

Lime Down Solar Project — Open Floor Hearing 1

21 April 2026 • Danny Pike, Secretary, CAWS (speaking also for Melksham Without Parish Council)

Good evening, Madam and Inspectors. My name is Dan Pike. I speak on behalf of Cllr. Peter Richardson, who is unable to attend tonight. I am the Secretary of the local residents group known as “Community Action: Whitley and Shaw”, and I have also been asked to speak on behalf of Melksham Without Parish Council.

Around our two small villages of Whitley and Shaw there are the best part of **eighty** energy-related schemes, in various stages of planning and construction. They include: solar farms, battery storage, substations, and cable corridors. Most of them converge on a single point: Melksham Substation, which lies on the edge of our parish.

I ask you to imagine a map of our villages and their immediate environment. Then try to picture that map with eighty pins on it. This is the setting into which this Application arrives.

The question that I wish to ask you tonight is procedural: *“Please would you require that the Applicant assess and document the Cumulative Impacts properly, before they receive consent to proceed?”*

The Applicant contends that the cumulative impacts from their project have been assessed. Our position is that the material that they have presented to you is inadequate. In particular, their Environmental Statement assesses the impacts

as if it were the only project in the area. But it is not. And the risks of all of these projects are cumulative, and capacity-limited.

Whitley and Shaw are two small villages that sit at the foot of a dense headwater catchment. When several headwaters are disturbed during construction, the flow downstream includes both sediment and contaminants moving through connected drainage, and into the wider river basin. The effects are cumulative, yet that catchment has not been assessed as a catchment by the Applicant.

I am an engineer by education, career and mindset. This helps me understand how large infrastructure projects can affect their surroundings. Often this is in ways that are difficult to anticipate, unless you know the area well. I have lived in Whitley for 16 years now, and I have experienced several floods in that time. I know it quite well.

The proposed cable route has a wide working corridor, stretching from north of the M4 over fields, roads, a railway and on to Melksham Substation. The Applicant asks us to accept that they will manage the project, but they do not define their construction methods in detail. Key elements of how it will be built are deferred to later stages, so the consequences cannot be predicted. Deferral does not remove risk; it is an attempt to avoid taking responsibility for it.

Across the eighty schemes in our area, battery storage is a repeating feature. The assessment of those schemes is site-by-site; yet the risk is not. They all depend on a shared Fire and Rescue response. Yet, there is no cumulative

major-accident assessment for all these projects, and no clear evidence that Wiltshire Fire and Rescue has been asked to consider one.

Please be assured that we are not against renewable energy in principle; we are against making important decisions on incomplete information. We are also not commenting on the abilities of the Applicant to complete this project. Rather, we are questioning the quality of the information that they have published, especially as it relates to the management of environmental risks.

Key assessments are missing; others are fragmented; critical matters are deferred. Whether, a robust and lawful decision can be made in this case, is a question only you can answer.

Thank you.