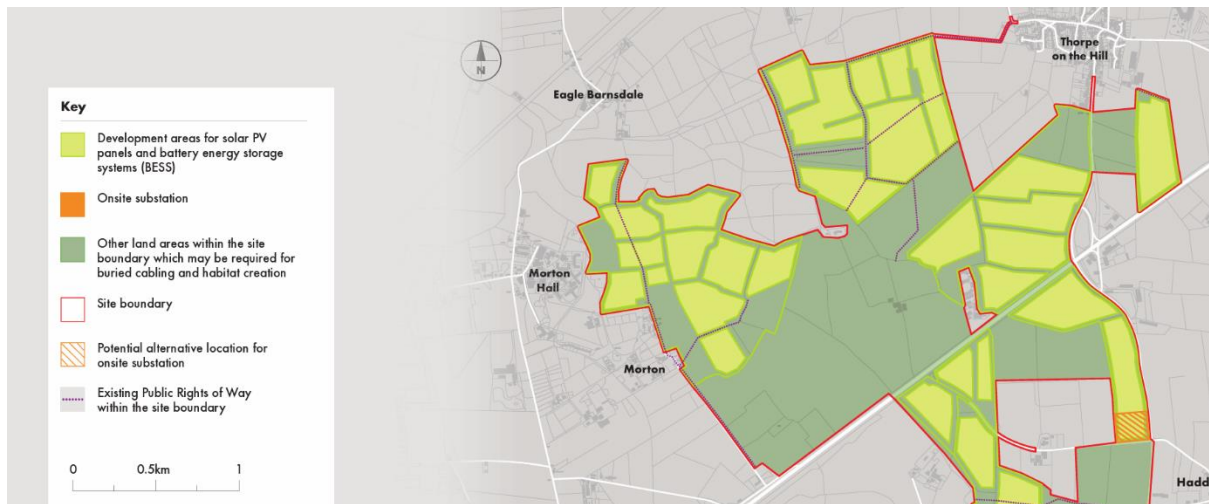


THORPE ON THE HILL PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO FOSSE GREEN ENERGY NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATION



Thorpe on the Hill Parish Council has many concerns about the proposed Fosse Green Energy Solar Farm and believes that the negative impact of this development far outweighs any envisioned benefits.

The Parish Council believes that this project should not be granted development consent. However, if consent were to be granted, two important mitigations are requested.

- The first is related to the selection of the areas of the farm where solar panels and BESS will be located. We note that many fields in very close proximity to Thorpe on the Hill have been designated for panels and batteries, whereas large areas to the west of the village, and north of the A46, have been allocated for buried cables and habitat creation. We feel this shows very little consideration, almost contempt, for the concerns of residents and ask you to interchange the solar panels fields closest to the village with those fields further away, designated for buried cables and habitat creation, or provide justification as to why this layout has been chosen, when it is of clear disadvantage to the residents of Thorpe on the Hill. We believe a design priority should be to keep the panels, and particularly the battery storage, as far away from the main density of population as possible.
- The second relates to your inclusion of parts of Clay Lane, Station Road, Lincoln Lane, and Fosse Lane within the site boundary. Our Chair asked for clarification as to why this was necessary. The following explanation was received. *‘the roads shown within the proposed boundary are being considered for access routes for construction and/or maintenance vehicles, and in some cases may also be used for routing the cabling we require to transfer electricity into the national grid. Public roads can be included in applications for planning permission or Development Consent Order, and in this case are included in case road widening or vegetation trimming or*

removal is required, which will be part of ongoing surveys. This is part of the swept path analysis for the HGVs, checking there is sufficient space along the existing road highway or whether minor transport works are required. We hope to provide more information on this at Statutory Consultation'. Our understanding is that electricity will be transferred to the grid via a substation near Navenby, this would seem to rule out any need for cabling to the north into Thorpe. In terms of access, we see no justification for you to stake a claim over Fosse Lane as it ends in a very tight turn into Main Street, clearly unsuitable for Heavy Goods Vehicles. Using Clay Lane for construction access would imply considerable HGV traffic along Lincoln Lane and Station Road, both primary residential streets in the village. We therefore request that any consideration of using Clay Lane, Station Road, Lincoln Lane, and Fosse Lane for access, particularly during construction, is curtailed as you develop your plans in response to consultation and these roads are moved outside the site boundary.

This is not an exhaustive list, and more mitigations may well be requested later.

Our concerns are many and we will expand on them during Stage 2 consultation.

