

Hillam Parish Council Written Representation relating to Light Valley Solar following the Open Hearings of July 2026

Executive Summary

Hillam Parish Council supports the transition to renewable energy and recognises the importance of decarbonising the UK's energy system. However, the Parish Council considers that the Light Valley Solar proposal would place a disproportionate burden on one rural community and does not achieve the balanced approach required by national planning policy.

The Council's principal concern is the proposed development of more than 1,000 hectares of productive agricultural land, including extensive areas of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) farmland. We believe that insufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate why lower-grade agricultural land, brownfield sites or alternative power generation opportunities could not be utilised, and we question whether the proposal is consistent with recent Government policy on food security and land use.

The Parish Council also believes that the cumulative impacts of the development have not been adequately assessed. In particular, we highlight the combined effects with other major infrastructure projects on landscape, traffic, local amenity and community wellbeing, together with concerns regarding construction impacts, grid connection works and long-term maintenance activities.

When we examine wider issues that impact our community, including landscape and visual effects, heritage, ecology, water management, transport, noise, and socio-economic impacts, we consider that significant uncertainties remain regarding both the assessment of effects and the effectiveness of proposed mitigation measures. We express particular concerns regarding: the close proximity of solar arrays and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) to residential areas; highway capacity; flood risk; wildlife impacts; the long-term restoration of agricultural land following decommissioning.

The Parish Council also questions whether the project has reached a sufficient level of design maturity for informed assessment, noting that key elements of the technology, layout and operational characteristics remain subject to change. We also request greater scrutiny of the applicant's justification for site selection and alternatives, their lifecycle carbon calculations and the provision of financial security for restoration obligations.

Overall, Hillam Parish Council asks the Examining Authority to carefully review whether the applicant has provided robust, evidence-based assessments across all planning disciplines, whether cumulative and long-term impacts have been fully considered, and whether the proposed mitigation measures are sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the National Policy Statements and wider planning policy. The Council submits that, in its current form, the proposal does not demonstrate that the benefits outweigh the identified environmental, agricultural and community impacts.

Hillam Parish Council Representation regarding Light Valley Solar

Firstly, it should be noted that HPC is not opposed to renewable energy. We recognise the need to decarbonise our energy system and we support the Government's transition to cleaner sources of power. Our concern is that this particular proposal places an unacceptable burden on one rural community and, in doing so, fails to achieve the careful balance that national planning policy requires.

Agriculture and land use

- The proposed solar farm would remove over 1,000 hectares of productive farmland from use, including extensive areas designated as Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a). This land is vital to the national agricultural economy and food supply, especially at a time when global disruptions, climate uncertainty, and political instability have highlighted the UK's vulnerability. Government guidance, including the December 2024 UK Food Security Report, the May 2024 Written Ministerial Statement and Defra's 2025 Land Use Framework, reinforces the need to protect BMV land and prioritise food production.
- The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) suggests we are facing "a tidal wave of solar farms on greenfield sites and working agricultural land". With an increasing number of applications around the county leading to a change of use of thousands of acres of land we feel this is an inappropriate industrialisation of the rural landscape and that for such development brownfield sites should be considered.
- The open hearing raised multiple challenges to the idea that livestock would be able to graze under solar panels. Camblesforth solar farm was cited at the Open Hearings as an example of a 'desert landscape' that results from solar farm activity with no possibility of grazing. We ask the EA to challenge any claims for continued farming use in the presence of solar panels.
- Based on the proposed 40 year duration of the Solar Farm the Parish Council is unable to understand how the government's safeguarding soils strategy can be met to ensure sustainable and secure food production. This is especially relevant when over 70% of the agricultural land being proposed is either classified as Grade 2 or 3A.
- National planning policy is clear: significant developments should avoid high-quality farmland wherever possible. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) both emphasise the importance of using lower-grade or previously developed land for renewable energy schemes. Yet Light Valley Solar fails to justify why less sensitive sites were not selected. The project's claim of biodiversity gain does not outweigh the permanent loss of food-producing land especially in rural communities like Hillam, which have historically supported sustainable farming.
- The project risks long-term damage to the soil profile, particularly across Sites 6 and 7, where the PEIR acknowledges a high risk of permanent soil degradation through compaction and poor drainage.
- Hillam residents have shown strong support for the Hillam Parish Council objections to this development and for the Rooftops not Countryside campaign, a community-led movement opposing the massive Light Valley Solar farm proposal spanning 2,500 acres across North Yorkshire. Locals argue that while they support renewable energy, industrial-scale solar panels and BESS sites should utilize urban rooftops, car parks, and brownfield land instead of fertile farmland. The campaign opposes the proposed development for several reasons:

