

Land off Main Street Kelham

Proposed ground mounted photo voltaic solar farm and battery energy storage system (BESS) with associated equipment, infrastructure, grid connection and ancillary work

1.0 Introduction

My name is Dr John Hinchliff and I asked to speak to the Inquiry because I did not feel the views and objections of many residents of Kelham, Averham and Staythorpe had been adequately addressed in the material supplied by the Appellant or the Planning Officers' report to the Newark and Sherwood District Council Planning Committee.

The application was refused unanimously by the Planning Committee which comprised Labour, Conservative, Lib Dem, Green and Independent Councillors. This unity strongly suggests that something is amiss with the planning balance arrived at by Officers' in their report to the Committee recommending permission be granted. The Councillors involved know the area well and their refusal to grant permission should be interpreted as an indication that the proposed development has serious problems.

2.0 Cumulative Impacts

2.1 The cumulative effect of impacts within the development and its immediate environs that lead to an unacceptable overall impact. The impacts are listed below:

1. Too close to residential property
2. Inadequacy of screening provisions
3. Industrial development in a residential area
4. Visual impact (industrialisation, 400m of engineered screening bund, security fences, cctv)
5. Harm to BMV resource and failure to assess alternative lower agricultural grade sites
6. Visual issues with the BESS and highly disruptive construction work needed to connect it
7. Degradation of PROW and loss of access open countryside when using the PROW
8. No accessible green space between Kelham and Averham
9. Not a significant contributor
10. Harm to the setting of cultural and heritage assets
11. Devaluation of property prices
12. 40 years is not temporary
13. Construction phase impacts added those already present and forthcoming
14. Further traffic increases on the A617

HARM - There is now evidence that the application is causing financial harm to house prices on Broadgate Lane. The Old Bothie was originally marketed for sale at £725K and is now on the market for offers above £600k. My immediate neighbours at Rookwood have told me that they've had several buyers pull out because of the solar farm and BESS. The current owners of the two houses on the lane that have sold since the application went in (Peachcroft and The Holt), have both told me that they were not aware of the application until after they moved in and they wouldn't have purchased if they'd been aware

Taken together the above are substantial and indicate that the proposal would have a very significant impact locally.

2.2 Developments and proposed developments that combine to cause a disproportionate effect on the area

I'm aware that I and residents objecting to the proposal may be accused of Nimbyism but when one considers the number and scale of actual and permitted electrical power infrastructure projects in and around our villages, we feel we have made and continue to make a significant contribution.

The situation with the Parish of Averham, Kelham and Staythorpe is that there are already significant past present and future projects that need to be taken into consideration. Within a 5km radius there is a 1.735 GWe power station, a National Grid substation, 400kv, 132kv and 32kv transmission equipment, pylons and overhead cables, a main line railway and Ollerton Road wind turbines. Two BESS units are currently permitted one in Staythorpe (currently under construction) and another at Averham. A further one is planned as part of the Elements Green GNR project.

The recently permitted Knapthorpe Lodge Solar Farm - 22/00975/FULM and Muskham Wood Solar at Caunton 22/0976/FULM are seeking to connect into the National Grid at Staythorpe. Consequently their cable routes and associated infrastructure will have to pass through and be located in the parish. Foxholes Farm, Bathley - 22/01983/FULM if permitted will likely follow a similar trajectory.

The GNR Solar Project is exactly the type and scale of project that the government is looking for and as such it is likely that it will be pushed through by the Secretary of State. The GNR proposals include significant areas of solar arrays, substations and BESS facilities. within the Parishes of Averham, Kelham and Staythorpe.

RWE recently unveiled their proposal for the carbon capture and storage plant at Staythorpe C power station another large scale heavy engineering project in our small community.

3.0 Closing Remarks

There are simply too many renewable energy and energy infrastructure applications in this small area, we are being overwhelmed. This proposal is in a residential area and far too close to housing.

Statements that less than 1% of UK land will be required to meet the government solar target are meaningless here in our small communities when a significant proportion of the accessible green space and open agricultural land around us is being lost.

