

Objection to the Proposed Meridian Solar Farm

As a resident whose property would be entirely surrounded on all sides by the proposed Meridian solar development, I wish to register my strongest objection to this application. The experience at the recent hearing made it abundantly clear that Meridian has failed to sufficiently justify many critical aspects of their proposal. Their responses were incomplete, superficial, and in several cases demonstrated a concerning lack of research into the realities of rural communities, environmental impacts, and the lived experience of residents who would be directly affected. Given the scale of the project, the sensitivity of the landscape, and the profound disruption it would cause, I believe this application should be refused on multiple substantive grounds.

1. Lack of Understanding of Employment in Rural Communities

Meridian's presentation suggested that the project would bring employment opportunities to the local area. However, they provided no meaningful evidence to support this claim. Rural communities do not benefit from temporary construction jobs that are typically filled by specialist contractors brought in from elsewhere. Long term employment associated with solar farms is minimal, often limited to occasional maintenance visits. Meridian failed to demonstrate any understanding of the employment structure in rural villages, where sustainable jobs are tied to agriculture, small businesses, and local services. Their suggestion of economic benefit was vague, unsubstantiated, and misleading.

2. Insufficient Consideration of Effects on Residents

The company did not adequately address the profound impact this project would have on residents—particularly those, like myself, whose homes would be completely encircled by industrial infrastructure. The psychological and emotional effects of being surrounded by a vast, metallic, artificial landscape were dismissed without proper assessment. Rural living is defined by openness, tranquillity, and connection to the land. Meridian's proposal would replace this with fencing, security cameras, inverter stations, and thousands of panels. The loss of amenity, privacy, and wellbeing was not meaningfully acknowledged.

3. Noise Impacts in a Flat Landscape

Meridian failed to provide convincing evidence regarding noise impacts. In a flat landscape with no natural features to absorb or deflect sound, noise travels further and more intensely. Inverter stations, transformers, and cooling fans produce a constant hum that is particularly intrusive in quiet rural settings. Meridian's noise modelling did not account for the unique acoustic characteristics of this landscape. Their assurances were generic and not tailored to the actual topography. Residents would be subjected to persistent noise pollution, especially at night when ambient sound levels are lowest.

4. Inadequate Road Infrastructure for Construction Traffic

The roadways proposed for construction access are wholly insufficient. These are narrow rural lanes not designed for heavy goods vehicles, cranes, or continuous construction traffic. Meridian did not present a credible plan for managing congestion, road safety, or damage to verges and drainage systems. The risk to pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, and farm vehicles was not properly assessed. The disruption would be severe, prolonged, and dangerous.

5. Disruption During Construction

The construction phase of a solar farm of this scale is lengthy and highly disruptive. Meridian did not provide a sequential or phased construction plan, instead presenting a vague outline that suggested a haphazard approach. Without a clear timeline, residents cannot understand how long they will be subjected to noise, dust, traffic, and general upheaval. The lack of detail indicates poor planning and a disregard for the community's wellbeing.

6. Quality of Land Being Used

The land selected for this project is productive rural land. Meridian did not sufficiently justify why high quality agricultural land should be sacrificed for industrial use. In a time when food security is increasingly important, the loss of viable farmland is a serious concern. Their assessment of land quality was superficial and did not reflect the reality of local agricultural output.

7. Poorly Planned Construction Approach

Meridian's construction plan appeared disorganised and non sequential. Large infrastructure projects require careful staging to minimise disruption and environmental harm. Their failure to present a coherent plan raises concerns about the competence of the developer and the likelihood of avoidable mistakes, delays, and safety issues.

8. Inappropriate Siting in a Flat Landscape

The flatness of the landscape makes this site particularly unsuitable for a solar farm of this magnitude. There are no natural features to screen the development, meaning the visual impact would be severe and far reaching. Residents would face uninterrupted views of industrial infrastructure in every direction. Meridian did not provide adequate mitigation measures, nor did they acknowledge the unique sensitivity of this landscape.

9. Effects on Local Fish and Fishermen

The project's potential impact on local waterways, fish populations, and fishing activities was not properly researched. Construction runoff, soil disturbance, and changes to drainage patterns can have significant ecological consequences. Meridian did not present any detailed hydrological or ecological studies addressing these risks. The omission is unacceptable given the importance of local waterways to both wildlife and the community.

10. Reinstatement of Rural Land

Meridian's claims about reinstating the land after the project's lifespan were vague and unconvincing. Solar farms often leave behind compacted soil, damaged drainage, and altered ecosystems. The idea that the land can simply be "returned to agriculture" after decades of industrial use is unrealistic. Meridian did not provide a credible restoration plan or evidence from comparable projects.

11. Flood Risk Concerns

The site lies predominantly within Flood Risk Zone 3. Meridian did not adequately justify why a project of this nature should be placed in an area known for significant flood risk. Solar infrastructure can exacerbate flooding by altering water flow and increasing runoff. Their flood risk assessment was insufficient and failed to address cumulative impacts.

12. Cumulative Effects in a Small Area

This project cannot be viewed in isolation. The cumulative impact of multiple energy and infrastructure projects in a small rural area is substantial. Meridian did not provide a meaningful cumulative impact assessment. Residents are already facing pressures from other developments, and this project would intensify those burdens.

13. Conflict with National Grid's Own Project

National Grid has stated that this project would interfere with their own infrastructure plans. Meridian did not adequately address this conflict. A development that disrupts national energy infrastructure should not proceed without clear resolution of these issues.

14. Carbon Footprint of Imported Materials

Meridian failed to acknowledge the carbon footprint associated with importing solar panels and ancillary equipment. The environmental cost of manufacturing, shipping, and transporting these materials is significant. Their environmental claims were therefore incomplete and misleading.

15. Most Critically: No Connection for the Project

The most fundamental flaw in this application is that there is no connection available for this project. Without a grid connection, the entire proposal is unviable. Meridian did not provide a credible explanation or timeline for securing a connection. Approving a project with no confirmed connection point would be irresponsible and premature.

Conclusion

Given the numerous deficiencies in Meridian's research, planning, and justification, and considering the profound negative impacts on residents, landscape, ecology, infrastructure, and agricultural land, I firmly believe this project should be refused. Meridian has not demonstrated that the benefits outweigh the harms, nor have they shown respect for the rural community they intend to disrupt. The proposal is incomplete, poorly researched, and fundamentally flawed.

I therefore request that the planning authority refuse this application on the many points outlined above.