Submission ID: S89BF85C6

Submitted by: Karen Ashworth – Interested Party Number - [redacted]
Property: [redacted]
Procedural Deadline A — 27 October 2026
Dear Examining Authority,
(Why I chose to make Firsby my home)
1. I am requesting that the Examining Authority undertakes an accompanied residential site inspection at my home [redacted], Firsby and visits the surrounding countryside of Conisbrough Parks and the routes connecting Firsby with Ravenfield as part of its examination of Whitestone Solar Farm, particularly Whitestone 1.
2. I am a former Great Britain Olympic Gymnast and had the privilege of representing my country, travelling extensively and experiencing many different countries and landscapes around the world.
3. Following my retirement from competitive gymnastics, I had opportunities to work and live overseas. However, I made the conscious decision to remain in Britain and raise my family at Firsby.
4. That decision was influenced enormously by the countryside surrounding Conisbrough Parks. I wanted my family to grow up somewhere peaceful, surrounded by open fields, wildlife, historic countryside and opportunities to enjoy the outdoors.
5. Having travelled so widely, I appreciate just how special this part of Yorkshire is. The countryside around Firsby is not simply somewhere I happen to live, it is somewhere I deliberately chose to make my home because of its location, beauty and tranquillity.
6. I love [redacted] and the life my family has built here and I am deeply concerned that Whitestone 1 could fundamentally change the very surroundings that made me choose this property in the first place.
7. I respectfully request that the Examining Authority undertakes an accompanied residential site inspection at my home, [redacted] Firsby and I would welcome the opportunity to show the Inspectors the views from my home and garden, the surrounding countryside and the tranquillity that made me choose this property as the place to raise my family. I believe a visit would help the Inspectors understand the potential effects of Whitestone 1 on my residential amenity.
(Running, walking my dogs and my connection with Ravenfield)
8. Physical activity has always been an important part of my life and continues to be so. I regularly enjoy running, walking my dogs and spending time outdoors in the beautiful countryside surrounding Firsby and Ravenfield. These activities are an important part of my everyday life and wellbeing.
9. I regularly use the countryside surrounding Firsby and have a strong connection with Ravenfield. The footpaths, bridleways, lanes and open countryside linking these places are part of my everyday life.
10. What makes these routes so valuable is the opportunity to exercise away from traffic, surrounded by nature, with open views and a sense of peace that is becoming increasingly difficult to find.
11. Running and walking through this countryside is not simply about getting from one place to another. It is about being outdoors, enjoying the landscape and having somewhere peaceful to clear my mind.
12. I am concerned that Whitestone 1 would introduce extensive solar panels, security fencing, construction tracks, electrical infrastructure and other development into a landscape that currently feels open and largely undeveloped.
13. Even where a public footpath or bridleway remains open, the experience of using it could be very different if it passes alongside extensive fencing, construction activity or solar infrastructure.
14. I ask the Examining Authority to consider the effects on people who use these routes regularly, including runners, dog walkers, families and other recreational users, rather than relying only on an assessment of whether the routes remain legally accessible.
15. I would particularly like the Inspectors to walk representative sections of the countryside between Firsby and Ravenfield, so they can experience the changing views, topography, tranquillity and connections between the different routes.
(The landscape and historic character of Conisbrough Parks)
16. Having travelled internationally, I know that every country has landscapes that make it special. For me, the historic countryside around Conisbrough Parks is one of those places.
17. The open fields, old farmsteads, historic parkland, views towards Conisbrough Castle and connections with Ravenfield are all part of the character of this area.
18. I understand that the countryside forms part of the Green Belt and that the Applicant has undertaken a landscape assessment. However, I question whether that assessment fully reflects the value of the landscape to people who live within it and use it every day.
19. The scale of Whitestone 1 is particularly troubling. This is not a small development confined to one field. It would introduce infrastructure across a substantial area of countryside, changing views and the experience of moving through the landscape.
20. I am concerned that the combined effects of solar panels, fencing, tracks, electrical equipment and associated works could substantially diminish the openness and rural character that make Conisbrough Parks special.
21. I also ask the Examining Authority to consider the historic landscape as a whole, rather than assessing individual viewpoints and heritage assets in isolation.
22. The relationship between the former medieval deer park, historic farms, public rights of way and views towards Conisbrough Castle is part of what makes this countryside distinctive.
23. I am particularly concerned that once extensive infrastructure is introduced, the landscape will be changed for decades, even if the development is described as temporary or capable of eventual restoration.
(Firsby Lane — access to our homes_
24. I also ask the Examining Authority to inspect Firsby Lane and the location of the proposed construction crossing affecting the lane.
25. Firsby Lane is the only lawful vehicular access to all residential properties at Firsby. It is the road upon which every resident depends to reach their home.
26. As a resident, I am concerned about any proposal that could introduce construction traffic controls, delays or potential obstructions affecting access to [redacted] and the wider residential community.

