

Thorpe on the Hill Parish Council

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Thorpe on the Hill Parish Council (TOTH PC)

Response to Fosse Green Energy Consultation Process

1. Introduction

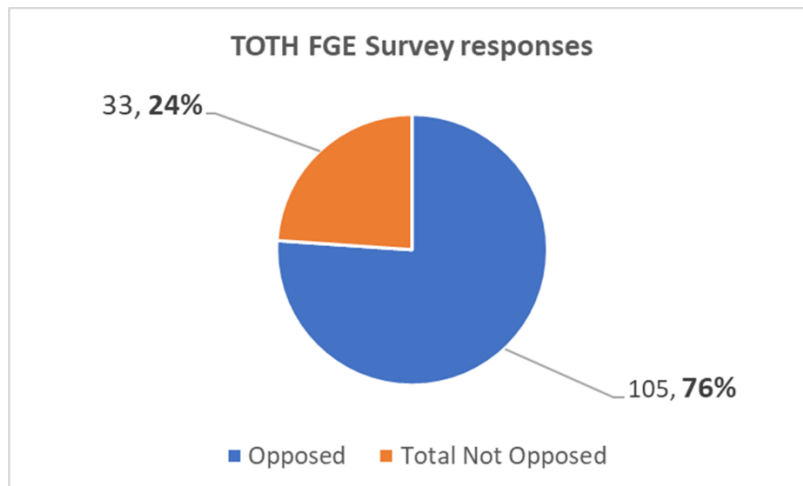
The Parish Council have consulted with Parishioners and discussed this matter at length. As a result, TOTH PC formally opposes the development of the proposed solar farm in the village.

In recognition of the classification as a NSIP, the PC also proposes a series of mitigations which would reduce the impact on the village, should consent be granted.

There is anger in the village because the density of solar panels in the area north of the A46 has increased from that indicated in the pre-consultation phase. Indeed, it now appears that TOTH will have the highest density within the FGE scheme, despite the fact it is the area most remote from the grid connection. It appears to residents that their previous feedback has been completely disregarded. This has strengthened the adverse reaction to the project.

2. Residents Opinions

Following the pre-consultation event in our Village Hall in 2023, the PC organised a series of public meetings and conducted a survey of residents. Recognising that many people express a view when asked, but are insufficiently prepared to construct a written response, members of the PC, supported by active residents, canvassed every household in the village by visiting them and asking for their opinions. The results are shown below. The category of “not opposed” includes those broadly in favour of the development, and those without a preference one way or another.



The survey indicated a 76% contingent opposed to the development, and the PC interpreted this as a clear mandate and adopted a position of opposition.

3. Opposition

The opposition to the scheme is not based upon a rejection of solar panels, nor on a failure to recognise the need to urgently address climate change, it is based on a range of factors as listed below.

- **Loss of Agricultural Land**
- **Detrimental impact upon Landscape and Visual Effects** – industrialisation of the landscape for the next 60 years (once constructed the area will attract even more similar developments)
- **Recreational Amenity damaged and degraded** – some public footpaths will be closed or diverted during construction and character of walks changed by being routed through corridors with 2.5 m high fences
- **Traffic and Transport Disruption** – there will be additional traffic, congestion, environmental damage, dust, and an increased risk of accidents to pedestrians, cyclists and drivers during the construction phase. The Construction period will see the worst-case scenario
- **Development is too close to residential dwellings** – long term impact on views and amenity, noise, and potential harm to health. Some impacts will not be mitigated
- **Alternatives given insufficient consideration** – including brownfield land and commercial and domestic dwellings roofs have not been adequately considered
- **Biodiversity impact and loss of habitat** – despite the claims, wildlife will be impacted adversely
- **Battery storage to close to habitation and unknown and unacceptable risk & explosion hazard** – risk of toxic smoke plus land and water contamination
- **Concern for flooding** – there will be an increased flood risk caused by water run-off from panels