Residents are constantly wondering and worrying over what the next proposal will entail.

The villages of Averham and Staythorpe could be surrounded by BESS developments at a time when the safety of these industrial facilities is under reviewed.

The visual impact of this proposed development has been underestimated in the Appellant's submissions in particular the screening bund is a large and unsightly addition to the landscape that has not been subject to a visual impact assessment. The tree planting on the northern face of the screening bund isn't specified even though it will be important in mitigating views of the solar arrays

and determining the long term visual nature of the development. There is an overreliance for screening of residential properties on local hedgerows and trees over which the Appellant has no control. Reassurances from the Appellant, Appellant's agent and the farmer who farms the land are meaningless. This is a 40 year project and the Appellant must demonstrate that they have the consent of the landowners to access, maintain and manage all commitments outside of the ownership boundary. Further, the reliance on what is essentially ephemeral domestic garden vegetation places the responsibility for screening on the owners of the houses which is inappropriate.

The Grade 2 land is not replaceable, allowing the development would conflict with decades of planning guidance and practice and set an undesirable precedent that any Grade 2 land can be covered in solar panels and BESS.

The Government seeks big projects that can deliver its net zero goals not problematic ones like this that make a limited contribution and cause public opinion to move against the technology.

The contribution of the solar farm would be unimportant nationally and easily be replaced by other more appropriate sites currently being constructed and planned. There are certainly no compelling reasons to permit it and in light of the harms and disruption it will cause, coupled to the ready availability of more appropriate, less valuable, less flexible and lower productivity agricultural land the appeal should be dismissed.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
Proposed Solar Farm and Battery Energy Storage System Kelham, Newark-on-Trent

Figure 1: Site Location



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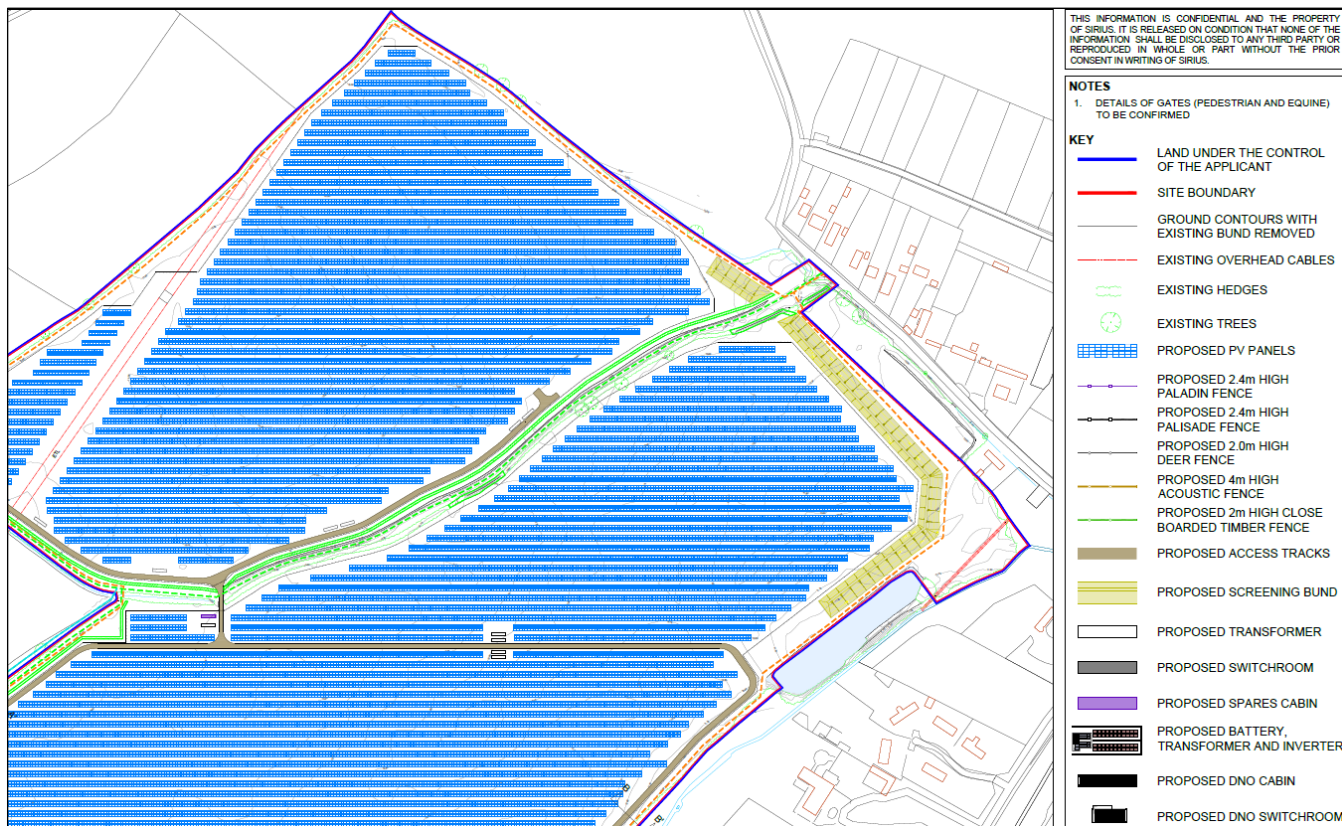


