



Third
Revolution
Projects

Summary of Proof of Evidence

Of Robert Shaw, BSc(hons), DipTP, MRTPI (for the Appellant,
Hatton Solar Farm Ltd) on Planning Matters

Section 78 Appeal: Hatton Solar Farm

Land adjacent to Sotby Woods, Sturton
Road, Hatton

LPA Reference: S/079/01078/22

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Version – Final

Prepared by: Robert Shaw

Third Revolution Reference: 1152_SPoE

Appellant: Hatton Solar Farm Ltd.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1.1 My name is Robert Shaw. I am a Chartered Town Planner and Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. My qualifications and experience are set out in Section 2 of my Proof of Evidence.
- 1.1.2 My Proof of Evidence has been prepared on behalf of Hatton Solar Farm Ltd (“the appellant”) in support of an appeal against refusal of planning permission by East Lindsey District Council (ELDC, “the Council”).

- 1.1.3 The application details are as follows:

“Installation of a temporary ground mounted 49.9MW solar farm with associated infrastructure, construction of vehicular accesses, CCTV cameras on 2.5m high poles, a 15m high communications tower and security fencing to a maximum height of 2.2m.” (LPA Ref: S/079/01078/22)

- 1.1.4 Paragraph 1.1.8 of the Appellant’s Statement of Case (CD8.1) and 5.1.8 of my evidence sets out the planning authority’s states reason for refusal, as follows:

“The proposed development would introduce solar panels and associated infrastructure onto a large area of 180 acres of land in a rural, agricultural landscape, adjacent to the Grade II listed Sturton Harden Corner Farm House with associated curtilage listed barns. Sturton Harden Corner Farm House sits atop a raised area of land resulting in there being clear views available of the farmhouse from immediately adjacent to the site and from some longer distance views from surrounding countryside. The sense of openness around the farmhouse and its visual connectivity with the surrounding farmland is an important part of its setting and significantly defines how the farmhouse and its barns are experienced. This openness would be compromised as a result of the proposed development which would also restrict some views of the farmhouse and barns from the public right of way GtSt/789/1. Furthermore, the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the application advises that the proposed landscaping would take 15 years to become effective in screening the development

The proposed development would therefore detract from the defining rural character of the site and immediate area when viewed in close proximity and in longer distance views for at least a 15-year period. Furthermore, the proposed development would also notably and harmfully detract from views towards the listed building and it’s immediate setting resulting

in less than substantial harm on the significance of the designated heritage asset.

Notwithstanding the significant benefits of the scheme, namely the provision of renewable energy and a potential increase in biodiversity at the site, these would not outweigh the cumulative harm to the countryside character of the area and the adverse impact on the setting and significance of Sturton Harden Corner Farm House. The proposed solar farm is therefore considered to be contrary to SP11, SP23 and SP27 of the East Lindsey Local Plan and paragraphs 180, 206 and 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework.”

1.1.5 My Proof of Evidence addresses the Council’s reason for refusal in full, as well as additional matters raised by the Rule 6 Party and third-party representations. It also considers the Main Issues identified in the Inspector’s Case Management Conference (CMC) Note, which confirms the following areas of focus for the Inquiry:

- Effect on the landscape.
- The effect on the setting and significance of the Grade II listed Sturton Harden Corner Farmhouse.
- The effect on agricultural land and food production (Rule 6).
- Residential and recreational amenity (Rule 6).
- Gas pipeline safety (Rule 6); and
- The overall planning balance, including the weight afforded to renewable energy.

1.1.6 I address the Main Issues in Section 13 of my evidence.

1.1.7 I refer to the evidence of Ms Mary Fisher (CD8.19), Chartered Landscape Architect, who addresses landscape and visual matters and Ms Gail Stoten (CD8.20), Heritage Consultant, who addresses the effect of the proposal on the setting of heritage assets. In addition, Mr Tony Kernon (CD8.21), Agricultural Consultant, addresses matters relating to the quality and use of agricultural land.

1.1.8 Additional materials have been provided to assess the socioeconomic impacts (CD8.22) across all phases of the scheme, which assesses the potential tourism impacts raised by the Rule 6 Party. I have drawn upon all of this expert evidence throughout my planning proof.

