Whitestone solar farm development – impacts upon Whiston

Whiston Parish Council wish to comment on the planning application in the following terms :-

The Parish Council is supportive of the general principle of Solar Farms and the generation of green energy, however we consider that the sheer size of the proposed development remains too large and will have an overbearing impact on surrounding villages, especially when considered alongside the cumulative effect of other local Solar developments and housing developments in our area which are consuming the available green space.

The development will degrade the appearance and character of the local area, in both the short and long term, affecting those who live here without providing any local benefit.

Our core concerns are:-

Effectiveness of consultation

We remain concerned that the majority of residents within our parish are unaware of the extent and details of the proposal. Our letter to RMBC dated 25th March, 2026 outlining our concerns is included in the RMBC adequacy of consultation response.

It appears that the location of the scheme is selected on the basis of connectivity to the grid and that the concerns and wellbeing of local residents very much takes second place within this decision.

Impact of cable route construction within our parish

- Timescales are unclear with no limits on when the scheme must be completed
- No guarantee the scheme will not be constructed in a piecemeal fashion over many years
- No indication of any permanent features left within the ‘order limits’
- Whist the control of the issue is passed to the contractor the risks of pollution, in particular run off and siltation of Whiston brook is not given the high risk status we feel would reflect the historic flood events we have experienced.
- Working hours and noise – there is an open aspect to our village from the cable route – The documents offer ‘anticipated’ working hours, we expect specific limits would be established and maintained.
- No stated limit of the actual width of land that will be used – it appears that permission to use a land corridor in excess of 200m width would be an outcome. No limit on what is permitted within this corridor.
- No limits on the width of hedgerows that can be removed, no limits on tree removal
- No timescales for reinstatement of farmland or hedgerows
- Construction details for tunnelling under the M1 (direct line of sight/noise from our village). This is very likely to be off peak traffic hours with the M1 closed
- Traffic impacts in combination with other developments not considered – note the cumulative impacts consider concurrent effects only, not sequential effects where disruption to travel (already an issue with current flood alleviation

scheme) will be an issue for the foreseeable future if this scheme and others proposed go ahead.
- Security and prevention of 'joy riding' within the site is a significant issue, again with risks to those trespassing and nuisance to those neighbouring
- No commitment to 'definitely' return the land used to its original use. If not what else will it be used for?

Longer term impact of the BESS and Sub-stations

- No consideration or demonstration of the visual impact and screening requirements of our parish
- No demonstratable evidence that there will be no noise increase (humming electrical equipment and cooling systems) particularly when the traffic on the M1 is off peak. This is also a significant issue for residents within our parish who live closer to the BESS and substations

Longer term impacts of solar panel arrays

The visual impact on local circular walking routes and longer routes incorporating the Trans Pennine Trail towards Ulley is significant. We remain concerned that the panel arrangement and security fences on one or both sides of the footway will be intrusive and request that the PROW widths/setback for the panels is re-considered, in particular where alternative routes are not available or unrealistic.

There are references to returning land to use for farming once the scheme is redundant. The risk of panels degrading and permanently polluting the soils and run off into watercourses is a concern – has this been considered?

Misleading statements and imagery within the submitted ES summary

A substantial proportion of the assessments made within the ES are subjective, which are then presented as fact, with numerous 'not significant' conclusions. This clearly is a matter where independent judgement is required and it is therefore critical that what is proposed is fairly represented.

One example is that the photographs of typical installations within the Environmental Statement (non-technical summary) do not reflect the proposals described in the document – in terms of size and actual appearance. For example Image 1 showing a typical solar PV array does not show panels that are 3.8m high. Similarly the images of BESS and substation show components rather than the overall effect with security fences and hard access routes. We would note that highways schemes of s similar size and land-take would be presented to the public with full three dimensional visualisations – we would expect that key elements of this scheme should be considered in this level of detail.

It is a concern that the village of Whiston and surrounding hamlets are not named in the non-technical summary – the issues affecting our parishioners also need to be brought to the attention of the planning inspectorate.

Community Benefit

There needs to be some demonstrable community benefit arising from a Solar Farm scheme of this sheer size. If the scheme is granted, the local community and school children should be invited to see the scheme on the ground and be educated on the benefits that the scheme will provide.

We suggest that community benefit could be demonstrated by establishing a children's playground and/or a nature reserve that gives information about the environmental benefits that the scheme would generate.

We continue to assess and review the extensive documentation that has been published and look forward to further engaging with the planning process.