They are based upon:

- The loss of agricultural land, including high quality Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, both in isolation and cumulatively. This loss will impact on both national and local food security.
- A belief that you have not complied with Planning Inspectorate direction in terms of the Soil Survey you have undertaken. You were directed to agree the location and number of samples with statutory consultees. We believe you have undertaken the survey without the necessary agreement with North Kesteven District Council, Lincolnshire County Council and Natural England. We therefore request that the correct process is followed, and the soil survey be repeated or extended after the necessary agreements have been reached.
- The impacts on the local landscape, their recreational value, and consequential negative impacts on the visitor economy. Thorpe on the Hill is at the centre of the Witham Valley Country Park and this proposal, if approved, will turn 2,500 acres of that park, into a predominantly industrial landscape. The area around the village contains many recreational facilities that attract thousands of visitors each year, campsites, caravan parks, holiday lodges, a golf range, a water sports park, restaurants and cafés, and a large Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust nature reserve. We have concerns for the commercial impact on these essential parts of the local economy if they become located in an industrial rather than rural landscape. We do not accept that temporary employment during the construction phase can compensate for this risk. Please see the comments above regarding locating areas of solar panels as far from the village as possible and areas for habitat creation as close as possible.
- The lack of evidence that other potential sites have been considered. At the non-statutory consultation event in Thorpe, a statement was made that any alternative site would need firstly, a small number of cooperative large

landowners and, secondly, a suitable grid connection. If the statement is correct, we regard this as an absurdly restrictive description of an alternative site and note that the grid connection does not currently exist and is also subject to planning permission.

- The sheer scale of the project and the consequential unprecedented significance of the impact on the landscape and visual amenity of the area. We regard the suggested number of 12 visual impact assessment sites to be wholly inadequate for a site of 2,500 acres, and request that the number be increased from 12 to 40 and at least half of the ten protected views recorded in our Neighbourhood Plan be included.
- The impact on the mental health of residents if a predominately rural location changes to a predominately industrial landscape. Many residents of the village chose to live here because of the immediate proximity of the rural landscape and the ease of access to public right of way routes out from the village to stretches of ancient woodland. If this development goes ahead, these walking routes will be along corridors between fields full of 3-metre-high solar arrays.
- The impact of the development upon the existing natural environment and wildlife, and the potential to compensate for and mitigate such impact.
- The significance of disruption to the community during the construction and decommissioning phases, as well as any significant maintenance/ replacement works during the operational life of the project.
- The uncertainty of the operational lifespan of the project. It is very unlikely that renewable energy technology will remain unchanged for forty years. Decommissioning could be needed well within the projected forty-year lifespan if new technologies emerge. We are further concerned that the financing of decommissioning is unclear and does not appear to be guaranteed.
- The uncertainty over battery storage safety, and the capacity of the emergency services to deal with accidents and fires, and the consequence risk of physical and respiratory injury to residents. We request that a full assessment of the potential hazards and risk to life of placing an estimated 192 batteries, each 6.5m by 2.5m by 3m in proximity to residential housing be included in the Environmental Statement. This should include a full impact assessment of a fire and explosion, not just a dismissal of these events as unlikely to happen. This assessment should take note that the UK's record temperature, 40.3 degrees centigrade, was recorded within 35 km of the proposed site.
- The involvement of overseas companies with little local, or even national, oversight or accountability.
- The uncertainty over the ethical sourcing of the solar panels, batteries and supporting infrastructure, both hardware and software. We note that Scottish Water, a company, which supplies nearly all Scotland's drinking water, has said it will ban Chinese-made solar panels from its future projects, and strengthen its modern slavery rules (Guardian 18th October 2023). We invite your comments on the sourcing of the solar panels for Fosse Green Solar

Farm.

- We do not believe a true assessment has been made of the environmental impact of sourcing the solar panels, batteries and supporting infrastructure. Therefore, the carbon saving benefits of the project are not clearly established. We consider that formal carbon lifecycle analysis (CLA) should be used to prove that during its whole lifecycle - construction, operation, decommissioning and disposal/recycling, this installation will actually save more carbon emissions than it creates.
- There is a spreading rumour among residents that this project could result in reduced electricity bills. We do not believe this is true and call upon you, as the developers, to refute this false rumour.
- A predicted and uncompensated fall in house prices. Even a 5% fall in value would see a collective loss in equity of £5,000,000 for Thorpe on the Hill householders.

We would add to our concerns the fact that many residents feel overwhelmed by the sheer scale of this development and the resources that you, the developers, can deploy.

Documents prepared by your consultants already run to hundreds of pages and are far beyond the capacity of any ordinary person to absorb and respond to.

Put bluntly, you are an investment group seeking to completely change the nature of the area surrounding our homes for your shareholders' financial gain.

This is creating great anxiety among residents.

We ask you to cease and desist.