2.0 The Appeal Site and its Surroundings and the Appeal proposals and Planning History

- 2.1.1 Section 4 of my evidence outlines the appeal site and surroundings with reference to the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG, CD8.3) with ELDC. Section 6 clarifies the appeal proposals, Section 7 the proposed refinements to the appeal scheme and Section 5 outlines the relevant planning history, with cross reference made to the SOCG.

3.0 Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1.1 In this section of my evidence, I identify the relevant planning policies and guidance that will be of most relevance to the determination of this appeal.

The development plan

- 3.1.2 As agreed in the SoCG with the LPA, the applicable statutory Development Plan comprises:

- East Lindsey Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted July 2018)
- East Lindsey Settlement Proposals Development Plan Document (adopted July 2018).

National policy and guidance

- 3.1.3 I refer specifically to the following material consideration in my evidence subsequently:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) (CD7.5)
- National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) (CD7.2)
- National Policy Statement (NPS) EN-1 (January 2024) (CD7.6)
- National Policy Statement (NPS) EN-3 (January 2024) (CD7.4)
- Written Ministerial Statement: “Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects” (May 2024) (CD7.40)
- UK Climate Change Act 2008, as amended (Net Zero duty) (CD7.10)
- British Energy Security Strategy (DESNZ, April 2022) (CD7.18)
- Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ, 15 Apr 2025 (CD7.34).
- Industrial Strategy: Clean Energy Industries Sector Plan (HM Treasury/DESNZ, June 2025) (CD7.38)

- Committee on Climate Change Progress in Reducing Emissions 2025, Statutory Report to Parliament (25 June 2025) (CD7.39)
- UK Solar Roadmap (June 2025) (CD7.35)
- ELDC Climate Change Strategy (2022) (CD6.8)

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 3.1.4 East Lindsey Landscape Character Assessment (2009): This is not adopted policy but forms part of the local evidence base. While it does not assess solar development specifically, it provides useful context on landscape character and sensitivity. I note that this document has been considered by the Ms Mary Fisher in their landscape assessment.

4.0 Need for the Development

- 4.1.1 The need for solar power is both established and compelling. In Section 11 of my evidence, I outline the key legislation, national energy policy, and planning guidance, from which I draw this conclusion.
- 4.1.2 There is an immediate and pressing need for the deployment of renewable electricity generation in the UK to assist in meeting the Government's legally binding target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 (CD7.10), and to respond to the national declaration of a climate emergency (CD7.33). Solar energy forms a central part of that response.
- 4.1.3 This is common ground with ELDC that there is an unconstrained and urgent need for renewable energy in the context of the Government's Clean Power 2030 ambition, and Net Zero targets, by 2050 nationally and by 2040 locally (Point 5, p18 of the SoCG).
- 4.1.4 The Government's Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (CD7.34) and Solar Roadmap (CD7.35) confirm a substantial increase in solar capacity is required by 2030, with a deployment target of up to 47GW by 2030. Current deployment remains significantly off track according to the 2025 Committee on Climate Change Progress Report (CD7.39).
- 4.1.5 This national energy ambition is strongly supported by the NPPF (CD7.5). Paragraph 161 confirms that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future. Paragraph 168a states that applicants are not required to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and paragraph 168 requires decision-makers to give significant weight to the benefits of renewable and low carbon energy generation and to a proposal's contribution to a net zero future.

4.1.6 The development would export up to 49.9MW of clean electricity, sufficient to power approximately 21,000 homes annually, and is expected to displace over 500,000 tonnes of CO₂ over its operational life. I consider it capable of making a meaningful and timely contribution to national and local energy targets.

4.1.7 In summary, the appeal proposal aligns with the urgent and accepted national need for renewable energy, contributes to climate change mitigation, and attracts significant weight in the planning balance.

Site Capacity

4.1.8 The appeal scheme has a site capacity of 49.9MW, based on the combined-inverters method. It is agreed with the Council that the scheme does not constitute Nationally Significant Infrastructure and is to be determined under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). I provide further detail on this in Section 10 of my Evidence, including confirmation that the inverter configuration may vary but will not exceed the stated capacity, and that this can be secured by condition if necessary.

