

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE CAMPAIGN GROUP STAUNCH'S FORMAL OBJECTIONS AND REASONS FOR REFUSAL IN RESPECT OF PLANNING APPLICATION NE/22/01411/FUL INSTALLATION OF A GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) DEVELOPMENT OF ABOUT 49.9 MEGAWATTS (MW), ASSOCIATED ELECTRICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND LANDSCAPING ON LAND ADJACENT TO FOXHOLES FARM TO THE EAST OF TITCHMARSH.

STAUNCH would like to state from the outset that, as a group, in principle we are in favour of renewable energy. However, we believe that all such schemes should be considered on the basis that they are appropriate and proportionate for the environments into which it is intended to site them.

In relation to the above application, our objections are summarised below. We believe that these objections are material grounds for consideration by the planning authority in determining the outcome of the application.

It is the intention of STAUNCH to submit more detailed evidence in support of these holding objections at the earliest opportunity.

Best and Most Versatile (BMV)

The Government have stated that the requirement for renewable sources of energy should be balanced with the need to maintain productive agricultural land to secure greater food security. Should this application be approved, some 154 acres of good or very good agricultural land currently farmed on an arable basis will be lost.

The information supplied by the applicant themselves states that at the very least, 100% of the soil on the site is either of Grade 3a (good quality agricultural land capable of producing moderate to high yields of a narrow range of arable crops or moderate yields of a wider range of crops) or Grade 3b (moderate quality agricultural land capable of producing moderate yields of a narrow range of crops or lower yields of a wider range of crops).

Previous assessment of this land carried out by Natural England identified this site as also having a large amount of Grade 2 soil (very good quality agricultural land with minor limitations which affect crop yield, cultivation or harvesting).

Too much "Best and Most Versatile" agricultural land has already gone out of production in The East Midlands since 2010 – at least 4,194 hectares out of a total 18,722 hectares across England.

Archaeology

Geophysical survey results submitted by the applicant has highlighted that the site has HIGH potential for Iron Age and Roman remains with a huge enclosure covering some 3 hectares. The village of Titchmarsh and the neighbouring market town of Thrapston have long been acknowledged as major sites of Iron Age and Roman settlement. In fact, a similar site within the parish of Titchmarsh, has been recently identified as of potential national significance.

Further detailed archaeological examination of this site must be carried out prior to any determination of this application to determine their archaeological value.

Cumulative Impact

At the present time two other significant unrelated applications within the Titchmarsh Parish and adjoining Thrapston are under consideration by the planning authority. These relate to commercial warehousing which would involve the removal of good productive agricultural land.

These can be accessed via the North Northants planning portal under references NE/22/00698/OUT and NE/22/00151/FUL.

The combined scale of all three developments is such that the cumulative impact of the loss of such productive agricultural land in such a small geographical area would be immensely detrimental to local communities, biodiversity, wildlife habitats and the wider food security agenda.

Access

Proposed access to the site is currently via a rural road network and specifically the Roman Road. The applicant has acknowledged that the existing roads would not provide the ability for two HGVs to pass each other and therefore widening of the existing road would be required.

Such widening would have a detrimental impact on the exiting biodiversity and visual amenity.

Ecology

There will be a significant impact on ecology with the loss of several important bird species and potentially veteran trees.

Ornithological farmland species are abundant on this site and will be severely disrupted, especially during the breeding season.

The application as it currently stands lacks any detail in relation to wildlife and biodiversity and the applicant should be required to undertake more detailed survey work in relation to this issue.

STAUNCH are currently gathering detailed evidence to further support our objections in relation to the ecology of the site and the detail will be provided to the planning authority at the earliest opportunity.

STAUNCH reserve the right to make/add to these objections in the light of additional submissions by the applicants, representations from consultees.

**Kevin Shapland
Chair
STAUNCH Campaign**

19th January 2023