation during the project development is not sufficient.

In the opinion of the Board of Trustees, this project should be rejected on the grounds of disregard to the wider heritage assets in the immediate area, its effect on our landscape and the harm to our developing tourism industry which all contribute significantly to the economic growth of this area.

We are the custodians of our heritage, we bear the responsibility of protecting it today so that its historical value and cultural significance may endure for the benefit of future generations, You too are part of that.

Other historical Assets (this list was not read out due to time constraints)

Roman Town of Segelocum (Littleborough)

Medieval Farming including Ridge and Furrow Fields

Early Christian Baptisms by Paulinus (in the Trent at Littleborough)

Doomsday Town of Estrotone (Sturton le Steeple)

St Nicholas Church and ancient bells (Littleborough)

St Martin Church (North Leverton)

St Helen's Church (South Wheatley)

St Peter and St Paul Church (Sturton le Steeple)

Pilgrim Fathers and the Separatist and Baptist Movement (Sturton)

Pilgrim, Mayflower Trails and Trent Valley Way

Sir Geoffrey Fenton and Edward Fenton (Fenton)

John Lassells (Sturton Downfall of Queen Katherine Howard)

Colonel Francis Thornagh (Fenton Parliamentarian English Civil War)

William Grey (reputedly 119 years at death – unconfirmed)

Burton Round (former oxbow loop now a palaeochannel)

Habblethorpe abandoned church (clandestine marriages)

Historic Hedgerows

West Burton abandoned village

Preliminary Hearing

SF3 336 EB9

We are volunteers at the windmill and as a group of trustees it is sometimes difficult to meet as regularly as the proposed timetable might require and would welcome dates for Issue Specific Hearings as soon as possible so we can try and have someone attend the meetings (currently expected in February). Thankyou

Relevant Representation

The Applicant has failed to accurately describe North Leverton Windmill, a heritage asset (National Importance and Grade 2* listed) and totally ignored its position as an important tourist attraction and has given no consideration to the visual impact that the project will have on the views from the windmill tower.

The windmill holds Best Tourist Attraction in North Nottinghamshire as voted by the public. We have 1000's of visitors throughout the year and almost all climb the tower and look out of the windows (the views of the fields to the North will be almost all covered in solar panels).

In addition the views from Retford Road (a popular photo spot) of the windmill will have almost all the backdrop being solar panels. The project will most likely have an adverse impact on the windmill and thus is sustainability.

This also has potential to impact on other businesses that benefits from the tourist numbers the windmill attracts. The

Applicant has failed to engage with the Trust and it was the trustees that invited them to visit the Windmill and see the actual impact towards the end of the consultation period

No feedback has been given and the EIA still does not refer to tourism nor any visual/economic impact.