Submission ID: SF9C5C198

Landscape, Visual Effects and Requested Site Inspection
Submitted by: Kerry Huggett, Firsby
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1. Introduction

I am a mother of [redacted] living in the small hamlet of Firsby, within the landscape affected by the proposed Whitestone 1 solar development.

I have already explained in my representation how important the surrounding countryside is to my family, particularly the freedom my children have to walk, cycle, explore and visit friends through Conisbrough Parks.

I now wish to raise specific concerns about the Applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and whether its selected viewpoints adequately represent the landscape experienced by my family and other residents.

2. The landscape as experienced by my family

Our relationship with this landscape is not limited to looking at it from one location. We experience it every day from our home, when leaving Firsby, and while walking and cycling along the public rights of way through Conisbrough Parks.

For my children, these routes are an important part of growing up in this rural community. My [redacted] regularly rides his bike through Conisbrough Parks to meet his friends, who all live in Conisbrough. These routes provide the main link between our home in Firsby and the town where his friendship group lives.

The ability to make this journey independently is incredibly important to him. Conisbrough Parks provides a safe and peaceful environment in which he can cycle to see his friends, develop his independence and enjoy a degree of freedom that is increasingly difficult to find elsewhere. As a parent, I value being able to allow him this independence because of the nature of the landscape and the routes connecting our communities.

Conisbrough Parks is therefore much more than an attractive rural setting for our family. It is part of the everyday infrastructure of our lives, connecting our hamlet with the neighbouring town and enabling our children to maintain friendships and social connections without relying on a car or an adult to take them everywhere.

My concern is that the impact of Whitestone 1 should not be considered solely in terms of whether solar panels can be seen from a particular point. The character, tranquillity and openness of the landscape through which my [redacted] travels are also important to his experience of these routes. Changes to the visual character of the countryside, together with any associated construction activity or temporary restrictions affecting public rights of way, could alter an environment that he currently experiences as safe, peaceful and familiar.

The landscape changes as we travel through it. There are open views, elevated positions, changes in topography and views towards historic landmarks. I am concerned that a series of individual photographs cannot adequately represent the full experience of moving through this landscape, particularly for children who use it regularly as part of their everyday lives.

3. Residential views from Firsby — Applicant Viewpoint 11

I understand that the Applicant has used Viewpoint 11, identified as Firsby Hall Farm / Conisbrough Parks Footpath No. 3, within its landscape and visual assessment.

However, Firsby contains seven residential properties with different orientations and outlooks. A photograph from one selected position cannot automatically represent the views experienced from each home.

My concern is that the Applicant may have underestimated the residential visual effects of Whitestone 1 by relying on representative viewpoints without sufficiently examining the different circumstances of individual properties.

I ask the Examining Authority to establish:

* What evidence demonstrates that Viewpoint 11 adequately represents the residential outlooks of the properties at Firsby?
* Has the Applicant considered the different orientations and elevations of these properties?
* Where are the visual effects experienced from my own home assessed?
* Has the Applicant considered whether the proposed solar arrays, fencing and associated infrastructure would remain visible above or beyond proposed landscape screening?

I request that the Examining Authority visits Firsby and considers the different residential outlooks, including from my property with my agreement.

4. Conisbrough Parks Bridleway 13 — former Applicant Viewpoint 12

I am concerned that an earlier viewpoint associated with Conisbrough Parks Bridleway 13 was reportedly excluded from the Applicant's assessment because of vegetation screening.

Bridleway 13 rises towards Hooton Woods and provides open and elevated views across the surrounding countryside. The experience of travelling along this route is not necessarily represented by a single photograph taken from a position where vegetation restricts visibility. Views can change considerably as a person moves along the bridleway, particularly where the ground rises and the surrounding landscape opens out.

The proposed solar arrays and associated infrastructure could be particularly apparent from elevated positions where planting around individual fields may offer limited screening.

I ask the Examining Authority to establish why the earlier viewpoint was removed, whether alternative positions were assessed and how the Applicant has considered the changing views along the route.

I request that the Examining Authority inspects the elevated sections of Conisbrough Parks Bridleway 13 towards Hooton Woods.

5. The wider public rights of way network and children's experience of the landscape

My children do not experience Conisbrough Parks as a collection of isolated viewpoints. They experience it as a connected, living landscape through which they can travel, explore, visit friends and develop their independence.

For my [redacted] the routes through Conisbrough Parks are the main connection between Firsby, where we live, and Conisbrough, where his friends live. Being able to cycle there independently gives him the freedom to maintain those friendships and participate in the social life of the wider community.

The peaceful rural nature of these routes is a significant part of what makes that independence possible and reassuring for me as his parent. I value the fact that he can make this journey through the countryside, rather than having to rely on lifts or travel along busier roads. It gives him freedom while allowing him to enjoy the landscape in which he is growing up.

