

SOLAR INDUSTRIAL ESTATE - HAWKSWORTH / THOROTON

Public Inquiry - Independent Person Submission by Thoroton resident - Colin Warburton.

PINS Appeal: APP/P3040/W/23/3330045

LPA Ref: 22/02241/FUL.

I have been a resident of Thoroton for the past thirty two years having moved to the village in November 1991. I write this statement from a personal point of view in order to try and explain the devastating affect the granting of this Solar Industrial Estate application will have on the conservation villages of Thoroton and Hawksworth and the surrounding area. From the outset let me make it abundantly clear that I am totally opposed to this application, which in my view is only designed to benefit a land owner that will do anything but farm the land and international organisations that have a sole purpose in making money at the expense of communities.

I am not opposed to Solar power in the right location, I simply believe that 233 acres of good quality farmland, located between two conservation villages, is not the right location for such an industrial development. Furthermore, I believe that RES have a statutory duty to consider suitable land away from conservation settlements.

I have already stated that I moved to Thoroton in late 1991. My sole purpose in making this move was to remove myself from a stressful working environment in order that the little time I had at home was peaceful living in a rural setting. In the mid 1990's I started working overseas returning to my home in Thoroton infrequently. This period of time working overseas focused my mind on what truly is important in life. For many years I lived and worked in the Philippines, residing in Metro Manila. Overcrowding and pollution was in abundance.

On my visits home, and then my eventual permanent return to Thoroton, brought home to me the indescribable benefits of living in such a location as rural South Nottinghamshire. One of the first things my wife and I did whenever we returned home was to walk the lanes and countryside between Thoroton, Hawksworth, Shelton and Orston. It is extremely difficult to explain the mental health benefits of living in the South Nottinghamshire countryside I can only say that for me the benefits of doing so are immeasurable. I do not wish to suggest that you can compare rural South Nottinghamshire to Metro Manila, I simply point out that by granting this Solar Industrial Estate application the countryside between the two rural villages of Thoroton and Hawksworth will be destroyed. The placing of solar panels, massive sub station, fencing, lighting etc over 233 acres of quality farmland between two conservation villages will turn the landscape into a industrial estate something akin to Metro Manila, not rural Nottinghamshire. All the mental health benefits of residing in a unspoilt rural setting will be lost for a period of forty years and will no doubt never be returned to farming. Indeed, the term of forty years will never be seen by ninety percent of village residents. Consequently, this is not a temporary change of land use.

During the past two years I have spoken with members of Parish Meetings in the surrounding villages. What immediately became apparent when the Solar Industrial Estate was first applied for was the intense opposition to the project and the amount of objections to the planning application. This statement is evidenced by the large number of objections to the application on

the Rushcliffe Borough Council Planning website.

The RES document identifies the proposed construction of the Solar Industrial Estate lasting up to a period of six to nine months. Forty movements per day of heavily laden vehicles will travel to and from the proposed construction site via the old A46, through the conservation village of Car Colston, travelling along three miles of poorly maintained narrow country lanes towards the proposed site entrance.

Car Lane is a single carriageway rural road that is also subject to a de-restricted 60mph speed limit. It has an average width of 5.5 metres with verges both sides along most of its length measuring circa 1.5 metres wide. There are no footpaths or street lighting. Car Lane runs through the village of Car Colston and the carriageway is poorly maintained. The Chair of the Car Colston Parish Meeting has written to the Chairman of this Public Inquiry highlighting his and other residents concerns in relation to this planning application. A photograph has been submitted by the Chair, Car Colston Parish Meeting, (copy attached) showing the poorly maintained road in Car Colston with a partly submerged motor car after recent flooding. Considerable damage to the road surface has been caused by heavy lorries travelling through the village.

On leaving Car Lane and turning left towards the village of Hawksworth before eventually turning right along Longhedge Lane towards the construction site, the roads continue to be narrow, poorly maintained with a 60mph speed limit. Along this stretch of road there are also no footpaths or street lighting. On Longhedge Lane there is a blind summit just before approaching the proposed site entrance and the width of the road at this point is just 3.5 metres with grass verges either side.

The route as described from the old A46 to the proposed construction site is frequently used by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and runners. With no footpaths available for use all of the above have to use the road surface. The Highway Code states that when a motor vehicle passes a cyclist a distance of 1.5 metres should be maintained between the vehicle and the cyclist when driving at 30mph. A greater distance between the two is required when passing above the speed of 30mph. The distance between a horse rider and a walker is 2 metres width when passing and the vehicle driver is required to significantly reduce the vehicle speed.

I would suggest that to permit up to 40 heavily laden vehicles per day to use narrow unlit rural roads with no footpaths is unsafe and in breach of the Road Traffic Act and Highway Code. The roads from the old A46 to the proposed construction site are in use at all times of the year not just by local residents of the immediate communities but also by hundreds of visitors to the area and that a restriction of this right to use the roads for walking, cycling, horse riding, running etc is a demonstration of loss of amenities. I would further suggest that no proposed Traffic Management Plan which includes road closures, one way traffic systems etc will alleviate the identified problems. It should be further noted that in addition to the forty heavily laden lorries per day there will be up to fifty construction workers at the proposed Solar site. These workers will have to travel to and from the site on a daily basis and will add to the traffic congestion. Attached is a photograph showing a lorry on Longhedge Lane near to the proposed site entrance which clearly identifies the limited space at the side of the vehicle.

In my view the siting of a Solar Industrial Estate between two rural Conservation villages is totally unacceptable. I accept that Conservation status are not designed to fossilise a place against change however, it is designed to allow greater scrutiny and control to manage positive change and that any changes that require planning permission do not harm, and ideally serve to actively enhance the existing character of the place. At three Thoroton Parish Meetings held in order to discuss the Solar planning application, one hundred percent of those residents in

attendance objected to the application and regarded it as a unnecessary and detrimental imposition on the village. How can 233 acres of quality farmland covered by hardcore, 140,000 solar panels, massive sub station, intrusive lighting and miles of metal fencing be regarded as actively enhancing the existing character of the place and be a positive development for the environment?

In conclusion, I would like to point out that at the outset of this Planning Application I consulted with RES by email requesting full transparency and disclosure of all supporting evidence they were relying upon when making statements in their planning application. I required this information as it became apparent to me that the statements being made were at odds to what I had witnessed living in the area for a period of thirty two years and more importantly what I was being told by knowledgeable farmers and other residents. To date I have never received a satisfactory response and this has clearly resulted in the challenges to many of the inaccuracies in the RES submission.

Having spent the past two years living and breathing this Planning Application and having considered all the relevant information available, I have come to the conclusion that there is absolutely no positive benefit to the community in placing a Solar Industrial Estate between the Conservation villages of Thoroton & Hawksworth. It is simply not the right location and good quality land needs to be farmed, not covered in solar plant.

Sent from my iPad



Car in pothole during flood in Car Colston Spring 2024



HGV on Hawksworth Lane (Part of the Haul Route)