Figure 2: Stand Off

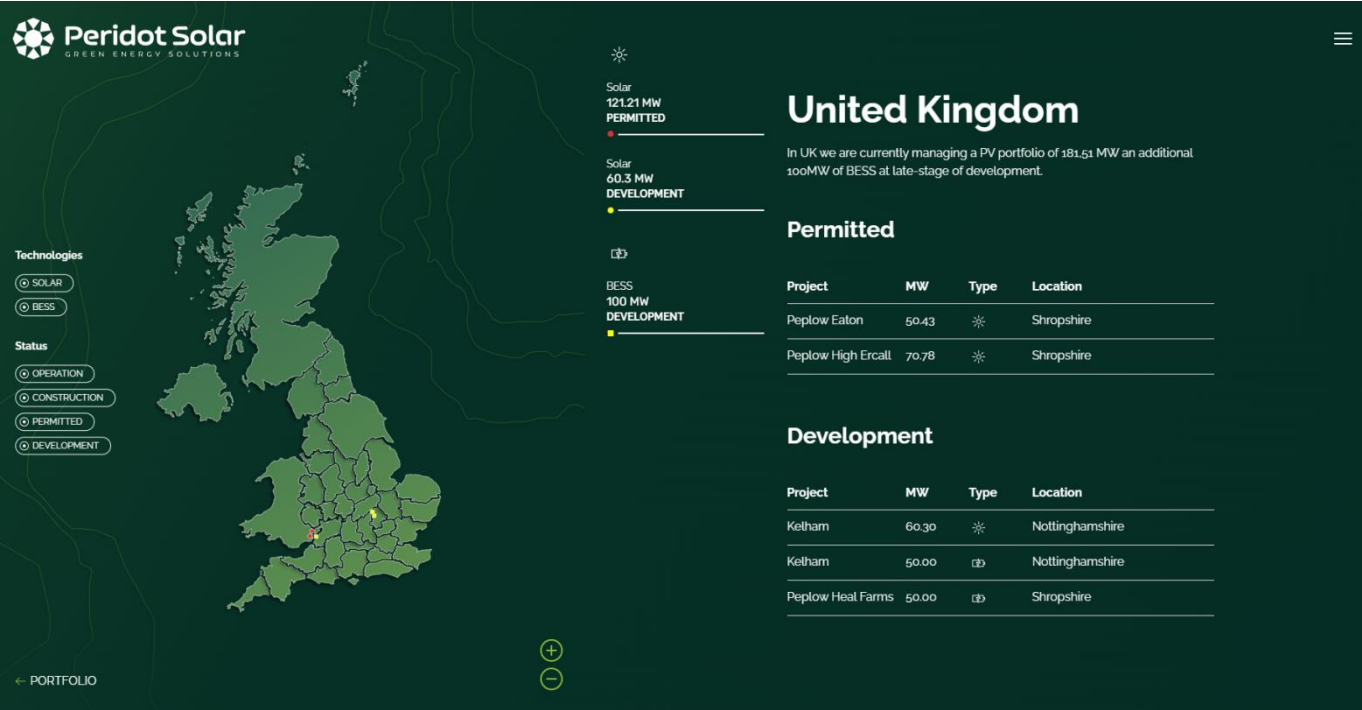


Figure 3: Site Selection?