- **Solar Panel Supply Concerns** – panels likely made in China with high embedded CO₂ and then shipped to UK, to ultimately end up in land-fill at the end-of -life. Additional concerns over human rights issues with supply.
- **Efficiency** – Most power is generated when not required and then stored and sold at higher prices during peak demands, Solar cells degrade and technology will become obsolete
- **Reduction in House Prices** – the development will damage the attractiveness and appeal of TOTH's rural location and amenities

4. Neighbourhood Plan

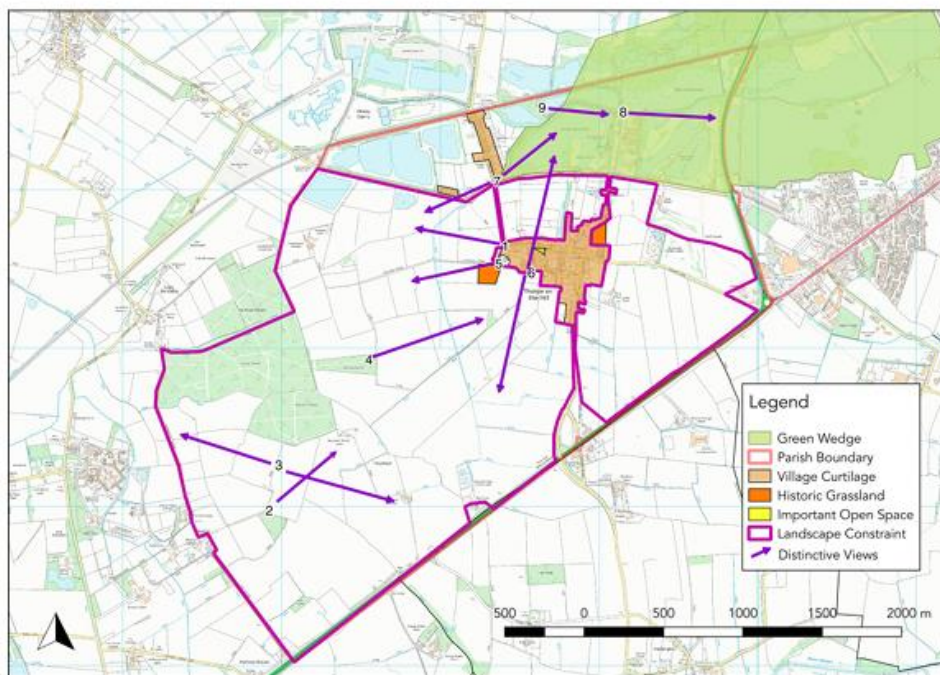
The village developed a Neighbourhood Plan and this was democratically adopted in a referendum in February 2018.








<https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/your-community/localism-your-community/neighbourhood-plans/thorpe-hill-neighbourhood-plan-made>

This plan identifies key characteristics of the village that should be given priority and protected. It also identifies distinctive views, many of which will be adversely impacted, particularly as TOTH occupies an elevated position.

Thorpe on the Hill Neighbourhood Plan

Map 5: Landscape character and features



Photographs of Village Views corresponding to the Neighbourhood Plan		
		
View 1	View 2	View 3 East
		
View 3 West	View 4	View 5
		
View 6		

Of the significant views identified in the Neighbourhood Plan, the six shown above will be adversely impacted by the proposed development. This will spoil the outlook and damage the rural amenity.

5. Mitigation

At a village level the three biggest potential adverse impacts of the scheme are:

1. Traffic
2. Footpaths and value of amenity
3. Views – outlook

The PC, based upon discussion with residents, requests the following steps be taken to mitigate the impact of the development:

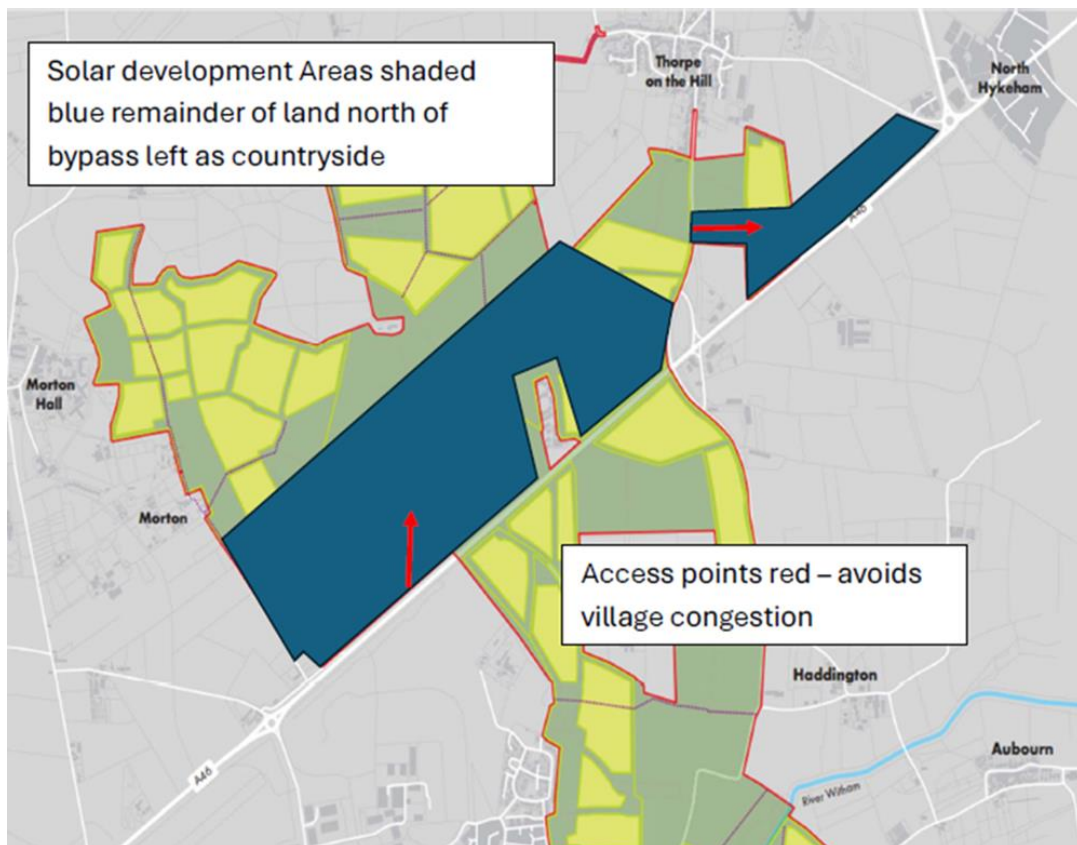
1. Creating means of access to the site that avoids construction and maintenance traffic going through the village
2. Protecting essential footpaths which are a much-loved feature of the village. These include the NKDC “Stepping Out” route to Tunman Wood. This can be viewed by following the link below and then clicking on the link **Thorpe on the**

Hill Walk that appears on the web-page. <https://thorpe-hill.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk/parish-amenities/whisby-nature-park-local-walks/1>

It is essential that these don't become long unattractive corridors between the village and the woods