- Loss of Farmland: Converting highly productive agricultural soil into an industrial site.
 - Environmental Impact: Disruption of local wildlife habitats and village character.
 - Failure to pursue Alternative Solutions: Pushing for solar arrays to be fitted on commercial warehouses and existing rooftops.
- The BESS and other built structures will take-up over 19Ha of land. Over 60 years, this should be regarded as a permanent loss, not temporary.
- It appears that mitigation in the form of hedgerows and woodland planting will be removed after decommissioning, just as they are coming to maturity. LVS and the EA need to consider what this will do to the landscape, visual amenity, biodiversity and ecology.
- The LVS response (Mr Fox) to the Open Hearing included the statement that the ‘Government has not made statements on the avoidance of BMV land’. This is not the case, please see UK Government guidance on renewable and low-carbon energy which states that the “factors a local planning authority will need to consider include: encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land...”.
- Therefore, we ask the EA to consider carefully whether the applicant's assessment of the impact on agriculture and land use, both during construction and over the long operational life of the development and subsequent decommissioning, together with the proposed mitigation measures, is complete, evidence-based and sufficient.

Cultural heritage

- Hillam is a historic and rural community valued for its countryside views, heritage, and village setting. The proposed development, particularly Sites 2, 3, 4 and 6, would bring industrial-scale solar infrastructure unacceptably close to nearby residential areas, with significant visual and environmental impacts. The project would introduce solar panels, battery storage units, fencing, and security cameras into open, tranquil landscapes that define our village identity.
- Heritage assets near the project area, including listed buildings and conservation areas, would be adversely affected.
- Given the huge impact on local heritage, we ask the EA to consider whether both the assessment of impact on heritage and cultural receptors and any proposed mitigating actions are good enough.

Cumulative and in-combination effects

- The Parish Council believe that the scale and dominance is a significant factor in the concerns that this development raises. Based over 4-6 plots, this is a substantial and sprawling development which would be less imposing if reduced in size or on a single site. UK Government guidance on renewable and low carbon energy states that “cumulative impacts require particular attention, especially the increasing impact that wind turbines and large-scale solar farms can have on landscape and local amenity as the number of turbines and solar arrays in an area increases”.
- The PEIR and Scoping Report identify potential harm to visual amenity and setting yet fail to fully consider cumulative impacts from other nearby infrastructure schemes, including Yorkshire Green, Noventum 50MW solar farm, the proposed limestone quarry on the A63, and additional development in Monk Fryston, Hillam and South Milford that include the major disruptions resulting from Yorkshire Water renewal of freshwater infrastructure. We ask the EA to consider that the development has significant impact on visual amenity. Here,

the developer's assessment identifies potential harm, and this is greatly compounded by the cumulative impact of multiple developments that have not been assessed. We ask that the EA consider whether the developer's assessment adequately addresses the harm and mitigation.