Figure 4: Energy Infrastructure Developments in the Averham, Kelham, Staythorpe Parish

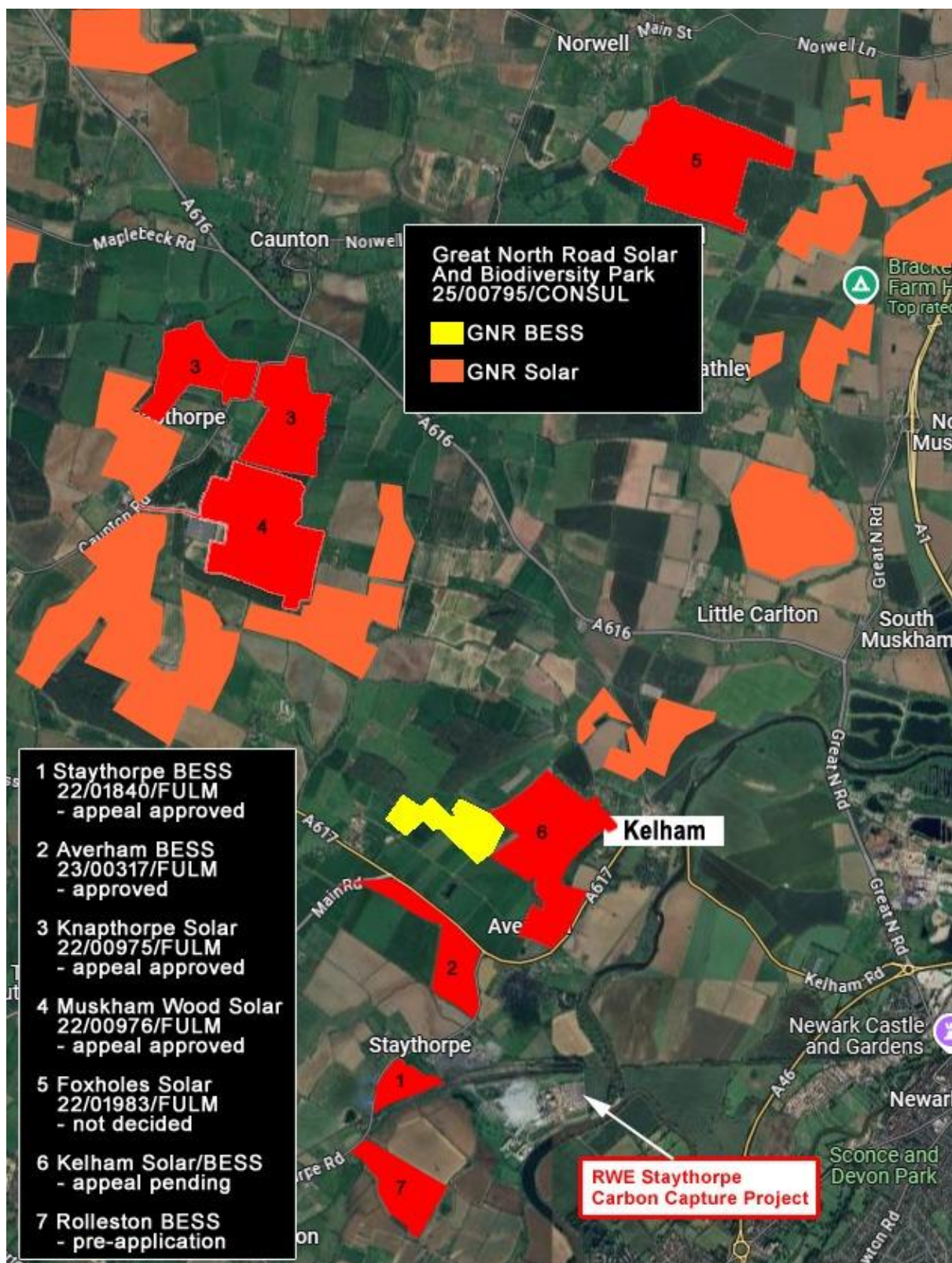