5.0 Case for the Appellant

5.1.1 Article 35(1)(b) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 requires that, where planning permission is refused, the decision notice must clearly and precisely state the full reasons for refusal, specifying all relevant policies and proposals in the Development Plan. In this case, the Council's reason for refusal cites the following policies of the East Lindsey Local Plan (2018): SP11 (Historic Environment), SP23 (Landscape), and SP27 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy). The Council also refers to paragraphs 180, 206, and 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework, relating to the protection of landscape and the conservation of heritage assets. These policies and the relevant parts of national policy are addressed in detail in the following sections of my Evidence.

Reason for refusal

5.1.2 The application was refused following re-determination by the Council's Planning Committee on 3rd October 2024, with the formal decision notice issued on 31st October 2024 (CD4.3). The decision followed the submission of further information by the appellant to address a previous procedural matter. The Council gave a single, albeit wide-ranging, reason for refusal, referred to above.

5.1.3 I consider that the main issues arising from the Council's reason for refusal are as follows:

- The effect on the landscape.
- The effect on the setting and significance of the Grade II listed Sturton Harden Corner Farmhouse.
- The planning balance, including the weight to be given to renewable energy benefits.

Landscape and visual impact

- 5.1.4 The landscape and visual effects of the scheme are addressed in the expert evidence of Ms Fisher. She concludes that the site is not part of any designated or valued landscape for planning purposes, is visually contained, and that the proposal is appropriately located and designed to respect local character.
- 5.1.5 Adverse effects on character and views would be localised, and the proposed planting and mitigation strategy will reduce effects far more rapidly than the reason for refusal indicates, at 2-4 years for existing hedges and 7-10 years for new.
- 5.1.6 Ms Fisher concludes that there are no proposals in planning or scoping that require consideration as cumulative effects in relation to the proposed development.
- 5.1.7 I am satisfied from Ms Fisher's proof that the development has been guided by the landscape character assessment. SP23 and SP27 do not expect there to be no harm to landscape character or visual receptors. The localised nature of the effects leads me to conclude that the district's landscapes will be protected, and the proposals do not compromise the distinctive character of the area and as such there is minimal conflict with SP23 and 27 from a landscape perspective, or NPPF para 187b (180 in the Decision Notice).

I conclude that the effect on visual qualities will reduce to an acceptable level as the landscaping matures and so there is minimal conflict with SP27 or NPPF paragraph 165a.

Heritage – Grade II Listed Sturton Harden Corner Farm house

- 5.1.8 The heritage impacts are addressed in the evidence of Ms Stoten, who concludes while the development would result in less than substantial harm to the Grade II Listed Sturton Harden Corner Farm house and curtilage listed farm buildings, this harm is at the lower end of the spectrum.
- 5.1.9 In the context of Paragraph 215 of the NPPF, I consider that this less than substantial harm is outweighed by the planning benefits: renewable energy generation, carbon emissions

reduction, biodiversity net gain, economic benefits and local investment, recreational amenity, and landscape enhancements.

- 5.1.10 SP11.1 supports continued protection and enhancements of heritage assets, contribute to the wider vitality of the area and reinforce a strong sense of place. Part 2 supports proposals where they preserve or enhance heritage assets and their setting. SP27 also notes that proposals will be supported where heritage impacts are considered acceptable, when weighed in the balance. These policies and paragraph 215 of the NPPF, do not indicate that there should be no harm to heritage assets. I consider there is some conflict with policy SP11 and return to this in the planning balance.

Compliance with the development plan

- 5.1.11 The East Lindsey Local Plan policies relevant to this appeal include Policies SP10 (Design and Amenity), SP11 (Historic Environment), SP13 (Inland Employment), SP27 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy), SP23 (Landscape), and others cited in the Council's Statement of Case.
- 5.1.12 Regarding the criteria in SP27 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy), I consider there to be no conflict with the following matters: residential amenity, landscape, historic landscape, biodiversity net gain (BNG), local economy, highway safety, or the water environment,
- 5.1.13 I consider there to be limited conflict with visual and heritage matters, but both reduce through landscaping. Since the policy specifically allows for the planning balance to be considered, I conclude that there is no overall conflict with SP27.
- 5.1.14 Regarding the criteria in SP10 (Design), I consider there to be no conflict with the following matters: use of brownfield and lower quality land, use of high-quality materials, on-site landscaping, glint and glare, safety, sustainability features, recycling and reuse, development near water sources or hazardous uses, and design.
- 5.1.15 I see no conflict with policies on transport (SP22), landscape (SP23), biodiversity (SP24), green infrastructure (SP25). There is some conflict with the policy on historic environment (SP11).
- 5.1.16 Having regard to the detailed evidence presented and the policy matters presented in my evidence, I am firmly of the view that the appeal scheme complies with the development plan when read as a whole. I consider the planning balance later in this proof.