- The Parish Council notes that the grid connection phase will be a secondary application, but the work will be done in tandem with the solar development. The grid connection application needs to be considered from the outset as an in-combination effect. There is likely to be significant disruption along Hillam Lane towards Burton Salmon and Brotherton. This is the main southerly route out of the village and the construction works will have a significant effect, not least with multiple HGVs per day already affecting other routes. We ask the EA to consider why this essential incremental development has not been assessed as part of the overall, cumulative effect on the local community.
- The Parish Council recognises the attraction of this option for landowners. Based on a review of Savills web site, the suggested after-tax benefit is in the region of £600 per Ha. Based solely on these figures, the current application is a tempting proposition for struggling farmers, residents and business owners. The Parish Council is concerned that this could cause a 'domino effect' in the area with other landowners following suit resulting in a situation like the proposed 1200 acres at Camblesforth, which is not an attractive prospect.
- Maintenance and repair works will include the replacement of parts, including solar panels and the BESS batteries. It is evident that LVS don't know which technology will be employed on site given that technology is constantly evolving. We ask the Examiner to ensure that any repair or replacement work is linked to the same controls as the initial construction restrictions, including visual impact, noise, height.

Ecology and biodiversity

- The Parish Council supports the concerns raised by the Ecology Team regarding inaccuracies in the applicant's assessment of wildlife impact.
- Local residents, who frequently observe diverse bird and mammal species on the agricultural land in question, have contributed valuable feedback emphasizing the need for a more thorough evaluation of ecological implications.
- Wildlife corridors will also be impacted, consider the example of roaming deer.
- There is a growing body of evidence, including a study published in Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews, which states that, "birds and bats are particularly threatened by large scale solar farms, as they can mistake the panels for bodies of water, a phenomenon called the Lake Effect". This confuses migrating birds and can cause birds to collide with and sustain burns from the panels. Given the exceptionally large scale of this proposed development, we ask the EA to carefully consider the impact that this application could have locally - particularly given the RSPB sites in the area.
- We ask the EA to ensure that the applicant's assessment and mitigations in relation to ecology and biodiversity are good enough for our rural location.

Landscape and visual effects

- The solar farm would be a large and visually intrusive development in a natural countryside setting. Hillam is an historic rural village whose character is defined by its open countryside, agricultural setting and long-distance views. The introduction of extensive solar arrays, battery storage compounds, security fencing, CCTV infrastructure and associated development across several sites would fundamentally alter the character of our village environment for decades. The Parish Council can see no direct or indirect benefit to the

wider Hillam (and Monk Fryston) community with a loss of visual amenity due to the changing landscape either by a) the siting of the solar farm or b) the introduction of screen plants. Either solution is considered a significant detractor from the current Open Space outlook.

- From the top of Duncce Mire Road, residents and visitors currently enjoy uninterrupted views eastwards towards the Yorkshire Wolds. Those views form part of the identity of our village and are valued by generations of local people. Under this proposal, this will be permanently changed and children living in and travelling through our local area may never experience that rural landscape. This is not simply a temporary construction impact. It represents a forty-year change to the character of the countryside.
- We ask the EA to consider that the development has significant impact on visual amenity. Here, the developer's assessment identifies potential harm, and this is greatly compounded by the cumulative impact of multiple developments that have not been assessed. We therefore ask that the EA consider whether the developer's assessment of impact on landscape and visual amenity adequately addresses the harm and mitigation resulting from direct and cumulative effects.
- We also note that at the Open Hearing multiple local residents refuted the LVS claims that they have consulted with all residents on the impact of the proposed developments on individual residential locations. We ask the EA to investigate these claims.

Noise and vibration

- There are an anticipated 1000 vehicle trips over the 6-to-9-month development phase. This will have a significant impact on local noise and vibration. Can the EA please consider whether the developer's assessment and mitigation is adequate.
- It is evident that LVS has not finalised the selection of solar panels and BESS technology. It appears for example that motorised, rotating panels are an option within this uncertain design, and we ask the Examiner to ensure that noise and other impacts on adjacent residents are considered based on the actual, selected solar panel and BESS designs.

