

STEEPLE RENEWABLES PROJECT NSIP

Closing summary statement on behalf of Sturton-le-Steeple Parish Council

Introduction

1. This closing summary statement is submitted by Sturton-le-Steeple Parish Council (“**the PC**”) on behalf of residents in the parish. The PC remains strongly opposed to the Steeple Renewables Project (“**the Proposals**”) and does not consider that the matters it has raised during the course of the Examination have been adequately addressed or resolved by the Applicant. The PC remains concerned about the following impacts of the Proposals:
 - a. **Cumulative impacts** of this and other major development projects both underway and planned in the local area have not been adequately assessed.
 - b. **Noise impacts** during the construction, operation and decommissioning stages.
 - c. Substantial adverse impacts on the local **landscape**.
 - d. Substantial adverse impacts on the rich **cultural heritage** and **archaeological significance** of the site and the surrounding area.
 - e. Harmful loss of **best and most versatile agricultural land**.
 - f. Detrimental impacts on the **health and well-being** of local residents.
2. As confirmed in the Statement of Common Ground between the Applicant and the PC,¹ it has not been possible to reach agreement on any of these issues.

¹ EN010163/EX/8.30.

Cumulative Impacts

3. The Examining Authority will now be very familiar with the context to the Proposals, as summarised in paras 2 & 3 of the PC's registration comments.² The PC remains of the view that the Applicant's assessment of cumulative impacts has been deficient in at least three respects:
 - a. First, it has failed to assess the cumulative impacts of the construction phases of these successive major projects. Rather than being perceived as temporary, the sheer volume of large-scale development projects taking place in the local area means that the construction impacts will be felt by the local community for an extended and continuous period. This has not been considered by the Applicant in its assessments. In particular, the cumulative traffic impact from HGV movements across all the anticipated developments has not been properly modelled.
 - b. Second, the exclusion of the STEP project from the assessment of cumulative impacts.
 - c. Third, the failure to produce any visualisations of cumulative effects as part of the LVIA.
4. We note that both National Grid and the UK Atomic Energy Agency made representations to the Applicant pointing out where their projects overlap and had requested additional assurances from the Applicant. We understand that further information has been submitted but are not clear whether these differences have been resolved. Robust measures and mitigations would need to be designed in collaboration with National Grid and UKAEA to minimise additional unnecessary adverse impact on our residents.

Noise

5. The Parish Council strongly disagrees with the Applicant's position that noise and vibration generated during the construction, operation and decommissioning of the

² EN010163-000297.

site will not be significant. We have shared the direct, comparable evidence from the neighbouring parish of Hayton and Tiln which saw the installation of a small-scale solar farm in 2023. Residents living within a half-mile radius of that solar farm have found that the level of noise generated is very disturbing, so much so that some feel unable to enjoy using their garden in the summer months. A previously well-used footpath has become unused and in places is no longer passable because walking through or around the solar farm has proven to be an unpleasant experience owing to the notable noise.

6. The Proposals are significantly larger than the Tiln installation, are located closer to residents' homes, and will have a far greater impact on people's lives, their enjoyment of their personal outdoor spaces, and the enjoyment of walking the many public rights of way in the area. Inverters and transformers create a constant low-frequency hum which is known to be noticeable and disruptive in quiet rural areas, and will overshadow the natural sounds that residents have come to expect from the countryside.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

7. The Parish Council also disagrees with the Applicant's assessments of the impacts on residents' visual amenity. Residents have been accustomed to viewing a single detracting feature — West Burton Power Station — in an otherwise open, agricultural landscape. As the Power Station is decommissioned 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, visible from many viewing points. This development, if consented, would render the entire view industrial in nature. The scale of change in views experienced by residents will be overbearing, not "low," "minor," or "moderate" as suggested by the Applicant. This large-scale infrastructure will fundamentally alter the existing character of our rural community.
8. The assumption that simply screening the Proposals from view with the planting of large hedgerows will result in there being no negative visual effects is, in our

submission, flawed. In some instances, the closing off of a previously open view across the landscape can itself be harmful. That will be the reality experienced on the ground in this case. Particularly stark examples of this can be seen in viewpoints 17B, 17C, and 17D of the photomontages at Appendix 6.2 to the Environmental Statement³ in both summer and winter views. In any event, the screening will take 15 years to establish. That is an extremely long time to expect residents to deal with significant and harmful visual impacts on the local landscape.

