

Public Inquiry – Independent Person Submission

PINS Appeal: APP/P3040/W/23/3330045

LPA Ref: 22/02241/FUL

Location: Land East of Hawksworth and Northwest of Thoroton, Shelton Road, Thoroton, Nottinghamshire

Jane Haskell

Homeowner of Westlands, Thoroton (house facing the T junction towards Hawksworth) since 2016, with my parents & ponies also resident (although in different parts of the property!)

Regular user of the local roads, bridlepaths & byways with my home bred new forest ponies. I have competed at Horse of the Year Show and at National level in both British dressage and British eventing.

Object

I'd like to start to by saying it is every horse owners dream, to be able to have their horses at home, for me they are very much pets, although I have competed my whole life with them as my aunt breeds new forest ponies (in the new forest) which are a classified rare breed. It is very much a lifestyle and done for the love of the hobby which does take over your life, as they are like children. When trying to find a suitable home, location is paramount with many factors but proximity to bridlepaths is certainly very important, as otherwise you are reliant on transport to be able to build fitness for them but also to enjoy them, which is needed for my mental stability (as I have come to learn when I do not ride as often as I need)

Thoroton and Hawksworth are great locations, in that we have good bridlepaths nearby that allow us to create circular routes linked by the road network, which I am sure anyone who enjoys walking or cycling would understand that turning around and returning the way you have been is no fun. Add to that a horse returning home, you are inviting problems! (as they rush to get home) Especially when training young ponies as I do. The road between the two villages is extremely useful with wider verges (especially when the grass has been cut) and is quieter than most, which is another bonus to the area.

The proposed solar farm is a major concern for two reasons, the build and the long term effect.

Roads in the area have become increasingly busy with many new homes to the area but comparing a few cars to the 40 lorries a day that will be using the roads to construct the solar industrial estate, its incomparable. The haul route that is proposed to be used for access will be

rendered useless to many. To remain safe on a horse will result in many using the other roads in the area which comes with its own issues.

It's the British Horse Societies recommendation to pass at a maximum speed of 10mph and at 2 metres distance. Sadly, this is quite rare and whilst we all like to believe we 'do the right thing' I get numerous apologetic waves when drivers see me too late. I would actually like to ask how many are actually aware of this amendment, which is now in the highway code, as once we pass a driving test we don't have to do it again! Which I believe is the same for HGV tests and larger vehicles too.

The longer-term effect of the solar panels is a big concern, we are losing space. Space when on a horse is paramount. Enclosing a horse into a tunnel (which is effectively what is being created with the bridlepath through the development) will create problems, as when they panic, they have limited options where to go! With a road either side of the tunnel, I wouldn't dare consider the potential danger. I would also like to point out horses will run through and jump gates, I have experienced both of these! However, when you provide space, there is a lot less risk of injury. The width of the bridlepath is also a concern, as I will regularly ride and lead another horse for fitness and time constraints as I know others locally also do. When trying to pass others using bridlepaths this is restricting but most have space to move, the tunnel won't. Add to this those whose dogs do not like horses, or people who don't, you will be restricting the enjoyment of our national, public rights of way network.

This winter has been incredibly wet everywhere, using this year as an example of perceived normal for the ground is ridiculous. As an example, the field I rent in the village which backs onto the river has flooded three times this year stopping access for over a week each time, it has never done this in the 8 years I have lived in the village. However, it's a fearful reality of how things could change if the solar industrial estate is passed. The increased run off due to the panels and reduced grass growth that aids drainage will only increase the flood risk to the village. This winter almost broke me with the issues we faced. Having to keep the ponies on the driveway is not anyone's idea of fun!

I'd finally like to mention a ride I had recently where the farmer had flags in the field, quite low and I presume used to keep birds off the crops. My older pony is pretty bomb proof, I can ride past huge farm vehicles without her flinching and she is a companion to many friends horses to gain confidence on the roads. However, that day she took a real dislike to those flags which surprised me and she took off sideways a few times, which was a real reminder to me that even she isn't 100% - so whilst the solar panels may not seem offensive to some, I am in no doubt it will result in a loss of use of that bridlepath to many, pushing us onto the roads even more than we already are.

For these reasons, I strongly object to this application