Other matters

- All large-scale, capital projects encounter major challenges and setbacks during construction, operation or decommissioning phases. Here, we seek assurance that developers and operators are not able to walk-away from important commitments such as site safety, visual and environmental impact and reconstitution of agricultural land, particularly given the cascade of ownership from Macquarie Asset Management to Island Green Power that relates to LVS. We ask the EA to consider whether there are strong enough financial protections through bonds or other measures. Here, we ask the EA to note Macquarie's investments in Southern Water and Thames Water, with UK Government currently considering renationalization to address major service failings.
- Local residents have described the design of the proposed solar project as immature, with design documents that lack clarity and detail. It is evident from the Examiner's hearings that LVS has not finalised design or selection of BESS and solar panel technologies, including whether panels should be fixed or motorised/swivelling. It is therefore unreasonable that LVS should make claims that relate for example to visual impact, specific noise criteria and height. We ask that the EA consider whether the design is adequately mature, and whether the proposed mitigating actions are good enough, particularly in terms of noise, glare and visual impact.

- The design does not show commitment to mitigating actions, for example in pulling back panel locations from villages and residential properties. The lack of adequate ‘buffer zones’ between solar panels and associated buildings and adjoining residences is a concern. Typical buffer zones for other developers can be well over 100m, far in excess of the 30m proposed by LVS, and which will have a significant impact on local residents. We ask the EA to consider the adequacy of buffer zones or ‘setbacks’ proposed by LVS. See the Lime Down Solar Park as an example.
- As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), Light Valley Solar must demonstrate compliance with national policies such as NPS EN-1 and EN-3. These policies support renewable energy in principle but require careful balancing of landscape, agricultural, and community impacts. This proposal fails on all fronts—undermining food production, rural character, and environmental integrity.
- A key element of the proposed solar PV developments is their claimed positive impact on carbon emissions over their lifetime, and yet the most recent SEPE analysis of the similar East Park Energy development identifies that:
 - the Applicant has materially understated the Scheme’s lifecycle carbon emissions and materially overstated its claimed carbon savings.
 - transparent alternative lifecycle calculations indicate that the Scheme would generate substantially more greenhouse gas emissions than it would avoid over its lifetime.

We are concerned that the LVS assessment of carbon impact may also be understated, for example does it include all costs of manufacture and shipping. Therefore, we challenged the carbon impact of the LVS application during the Open Hearing and LVS responded with references to APP046 and APP167, neither of which relate (we can find no Open Hearing transcript of the LVS [Mr Fox] response to allow us to re-check these references). Therefore, we ask that the Examiner consider, perhaps through independent validation, the expected impact of the LVS development on carbon emissions, recognising that the National Policy Statement EN-1 requires that an application must be determined in accordance with the National Policy Statements except where “adverse impacts from the development outweigh the benefits.”

- The government has made clear that energy developments should not come at the cost of essential land for agriculture or the wellbeing of rural communities. Recent ministerial statements and planning decisions have repeatedly rejected similar large-scale solar farms on BMV land. Approving this scheme would set a dangerous precedent, disregarding established planning safeguards in favour of short-term returns for developers and investors.
- Uncertainties persist regarding health risks associated with living near a solar farm. Given the concentration of village residents within half a mile of the proposed development, and considering its size and projected duration, the Parish Council strongly urges North Yorkshire Council to reject this application and similar ones in other rural villages. Instead, emphasis should be placed on identifying more suitable brownfield locations within the county for solar farm development.
- Expressing apprehension about the solar farm's proximity to Hillam village, the Parish Council is concerned about the potential increase in solar-related crime incidents, a trend documented nationally. Drawing criminal activities closer to the village could result in a rise in residential-related crimes.

