

Interested Party Reference number: [REDACTED]

Lime Down Solar Park – Closing Submission

Ladyswood Stud

As we reach the end of this process, I wanted to summarise my frustrations with the Applicant's approach to Ladyswood Stud. I have found the entire experience deeply disappointing, not least because we have made every effort to engage constructively and explain the very real risks to our business, our horses and, most importantly, our staff.

My concerns can be summarised in a number of areas.

Complete failure to engage - despite seven requests for a meeting at Ladyswood Stud, alongside numerous other attempts, the applicant has never meaningfully engaged with us on site.

At the final hearings, [REDACTED] claimed to have responded to one such request. Despite being asked to substantiate this, following the Planning Inspector's intervention, no evidence has been forthcoming.

I find this extraordinary. It is impossible to assess the impact on a specialist thoroughbred stud without ever visiting it or speaking to the people who run it. It is perhaps no surprise that the subsequent assessment and mitigation proposals have been so inadequate.

This has let the applicant with a fundamental misunderstanding of our business and likewise other equine operations. Ladyswood Stud is a commercial thoroughbred breeding operation with 45 horses, five employees and turnover exceeding £1 million. We operate on very narrow margins, with significant responsibilities to our staff, customers and the valuable bloodstock entrusted to our care.

The applicant has demonstrated remarkably little understanding of the practical realities of managing pregnant mares, newborn foals and highly strung young thoroughbreds. Even the applicant's veterinary expert acknowledged having limited experience of thoroughbred bloodstock. Anyone familiar with the industry will appreciate that the behaviour and management requirements of commercial thoroughbreds are very different from those of recreational horses.

The suggestion that an equine liaison officer, who would not necessarily have resolve our concerns by notifying us of forthcoming construction works is particularly frustrating.

We cannot simply move 45 horses around at will. We do not have spare paddocks or unlimited stabling, and moving pregnant mares, foals and young horses introduces risks of its own.

Being told that disruptive works are about to take place does absolutely nothing to prevent a horse from reacting to a sudden noise. None of our team can envisage how any of this would work in practice, and the applicant has offered nothing to give us confidence.

A genuine fear for the safety of our staff is unquestionably my greatest concern. Our employees work every day with powerful, unpredictable animals. A sudden noise can provoke a violent reaction with potentially devastating consequences.

We recently had a nasty accident at the stud caused by precisely such a disturbance. It brought home just how serious these risks are.

I have subsequently spoken to our team, who are sufficiently concerned that they would now like to speak directly to the applicant. They have no confidence in the proposed mitigation and are genuinely frightened about the implications for their safety. I find it deeply troubling that their concerns have not been properly heard.

We are situated in one of the most celebrated equine areas in the country, surrounded by Badminton, Beaufort Polo, commercial stud farms and countless other equestrian businesses. This is an area whose reputation and economic activity have been built around horses for generations, yet the process to assess this was given minimal consideration by the applicant.

British thoroughbred breeding is already under enormous pressure, with foal crops approximately 20% below their peak. The wider racing industry contributes c£4 bln to the economy, supports 85,000 rural jobs and generates substantial taxation.

More stud closures and further pressure on an already fragile industry are the last things we need.

We are not a large business with unlimited resources. We employ five people, generate over £1 million in turnover and barely break even.

Our customers expect us to provide a safe, professional environment for their horses. If we cannot guarantee that, they will simply take their business elsewhere, or leave the industry.

It would not take much disruption, additional expense or loss of customer confidence to threaten the viability of the entire operation.

And the consequences extend well beyond our five employees. We support vets, farriers, transporters, feed suppliers and numerous other local businesses.

We have been offered assurances and vague promises of future liaison, but precious little in the way of practical, enforceable safeguards.

We have spent years building Ladyswood Stud into a respected commercial business. We employ a wide cross section of local people, care for valuable animals, the environment and make a meaningful contribution to an industry and local community I care passionately about.

On a macro level, our team are all fierce proponents of renewable energy, yet find ourselves at the behest of a scheme so evidently conflicting with these views. Generating expensive energy, all while not going carbon neutral for over half a decade.

We have repeatedly asked the applicant takes the time to understand our business, listens to those who work here and comes forward with credible proposals to protect our future.

Seven requests for a meeting. No meaningful site engagement. A veterinary assessment lacking specialist thoroughbred experience. Mitigation proposals that are practically unworkable. And a team of employees who are now genuinely concerned for their safety.

I find it astonishing that we have reached the end of the examination with so many basic questions unanswered.

The applicant has had every opportunity to understand and address these concerns. It has consistently and willingly failed to do so.

My greatest frustration is that, should consent be granted and the Applicant's assurances prove misplaced, it will not be

their consultants or management dealing with the consequences. It will be my staff, our horses, our customers and ultimately my business.

Aside from representing our own business, the process in ensuring a broader level of scrutiny is applied to the applicant has been extremely challenging. Raising funds and dedicating 2.5 years of our lives to ensure even the most basic questions are applied has proved incredibly tough for family, friends and our local community. There is no regulator to appeal to at times of questionable due process, the cards are stacked against those in the line of fire when an application such as this is made. There has been talk of the applicant's war chest being over £10m, it has often felt like a case of David vs Goliath. When our legal representation of [REDACTED] withdrew citing threatening approaches by other solar developer companies after just 3 months of representation, we knew the fight ahead would be incredibly one-sided and so it has proved. We have been tremendously fortunate to have a remarkable local community who have been prepared to see through this and give up livelihoods, careers, funds and try and ensure the process was held to account.

I sincerely hope these considerations are given the weight they deserve when the Examining Authority makes its recommendation.