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Branch Chair
Mrs Jan Arger

Authority: Hambleton District Council

Type of consultation: Planning Consultation

Full details of application/consultation: 21/03042/FUL - Application for Installation of solar photovoltaic ('PV') array/solar farm with associated infrastructure – AMEDED DETAILS

At land: OS Field 2700 Carlton Husthwaite North Yorkshire

Type of response: Objection

Date of Submission: 16th December 2022

All responses or queries relating to this submission should be directed to the Secretary for the Trustees at the contact details shown above on this frontispiece.

All CPRE North and East Yorkshire comments are prepared by the charity using professional planners whose research and recommendations form the basis of this response in line with national CPRE policies.

External planning consultant used in this response:



KVA Planning Consultancy
Katie Atkinson, BA (Hons), Dip TP, MA
MRTPI
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Comment

CPRE North and East Yorkshire ('CPRENEY') welcomes the opportunity to comment on the amended details submitted in support of an application for Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Panels and Associated Infrastructure on of agricultural land to north-west and south-west of the village of Husthwaite, approximately 3km north of Easingwold. The site is split across two areas of land know as Woolpots North and Woolpots South. The application was submitted to Hambleton District Council ('HDC' / 'the Council') on behalf of Woolpots Solar Farm Ltd ('the applicant').

CPRENEY commented on the original proposals in April of this year and strongly objected on the following grounds:

- The significant loss of BMV land and impact on soils;
- The detrimental impact on two nationally protected landscapes (AONB and NP);
- The eventual loss of Biodiversity Net Gain (after 40 years);
- The detrimental impact on Conservation Areas; and
- The proposals are contrary to local and national planning policy.

Having had the opportunity to consider the amended details, CPRENEY maintains its objection to the proposal and asks that this written letter is read alongside our previous response so as to avoid unnecessary duplication.

It is acknowledged that the applicant has considered objections to the original proposal and has submitted amendments to the scheme, mainly a 39% reduction in footprint and the number of panels to both Woolpots North and South, removal of the Battery Energy Storage System containers from both sites and replacement with a single compound at Woolpots South, and the replacement of tracking panels with fixed south facing panels.

Whilst this is helpful to some extent, it does not remove our overall concerns with the scheme or change our position of favouring a rooftop/brownfield first approach, followed by utilising the least productive land thus protecting BMV land and soils.

The NPPF clearly directs Local Planning Authorities making decisions about the natural and local environment to protect and enhance landscapes, biodiversity, geology and soils, recognise soils as a natural capital asset that provide important ecosystem services and consider the economic and other benefits of BMV agricultural land, and try to use areas of poorer quality land instead of higher quality land. This is further supported by the the Council's Core Strategy Policy CP3 which only supports development which promotes '*the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land*'. - Please refer to our previous comments regarding protection for soils and Welsh case law.

CPRENEY remain concerned about the cumulative impact of this proposal with other already approved solar arrays and other potential schemes in the immediate vicinity which would impact detrimentally the nationally designated landscapes of the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the North York Moors National Park (NP). (See applicant's plan in CPRENEY's previous response).

The proposal remains within the setting of two nationally designated landscapes which are rare and precious commodities afforded the highest level of protection in planning policy. As such the responses by the AONB team and the National Park Authority as local advocates and decision makers (the NPA) for these landscapes should be given great weight in the planning balance when determining this proposal.

It is considered that the reduced footprints and positioning of the panels, whilst welcomed, are not sufficient

to mitigate the impact on the visitors to these landscapes and to mitigate the impacts the two sites will have on the special qualities for which they were first designated. Users of public rights of way will still be impacted by the proposals as will visitors travelling by road to visit or pass through the landscapes. The two sites are within the setting of the designated landscapes and as such provide an important gateway to the nationally protected areas. It is well known that development that occurs within the setting of a nationally designated landscape can impact the experience of the landscape. As such the location is simply incorrect and the proposal should be withdrawn or refused.

Conclusion

CPRENEY welcomes the opportunity to comment on the amended details submitted on behalf of the applicant in support of the proposals for a split site solar farm at Husthwaite. CPRENEY maintain their strong objection to the proposals. The proposed development is contrary to several local and national planning policies as set out above and therefore, CPRENEY respectfully ask that this proposal be refused. Please read this response alongside our previous response.

CPRENEY recognise the need to transition away from fossil fuels towards a renewable and clean energy generation mix, including solar, to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 or earlier. In some circumstances it is recognised that ground mounted solar arrays can be well screened and mitigated appropriately. However, CPRENEY do not consider that large-scale solar farms are appropriate in the open countryside on greenfield sites, especially on very good BMV land.

Of particular importance to the determination of this application is the hugely significant detrimental impact of the proposals on the setting of the two nationally protected landscapes of the AONB and the NP. The Council has a duty to consider developments in the setting of nationally protected landscape and the impact it may have on those designations.

CPRENEY reserves the right to comment further should any additional information be submitted in support of the proposal.