

6 Historic Environment

Introduction

This Supplementary Written Representation is submitted by Fields for Farming (FFF), a community group representing the interests of residents in Sturton le Steeple, Fenton, Littleborough, North Leverton, and North and South Wheatley (the “Residents”). It builds upon our initial Relevant Representation (RR-035, dated 28 August 2025) and provides further evidence and analysis on the specific subjects of Historic Environment – item 6 on the agenda of the Issue Specific Hearing on 12 November 2025. It seeks to oppose the application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) by Steeple Renewables Limited (the “Applicant”) for the Steeple Solar Farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (the “Proposed Development”).

The area around the affected villages of Sturton-le-Steeple, North Leverton, South Wheatley, Fenton & Littleborough is steeped in history.

6.1 Archaeology

As confirmed by the HLF project of 2017 and the more recent dig in Littleborough itself, not only do we have an important Roman settlement at Littleborough, but also the remains ribbon settlements along the Roman road South of the current road from Littleborough to Sturton. In addition, there is the site of a medieval manor close to Manor Farm in Sturton le Steeple, along with a number of other linear earthworks and drainage features.

Littleborough or Teowolfingcaster or Segelocum has a history going back to Roman times, where the Road from Lindum to Danum crossed the Trent. The river at that time was branched either side of the town. It is also the probable location of the baptism by St Paulinus of the locals, and the point at which Harold Godwinson crossed the Trent en route to Hastings.

The work during 2025 built on the foundations of the HLF project, with a direct outcome of locating part of the Roman Road, plus a Medieval House (floor and walls) in Littleborough. In 2026 we intend to build on this by mapping the route of the road at both river crossings and on to Sturton.

The SAM site presently covering the main Roman settlement is being extended to cover the ribbon developments and other important remains detected during the recent surveys. This will include fields to the Left of the current road from Littleborough to Sturton.

We note that the Applicant was also able to locate the stretch of road indicating the ribbon development, but has nonetheless not explored the continuation of the route further towards Sturton. The County Archaeologist confirmed our view that the trial trenching conducted to date was inadequate, and that more work would need to be undertaken before issuance of a DCO, rather than just during actual excavations. This view was also echoed by the Inspector of Ancient Monuments, who also confirmed that the linear or ribbon settlements required more attention. Both concluded that substantially more ground truthing was required.

West Burton village site is also a Scheduled Monument, whose immediate surroundings would be ruined by the 15m solar panels surrounding it.

[Sources: Sturton Le Steeple 2107 geophysical survey report no 146 Cranfield Institute of Technology., <http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/articles/tts/tts1909/summer/littleborough.htm>]

6.2 Listed Heritage

The presence of 33 listed buildings locally, many of them directly adjacent to the proposed development, shows the important historical and cultural heritage. This was reflected in the local development plan, adopted in 2015, policies 6/3 and 6/14, where “Planning Permission will not be granted for development that will have a significant detrimental effect upon the appearance and amenity of the countryside. it would not cause demonstrable harm to any interests of acknowledged importance; and where development is considered appropriate it is so designed and located as not to adversely affect the character and appearance of the surrounding area.”

[Source Bassetlaw Local Plan 2009 ch6]

The historic character and setting of several of these listed buildings would be irretrievably destroyed by covering the surrounding fields with solar arrays, especially the North Leverton Windmill, the Tollbar Cottage and other key sites. The same is true of the churches, including the Norman/Saxon church of St Nicholas in Littleborough, St Martin in North Leverton, and St Peter & St Paul in Sturton.

The issues specific to the Windmill have been covered by the relevant submission on behalf of the Windmill Trust, so we will not repeat them here.

In addition to the listed buildings, or “assets” in the parlance of the Applicant, we have the associated historical relationship of many of these assets with historical events of local and national importance. These include the martyrdom of John Lascelles during the reign of Henry VIII, the birth of the Baptist John Smith, and the Mayflower Pilgrims John Robinson and Catherine Wright (who effectively founded the tradition of Thanksgiving in America). These historical links draw tourists from UK, EU and USA, who would be unimpressed to visit a massive solar array rather than the historical setting they expect.

It is the very nature of the open farmland, drained under the leadership of Vermuyden in the C17th that forms the backdrop to these important historical sites and buildings, and this nature and function would be completely destroyed by the intended works.

Thus, the negative visual impact of vast arrays of 3m tall solar panels, battery storage containers and CCTV monitored security fencing would ruin these assets and their connection to the historic landscape. It is not in accordance with either the local plan or indeed best practice.

The Applicant’s approach to this issue is to parcel up each “asset” without considering setting or context, and to seek to limit the negative impact to “minor” by ignoring the ability of the human eye to take in the broader landscape and the impact on it created by mitigation measures largely comprising high hedges designed to block the open views, as these would be compromised by the intrusion of rows of solar panels.

[Sources, local consultation, Retford and District Historical and Archaeological Society, Sturton Council information, Research by R Eyre in 2015, extended by A Gibson in 2024 and RES proposals and submissions as recorded in EN1016 -000254-Steeple_ISH_12Nov_PT4]

6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, any proposed development must take into account the potential and irreversible damage to the character setting of a number of listed buildings and scheduled monuments of national importance, as outlined by the Local Development Plan and endorsed by a number of historical and other bodies. The Applicant’s current environmental report has singularly failed to

address these issues, instead concluding that “anything can be mitigated” and that “there would be no significant environmental impact”: both claims absurdly wide of the mark.