



SOUTHWELL CIVIC SOCIETY

Planning Secretary: Mike Struggles, 4 Lees Field, Southwell, Nottinghamshire. NG25 0LJ
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JMB Solar,
Augustine House,
Oliver Bond Street,
Dublin 8.

12th May 2020

Dear Sirs,

Halloughton Solar Farm

We wish to contribute to your consultation exercise regarding the above-proposed solar farm. Any comments we make at this stage should not be taken as objection to, or support for, the project.

Whereas we understand why you are unable to hold a public meeting or exhibition at this time it would not seem so urgent and critical a matter that the consultation needs to be undertaken on-line. Indeed it is the experience of our members both as consultees and designers of major infrastructure schemes that face to face contact with the general public can quickly answer any questions and reassure any concerns they may have. On an informal basis local knowledge can be invaluable and in the long term secure an earlier completion.

The Civic Society is concerned that the chosen access point is alongside the Grade 2 listed church. Given the extent of the proposed development then it would seem possible to find a less sensitive site, given the large amount of construction traffic that will be involved. Disruption to the Halloughton community whilst the site is being developed is a serious issue.

With regard to flooding this is also a major issue. The site may very well be in Zone 1, however the site feeds the Westhorpe Dumble. In 2007 and 2013 we had major flooding in Southwell with both events causing extensive damage to hundreds of properties. The Westhorpe Dumble catchment is small; your proposal covers a significant proportion of the upper part of this. The run off is very rapid and the time of concentration is short causing flash flooding. In July 2013 where the Dumble meets Nottingham Road the water level rose from three or four inches to over eight feet in one hour. Nottingham Trent University at the nearby Brackenhurst Campus have a PhD Project studying natural attenuation measures on the surrounding dumbles such as building log dams etc. We would expect any scheme to provide not only sufficient retention to ensure no more water was discharged than at the present time, but to seize the opportunity to significantly reduce the flash flooding lower down the watercourse.

The other main concerns about the site are the impact it would have on the landscape, the public enjoyment of the countryside around the site and the ecology of the area especially the effect on the Westhorpe Dumble. The Newark and Sherwood District Council Landscape Appraisal for the Halloughton Village Farmlands identified the following objectives for the landscape and built features-

Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment Mid-Nottinghamshire Farmlands

| ACTIONS – Conserve and Reinforce |
|---|
| Landscape Features <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conserve and reinforce hedgerows where these are gappy and in poor condition, particularly internal hedgerows. Seek opportunities to restore the historic field pattern/boundaries where these have been lost and introduce more hedgerow trees. Reinforce with new planting to replace post and wire fencing.• Conserve and Reinforce the ecological diversity of Norwood Park and other designated SINCs where appropriate. |
| Built Features <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conserve the local built vernacular and reinforce this in new development.• Conserve and reinforce the rural character of the Policy Zone by concentrating new development around existing settlements of Southwell and Halloughton. |

It is important that any planning application for the solar farm takes these objectives (actions) into account. All ancient field boundary hedges, particularly those that are covered by the Hedgerow Regulations, would need to be retained and maintained in good condition by a formal agreement with the district council.

Existing hedgerows, on the boundaries to the site should, by formal agreement with the district council, be retained in good condition and at a height to screen and break up the visual impact of the development on the landscape and to mitigate the effects of the boundary fencing. Where no hedges exist to screen the fences new ones would need to be planted. This would help to retain the ethos of a rural landscape rather than that of having an industrial imposition upon it. Any buildings on the site would need to blend in with or complement the local vernacular.

The proposal for the solar farm includes consideration for the ecology of the site and the surrounding countryside. This should include a full flora and fauna assessment of the site and the surrounding habitats; the methodology for which should be agreed with the Nottinghamshire County Council senior conservation officer.

This site would offer an opportunity to monitor the effects of a solar farm on ecology. A pre site development appraisal would therefore be essential and post development appraisals over time would also need to be agreed with the senior conservation officer. It is helpful that the proposal for the management of the solar farm includes a grazing and cutting regime which should be agreed with the senior conservation officer, as should the seeds mixtures used for planting up any areas within the site. These management issues should be formally proposed as conditions to be agreed with the District Council in any planning application. It would be essential also that the commitment to return the site to agricultural land when it is no longer required as a solar farm

"Whilst this project may provide benefits to the wider community in more sustainable energy and financial gain to the landowner and developer, it is difficult to see any direct benefits to Halloughton village or its inhabitants. These need to be clearly identified for any objective judgements to be made on the proposal."

Yours faithfully

Michael Struggles
Planning Secretary.