9. This particular project is simply too large in scale. The change to the current public rights of way routes will massively impact residents. Walking through or around a solar farm will be a very different experience to walking through open countryside, as has already been demonstrated in a neighbouring parish where once very popular footpaths are now unused, overgrown, and impassable.

Historic Environment and Christian Heritage

10. As detailed in our submissions, the site and surrounding areas benefit from a wealth of cultural heritage and the impact on a number of important historic features does not appear to have been assessed, or adequately assessed, by the Applicant's assessments. The LVIA has also failed to adequately have regard to the cultural heritage and historic significance of the site and surrounding area. Despite assurances from the Applicant that the LVIA has been "cognisant" of the findings of the Cultural Heritage Chapter, there does not appear to be any concrete evidence of this "cognisance" in the LVIA itself. There is, for example, no reference to the significance of historic green lanes and field patterns, nor to Bassetlaw's important Pilgrim Trail which passes through the site.
11. Sturton le Steeple is a village of incomparable significance in English Christian history, being one of the epicentres of the Pilgrim story. The combination of significant figures that emerged here make Sturton of unparalleled importance relative to its size. John Lassells (d.1546) was one of the most significant leaders and martyrs of the English Reformation; John Smyth (c.1554–1612), the first English

³ EN010163/APP/6.3.6

Baptist, was born and educated here; John Robinson (1576–1625), the spiritual leader of the Mayflower Pilgrims, was also born here; and his sister-in-law, also born here, went to New England as the wife of the first leader of the Pilgrims.

12. Christian heritage is integral to the significance of heritage assets in and around Sturton le Steeple. It transforms individual buildings and places into a coherent historic landscape of international resonance, grounded in the lives and journeys of Separatists and early Baptists. That significance resides not only in the fabric of churches and historic sites, but in the experience of moving through a largely rural landscape whose character still allows the story to be read. The proposed scheme would materially diminish that significance by repatterning the landscape, interrupting key views and routes, weakening the interpretive experience, and undermining an established and expanding tourism economy that relies on the authenticity and legibility of this Christian heritage landscape. It would conflict with both the Neighbourhood Plan's heritage and landscape objectives and the NPPF's requirement to give great weight to the conservation of heritage assets and their settings.
13. The links with both Baptists and the Mayflower bring many American and international visitors to Sturton. The Parish Council has been working directly with Bassetlaw District Council to enhance tourism for our area, commissioning an important piece of sculpture funded through Rural England funding at a cost of £10,000, together with a £1,000 donation from Pilgrims and Prophets Tourism. Walking tours have been oversubscribed, attracting international visitors including the Governor of the Australian Society of Mayflower Descendants and a Polish Baptist Minister planning a larger group trip. This development threatens to destroy the attraction that brings those visitors to this area. Our Christian Heritage must not be silenced under the blanket covering of "climate change benefits."
14. For those reasons, we refute the assessment of "less than substantial harm" to the six identified designated heritage assets and "low level less than substantial residual harm" to non-designated heritage assets. Our calls for an independent

historian to research our Christian Cultural Heritage and its links with the Mayflower Pilgrims, Martyrs, and Baptist Church history have gone unanswered.

15. Further, the Parish Council agrees with Nottinghamshire County Council and Historic England that the Applicant's approach to assessment of buried heritage is profoundly flawed and its conclusions and proposed mitigations based on insufficient data.

Loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

16. The Proposals would result in a significant and harmful loss of productive farmland, which carries with it associated food security risks and a loss of jobs for farmers and supporting industries. The Applicant's own Planning Statement recognises that 72.1% of the land within the Order Limits meets the definition of "Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land." National policy — including the NPPF, EN-3, and DEFRA Guidance — states that BMV loss should be avoided wherever possible.
17. This is more than a policy designation. This is land that is used to produce wheat, barley, oil seed rape, beans, and sugar beet. Those products are in turn used to make bread, biscuits, breakfast cereals, animal feed, beer, and much more. Grazing the fields with sheep during the operational phase of the development will simply not mitigate the real-life cost of what is being lost. Although the Applicant states that the effects will be temporary, the significant loss of working land will threaten the viability of many farms and is likely to affect three generations of farmers.
18. We continue to have significant concerns about the negative impact this project will have on national food security. Our calls for compensation for affected farms and for an independent expert opinion on predicted soil degradation have been ignored.
19. We fully support and adopt the representations of our community group – Fields for Farming – on this issue.