Site selection and alternatives

- The developers recognise that the site is in the green belt but believe they have “very special circumstances” to consider this application acceptable. We believe this application has failed to acknowledge residents’ sentiment towards preserving the green belt within the boundaries of Hillam. Over the past couple of years, the Parish Council has spent considerable public funds in planning related disputes to preserve the green belt. If a development such as this were to go ahead, it would make a mockery of all the good work undertaken by Parish Councillors, local government councillors and Selby District Council as was.
- There are anecdotal articles (e.g. see Simon de Bruxelles, The Times) that suggest that allowing development such as this in the greenbelt may pave the way for future residential development.
- There are more appropriate locations for solar infrastructure, such as rooftops, brownfield sites, and degraded land, which would avoid the environmental and social costs of building on agricultural greenfield sites. National guidance encourages solar on less sensitive land, and emerging policies such as the New Homes (Solar Generation) Bill support these alternatives. Light Valley Solar’s justification is based on connection to the Monk Fryston substation does not excuse the inappropriate site selection near Hillam and surrounding villages.
- The developers have been asked if alternative methods of generation have been considered. They state wind generation has been ruled out due to current legislation. The Parish Council interpret the current guideline to be a) a suitable site is identified and b) there is no local objection. Plots 4, 5 & 6 are adjacent to a field which already has a wind turbine. Anyone local will tell you that Hillam Common is a very windy plain. We would suggest that this may be a suitable site. In terms of local objection, that is an unknown quantity until appropriate canvassing has been undertaken. While solar panels cover their entire contiguous footprint (preventing other uses), wind turbines physically occupy less than 1% of the total land within a wind farm. This leaves up to 95% of the surrounding land perfectly usable for agriculture or grazing. Around 10,000 solar panels could be needed to generate as much electricity as a single, modern wind turbine. Furthermore, onshore wind energy is cheaper than solar farms, see LCOE data below (source Energy Institute). We ask that the EA examine whether developers have adequately considered alternative methods or combinations of energy generation.

	Total installed costs (2024\$/kW)	Capacity factor (%)	Levelised cost of electricity (2024\$/kWh)	2024 installations (in 1,000 kW)
Bioenergy	3,242	73	0.087	5.07
Geothermal	4,015	88	0.06	0.32
Hydropower	2,267	48	0.057	9.3
Solar PV	691	17	0.043	452.1
Concentrated solar	3,677	41	0.092	0.71
Onshore wind	1,041	34	0.034	105
Offshore wind	2,852	42	0.079	8.3
Battery storage	192*	—	0.104	40

- Concerns around land availability are likely to increase over the next couple of years due to other developments, climate change and geopolitical issues affecting UK supply. These factors should also be taken into consideration when looking at this application.
- The BESS site selection is of concern to Hillam PC. The National Fire Chiefs Council states that “BESS fires are challenging to extinguish and can continue to burn from several hours to several days. A fire in Liverpool, in 2020, lasted 3 days. Smoke plumes from fires can also harm air quality. However, trying to extinguish fires using water can result in large volumes of contaminated fire-water runoff which can have a long-term impact on the environment. As a result, the prevailing view when it comes to firefighting tactics is to adopt a ‘controlled burn’ to minimise runoff whilst protecting the surrounding area from flame and heat impingement”. In short, fire authorities may ‘let it burn’ for long periods with consequential impact on the local area. NY Fire & Rescue state that developers should ensure “the BESS is located with due considerations of impact on communities, sites and infrastructure”. The NFCC also recommends safety features in the design of BESS, including “gas and fire detectors, explosion control systems, and water supplies for emergency services in case a fire does occur”. Therefore, we ask the EA to seek a thorough assessment of the impact of BESS location, safety measures, emergency response and environmental impact, and to challenge the LVS selection of BESS location. At the Open Hearing, LVS (Mr. Fox) responded with reference to APP216, and yet the ‘BESS Location Selection Criteria’ (Table 3-6) do not include any consideration of air quality risks to local residents in the event of a fire incident or to the risks to water contamination following any incident.
- It was also commented (LVS, Mr Fox) at the Open Hearing that “no brownfield sites offer this connectivity” (referring to the grid connection at Monk Fryston). We find this hard to agree with, when considering potential sites such as Ferrybridge. Can the EA please consider the adequacy of the LVS assessment of alternative sites.

