

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

Lynn Ross, resident of Hawksworth. Smallholder.

I object to the Application

Priority being loss of food production and significant adverse effect on the environment.

QUOTE: “ Government ensures food production remains primary purpose of farming. Our target is to produce 60% of food consumed in the UK”. Rishi Sunak, March 2024.

60% of our food is currently imported; this is not environmentally sustainable.

QUOTE: “Food production is the primary purpose of farming and today we are taking action to clarify this principle. Mark Spencer MP, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 25 March 2024”

QUOTE: “The best agricultural land should be prioritised for food production” – Dept of Energy statement 15 May 2024

Food production clear priority for government and wider communities.

Large Scale Solar Farms: Commons debate, 18 April 2024.

Westminster Hall debate on 18 April 2024, chaired by Dr Caroline Johnson (MP, Sleaford) addressed the emerging flood of applications for Large scale Solar Farms. The points raised are alarming:

- Self sufficiency of food production continues to fall since 1980s. Agricultural land currently at its lowest since WW2.
- **100,000 acres** of agricultural land being taken out of cultivation annually.
- Lincolnshire, major food producer and bread- basket of UK produces 30% of UK crops and 18% poultry. Current plans for 12 Solar Plants in this area aim to take out a **further 23,000 acres of Best and Most Versatile** land.
- Equates to **81000 tonnes** of wheat, **57 million** loaves of bread and reduces production by **12%**
- **LAND IS FINITE.**
- Continual removal of crop production land increases pressure on our agricultural systems to produce more with less.
- Global turmoil continues to impact on food security and Climate Change is having devastating effect on our farming industry. This means that UK will have to import more food to compensate for lower yields. – higher prices, temp shortages. Increased carbon footprint – not sustainable.
- BMV and its definition was discussed at length. See handout attached taken from www.gov.uk – Agricultural Land Classification. Grade 3a - Good Quality Ag land. 3b – Moderate Quality ag land. **All MPs** agreed that 3b sits within BMV as it is still used for crops. *Currently some crops from proposed site used for biofuel for local AD, - Stoke Bardolph. Contributes to power production for 15,000 houses locally.*
- Greg Smith, MP (Bucks) raised point that new NPPF changes the language from ‘Best and Most Versatile’ to “agricultural land for food production” taking away the layered grading and recognising the importance of land for food production.

- Greg Smith MP also raised the point that in his area around Bicester, Oxfordshire, Milton Keynes, thousands of Distribution Centres, Warehouses etc have no solar on roofs. Same can be said for similar recent development on A453 locally.
- The same debate also gave estimation of **600,000 acres** of south-facing industrial roof-space in UK which could be utilised to house solar, however, the point was made that around **300 GW** of solar production already in pipeline which exceeds the government's targets of 70 GW by 2035.

24 May 2024, Secretary of State, Claire Coutinho issued written ministerial statement to Parliament re food security and placed increased emphasis on protecting BMV ie "Agricultural land for food production"

RES application and independent specialist identifies that **96% of land within proposed site sits within this band [2 – 3b],**

This is not compelling evidence to site an industrial plant.

Continued agricultural use to include sheep – RES discussion Monday 10 June.

As a smallholding, we provide grazing land for a local shepherdess and currently have 18 sheep. **Livestock need to be managed.** The sheep are checked every day to ensure they are fit and healthy. Currently we have 3 lambs who are lame due to the wet conditions of the fields and require daily medication. They need access to clean drinking water, need to be fed additional nutrition in some cases, need to be vaccinated for fly strike and various ailments during the warmer weather and need to be sheared. They require good quality grass to gain weight – these are not pets to keep the grass down, but a farmer's livelihood. They are also entitled to high animal welfare standards.

The plan to place sheep within the solar plant to graze on poor quality grass hidden in the shade of large solar panels is irresponsible. The idea that grazing sheep define the area as 'agricultural' is at best, disingenuous.

Personal statement

Equally important to me is the loss of rural amenity and the significant adverse effect this industrial development will have for the next 40 years and beyond.

We moved to Hawksworth 15 years ago to embrace a change in how we live; we knew there were no immediate amenities, but came to enjoy the wide open spaces, be closer to nature, to care for the environment and be part of a rural and predominantly farming community.

We have created a wildlife haven on our smallholding and continue to learn about how to farm, albeit on a tiny, tiny scale! Our village has its own Agricultural Group (HAGS), which is attended by many residents at our monthly social meetings who are keen to learn and support our local farmers.

I run and walk the local roads several times a week and meet many others including horse riders, dog walkers, cyclists and general visitors to what is a beautiful landscape – see our census, 4 May 2024. Our rural communities have **social value**. The landscape and changing seasons provide leisure spaces and also safe space and habitats for flora and fauna, all of which contributes to our sense of well-being.

This is a conservation area with a valued local landscape, and we are committed to protect it for future generations. . That said, we recognise the urgent need to develop clean and sustainable energy.

No-one here would argue that sustainable renewable energy is not a priority. The idea that we have to trade off food production and loss of invaluable countryside against energy makes no sense, when there are alternatives.

Solar (although not considered to be the most effective or efficient), can be sited on multiple surfaces in areas that do not overpower and adversely affect local communities. The social and environmental impact of this planned development is far-reaching and adds no value to the locality, biodiversity or local economy.

At the end of the temporary 40 years (I will be dead by then), our grandchildren will be faced with the prospect of acres of an unusable eyesore, with the removal of toxic panels that are not recyclable to landfill, and no-one wanting to take responsibility for the regeneration of this area. The money will be well spent by then – and there is no plan.

I would hope the original decision by RBC to refuse this application be upheld. I strongly object to the proposed development.