27. Residents need reliable access for work, family life, deliveries, visitors, medical appointments and emergencies. These are ordinary everyday needs that should not be overlooked or compromised when construction arrangements are being designed.
28. I would like the Applicant to demonstrate how access will be maintained safely and reliably, including what would happen if a construction vehicle broke down, if equipment obstructed the lane or if emergency services needed immediate access.
29. I ask the Examining Authority to establish whether the proposed crossing has been assessed specifically in relation to the fact that there is no alternative lawful vehicular access for Firsby residents.
30. I also ask whether alternative construction arrangements have been examined that could avoid this conflict altogether.
(Wildlife, tranquillity and family life)
31. One of the reasons I chose [redacted] was the opportunity for my family to enjoy the countryside and wildlife on our doorstep.
32. I value being able to walk out of my home and enjoy open fields, birdsong, wildlife and quiet rural surroundings without having to travel elsewhere.
33. I am concerned that construction activity, vehicle movements, noise, lighting and fencing could affect the tranquillity of the area and the wildlife that uses the surrounding fields.
34. I would like the Examining Authority to consider these effects together, particularly where the same residents and recreational users could experience changes to their home environment, access routes and surrounding countryside.
35. The countryside also has an important role in physical and mental wellbeing. As someone whose life has been closely connected with sport and exercise, I know how valuable access to peaceful outdoor spaces can be.
36. I do not believe that the value of these places can be measured solely by the number of people using an individual footpath at a particular time. The connected network and the landscape through which it passes are part of the benefit.
(Locations I ask the Examining Authority to inspect)
37. I respectfully request that the Examining Authority considers the following locations for site inspections, particularly to understand the residential, recreational, landscape and heritage effects of Whitestone 1.
38. My requested inspection locations are:

- [redacted], Firsby — accompanied residential site inspection (highest priority). My family home, where I would welcome the Inspectors by prior arrangement to experience the views from my home and garden, the peaceful rural setting and the potential effects of Whitestone 1 on my residential amenity.
- Firsby Lane — proposed construction crossing. The only lawful vehicular access to all residential properties at Firsby. I ask the Inspectors to consider the proposed crossing, potential traffic restrictions, emergency access and the consequences for residents.
- Conisbrough Parks Bridleway 13 — towards Hooton Woods and land parcel 29. To appreciate the elevated views, topography, historic landscape and the changing experience of people walking and riding along this route, including the area of the previously omitted landscape viewpoint.
- Conisbrough Parks Bridleway 2 — Firsby Lane towards Hilltop Farm and Arbour Lane. To consider the connection between Firsby and the surrounding countryside, existing recreational use and proposed construction arrangements.
- Conisbrough Parks Footpath 3 — Arbour Lane towards Park Lane. To appreciate the open countryside, tranquillity and experience of walking or running through the landscape.
- Conisbrough Parks Bridleway 4 — Park Lane. To consider the effects of the proposed electrical infrastructure, construction activity and changes to the historic rural setting.
- Conisbrough Parks Route 14 — Arbour Lane towards Park Lane. To appreciate views towards Conisbrough Castle and the historic landscape. The route's footpath and bridleway classifications should be checked against the definitive map.
- Ravenfield Footpath 10 — Braithwell Road towards Garden Lane. To appreciate the changing views towards Conisbrough Castle and consider whether the Applicant's selected viewpoint adequately represents the experience of walking or running along this route.
- Ravenfield Footpath 2 — St James' Church towards Ravenfield Ponds and Arbour Lane. To consider the relationship between the historic church, the surrounding countryside and the wider landscape.
- Ravenfield Bridleway 4 — St James' View towards Moor Lane. To appreciate the recreational network, changing topography and countryside connecting Ravenfield with Conisbrough Parks.
- Ravenfield Footpath 6 — towards Hollings Lane. To consider the importance of this route to local walkers, families and the wider recreational network.

39. I appreciate that the Examining Authority may not be able to visit every location. However, my highest priority is an accompanied residential site inspection at [redacted], Firsby, followed by the proposed construction crossing on Firsby Lane, Conisbrough Parks Bridleway 13, the countryside connecting Firsby with Ravenfield and Ravenfield Footpath 10.
(Request for consideration of removing Whitestone 1)
40. I fully understand the need for Britain to develop clean and renewable sources of energy. I support the ambition to move towards a more sustainable future.
41. However, I believe renewable energy development must be balanced against the environmental, historic, landscape and community effects of the particular location chosen.
42. My concern is that Whitestone 1 would substantially change the countryside that I deliberately chose as the place to raise my family, together with the connected recreational landscape that I use regularly for running and walking.
43. I ask the Examining Authority to examine whether the Applicant has adequately assessed the combined effects on the Green Belt, landscape character, historic setting, residential amenity, public rights of way, tranquillity, wildlife and Firsby residents' access.
44. I also ask whether the Applicant has sufficiently justified the scale and location of Whitestone 1 and whether reasonable alternatives could avoid or reduce the harm to this particular landscape.
45. I respectfully request that the Examining Authority gives serious consideration to the removal of Whitestone 1 from the Development Consent Order proposal if the evidence does not justify its inclusion.
46. I have been fortunate enough to represent my country and experience many remarkable places around the world, yet I chose to make my home here in Yorkshire, surrounded by the countryside of Conisbrough Parks.
47. I made that choice because this is somewhere special to me and my family. I hope the Examining Authority will visit

[redacted], see the landscape for itself and understand why I feel so strongly that it should be protected.
Thank you for considering my request.
Karen Ashworth