Socioeconomic effects

- Despite the scale of this proposal, the developer has provided no meaningful or defined benefit for Hillam or its residents. Vague promises of “community enhancement” and footpaths do not justify the permanent industrialisation of the countryside. Residents’ quality of life, property values, and access to open landscapes would be significantly harmed.
- Hillam and Monk Fryston are both attractive and sought after villages. The villages have quite a unique feel about them compared to others in the area. This is in part due to the limited residential sprawl but also due to the lack of industrialisation of the immediate rural landscape.
- Residents have voiced concerns that there may be detrimental effects on house prices in the village. By completing a basic Google search, it is easy to establish that homes within close proximity to such developments do see reductions in price and those few properties that will be surrounded by the development will become much less desirable without their currently sprawling views of open countryside.
- We believe that the proposed developments need to identify community benefits explicitly. The Parish Council has previously received a letter of intent for a separate solar development offering financial community benefits of £1500 per Mw, yet we have seen no progress or engagement from the developer in delivering these benefits. Equally, it is hard to quantify an appropriate “benefit” based on the perceived “harm” to all residents in the affected area.

- Ideally the “community benefit” would not be monetary, but there appears to be little obvious gain from this development, for all affected residents. The effects of a “one off” monetary injection will be short lived, considering the “harms” associated with the development will be felt significantly during the construction phase, and to differing degrees during operational and decommissioning phases.
- It would then be remiss of the Parish Council not to capitalise on any “community benefit” if a decision to proceed goes ahead.
- We ask that the EA ensure that developer’s assessment of socioeconomic effects is of high quality, and for the EA to consider whether the mitigating actions are good enough.

Traffic and transport including public rights of way

- There are an anticipated 1000 vehicle trips over the 6-to-9-month development phase. The construction and operation of the project will cause significant disruption to local residents. Increased traffic on the A63, the A162 and local roads such as Common Lane and Hillam Lane will bring noise, dust, and congestion, exacerbated by other projects in the area. Our local MP Keir Mather has raised grave concerns about the A63 with regards to existing volumes of traffic and road safety, given the lack of a road crossing to assist school children and other residents. The A63/A162 island is already a bottleneck, resulting from HGV traffic from Sherburn industrial estates and new housing developments combining with through traffic from Monk Fryston, Hillam, Hambleton, Thorpe Willoughby and Selby.
- The Parish Council appreciates that the traffic management plan avoids passing through the centre of Hillam’s conservation area but is concerned about the number of HGVs navigating the northerly end of Austfield Lane. Hillam villagers know that Austfield Lane is narrow, has very limited passing places and is heavily used, not only by vehicles but by horse riders, cyclists, walkers, many with pushchairs, and dog walkers.
- Overall, the lack of footpaths by these roads is a concern with increased HGV traffic. The roads are generally narrow, of minor road construction with many verges that have been previously damaged or eroded. There are also old dyke bridges that may be in danger of collapse based on the proposed volume and weight of traffic that will be generated by the development. We believe that the developer commitment to accessible routes, woodland and rights of way is inadequate. For example, a clearer network of footpaths or other rights of way could ease residents’ concerns with regards to traffic. Here we support the comments of the British Horse Society, that PROWs are not properly defined or differentiated, permanent diversions and permissive paths are vague e.g. lengths not defined. We ask the EA to consider whether the developer’s assessment of impact on rights of way and mitigating actions is good enough.
- Preliminary Works are proposed following any planning approval but prior to official commencement of development. The scope of the works would go beyond minor to include removal of vegetation, installation of access points and remediation of land which could involve large-scale ground works, requiring the use of heavy plant machinery. We are concerned that this will generate HGV traffic and should not be allowed to be undertaken ahead of the main consented works which would be controlled by the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and which includes traffic routes and operational hour restrictions.
- Construction activity will cause damage to local roads and margins, and we seek assurance that local councils will not have to fund repairs. Can the EA please assure us that the liability for remediation remains with the applicant. On the other hand, early landscape mitigation planting should be encouraged as early as possible and including this in the preliminary

works would be a benefit provided it is appropriately monitored once the development commences.

- The Parish Council notes that the plan has been amended in relation to access to site 3 and subsequently sites 4,5 and 6, avoiding trying to get heavy traffic from Chapel Street onto Stocking Lane. To facilitate heavy vehicle access, it is assumed that this “access road” is quite substantive. The PC, on behalf of the users of the sports facilities on Stocking Lane (and other village events) would like the developer to consider a long term “access road” that could be utilised as part of a “one way” access route for Stocking Lane. There are an increasing number of parking and congestion issues caused by the increased use of the Stocking Lane venues.
- We ask that the EA consider whether the developer’s assessment of impact on traffic and transport, and proposed mitigating actions, are adequate given the current and well reported risks and traffic jams in the area. We also ask the EA to press NY Council for a thorough assessment of highways impact and alternative routes before any approval is considered.

