

PUBLIC INQUIRY HEARING W/C 10TH JUNE 2024

LPA REFERENCE 22/02241/FUL RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Personal Statement

My name is Peter Purdy and I live at Manor House Farm, Thoroton and have done for nearly 30 years. All my adult life I have chosen to live in a village in a rural setting.

In the Appellant's Statement of Case on a number of occasions (Page 5 Paragraph 1.2 and again on Page 8 Paragraph 3.1) they state that the "Proposed development is located in a semi-rural setting". Nothing could be further from the truth. RES seek to denigrate the site and its surroundings and implies that it is not part of a classic rural landscape. Both Hawksworth and Thoroton are designated as Heritage Assets as they are both Conservation Villages. They did not acquire this status because they had half a dozen old walls and buildings; they got it because of their setting. This was confirmed when the Greater Nottinghamshire Landscape Character Assessment was published in 2009. The document was prepared as an aid to local planning authorities to aid development control decisions. Our two villages were already designated as Heritage Assets prior to the report but were confirmed by Rushcliffe Borough Council in the Management Plans for both Hawksworth and Thoroton as being in the South Nottinghamshire Farmlands Character Area. Further more, RDC confirmed that it would follow the Guidelines and Recommendations in that Assessment. A principal one of those was that they would "Conserve the character and settings of village settlements." This proposed development by RES for an industrial solar installation does not conserve the character or the setting of Hawksworth and Thoroton it would destroy both.

RES on their Landscape Master Plan, dated 28/03/24, shows on the eastern boundary running beside the Thoroton to Shelton Lane a proposed permitted path. The proposed path then runs along the southern boundary up the Hawksworth Lane. This has been promoted as a generous new concession. This is no such thing – it is a maintenance corridor for RES to maintain the 4 metre high hedges and the 2.4 metre high security fence and some of the 96 security cameras

that would ring the site. I can assure the Planning Inspector that there is no amenity value to walk a corridor hemmed in between a 4 metre high hedge and a security fence with an unrivalled view of nearly 140,000 solar panels. Any member of the public who took such a walk would wonder how on earth did this happen. In fact the landowner and RES have already begun to diminish the landscape by over the last three years, allowing the hedges on the boundary to grow out of control, curtailing landscape views. This is in marked contrast to the farming land owner on the eastern side of the Thoroton Shelton road who has kept his hedges in a state of good repair and as a by-product has given us a better view of the landscape.

Again in RES Statement of Case on Page 14 Paragraph 5.8 they state that solar is the cheapest form of generating electricity. That maybe for generating profit for the operator, however, it does not bring the benefit of cheap electricity to the end user. As evidence of this I asked my provider of electricity, OVO Energy for a quote to provide me with green energy. I attach a copy of their reply which indicates that it will cost me an additional £10 per month or £120 annually. RES offer no benefit by way of cheaper electricity to those affected should this development be granted permission.

As someone whose interest in solar developments has been sparked by this RES application, I was pleased to learn that King Charles in March applied for planning permission to Kings Lynn and West Norfolk council for a solar installation at Sandringham. He intends that the installation makes the house and the estate self-sufficient with a supply of green energy. I whole heartedly support the King in this laudable project and hope he receives planning permission. It is interesting to note in the planning application the King is proposing to install 2000 solar panels on 2 hectares and the output will be 2.1 megawatts. In broad terms, to a layman, that looks like for every 1000 panels the output is 1 megawatt. On that basis, given that RES are proposing to install 139,568 solar panels the output should be around 139 megawatts. After all RES do state that the site has "good solar irradiation levels".

Finally, just to reinforce the fact that this area is thoroughly rural. Thoroton has no shop, no pub, no school, no bus service, no village hall, no leisure centre, no children's playground, no Deliveroo, no mains gas supply, and a very hit and miss mobile phone coverage. So those who live in an urban setting might ask "Why on earth do you live there?" I can't answer for everyone but somewhere like Thoroton and Hawksworth offers a real sense of community. Where people know you and you know them. We can all step out and access a quiet lane, a footpath or a bridleway that give way to the countryside that surrounds us. This goes a long way to compensate for all those things we don't have. It also means the access contributes to our fitness, social interaction and mental wellbeing. The proposed development would cut us off from the environment in which we live. I therefore wish to oppose this appeal.

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3 The Development Proposal

- 3.1 This application seeks planning consent for a ground-mounted solar array and associated infrastructure. The array would comprise circa 2,000 panels, providing a combined total of 2.1MW of energy.
- 3.2 The solar panels are constructed of toughened glass and are mounted on a steel framework supporting structure which would be driven directly into the ground.
- 3.3 The panels would be orientated due south, inclined to ensure optimum irradiance and arranged in rows that follow the terrain, being approximately 3.06m above ground level at their tallest point.
- 3.4 The solar array would be connected to a new hybrid power system unit (Flex ESS50 model), which would be positioned on the western edge of the site. This unit would both manage the power supply from the panels and provide battery storage. The unit is contained within a single modular block with a footprint of 3.2m x 1.17m, and measuring 1.95m high. The unit will be coloured a visually recessive green, to match the colour used in the nearby works sheds.
- 3.5 The site is already enclosed to the north, east and west by mature tree line and hedge planting. The southern boundary is enclosed by a timber post and rail fence. Consequently, no additional fencing is proposed. The nature of the location means that security measures across the Estate are already high. This being the case, no additional security measures (CCTV etc) are proposed as part of this application.
- 3.6 The proposed works would not require the removal of any trees but creation of the works access into the site would require the loss of a 6m length of hedgerow.
- 3.7 No new access road or areas of hardstanding are proposed as part of the works.
- 3.8 Figure 2, below, shows the proposed panel layout.

