

At the recent open floor hearings, I spoke about the impact of the LVS solar development in relation to sites 6 and 7 in particular. These sites are adjacent to Common Lane, South Milford, which is a single track lane and a no through road, with little traffic. As such, for a village that's surrounded by busy road networks, this area represents a relatively safe and an accessible environment for local people - and not only those from South Milford. It's the place where walkers, dog walkers, bird watchers, horse riders, cyclists, runners, children learning to ride bikes and horses that are being trained can undertake such activities in a safe and pleasant environment. This area is of great benefit to the health and wellbeing of local residents - myself and my family included - and the installation of solar panels will totally change the landscape and, with it, the impact on people will be very significant. The North Yorkshire Council recognises, in its Climate Change Strategy, the importance of retaining places where residents can go to undertake activities such as those mentioned above and the beneficial impact this sort of environment has on people's health and wellbeing. The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) has also been arguing to the government that 'while the NPPF does not define a 'valued landscape', previous judgements have established that a 'valued landscape' has qualities beyond the ordinary. CPRE argues that these could include: rural character, scenic quality, far-reaching views, a sense of history, historic lanes, recreational use and public enjoyment - the latter two being of particular relevance here. In addition to the aspects mentioned above, a number of residents - again, including myself - have highlighted the devastating impact that would be caused to both the rescue dog kennels, which would be surrounded by site 7, and the number of horses and ponies that are located on various sites along or off Common Lane. This in relation to the construction and replacement periods in particular, from the noise from pile driving etc. plus the impact of heavy traffic on the single track road that would prevent local residents from using this area. I focussed on health and wellbeing aspects at the hearing, as I'd previously submitted written comments and others had already raised many points that I'd have also raised and agree with. What struck me at the hearing was the way that LVS just totally disregarded the aspects highlighted above, amongst others, on the basis of them being outweighed by 'the greater good for the country'. This doesn't represent any true consideration of the views of and impact on local residents, in and around South Milford. I feel that much greater consideration could be given to alternative sites and do not believe that these sites - added, along with site 8, at a later stage and with a lesser consultation period - are the only option. Even if we had to have ground mounted solar, which I don't believe is the ideal solution to the need for greener energy (which I recognise we need), there are many other fields that are perhaps alongside roads (e.g. the A162 near South Milford) where people generally don't walk or undertake other activities and where driving alongside solar panels wouldn't have the same impact as the sites proposed by LVS. Equally, there are other means for the installation of solar panels and I don't understand why these can't be pursued - for example, a reservoir in England that has solar panels over it has been evaluated and the impact has proved beneficial - with solar panels reducing algae (plus the level of water treatment) and the reservoir helping to cool the solar panels. However, I've been advised by a LVS representative that LVS only deals in ground mounted panels and I've also read recently that the installation of solar panels over reservoirs is a more expensive option, in the first instance. Neither of these reasons are in any way adequate to compensate for our local people's loss of amenity. Plus there are many other places where solar panels could be sited ... just not as easily and as cheaply, presumably meaning less profit for those involved with LVS. These aren't good enough reasons either. I'm also concerned about the lack of recognition to date of the potential impact during the lifetime of this project - having been told previously by LVS representatives that the life of solar panels would be no more than 20 years, I don't understand how it's now quoted as 40 years - this seems to be an unlikely scenario. In any event, there will be significant activity throughout the lifetime of the proposed project, due to the need for replacement panels and infrastructure. This hasn't properly been taken into account by LVS. Another aspect that LVS has failed to take into account adequately is the issue of landscape value to local residents. During the open hearing, when questioned by an Inspector, LVS responded that the area represented a 'low value' landscape and that this reflected their professional judgement, together with having used what sounded like AI or an algorithm to come up with this rating. The point I want to make, in relation to the LVS response, is that the value of the landscape - re sites 6 and 7 in particular - for South Milford residents should be considered in context. Whilst we don't live in an area of natural beauty, like the Dales or NY Moors, we do live in a village that's surrounded by busy roads and where we have been losing public footpaths - including along Common Lane, where a footpath over the railway has recently been closed. This makes the peaceful and relatively safe environment I've been referring to even more important to those of us who live locally and regularly undertake activities along Common Lane. LVS may have said in an Open Floor Hearing that the residents most directly affected 'are not entitled to a view' and that is recognised - but we, as local people, should be entitled to retain our much valued landscape and our generally safe and peaceful recreational area. If nothing else, we need the Common Lane sites for the health and wellbeing benefits for local residents that this area supports. Whilst the Inspectors were rigorous in their discussions with LVS, which was much appreciated, I would still ask the Inspectors to give additional consideration to both the local (to South Milford) and also the overall cumulative impacts of the proposed project on our local area. I'd ask if this could include consideration of requiring LVS to identify alternative local sites - at least to the current sites 6 and 7. At the very least, removal of site 7 from the project would reduce the huge impact this would have and benefit the animals and residents located on the initial stretch of road along Common Lane. Please note that I have attached a few photos of the landscape that I, and my family, really appreciate and don't want to lose to an array of solar panels plus the necessary infrastructure - not only impacting on the overall landscape but also e.g. noise levels, fire risk. Also of extreme importance to us, albeit not shown in the landscape photos, are the opportunities we get to see deer, hares, rabbits, eagrets, swifts, swallows, curlews plus other wildlife and birds that we really value - whether a protected species or not.









