Greenhill Solar

The following is a critique of the 'Traffic and Transport' section of the 'OCTMP' (Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan) submitted by 'KMC transport planning' on behalf of Greenhill Solar Farm

This document appears to be a 'desk top' study with a significant element of 'cut and paste' from other traffic and transport plans.

Issues ref - Traffic and transport (Areas C,D and E)

Main issues -

1. vagueness of drawings, making interpretation difficult

2. - confusion due to conflicting data in different parts of the OCTMP

3. A significant amount of assumptions, regarding traffic, transportation, vehicles, workers, and adequacy or the network

4. Contradicting statements within the OCTMP

APP/GH 6.2.13 (transport and Access) page 11

Consultee - Mears Ashby Parish Council - questions the use of 'Mears Ashby Road, Earls Barton as an HGV route access to Greenhill E

Comment addressed and confirmed that Mears Ashby Road will NOT be used for HGV Access?

(This road has never been a defined HGV route anyway.)

However Fig 4.3 of the OCTMP, - Construction HGV routing, clearly shows Mears Ashby Road Earls Barton as an HGV route?

Whilst we applaud this decision, which appear to be on the grounds that it only effects one field EF33, this begs the question if it is not now a HGV route, how they will get, excavators, pile drivers, imported stone for access routes and other machinery into EF33?

Given also that the drawings show no access across the stream, hedge line and tree network into (EF 23) which is an 'Enhanced Riparian native planting area?' (There clearly is no cable route marked int EF 23 either.) This would suggest that EF33 is no longer going to be used as part of the scheme?

The removal of EF33 from the network would be an obvious solution and one which we, the residents of Mears Ashby and Mears Ashby Road, Earls Barton would welcome.

3.2 -Construction Phase

The HGV movements have been based upon forecasts for similar schemes at Cottam and West Burton.

Q. Are the road layout the same? Is the number and size of vehicles going to be the same? How do they know the HGV movements are the same? Are the plan layouts for the fields with solar panels the same?Are the route distances the same? Are the accesses the same?
Are the numbers of construction workers the same?
We assume then that assumptions are an acceptable way to design and build a scheme that you personally are not financially responsible for?

Further contradiction -Table 3.2 construction worker movements and vehicles

Total worker arrivals for Greenhill E =75 per day
Total 2 way vehicle movements = 150.
Therefore this means 1 worker per vehicle.

Table 3.3 - combined worker and HGV for Greenhill E = 84-75 (ie 9 HGV)
Total 2 way Vehicle movements for Greenhill E , 168- 150 (18)

So - the largest area of Solar panels on the whole scheme 'Greenhill E', will only have 9 HGV's per day/ (84-75)

Given the number of accesses on Highfield Road (5) and the amount of widening of accesses, the internal haul roads, worker parking areas. The excavating, disposal, filling with imported stone, the hedge removal and disposal, the movement of excavators, pile driving equipment, fencing, solar panel deliveries,etc, - only 9 HGV's per day?

5.5 Management of deliveries

5.5.1 States that Construction vehicles will not be able to deliver until 0930.

(Construction industry starts at 0730 - lorries carrying stone and equipment will be on the road by 0730) . The HGV routes to most sites are commuter cut-through routes. If lorries cannot access the sites until 0930 they will have to park up and wait. There are no defined HGV parking areas this side of Northampton. Hauliers are paid by the number of loads they deliver per day, many of them will be owner drivers. They do not sit and wait in lay-bys. They will not contract with Greenhill and the programme will suffer, or the rules they have laid down will be broken. Lorry drivers tend to go where they want , when they want, and they will not stick to defined routes or times. Consequently we will have lorries parked up in gateways and on verges, in dangerous locations. We will have traffic cutting through villages on non-HGV roads.We will have chaos at school times and commuters stuck behind waiting lorries blocking the roads. Residents will be stuck behind lorries and queues unable to get to work on time. This is a disaster waiting to happen and Greenhill will have no idea how they will manage this.

6 Construction Worker Traffic

6.2.1 - Whilst the introduction of construction compounds is applauded and construction workers have to park there and catch a shuttle bus, what happens to late arrivals due to traffic? Will they wait for the

shuttle bus to return? No, they will drive to the site they are working on as they won't want to be late on site and have pay deducted. Also the assumption that construction workers all live in the same place and can car share is beyond ridiculous. (6.2.2)

Finally, I have found no mention of traffic control on the roads affected by the widening (Highfield Road for example) for the creation of these accesses, so temporary traffic signals will have to be used.

Below is the proposed Access D1-right on the junction of Sywell road, which is a busy commuter road. Creation of an access here will be difficult and dangerous.

I have also assumed that all the 5 accesses will be widened, filled with stone, all at the same time, as the machinery and equipment will be there.

That being the case then there will be 4/5 sets of traffic lights on Highfield Road. This would be traffic chaos and should really be subject to a road closure. Given that the alternative is Glebe Road, which is single track, then this exemplifies the fact that this fragmented solar farm proposal, is totally unsuitable for this location

For the main access on Sywell road, (C1 opposite Beckworth Emporium)4 way temporary traffic lights will be required at the junction to control traffic from both directions east west and for access into area C and to access to Glebe road and the entrance to Beckworth Emporium 20m from the junction.
There has been no consideration to the impact that this scenario will have, given that on Monday 6th October I called int Beckworth Emporium, to do a traffic count at Mid-day. There were 250 cars parked in the car park and I was told this was a typical day. I live less than 1 mile from Beckworth Emporium, I know how popular and how busy it is and how much traffic comes from the Sywell road in both directions, with its bad bends and poor visibility. Visitor numbers to Beckworth will inevitably fall due to the delays caused by the 4 way lights and people will not bother to visit. Queues will cause frustrations at all times with 4 way lights as the 'inter green periods' are considerably longer. Visitor numbers will drop and Blue Diamond group, the owners will take this up with NNC.

This will be further complicated by the building of a 400kv substation and a massive BESS, battery storage facility at Greenhill C, also through access C1.
It is proposed that 5no 155 tonne transformers will be delivered on low loader trailers 2.9m wide and 18.65m long, as well as 92 modified storage containers containing the batteries on similar size vehicles I can find no evidence that Greenhill have assessed, using a 'swept path analysis' whether the access is wide enough or the ground clearance is sufficient and the implications for traffic issues and damage to the existing road surface, have been taken into account.

These are just my comments on one small area of this proposed solar installation.

My view is that these type of installations are driven only by a developer looking for an opportunity, where willing land owners and proximity to Sub-station are the key drivers.
The developer then gets consultants to make it fit together, using re-cycled data from previous developments.

Nick Frampton

Retired Civil Engineer
Worked in and on construction projects for 40 years.