Water environment

- The area is vulnerable to surface water issues, especially given the clay and sandy soil composition, and the loss of vegetation during construction could exacerbate flood risks.
- Many historic land drains are unmapped and could be damaged by large-scale developments. We have seen the impact even for small-scale, local projects where floods resulted from land drain damage.
- Historic assessment of the area around Monk Fryston and Hillam has shown that it suffered greatly from flooding in previous generations, only being recovered through drainage and flood defence measures, which may be threatened by the proposed developments.
- If LVS plan any elevated installations, to avoid flooding areas, then height limits on panels and buildings and hence visual impact would be of concern.
- We also ask the EA to consider whether the applicant has adequately assessed the demand for the millions of litres of water required for each cleaning cycle of the solar panels, throughout the operational life of the development, and whether detailed assessment has taken place with Yorkshire Water and others, to ensure local residents will not be adversely affected during periods of peak demand. LVS (Mr Fox) cited APP204 in Open Hearing response, but this shows only 0.27 litres per m² of panel per clean cycle, yet other sources indicate 2 to 4 litres per m² (see e.g. Science Direct articles). Here we note the problems encountered at the Cleve Hill solar farm in the Southeast. We also ask the EA to ensure that water requirements for BESS firefighting be considered as part of these assessments, along with managing the impact and recovery cost from contaminated water post any fire incident.
- We ask the EA to confirm that the developer has thoroughly considered all forms of impact on the water environment, including drainage and flooding risks.

Hillam Parish Council

6/8/26

Hillam Parish Council – Oral Representation to the Examining Authority

Good morning, we are Steve Sadler and Ali Oliver, speaking on behalf of Hillam Parish Council.

Firstly, we are not opposed to renewable energy. We recognise the need to decarbonise our energy system and we support the Government's transition to cleaner sources of power.

Our concern is that this particular proposal places an unacceptable burden on one rural community and, in doing so, fails to achieve the careful balance that national planning policy requires.

Our written representation sets out our concerns in detail. Today we focus on the principal issues that deserve particular scrutiny by the Examining Authority.

The first concerns **agriculture and land use**.

This proposal would remove over one thousand hectares of productive agricultural land from use for forty years. More than seventy per cent of that land is classified as Grade 2 or Grade 3a, making it Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. This is not marginal land; it is some of the country's most productive farmland.

Food security is an increasingly important national issue, and when Government policy has repeatedly highlighted the importance of protecting productive agricultural land, we ask the EA to question whether this proposal has demonstrated that such a loss is justified.

National planning policy requires that preference is given to lower-quality agricultural land, brownfield sites and previously developed land.

We remain unconvinced and we ask the EA to challenge whether the applicant has adequately demonstrated why those alternatives could not have been pursued.

We are also concerned about the long-term consequences for the land itself. Forty years represents an entire farming generation. The applicant acknowledges the risk of soil compaction and degradation in parts of the site, particularly Sites 6 and 7. We therefore question whether the safeguarding of soils and the eventual restoration of productive agriculture can realistically be achieved after such an extended period.

Accordingly, we ask the EA to consider carefully whether the applicant's assessment of the impact on agriculture and land use, both during construction and over the long operational life of the development, together with the proposed mitigation measures, is complete, evidence-based and sufficient.

Our second concern is the **cumulative effect of this proposal**.

We believe this is one of the most significant issues before the Examination.

The development is spread across multiple sites surrounding Hillam. This substantially increases its visual dominance and its impact on residents.

This proposal cannot be viewed in isolation. Residents are already facing Yorkshire Green, the proposed limestone quarry, planned housing developments in Monk Fryston, Hillam and South Milford, and major Yorkshire Water infrastructure works. In addition, the future grid connection works associated with this solar farm will inevitably create further disruption, despite being brought forward through a separate application.