Flood Risk, Groundwater and Contaminated Land

20. The Parish Council has requested independent verification of flood risk data which has not been provided and highlighted the need for robust construction-phase

controls. Parts of the proposed development lie within known flood zones and locals have described their experiences of repeated field flooding and drainage issues, which on occasion have resulted in road and school closures. The site includes heavy clay soils that are prone to compaction, which in turn increases run-off. Our farmers operate controlled traffic farming, with all farm machinery limited to fixed tramlines, precisely because of these soil conditions.

21. The Environment Agency stated within its relevant representation that the conceptual site model is inadequate and that not all sources of contamination have been assessed. Despite our requests, there has been no independent site condition report of the former COMAH site at West Burton Power Station to assess for contamination and to understand the risks of developing this land.
22. We further note that the Examining Authority's comments on the draft DCO dated 30th March 2026 noted that agreement with the Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board has not yet been reached. It is not clear to us whether that position has changed.

Health and Wellbeing

23. The Parish Council's position on health and wellbeing has been set out in detail in our dedicated submission on the Applicant's Health Impact Assessment ("**HIA**"), dated 1 March 2026. In summary, the Applicant's HIA is factually incorrect, procedurally inadequate, and fails to assess the real health and wellbeing impacts on our community. It does not comply with national HIA guidance from Public Health England, the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998, or the Nottinghamshire Spatial Planning and Health Framework. Without a lawful, evidence-based assessment, the Examining Authority cannot properly weigh the harms to residents.
24. The Proposals will negatively affect the health and wellbeing of the local community through:
 - a. Construction disturbance including dust, noise, vibration and traffic;
 - b. Increased road safety risks;

- c. Loss of rural character and tranquillity;
 - d. Reduced quality of recreational routes; and
 - e. Psychological stress from industrialisation of the landscape.
25. As detailed in our previous written comments, the HIA failed to have regard to the vulnerabilities that exist in our community at a higher rate than the national average, namely, respiratory conditions, low physical activity, obesity, preventable mortality and low wellbeing. This is evidenced in the Public Health Outcomes Framework data for Bassetlaw. The failure to identify or mitigate for disproportionate impacts on these vulnerable groups is in breach of the Equality Act, Human Rights Act and Nottinghamshire Spatial Planning & Health Framework. We set out in Tables 1, 2 and 3 of our previous submissions how the HIA fails to meet the standards prescribed by statute and policy.
26. In summary on this issue, the Applicant has acknowledged that there will be negative impacts to the health and wellbeing of our community, particularly to those with protected characteristics, however they have failed to use publicly available data to design robust mitigation strategies to offset harm. The Applicant has not provided a monitoring plan, indicators, responsibilities, or enforcement mechanisms which makes the stated mitigation meaningless. This project will widen existing health inequality and result in poor health outcomes.
27. Once again our calls for a more comprehensive, independent assessment of these impacts have been ignored.

Fire safety

28. The PC has raised concerns about the fire risk posed by the close proximity of the Battery Energy Storage System (“**BESS**”) to the STEP project and the inadequacy of proposed fire service access routes. These concerns are also reflected in Fields For Farming’s detailed submissions about the nature of BESS fires and were discussed at some length during examination hearings.

29. The PC is pleased to see that the latest Outline Fire Risk Plan has responded to some of these concerns and provides a more detailed and robust strategy, integrating feedback from the fire and rescue service. However, the PC remains concerned about the proximity of the BESS to residents and other major infrastructure, particularly the STEP project and the very serious impacts which a BESS fire may have as a result.

Consultation and Process

30. In addition to the substantive concerns summarised above, the PC submits that the Applicant's consultation processes have been conducted at a surface level, meeting only the minimum statutory requirements. Whilst community views were collected, there is little evidence demonstrating how this feedback influenced or shaped the evolution of the project design. Reasonable suggestions from residents and from Nottinghamshire County Council — particularly those aimed at mitigating impacts on local communities — have often been dismissed or inadequately addressed. This pattern suggests an unwillingness to meaningfully involve the community in the development process.
31. A review of the Applicant's responses to the Examining Authority's First Written Questions⁴ indicates several recurring concerns regarding the quality, clarity, and cooperativeness of the submissions. In many instances, the Applicant does not directly address the question posed. Instead, responses frequently redirect stakeholders to other documents — often without clear signposting — resulting in unnecessary additional work for all parties and hindering efficient examination of the issues. The tone and approach of the responses can be characterised as overly rigid and unconstructive. When asked whether they are willing to undertake further work to meet the needs of affected stakeholders, the Applicant consistently adopts a narrow interpretation of what they consider "necessary," even where additional work would provide tangible benefits to the local community.

