

22/00319/FUL Solar farm - Land west of Wood Lane and Stocking Lane NG11 0LF

Gotham Parish Council hereby Object to the use of this site for Solar Energy Production, although we all support the use of Solar Energy to gain energy security, we feel Solar farms on agricultural land in such a spot of local beauty does not outweigh the loss of the green belt, the landscape and visual effects, loss of agricultural land and the damage to an area which is an open space with a large amount of recreational use thanks to the extensive Rights of Way network around and within it.

In the 11 months since the last consultation, there are several factors that have changed, that in our opinion now put the acceptability of this application into question.

New Issues

Food Security now outweighs energy Security.

The war in Ukraine, the Covid epidemic shortages and the environmental carbon footprint of imported food due to transportation carbon footprints, now means the UK needs to establish Self sufficient food security, which we believe outweighs the possible Energy Security crisis. Although both are important, we cannot live without food whereas we could in theory survive with reduced energy, we just need to learn to become more efficient as a race.

Although the land here is classified as 3b, large areas of this land produce very good yields of crops that we witnessed in these fields all our lives and in fact, in dryer years, due to its moisture retention, can out produce crops grown on 3a land. With the outlook of the global warming, these areas could well be crucial in the years to come for arable food production and should be retained as such.

Last year, the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs George Eustice suggests to a House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, good reasons against solar farms on BMV land, and that BMV land should include subgrade 3b land. (Published in House of Commons HC 478 29th June 2022)

Pressures need to be put on the government to create policy to move Solar away from farms, and placed onto large buildings , all new builds and incentives for home owners to also site solar on their roofs to remove the need for eating into any agricultural land or green belt.

Loss of other local Green Space/ Belt in the area

Since the last consultation: -

The area has now lost a very large area of Green Belt land at Church Farm Kingston-on-Soar 22/00809/FUL being approved. This was also mainly well used agricultural land.

Proposals to remove another large area from the Green Belt for the LDO 22/01339/LDO

These new developments, along with the Fairham Pastures development and other local developments in both Gotham and other local areas, will already have massive impact on local wildlife numbers and the general biodiversity of the area. Any more loss would be dangerous.

Site Security Issues

The Nottinghamshire Designing Out Crime Officer (in accord with his DOCCO colleagues in other Constabularies) has reacted to the increasing thefts from solar 'farms' because of their valuable contents. Some sites have been burgled repeatedly, and he now strongly advises to avoid what is described as "Deer Fencing" and to use boundary fence is to a minimum of LPS 1175 level 3 and to a

height of 2.4 metres. The use of such a fence would also increase the visual impact of the area and any screening would by its very nature, further reduce the openness of the area making the Rights of Ways claustrophobic. This further emphasises the unsuitability of this Green Belt for such an application.

Original Issues

The above new issues along with the following issues that have not been addressed make this application unacceptable.

Loss of open spaces used for recreational use. Here elevated open views and surrounding agricultural fields and woodland create a countryside experience important for mental and physical well-being. Various circular walks and rides are available pass through this area. Green belt – the assessment provided by the applicant does not adequately consider openness.

Larger mammals need routes move freely between the areas of surrounding woodland. Additional corridors are required along with larger under fence gaps.

Larger buffer strips would be required to separate woodland from areas covered by panels. The Bunny Woods Solar Farm application 22/00303/FUL now has a proposed buffer of 100m from the edge of wood to the security fence. Partly this is to protect views from a path within the woods. It is also to address habitat concerns.

Loss of biodiverse habitat which has viable populations of larger mammals, a diversity of birds (including owls and birds of prey) and bats. Destruction of fields which provide areas for creatures to hunt, forage and for some bird species to nest.

Noise from inverters could affect wildlife if installed on the woodland edge near badger setts, bat roosts, bird nesting sites etc.

Management methods proposed include using herbicides to clear the land which goes against Rushcliffe's proposal to limit the use pesticides except in exceptional circumstances.

Conclusion

Planning laws require that for planning permission to be granted in the Green Belt, Very Special Circumstances (VSCs) must clearly outweigh the harm caused by the proposed development. Clear superiority of the VSCs is now no longer evident. More screening of the solar equipment will not mitigate the harm, it will increase it by further removing the essential open vistas which make the community's recreational use of the Green Belt so enjoyable and beneficial. Moreover, the Government's Energy Security Strategy intends that offshore wind be 50GW by 2030, which it states will be more than enough to power every home in the UK, so for most of the development's 40-year life, the VSCs will be reduced, yet the harm will be ongoing.