This is an important aspect of the landscape's value that cannot necessarily be captured by a photograph or fully conveyed by assessing visibility from a limited number of viewpoints. Its value lies not only in what can be seen, but also in how people use it, how it connects communities and how it contributes to the quality of everyday life.
I am concerned that the Applicant's landscape assessment may not adequately represent the continuous experience of these routes, particularly where views change with elevation and direction.
I ask the Examining Authority to consider the cumulative experience of travelling through Conisbrough Parks, including the changing views, the tranquillity of the countryside and the relationship between the public rights of way and the communities they connect.
I also ask that this be considered alongside the separate assessments of construction activity, access, temporary restrictions and public rights of way. These are different effects, but together they influence how my children and other local families would experience and use the countryside.
I recognise that a solar development does not automatically make a public right of way unsafe or inaccessible. However, I believe it is important to understand how the proposed development and its construction would affect the character and experience of the routes that local families currently rely upon.
For our family, protecting Conisbrough Parks is not simply about preserving a view. It is about retaining the rural connections that allow our children to enjoy the countryside, maintain friendships and grow up with a sense of freedom and independence.
6. The historic landscape of Conisbrough Parks
The countryside surrounding Firsby is also a historic landscape.
As I explained in my earlier representation, Firsby has a history associated with medieval pottery production, while the wider area contains the historic landscape of Conisbrough Parks and its relationship with Conisbrough Castle.
These connections matter to my family because they contribute to the character and identity of the place where my children are growing up. The countryside is not simply open land awaiting development; it forms part of the area's history and sense of place.
I am concerned that the Applicant's selected viewpoints may not adequately convey the experience of this historic landscape, including the open views and relationships between historic features.
I ask that the landscape and visual assessment be considered alongside the heritage assessment, particularly where the proposed development would change the setting or appreciation of historic assets.
7. The effectiveness of landscape screening
I understand that the Applicant proposes landscape planting and other measures intended to reduce visual effects. However, the countryside around Firsby is not flat. Its changing elevation creates views across and over fields and hedgerows.
I am concerned that planting around individual solar fields may not be sufficient to screen the wider development, particularly from higher ground or where arrays and associated infrastructure are visible across several fields.
I also recognise that newly planted vegetation takes time to establish and mature. I therefore ask the Applicant to explain what views would remain during the early years of operation and after proposed planting has matured, and how the effectiveness of that mitigation has been demonstrated.
The assessment should consider not only whether planting may screen particular panels from selected viewpoints, but also whether the development as a whole would remain visible from residential properties, elevated public rights of way and the wider landscape of Conisbrough Parks.
8. Requested site inspection
I respectfully request that the Examining Authority visits Firsby and the surrounding Conisbrough Parks countryside, including:
* The residential outlook from my home, with my agreement.
* The vicinity of Applicant Viewpoint 11 at Firsby Hall Farm.
* Conisbrough Parks Bridleway 13, particularly its elevated sections towards Hooton Woods.
* The connected routes used by families walking and cycling between Firsby and neighbouring communities, including the routes linking Firsby with Conisbrough.
I believe these visits would assist the Examining Authority in understanding the landscape as it is actually experienced by residents rather than relying exclusively upon selected photographs.
In particular, I believe it would be valuable to experience the changes in elevation and visibility along these routes and to understand their role in connecting local communities. This would help demonstrate why the landscape's value cannot be fully understood by considering individual viewpoints in isolation.
9. Conclusion
I recognise the importance of renewable energy, but I do not believe that this removes the need to properly assess the effects of development on existing communities and their surroundings.
For my family, Conisbrough Parks is not simply a view. It is where my children spend their childhood, develop independence and enjoy the countryside. It is also the connection between our home in Firsby and the wider community of Conisbrough, enabling my [redacted] to cycle independently to meet his friends in a peaceful rural environment.
These everyday experiences are an important part of our quality of life. They are also part of what makes living in this landscape special.
My concern is that the Applicant's landscape and visual assessment may not adequately represent that experience or the effects of introducing extensive solar infrastructure into this landscape. I ask the Examining Authority to examine whether the Applicant's viewpoint selection and assessment are sufficiently representative, whether the predicted effects of Whitestone 1 have been adequately justified and whether the proposed mitigation would be effective in practice.
I respectfully ask that the Examining Authority considers the landscape not only as a series of views, but as a place where people live, where communities are connected and where children can enjoy the freedom to explore their surroundings and develop independence.
My children cannot explain these concerns through the planning process themselves, but their experience of Conisbrough Parks deserves to be understood and considered before a decision is made that could change it for generations.
Kerry Huggett
Firsby