Clean Air Solar Farm: Ten Key Concerns

Introduction

To support the Action Group's **"Enough is Enough"** campaign, and to provide further background to the information leaflet produced ahead of the Public Information Days on 22–24 June, we have identified ten key areas of concern regarding the proposed Clean Air Solar Farm.

This document reflects our current understanding of the proposal. Despite repeated requests, neither Clean Air nor East Riding Council has provided detailed responses to a number of important questions raised by local residents.

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1. Scale of the Proposal

The Clean Air proposal is for a **500 MW solar farm** covering more than **2,500 acres** of land in two separate areas around Lockington, Beswick and Beverley, including Cottingham, Skidby, Little Weighton, Bentley and Walkington.

The scheme is being developed by PS Renewables and Orsted Onshore, a sister company of Orsted Offshore, which operates some of the world's largest offshore wind farms.

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2. Why This Location?

A previous Kingfisher Solar Farm proposal in the Lockington/Beswick area was abandoned because it was not considered financially viable.

The current proposal benefits from its close proximity to the expanded **Creyke Beck Energy Hub**, reducing transmission losses and cabling costs. This significantly improves profitability and makes the area increasingly attractive to energy developers.

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3. This Is Not NIMBYism

We reject suggestions that opposition to this proposal is simply a case of "Not In My Back Yard".

The national target for solar development on agricultural land is approximately **1%**. Across the East Riding of Yorkshire, existing and proposed solar developments now account for around **12%**, rising to approximately **20% in the immediate Beverley area**.

We believe our area is already carrying a disproportionate share of the burden.

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4. The Cumulative Impact on Beverley and the East Riding

This proposal cannot be considered in isolation.

The Beverley area is already facing multiple major infrastructure projects, including:

- New substations at Wanless Beck and Birkhill Wood
- Pear Tree Hill Solar Farm
- National Grid transmission infrastructure
- Dogger Bank South cabling and associated works
- Dogger Bank D and Hornsea 4 cabling routes
- Pillswood BESS expansion
- National Gas Project Union hydrogen pipelines
- Flood defence projects
- New housing developments
- Road improvement schemes

Our Concern

The cumulative impact of these projects over the next five years could place an unacceptable burden on local communities, businesses and infrastructure.

We have seen no evidence that a comprehensive strategic assessment of all these projects has been undertaken.

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5. Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Risks

The proposal includes a **500 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)** located near the Energy Hub and above the East Yorkshire Chalk Aquifer, which supplies drinking water to much of the surrounding region.

Battery storage facilities carry recognised risks associated with thermal runaway and fire.

Key Question

Why should such a facility be located above a strategically important water resource?

The inclusion of a BESS also significantly increases the commercial value of the development by allowing electricity to be stored and sold during periods of peak demand.

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6. Loss of Agricultural Land

The true size of the development footprint remains unclear.

Based on currently available information, the total area affected could be closer to **5,000 acres**, equivalent to approximately **3,000 football pitches**.

Although only a proportion of the land may contain solar panels, the entire site would effectively be removed from normal agricultural production.

Impact on Food Security

This land currently supports the production of:

- Oats
- Barley
- Rapeseed
- Peas
- Potatoes

The loss of this productive farmland raises serious questions about long-term food security.

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7. Use of Grade 2 Agricultural Land

The proposed site contains **Grade 2 agricultural land**, among the highest-quality farmland in England.

Before such land is developed, we believe every available brownfield alternative should be thoroughly assessed and exhausted.

The key question remains:

How much profit is enough to justify the loss of some of England's best farmland?

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8. Alternative Solar Technologies

The amount of land required depends heavily on the technology selected.

More advanced solar systems can:

- Track the movement of the sun
- Generate more electricity
- Require a smaller land footprint

However, they are more expensive to install.

We believe developers should be required to demonstrate that all reasonable measures have been taken to minimise land use.

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9. Biodiversity and Dual Farming

The development must deliver a minimum **10% Biodiversity Net Gain**.

We believe the most effective way to achieve this is to minimise the development footprint and retain as much productive farmland as possible.

Questions We Believe Need Answering

- Why is sheep grazing being presented as the primary dual-use option?
- Have alternative agricultural uses been fully considered?
- What evidence exists that sheep farming will be economically sustainable on these sites?

Examples from other countries demonstrate that more productive approaches to agrivoltaics are possible.

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10. Impact on Farming Families and Future Land Use

Many local landowners and tenant farmers have worked this land successfully for generations.

We fear that once agricultural land is industrialised for energy production, it will never genuinely return to farming.

Although decommissioning is proposed after 40 years, future economic pressures and technological developments may make permanent retention of energy infrastructure increasingly likely.

Our Concern

Once productive farmland is lost, it may be lost forever.

Conclusion

There are many additional issues that this document has not addressed in detail, including:

- Heritage impacts
- Landscape character
- Public access
- Recreation
- Wildlife
- Community wellbeing

Instead, we have focused on what we believe to be the central issue underlying this proposal: **developer profitability versus the long-term protection of food-producing agricultural land.**

Future generations may question whether sufficient weight was given to food security and environmental stewardship if high-quality farmland is permanently removed from production to meet short-term energy targets.