Thorganby Parish Council

c/o Parish Clerk
[redacted]
YO8 6YU

10 August 2026

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

Response to call for community feedback from Light Valley Solar Ltd to meet Deadline 1 - 11 August 2026

Thorganby Parish Council has listened to the concerns raised by multiple residents and has recognised the apparent majority sentiment ***against*** the proposed development.

Whilst the Parish Council is not formally being consulted on these development proposals, we do feel it is our responsibility to represent the concerns of the majority of residents who have taken the time to communicate with the Council, and would like to summarise the objections in this document.

We would like to emphasise that we speak primarily from a "Thorganby perspective" but believe that our concerns will be echoed by many of the Parishes which would be impacted by these proposals, should they proceed, with their own specific inputs in relation to the impact on their own communities.

Loss of productive agricultural land and impact on good security and import requirements, with increased associated CO2 outputs due to transportation

Most of the land which would be affected around the Escrick site (LVS Site 1) is classified as BMV/ALC Grade 2 (the second highest land rating in the UK), and is used for arable production rather than grazing pasture. The removal of this land from productive farming would have a negative impact on UK domestic food production and therefore UK food security – increasing reliance on overseas producers and leading to increased CO2 emissions resulting from transportation of food into the UK via sea and air freight.

We have seen no calculations from the developers in terms of how much food production tonnage would be reduced across all of the areas lost to crop cultivation over the length of the projects and how the increased importation transportation generated CO2 values would be set off against the claimed CO reductions supposedly coming from the move to non-fossil fuel generation. Is it fair to allow them to "overlook" this negative aspect of the proposal, because it may be inconvenient to have to factor this in?

With nearly 500 hectares of BMV land taken out of production across the entire scheme, using wheat as an example crop, with wheat yields averaging around 10 tonnes per hectare, this equates to around 300,000 tonnes of wheat not being produced domestically over a 60-

year span, and having to be imported. Given that most imported wheat into the UK comes from Canada, this could potentially be a figure running into tens of thousands of tonnes of CO_2 relating purely to sea transportation, plus land haulage on both sides of the Atlantic – surely not a factor to be left out of the consideration of the scheme's pros and cons?

We are not familiar with the status of other affected areas, but feel that parishes across the development will and should highlight the BMV/ALC values for their areas so that the wider impact on food production and the amplified effect on additional imports is made clear. Every thousand tonnes of wheat, potatoes or carrots (widely grown in this area) not produced in the UK must be imported, as we are not a net exporter of <u>any</u> of these foodstuffs.

On a wider front, the Inspectorate should take the provision of national food security into account, and with a warming climate leading to greater drought and reduced crop yields, plus the loss of crops to wildfires and deliberate arson as being witnessed across the UK at this very moment, projects such as this which further reduce our national capability to feed our growing population must be called into serious question – especially when there are industrial and brownfield sites so readily available, but for the question of the developer's profits.

Loss of farm tenancies and agricultural jobs

Whilst landowners may be content to sell up and pocket the proceeds, Parishioners have expressed serious concerns over how many tenant farming families are either going to be made jobless/homeless, or have the acreage they farm reduced below sustainable business levels. Add to this the reduction in work for the many independent and small-scale farming contractors based throughout the region and we foresee a great deal of economic hardship resulting from the significant loss of arable lands under this proposed scheme. These are not careers or skills that are easily transferrable into other areas, so we do not consider that any "employment opportunities" associated with the development would be sufficient to remedy the likely hardships which would be brought about by the scheme.

Impact on sensitive wildlife habitats

North Yorkshire is predominantly a rural county, and as such is recognised as having a large number of often sensitive and internationally recognised wildlife sanctuaries. Within this immediate area we have both the Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve, a SSSI/Ramsar site of internationally recognised importance for migrating wildfowl, and the Skipwith Common National Nature Reserve.

