Submission ID: SCD0CEF64

Whitestone Solar Farm — EN0110020
Request for Examining Authority Site Inspection Viewpoints
Submitted by: Debbie Malham — Interested Party
Whitestone 1 — Conisbrough Parks, Firsby and Ravenfield
Dear Examining Authority,
1. I would like to ask the Planning Inspectors to visit several locations around Whitestone 1, particularly the bridleways through Conisbrough Parks and Ravenfield that I regularly use with my horse, Jess.
2. I keep my horses at [redacted] and have ridden around Conisbrough Parks for many years. I know these routes extremely well, and they are an important part of my everyday life. My biggest concern is that the proposed development could take away the safe, peaceful off-road riding that makes this area so special for horse riders.
The bridleway network I regularly use
3. I regularly ride Jess along the interconnected bridleways throughout Conisbrough Parks and Rotherham Ravenfield Bridleway No. 4. What makes these routes so valuable is that they allow me to ride for miles through beautiful countryside without having to use busy roads. This is particularly important for horse riders because traffic is one of the biggest dangers we face.
4. One of my regular rides takes me along Rotherham Ravenfield Bridleway No. 4, through Firsby and onto Conisbrough Parks Bridleway No. 13, which I follow up towards Hooton Woods. As you climb towards the woodland, the countryside opens up and there are magnificent panoramic views stretching across the landscape towards the Beacons at Clifton.
5. Another ride I enjoy takes me along Conisbrough Parks Bridleway No. 14, where there are wonderful views towards Conisbrough Castle from the higher ground. This route then connects with Conisbrough Parks Bridleway No. 4, where I can either ride towards Conisbrough or head in the other direction towards Birks Lodge and Conisbrough Park Grange Farm.
6. These are not isolated paths. They form a connected network which gives riders a choice of routes through the countryside. There are no public roads running through the main Conisbrough Parks bridleway network, and that is one of the reasons it is so valuable. I would really like the Inspectors to experience these routes as a whole rather than just looking at individual paths on a map.
Locations I would particularly like the Inspectors to visit
7. Conisbrough Parks Bridleway No. 13 — towards Hooton Woods
This is one of my regular rides with Jess, and I am particularly disappointed that the Applicant appears to have removed a viewpoint from this bridleway.
As you ride towards Hooton Woods, the landscape opens up and there are magnificent views across the countryside towards Clifton. I would like the Inspectors to visit the higher ground and see those views for themselves.
I do not believe a photograph from another location can properly show what it is like to travel along this bridleway and experience the changing landscape.
8. Conisbrough Parks Bridleways No. 2 and No. 4 — proposed construction crossing points
I would ask the Inspectors to visit the locations where construction vehicles are proposed to cross or interact with the existing bridleways.
Horses are flight animals. Even a normally calm horse can become frightened by a large vehicle, machinery, reversing alarm or sudden movement.
I am very concerned about introducing heavy construction traffic into an area where horse riders currently enjoy peaceful off-road riding. Having a traffic marshal at a crossing does not necessarily prevent a horse from becoming frightened.
I would like the Inspectors to see these locations and consider whether the proposed arrangements could genuinely keep horse riders safe.
9. Conisbrough Parks Bridleway No. 4 — proposed substation near Conisbrough Lodge
I would particularly like the Inspectors to visit the section of Bridleway No. 4 near Conisbrough Lodge, where I understand a substation is proposed on the opposite side of the bridleway.
I find this location very concerning. Conisbrough Lodge is part of the historic character of this landscape, and I struggle to understand why such substantial electrical infrastructure would be placed so close to it and alongside a well-used bridleway.
I would like the Inspectors to see the location for themselves and consider the effect on the historic surroundings, the landscape and people riding through this area.
10. Rotherham Ravenfield Bridleway No. 4 — Route 26/4/1
I regularly use this bridleway and would ask the Inspectors to walk along it.
It gives a good understanding of the hills and changing levels of the land proposed for development. There are extensive views across the surrounding countryside, and I am concerned that the scale and position of the proposed solar development mean it could remain clearly visible throughout its operational life.
I do not believe planting hedges and trees will necessarily be enough to screen such a large development on this landscape.
I would like the Inspectors to see the topography for themselves and consider whether the proposed screening could realistically reduce the visual impact.
11. Conisbrough Parks Bridleway No. 14 — views towards Conisbrough Castle
I would also ask the Inspectors to visit the higher ground along this route where there are magnificent views towards Conisbrough Castle.
These views are part of what makes riding through Conisbrough Parks so special. The countryside has a long history, and the relationship between the Castle and the surrounding landscape is something I believe should be properly appreciated before any decision is made.
12. [redacted] and Firsby Lane
I would ask the Inspectors to visit Firsby Lane and the area around [redacted], where I keep my horses.
Access along Firsby Lane is essential for their care and welfare. Veterinary visits, farriers, deliveries and emergency access all depend on being able to use this route.

I am concerned about how the proposed construction arrangements could affect this access and would like the Inspectors to see the local circumstances for themselves.

My concerns about construction and horse-rider safety

13. My biggest fear is that the proposed development could make the entire bridleway network unsafe or impractical to use during construction, even if the Applicant says the paths will remain open.

14. At present, I can ride Jess through miles of peaceful countryside without having to worry about heavy vehicles passing nearby. Introducing construction traffic, temporary access tracks, machinery and controlled crossing points into Conisbrough Parks would completely change that environment.

15. Horses can react suddenly and unpredictably when frightened. A horse that bolts or throws its rider could cause a serious or potentially fatal accident. I am genuinely frightened about the risks this development could create, not just for myself and Jess but for the many other horse riders who use these bridleways.

16. I am particularly concerned that the Applicant appears to place considerable reliance on traffic marshals, signage and management plans. These may control vehicles, but they cannot guarantee how a horse will react. If Jess becomes frightened by construction activity, I cannot explain to her that a crossing is being managed safely. I may have no choice but to stop using routes I have ridden for years.

17. I would ask the Examining Authority to examine what specialist research or assessment the Applicant has undertaken into equine behaviour and the risks associated with construction traffic, reversing alarms, machinery and unfamiliar activity. I would also ask whether the effects on the connected bridleway network have been assessed, rather than considering individual crossing points separately.

18. I am also concerned about the longer-term effects of the development. Even after construction, extensive solar panels, fencing, substations and other infrastructure would change the character of this countryside. The bridleways may remain legally open, but that does not mean the experience of riding through Conisbrough Parks will remain the same.

My request to the Examining Authority

19. I understand that the Inspectors cannot visit every location requested, but I would particularly ask them to visit Bridleway No. 13 towards Hooton Woods, the proposed construction crossing points on Bridleways No. 2 and No. 4, the proposed substation location near Conisbrough Lodge, Rotherham Ravenfield Bridleway No. 4 and the higher ground on Conisbrough Parks Route No. 14 overlooking Conisbrough Castle.

20. I would also ask the Inspectors to consider walking a section of the connected bridleway network rather than visiting only individual viewpoints. I believe this would help them understand why the routes are so important to local horse riders and why I am concerned that the development could make them unsafe or impractical to use.

21. I would be very happy to attend an accompanied site inspection and explain how I use these routes with Jess, the views we enjoy and why I am so worried about what could happen if the development goes ahead.

Thank you for considering my request.

Debbie Malham

Interested Party

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