

Good afternoon.

My name is Paul Lock, and I am speaking as a Lincolnshire County Councillor on behalf of residents who feel increasingly overwhelmed by the scale of nationally significant infrastructure being imposed across our county.

Let me be clear from the outset: this is not an objection to renewable energy.

Our residents understand the need for energy security, and they understand the need to reduce emissions. What they struggle to understand is why Lincolnshire is increasingly expected to carry such a disproportionate share of the nation's energy infrastructure while the impacts on local communities are repeatedly described as manageable, acceptable, or temporary.

My first concern is deliverability.

Residents are being asked to accept significant and certain impacts on their communities based on promised future benefits. Yet they are entitled to ask a straightforward question: what happens if the wider infrastructure required to fully support this development does not arrive as planned?

The impacts on local people are immediate and real. The benefits rely upon assumptions, future infrastructure and decisions beyond this application. That is why the burden of proof must rest firmly with the applicant. It should not fall upon local communities to demonstrate what might go wrong.

My second concern is cumulative impact.

Meridian is not arriving in an untouched landscape. Across Lincolnshire we are experiencing an unprecedented concentration of solar farms, substations, grid infrastructure and other energy projects.

Each application is assessed individually and each concludes that impacts are acceptable. But residents do not experience these developments individually. They experience them collectively.

They see more substations appearing, more pylons crossing the landscape, more agricultural land changing use and more infrastructure being concentrated into the same rural areas.

As a result, many residents are asking a simple question: when is enough, enough?

There is a growing perception that Lincolnshire is being treated as a convenient location because we have available land and a rural population. But Lincolnshire is not vacant space on a map. It is our home, our countryside and our communities.

Finally, I want to address trust.

Many residents feel that decisions affecting their communities are increasingly being made far away from those communities. They participate in consultations, submit representations and engage with examinations, yet many question how much influence local voices truly have.

Whether that perception is fair or not, it exists, and public confidence in the planning process depends upon local evidence being taken seriously.

I therefore ask the Examining Authority to rigorously test the evidence, challenge the assumptions and fully assess the cumulative effects of this proposal alongside other developments affecting Lincolnshire.

Residents are not saying "not here" because they oppose renewable energy. They are asking for fairness, balance and proper scrutiny.

I'm please to see the level of detail our County Council officers have submitted and do hope the highlighted evidence in particular with National Grid's' own objection and acknowledgement that this is not only undeliverable but unsafe and compromising safety aspects of other national projects such as the Eastern Green Link projects.

If uncertainty remains regarding deliverability or cumulative impacts, those uncertainties should weigh heavily against granting consent.

Thank you.

Statement 2

Good afternoon.

My name is Cllr Ingrid Sheard, and I am speaking as a local Lincolnshire County Councillor representing communities affected by this proposal.

I would like to focus on the practical impacts that residents will experience if this development proceeds.

My first concern is the loss of productive agricultural land and the implications for food security.

The applicant's own Environmental Statement identifies approximately 418 hectares of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land within the development area, including Grade 1 and Grade 2 farmland. The applicant also acknowledges significant adverse effects on some of that land.

That point is important because it is not being raised solely by objectors. It is acknowledged within the applicant's own assessment.

Residents are regularly assured that solar developments are temporary and reversible. However, the applicant also recognises that restoration to former agricultural classifications cannot be guaranteed and that uncertainty remains regarding long-term soil impacts.

That leaves local communities with an understandable concern: if restoration cannot be guaranteed, how can reversibility truly be guaranteed?

Prime agricultural land is a national asset. Once degraded, it cannot simply be recreated elsewhere. Food security remains critically important, and residents believe that some of the country's best farmland should be afforded significant weight in this examination.

My second concern relates to local roads and rural communities.

The applicant's assessment concludes there will be no significant traffic effects, but many residents find that difficult to reconcile with their lived experience of major construction projects.

Roads such as Hull's Drove, Martins Road, James Road and Barrier Bank were designed to serve rural and agricultural communities. They were not designed to function as construction routes for nationally significant infrastructure projects.

Across Lincolnshire we have already seen the consequences that heavy construction traffic can bring. Residents have experienced damaged verges, deteriorating road edges, mud, dust, noise and increased conflict between local traffic and heavy goods vehicles.

Beyond the technical modelling, there is also a human impact. Residents often feel less safe using roads they have driven for years. Communities face disruption for extended periods, and that disruption cannot always be captured within transport assessments and spreadsheets.

In closing, I ask the Examining Authority to give substantial weight to the acknowledged impacts on agricultural land, the uncertainty around soil restoration and the practical consequences for rural communities and local roads.

The land affected by this proposal is not empty land waiting for development. It is productive farmland, valued countryside and part of established communities.

These local impacts deserve careful consideration and the most rigorous scrutiny before any decision is reached.

Thank you.

This split gives you the **strategic "why this should concern the Inspector" case**, while the second speaker delivers the **evidence-based "what local people will actually lose and experience" case**. Together they sound coordinated, avoid duplication, and should each come in at roughly **2 minutes 45 seconds to 3 minutes** when read at a normal hearing pace.