Figure 5: Energy Infrastructure Developments to the West of Newark

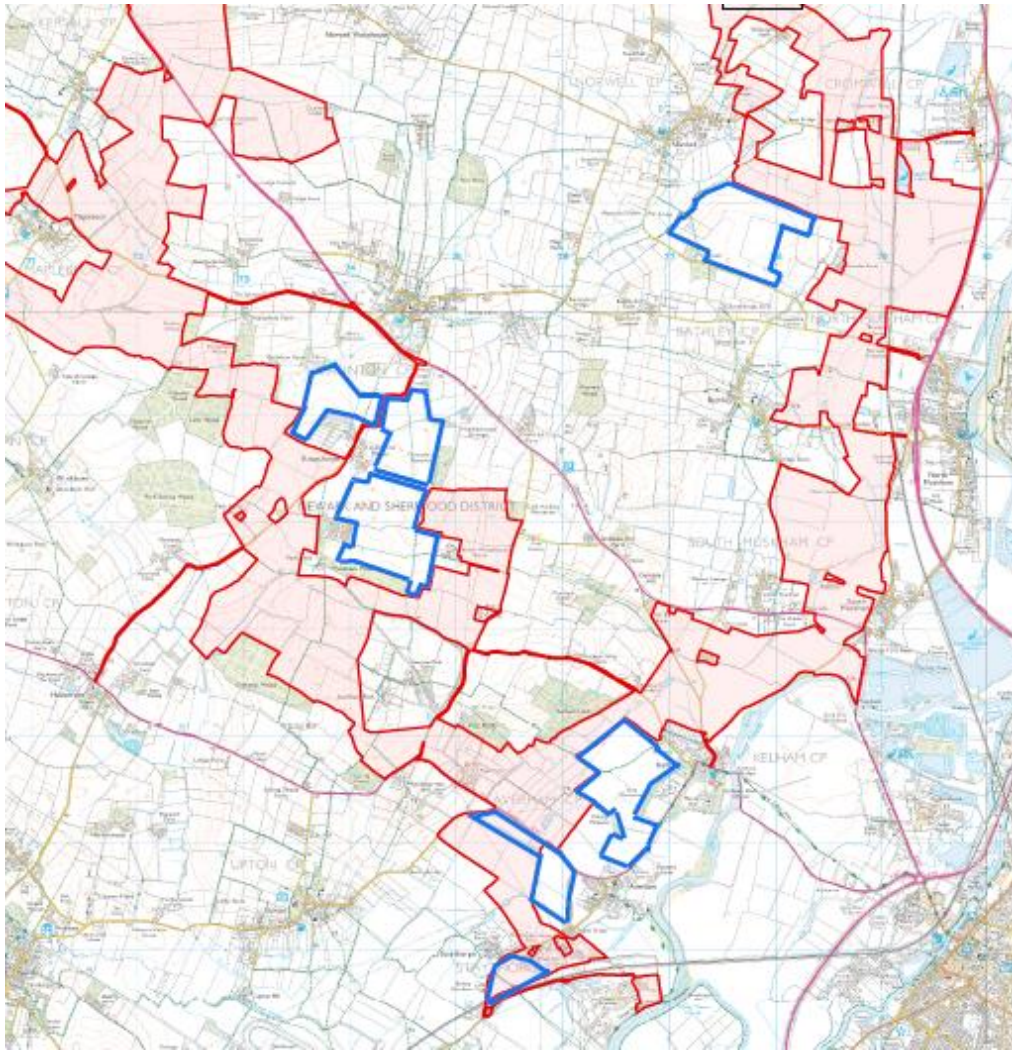


Figure 6: Unacceptable