⁴ EN010163-000365-8.11

32. Concerns have also been raised regarding the conduct of hearings. There has been significant variation in the amount of speaking time afforded to different participants. Community participants have been reprimanded for their language, whereas the Applicant has been permitted to make dismissive or inflammatory remarks without challenge. The PC submitted a formal complaint to the Examining Authority regarding conduct at ISH2, in which the Applicant's representative described our Christian Heritage trail as having "no value" and a community member was unfairly reprimanded while the Applicant's representatives made veiled threats without consequence. These issues collectively contribute to a sense that the process has not been conducted evenly or transparently.
33. The fact that Bassetlaw District Council has chosen not to participate in the examination process raises further concern. This increases the risk that the Applicant will be permitted to proceed without adequate scrutiny or safeguards, particularly in relation to the discharge of requirements that rely upon approval by the Local Planning Authority.

Safeguards Sought

34. If, notwithstanding the above, the Examining Authority were minded to recommend the grant of development consent, the Parish Council strongly calls for it to be subject to the following safeguards:
 - a. First, a fully independent design review process with meaningful, structured community involvement that demonstrably influences the final design.
 - b. Second, a formal role for community representatives in developing the Construction Traffic Management Plan, ensuring it accounts for the cumulative impact of multiple concurrent developments in the area.
 - c. Third, enhanced mitigation and collaboration. The Applicant must work collaboratively with stakeholders, including Nottinghamshire County Council, to strengthen mitigation measures and provide clearer assurances relating to landscape and visual impact and the historic

environment, including the Archaeological Mitigation Strategy and Christian Heritage and associated tourism.

- d. Fourth, the establishment of a community liaison committee to support partnership working and improve communication between the various developers whose projects collectively affect our community.
- e. Fifth, a comprehensive, independent HIA to be undertaken using Nottinghamshire's HIA template and data publicly available from Public Health England, with analysis of the impact on vulnerable groups and inclusive public consultation regarding health and wellbeing using accessible information. We recommend that this be undertaken by an independent public health consultant and that the Applicant be required to consult NHS England and the Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board.

Conclusion

- 35. Across every area of concern we have identified — cumulative impact, transport and traffic, noise, landscape and visual amenity, the historic environment including our internationally significant Christian Heritage, the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, flood risk and contamination, health and wellbeing, and the adequacy of consultation — the PC and the Applicant remain in fundamental disagreement. The Applicant's assessments are, in our submission, inadequate. Its Health Impact Assessment is non-compliant with national guidance and legislation. Its consultation has been superficial and does not appear to have shaped the Proposals in any material way. Its approach throughout this process has been overly rigid and dismissive of the concerns of the community it seeks to surround with industrial infrastructure.
- 36. Our community already contributes significantly to the national interest in meeting net zero through the STEP fusion energy project being developed at West Burton Power Station. We support the transition to renewable energy, but not at any cost and not in any location. This particular project is too large for this space and inappropriately situated, surrounding a community of rich historical significance

that is actively working to build a tourism economy rooted in its Christian Heritage and Pilgrim connections. The industrialisation of such a vast swathe of countryside around our village would cause irreversible harm to the character, identity, and wellbeing of this community.

37. In closing, we note that the PC's objections are not raised in isolation. They are corroborated and reinforced by the detailed evidence submitted by Fields for Farming,⁵ neighbouring parish councils, Nottinghamshire County Council, CPRE, and numerous individual residents and community groups. The consistency and weight of that evidence should give the Examining Authority significant cause for concern.
38. We urge the Examining Authority to give due weight to the breadth and depth of the concerns we have raised throughout this Examination and to refuse development consent. The negative, **long-term** impact and harm that this project will cause vastly outweighs the potential benefits.

⁵ EN010163-000431; EN010163-000275; EN010163-000287; EN010163-000289; EN010163-000291; EN010163-000292; EN010163-000538