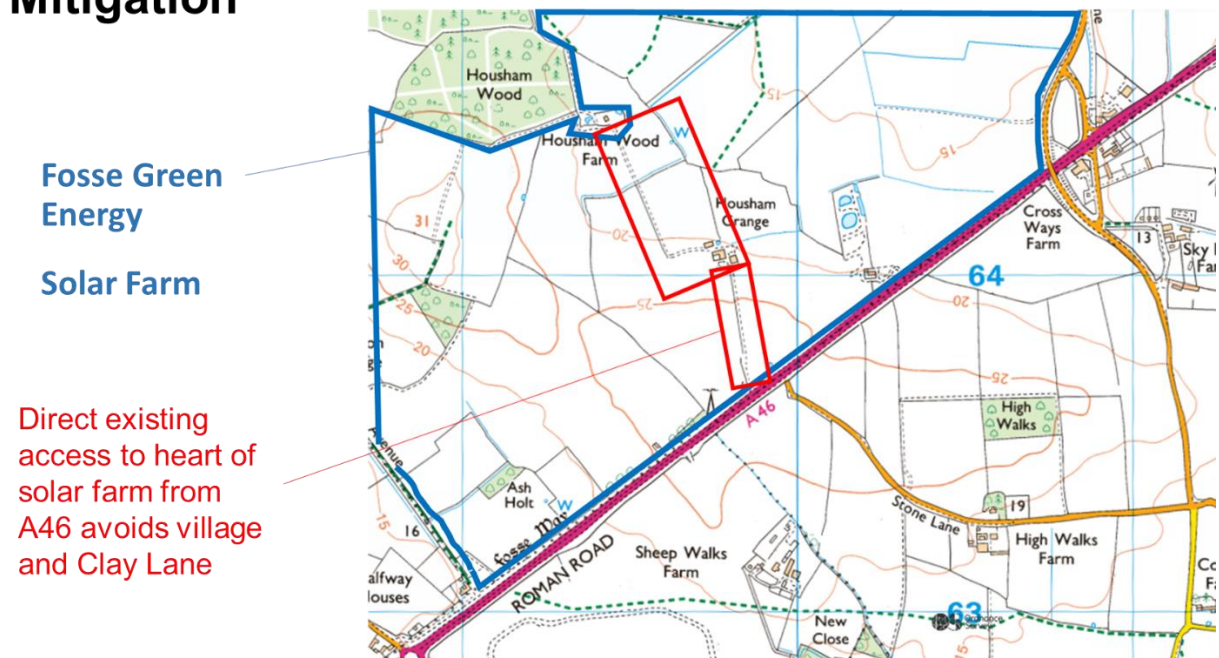
3. Protecting, so far as is possible, the rural views and atmosphere of the village
4. Creating as large a buffer zone as possible with the village by
 - Moving the solar panels as far away from houses as possible
 - Relocating habitat creation and wildlife areas as close to the village as possible

Minor mitigations like pre-planting in key areas, in advance of construction to allow screening trees and hedges to mature, would also be greatly appreciated.



In order to avoid all construction and maintenance traffic, an alternative means of accessing the site must be found. An example is shown below.

Mitigation



6. Summary

TOTH has a predominantly rural character, sits within the Witham Valley Country Park, and is a gateway to Lincoln, with distinctive views for people driving towards the city along the A46, due to its elevated position. One of the key Parish priorities is to promote tourism, as the village benefits from having a range of amenities including the Nature Reserve at Whisby, part of which lies within the Parish boundary and is accessed from the village, a popular golf course, and recreational lakes. There is a deep concern that the attractive nature of these amenities will be damaged by a process which industrialises the landscape.

The choice of TOTH as a suitable location for a solar farm seems in large measure to result from the willingness of a small number of local landowners to sign up for the project, not out of any environmental concerns, but solely to profit from the increased revenue they will enjoy from elevated lease values.

Village residents are well aware of this distorted motivation which appears to benefit a few landowners who will not be affected themselves, as they don't live close to the development, whereas villagers will be the net losers without receiving any material benefits. Villagers are often classed as Nimbys, but in fact the landowners and developers stand more guilty of this accusation.

Suggestions of a potential Community Benefit fund sound attractive in principle, but in reality this could be 10 years away in terms of pay-outs as this fund is based upon income derived from power generation. During this period it is likely that house prices in the village will be adversely impacted and amenities damaged. Furthermore, TOTH is reasonably well provided for as a small village,

and is not currently in the position of needing extra funds to address shortcomings that require a cash injection from a community benefit fund. At the point of writing, it largely appears as though the “carrot” of a community benefit fund would not be a great benefit to TOTH for the reasons stated.

There are also suggestions that improved footpaths could enhance access between villages, but this does not apply to TOTH as the village is cut-off from its neighbours in the scheme, by the busy A46 dual carriageway. Under these circumstances it becomes even more imperative that existing footpaths in the village are preserved and not degraded.

In order to assuage the genuine levels of frustration and anger expressed by residents, we urge FGE to pay the utmost attention to the requests for mitigation, otherwise opposition to the development will remain at an elevated level.