The Lower Derwent Valey NNR has been recognised by the UK Government as a Special Protection Area and a Ramsar site - Ramsar Sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Convention on Wetlands. The area sees tens of thousands of migrating birds visiting each year, and there is a great danger of massive solar arrays causing disturbance to migratory flightpaths, creating "false lake" effects and thereby causing death, injury and displacement amongst the birdlife normally seen in the area – totally contrary to the safeguards put in place to establish the protected status of the area.

In respect of Skipwith Common NNR - Skipwith Common is one of the last remaining areas of northern lowland heath in England. An incredible variety of plants and animals depend on the Common for their survival. The 270ha of open heath, ponds and mire is an ancient landscape, with its roots in pre-history. Skipwith Common's heathland has stayed almost the same for thousands of years – with its physical geography closely linked to the surrounding area and likely to suffer if watercourses and drainage around the site are disturbed.

BESS facilities and firefighting provision

During this hearing, and in other similar hearings around the UK, the lack of regulation around BESS facilities has become abundantly clear, and in this the case the applicant's lack of clarity about which BESS technology which will be employed calls their attitude to health and safety into serious question. If they are unable to state what technology will be used, how can they assess the safety record of said "unknown" technology and how can they plan mitigation of risk around the deployment. This simply is not good enough when the potential risk to life, health, the environment and property is considered.

With knowledge and experience of other thermal runaway events in the UK and overseas, and awareness of the release of harmful substances from such thermal events, surely a proposal to site a BESS facility alongside a populated area cannot be sanctioned? Given wind-borne pollution arising from fires at such facilities, the siting of any BESS should take into account the potential spread of harmful emissions across the wider area downwind of any site, and amend site locations to the area of least risk and impact.

It also seems lax in the extreme to quote Yorkshire Water as stating that there is "no overall problem" in the provision of fire-fighting water supplies. What does this mean – that there will be times when there WILL BE a problem in water supply? Presumably such limits on availability are likely to occur in times of drought, which are becoming more frequent – and which are more likely to coincide with thermal events due to high temperatures reached during heatwaves. An average person, considering the level of risk, might reasonably predict that this could be a perfect combination of higher temperatures increasing the risk of thermal event, alongside a reduction in water availability due to drought, and conclude that the fire-fighting and contaminated water storage plans are inadequate and should not be permitted in their present form.

Increase in heavy good traffic on rural lanes and B-roads

During the lengthy construction phase of such a large-scale proposal, there is inevitably going to be a massive increase of HGV traffic onto narrow, often poorly surfaced country roads. One consequence of this is going to be a rapid degradation of already challenging roads, making driving more hazardous and damage to vehicles far more likely as HGVs break up road edges and create more potholes.

There are already times when commuting traffic makes the rural road network congested, and residents having to share narrow road space with large vehicles is only going to exacerbate this problem – and over a very lengthy period of time.

At certain times of the farming year, especially around harvest, the rural road network also sees a huge increase in farming traffic and large vehicles such as combined harvesters and the tractors and trailers transporting the harvest to storage facilities, and whilst residents of these areas are used to this and make allowances for sharing the road with contractors moving from farm to farm and between fields, to add a large amount of additional construction HGV traffic is likely to bring some areas to a standstill.

What contribution are the developers prepared to make, and continue to make over the life of the scheme, to ensure that the tax and rates-payers of North Yorkshire do not have to foot the bill for the increase costs of upgrading road capacities and ongoing remedial works due to the impact of HGVs both during construction and over the life of the scheme in relation to both maintenance and the clean-up of the scheme at the end of the project?

We have seen no offer whatsoever from the developer to contribute to road building and maintenance, which effectively amounts to loading part of what would effectively be capital costs of the scheme onto local residents while taking the profits offshore.   We are sure that North Yorkshire Council would have, when consulted, a lot to say about the increased construction and maintenance costs associated with upgrading and maintaining a safe highway network which would accommodate both regular and additional traffic throughout the project.

We would urge the Inspectorate to impose an upfront cash levy on the developers to re-imburse NYC for the additional costs and the continue to charge them throughout the life of the project for cost increases associated with their operations – not forgetting the clearances which will again entail a lot of heavy plant movements – and ask that the Inspectorate liaise closely with NYC to recognise these costs and ensure that they are passed on in full.

