

Cllr Chris Grocock – statement at Planning Inquiry

10th June 2024

My ward of Cranmer covers the parish of Thoroton and with the neighbouring parish of Hawksworth, these two conservation villages form a vital part of the local heritage within the south Nottinghamshire rural landscapes, in which they are set. I've have attended multiple meetings of the Thoroton Parish meeting, the Thoroton-Hawksworth Action Group, and a meeting with the local MP and representatives of the local community.

The detailed, balanced assessment of all parties involved and the exceptionally high level of community interest of people from many different backgrounds, show that this is not a case of simple nimbyism on behalf of a few. As the room has filled up this morning and more chairs have been added, it's clear to me that SO MANY local residents feel the proposed development will irreparably damage their lives, their lifestyle, their wellbeing, and in very real terms, their prosperity. It is therefore my duty as their elected representative to support that strength of feeling, as well as the position of Rushcliffe Borough Council, as best I can.

Rushcliffe Borough Council's Planning Teams and the Action Group are setting out their case exceptionally strongly and their position has my full support. I'm not an expert witness by any means, I'm only seeking to add my voice to the many voices of our local community, across the communities in my ward, and the wider Vale of Belvoir, who are facing the pressure of this proposed development and others like it. So, my simple question in this, how could the proposed development be considered sustainable?

On balance, it is not supported by policy, there are no plans nor sufficient infrastructure for this scale of industrial level energy generation in rural Rushcliffe. As well as the crucial landscape, conservation and heritage issues, the road infrastructure is woefully inadequate to both build and service the site, with significant disruption and damage likely to be caused to rural roads and other villages that vehicles will need to drive through to access the development's location. The proportion of BMV agricultural land that will be lost on this specific site is, as has been set, out by the Council, is another key consideration when determining the possibility that other sites might be more appropriate. The appellant cites government policy demonstrating the urgency of need for renewable energy generation to hit net zero targets, but then dismisses the potential impact of climate change itself with the increased but largely unpredictable risk of flooding, confidently downgraded to lack sufficient weight, when it's clear it hasn't actually been properly evaluated.

I understand that attractiveness of the proposal to the appellant. There is capacity in the National Grid up and down the Trent Valley, due to the closure of the region's historic coal-fired power stations. There are no longer government subsidies for the more complex retrofitting or installation of solar panels on residential and commercial buildings. Many landowners are looking to diversify their income. But there is no policy of weight that encourages this scale of development in this specific location.

Historic views will be irreparably lost. Many residents will look out on fields of large metallic structures as high as their upstairs windows. The conservation character of Thoroton and Hawksworth will be fundamentally damaged.

Therefore, the societal, economic, and environmental benefits that could be theoretically derived from the proposed development, do not outweigh the issues of landscape and

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conservation, agriculture and flooding, and all the negative social, psychological and financial impact on the residents of the two villages, and neighbouring parishes, implied when weighing those crucial material considerations.

These factors fully demonstrate why this site, specifically, is the wrong one for this development. So, my only ask of this Inquiry when weighing the different material considerations, that all parties have represented, is to consider what sits behind the weighting of the Borough Council and the Action Groups stated positions. It is the lives of the people sitting in this room. Their wellbeing, their prosperity, their happiness. And that surely carries the greatest weight of all.

Thank you.