From the perspective of local residents, these are not separate developments. They represent one continuous period of disruption affecting the same roads, the same communities and the same landscape.

We therefore ask the EA to consider whether the applicant's assessment of these cumulative and in-combination effects is good enough, and whether the proposed mitigation genuinely reflects the reality that local communities will experience.

Turning now to **landscape and visual effects**.

Hillam is an historic rural village whose character is defined by its open countryside, agricultural setting and long-distance views.

The introduction of extensive solar arrays, battery storage compounds, security fencing, CCTV infrastructure and associated development across several sites would fundamentally alter that character for decades.

One example illustrates this well.

Stand on Duncce Mire Road, where residents and visitors currently enjoy uninterrupted views eastwards towards the Yorkshire Wolds. Those views form part of the identity of our village and are valued by generations of local people. Under this proposal, this will be permanently changed and children living in and travelling through our local area may never experience that rural landscape.

This is not simply a temporary construction impact. It represents a forty-year change to the character of the countryside.

We therefore ask the EA to consider whether the applicant's assessment of visual amenity, landscape character and heritage impacts, fully reflects the significance of these changes and whether the cumulative effects have been adequately assessed.

Our fourth concern relates to **transport, public rights of way and community safety**.

We are pleased that heavy construction traffic should now avoid Hillam's conservation area. However, the revised proposals now have greater impact on selected road locations.

For example, Hillam villagers know that Austfield Lane is narrow, has very limited passing places and is heavily used, not only by vehicles but by horse riders, cyclists, walkers and dog walkers.

The increase in construction traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles, creates understandable concerns regarding road safety, congestion and damage to already fragile rural roads.

Many of these roads have no footways, have weakened verges and historic dyke bridges. We are not satisfied that the applicant has demonstrated these routes can safely accommodate the proposed construction traffic over many months without unacceptable impacts on residents and road users.

Equally important are the public rights of way.

We believe that the proposed mitigation falls short of what local people require. Better connectivity, clearer alternative routes and improved access arrangements could reduce

conflict between construction traffic and those using the countryside on a daily basis. At present, we do not believe that this has been adequately addressed.

We also remain concerned that the future grid connection works, likely to affect Hillam Lane towards Burton Salmon and Brotherton, have not been fully considered as part of the overall transport assessment despite their obvious cumulative impact on the community.

We therefore ask the EA to consider whether the applicant's assessments relating to traffic, transport and public rights of way are sufficiently robust and whether the proposed mitigation is genuinely adequate.

Finally, we would like to address **drainage and the water environment**.

Hillam has a long history of drainage challenges.

The area relies upon historic drainage systems, many of which are unmapped. Local experience has demonstrated that even relatively small developments can damage these systems and increase local flooding.

Given the scale of the proposed development, we believe much greater assurance is required that drainage infrastructure has been fully understood and protected.

We also ask the EA to consider whether the applicant has adequately assessed the demand for the millions of litres of water required for each cleaning cycle of the solar panels, throughout the operational life of the development, and whether appropriate consultation has taken place with Yorkshire Water to ensure local residents will not be adversely affected during periods of peak demand. Here we note the problems encountered at Cleve Hill.

In conclusion, we believe this proposal raises significant questions that have not yet been satisfactorily answered.

We ask the EA to scrutinise carefully whether the applicant has fully assessed the impacts on productive agricultural land, cumulative effects, landscape, heritage, traffic, public rights of way, drainage and the wider rural community.

Our request is not that renewable energy should be prevented.

Our request is that renewable energy should be delivered in the right place, at the right scale and with full regard for the communities who will live with the consequences for decades to come.

So, we respectfully ask the EA to ensure that the evidence presented by the applicant is rigorously tested and that the proposed mitigation is demonstrably sufficient before any recommendation is made.

Thank you for listening and considering the views of Hillam Parish Council.

Steve Sadler

Ali Oliver