Loss of amenity and recreational opportunities

The proposed road and junction changes planned to accommodate heavy vehicles and exceptionally large vehicles are going to entail loss of hedgerows and mature trees, with subsequent impact both on wildlife and the nature of the countryside around the sites. There is going to be a loss of amenity in terms of footpaths, bridleways and other rights of way currently enjoyed over varying types of countryside being subsumed into an industrial landscape offering no enjoyable recreational facilities in comparison with that available to residents and visitors at present.

The suggestions made by the developers about footpath creation and recreation areas being provided alongside their developments are fairly ludicrous – who comes into the countryside to picnic, walk, cycle, birdwatch, dog-walk etc alongside and within an industrialised landscape?

Impact on wildlife

Loss of habitat for mammals, birds and insect life is going to devalue the flora and fauna of the area in a manner which is unlikely ever to be improved in a dramatically changed landscape, regardless of ancillary planting schemes which are unlikely to mature for decades and, given the proposed 60-year lifespan of this development, we foresee a desertification effect of the ground under the solar arrays and those areas affected by associated infrastructure and cabling routes.

In terms of the mitigation promised by the developers in terms of planting and additional hedgerow creation, it strikes us that this is at odds with assurances given to farmers whose land would be used that the land would be fully restored to agricultural status at the end of the project – does this mean the removal of (by then) established wildlife areas and hedgerows – and how will the negative impact on wildlife of this habitat be measured and counteracted? If this is the case, then the project will visit a doubly negative impact on the wildlife within the construction areas – which surely cannot be permitted by the Inspectorate.

Devaluation of properties

There is, it would seem, little to recommend in terms of turning an area from a green, pleasant and rural landscape into a mono-culture of extremely large solar panels, and there is no way of disguising the fact that this is going to make the area less appealing and therefore the properties owned and invested in by many families are likely to be both harder to sell and will achieve lower sale prices than if the development was not prevalent in the area.

Why is no scheme in existence to fairly compensate affected families and does the Inspectorate consider that it is just and reasonable to inflict massive financial distress on families and property owners? If construction land can be compulsory purchased, then people whose properties are potentially rendered unsaleable or massively devalued should be fully compensated for the lost value of their property – to at least permit them to move away from the developments.

We have heard at the hearings about properties which would be surrounded, and the developer appeared to give zero thought or sympathy to the families who would affected – so we urge the Inspectorate to step in where necessary to prevent or fully mitigate the worst of these injustices.

Lack of community benefit and uncertainty about investment proposals

Retail energy markets are largely governed by wholesale gas prices, which is mainly imported, and therefore we feel that this proposed scheme would deliver zero benefit in terms of cost savings to the residents whose locale is being so dramatically altered. The energy produced under such a scheme would be fed into the National Grid and retailed according to market forces, and therefore this area simply becomes a "factory floor" for energy production and transitions from being a rural economy to an industrial economy – with no mandate for such change from those most affected.

We have seen no evidence of serious proposals, should the scheme be approved, about how community benefit in terms of investment funds would be allocated and guaranteed over the life of the scheme. The developers are quite prepared to take away what to many people is "a green and pleasant land" for generations – so what are they going to give them in return in order to enhance local facilities and amenities?

Thorganby is a village with pretty much no facilities apart from a village hall and a playing field. We have lost our community pub, have no shops and a limited bus service which inhibits choice for residents young and old, but particularly young people not able to drive yet but wanting to explore the wider world, and avail themselves of part-time work in York.

Community grants should be a feature of the developer's proposals, but thus far we have only seen limited platitudes and no hard and fast costed and guaranteed community investment proposals. Again, we urge the Inspectorate to hold the developers to account and ensure that investments are both agreed with communities as being realistic but are also guaranteed and that there can be no backsliding on promises once the scheme is underway, should it be approved. Our very real concern is that the developers will construct and move on, leaving industrialisation in their wake and becoming "removed" from the day-to-day operations – not overlooking the fact that an Australian investment firm is the beneficiary from this scheme.

Larger scale of other potentially linked developments spreading the impact across a wider area

We have seen outline plans for other planned sites to the east of Thorganby, meaning that this area is set to be surrounded by such developments and many more communities to the east of the River Derwent are likely to be negatively affected as these developments join together. Regionally, this becomes a far larger impact than the 2500 acres covered by the LVS proposal, and should be recognised as a "bigger picture".

Can the Inspectorate be made aware of the other proposed schemes in North and East Yorkshire and be able to witness the impact of these schemes, if all approved, on the wider region? Not doing so, and treating every application as "individual" would be a failure to see that bigger picture and realise how the combined schemes could decimate the rural landscape of the region – potentially allowing for more nuanced and considered decision taking by the Inspectorate at top level.

Lack of explanation of why brownfield and existing industrial and warehousing sites have not been considered

We have seen no explanation as to why the many brownfield sites left in the wake of industrial shrinkage over the past 50 years are not being considered. In addition, as a result of the geographical location of this area near to a North-South/East-West crossroads of the A1/M1 and M62, there have been many massive scale warehousing and distribution centre developments with huge buildings with roofs suitable for solar power placements.

Is it simply that going onto agricultural and greenfield sites is cheaper and faster than the more complex exploitation of industrial and brownfield sites? This almost seemed to be conceded by the developers, and we don't feel that "this is the cheapest option" is good enough justification for granting approval of the scheme. Effectively the developers are saying, "we'll make larger profits by doing it this way – so hard luck you affected communities – we can get away with this under the remit of current UK Government policies so we fully intend to do so". It's not equitable in any shape or form to permit this attitude to prevail.

This is not a scheme which benefits residents, the UK taxpayer or the UK Treasury

This scheme, to the best of our knowledge, is backed by an international asset management company based in Australia. The profits derived from running this scheme are intended to flow to the shareholders of this organisation and, as shareholders demand accountability in relation to maximising their income from investments, the organisation behind the scheme will have one simple motivation - to extract the maximum amount of revenue throughout the course of the scheme in order to satisfy shareholder demand. The rights and negative consequences to the residents affected, and indeed the wider UK, simply will not feature in the operational planning of such a proposal.

The scheme may be dressed up as "green and environmentally positive" but big business does not operate on such a premise - it looks for profit opportunities. There is nothing wrong with this, per se, as this is the remit of the business, but asking residents of this area to put up with all the negative consequences of such a development "in the interests of the UK, green energy and global benefits" is disingenuous.

This is about making money – potentially to the huge detriment of the residents and regions affected by it for generations.

There are no meaningful details about properly considered and fair compensation schemes for loss of livelihoods, reductions in property values or loss of amenity – let alone the generational damage to the countryside and its wildlife.

The attitude presented by the developer's legal team was one of shoulder shrugging over all of the concerns raised, with very little by way of acknowledgment of, or empathy with the many and heartfelt objections being made by the people in the room. The reasoning or explanations seemed to focus on being able to get away with what is legally permitted, and to hell with the consequences for everyone on the losing end of the scheme. It appeared very much that the applicants came to the hearing expecting a “rubber stamping” exercise by the Inspectorate – we hope that you are able to demonstrate greater powers of control and compunction should you be minded to grant approval, and that those affected at all levels from individuals to the County Council are fully and properly recompensed before the developers take their profits.

One final note to make is to give consideration to Government announcements in recent days in respect of the roll-back of net-zero targets across various areas, and how changing Government policy over coming months and years might change the mindset of the Inspectorate in terms of the decisions it takes – we are looking to the Inspectorate to ensure fairness over decades, not just in the “here and now”.

On the face of it as things stand, based on the recent hearings at Escrick, this is a scheme which takes without giving, or at least giving the absolute bare minimum that the developers can get away with, and as such we cannot endorse and will continue to oppose it.

Thank you to the Inspectorate for allowing us to make comments on behalf of our Parish, and we appreciate the difficult job you have to do, but are confident that you will take all things into consideration and reach a fair conclusion.

Thorganby Parish Council