Other material considerations

- 5.1.17 I have concluded in Section 9 of my Evidence that the Proposed Development is in accordance with the Development Plan as a whole and therefore should be approved without delay in accordance with the NPPF. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider whether there are any other material considerations which might justify a departure from the Development Plan or alternatively provide additional support for the Proposed Development.

6.0 Rule 6 Party and Third-Party Representations

- 6.1.1 A range of additional matters have been raised by the Rule 6 Party (the Hatton Action Group) and third-party objectors. These matters have been carefully considered and, where necessary, addressed through the submitted evidence, technical assessments, design changes and Statement of Common Ground with the LPA.
- 6.1.2 The Hatton Action Group's Statement of Case confirms their focus on five principal issues, namely:
- The effect of the development on agricultural land and food security.
 - impacts on recreational amenity (PRoW use).
 - health and safety concerns relating to the high-pressure gas pipeline.
 - consideration of alternative sites and the adequacy of the site selection process; and
 - the overall planning balance, including the weight afforded to renewable energy.

Agricultural land and food security

- 6.1.3 The appeal site comprises a mix of Grades 2, 3a and 3b agricultural land, with much of it falling close to Grade 3b, as confirmed by site-specific survey (CD1.19). It is common ground with the Council that the proposal does not conflict with policy on the use of agricultural land or best and most versatile (BMV) land.
- 6.1.4 The Rule 6 Party raises concerns around the use of BMV land, reversibility, and food security. However, the evidence of Mr Kernon addresses these matters in detail. He notes that:
- National policy no longer includes a specific requirement for compelling evidence or alternative site assessment;
 - The development is temporary and fully reversible, with potential for continued agricultural use (e.g. grazing);

- There is no evidence that poorer land is available locally; and
- Government guidance and recent appeal decisions confirm that solar farms have a negligible impact on food security, and that climate change is the greater threat to food production.

6.1.5 The Council's officer also concluded that the temporary use of BMV land is justified in the planning balance, and I agree. There is no policy conflict, and I do not consider agricultural land or food security concerns to justify refusal in this case.

Recreational amenity

Impacts on recreational amenity of users of the PRoWs

6.1.6 The eastern PRoW will be retained and remain open throughout construction and operation. It benefits from wide set-backs and structural planting to reduce visual effects. The scheme follows British Horse Society guidance, has no objection from the PRoW Officer, and includes mitigation for glint and glare. As such, there will be no material harm to users' amenity, and no conflict with NPPF paragraph 105.

Impacts on walkers and cyclists on roads from increased traffic

6.1.7 Construction-phase traffic impacts have been assessed and are subject to a secured Construction Management Plan. The proposed highway improvements, including seven new passing places, will benefit all users and remain in place post-construction. Operational traffic will be minimal. I consider these impacts temporary, proportionate, and effectively mitigated.

Impacts on holiday-let properties

6.1.8 Expert evidence confirms that views from nearby holiday accommodation — including The Old Barn, Corner Farm, and Beech House Cottages, will be limited, and capable of mitigation through landscape planting. Effects reduce over time and are not significant in planning terms. The socio-economic assessment concludes there will be no impact on the viability or appeal of these businesses.

6.1.9 Taken together, I conclude that the scheme appropriately addresses recreational and tourism amenity impacts, and no conflict arises with the development plan or national policy.

Health and safety concerns relating to the high-pressure gas pipeline.

6.1.10 The Rule 6 Party raises concerns about the presence of the high-pressure gas pipeline (Feeder 17) running through the appeal site. This constraint has been fully accounted for in the scheme

design, with a 24.4m easement provided in line with National Gas requirements and no solar infrastructure proposed within this corridor (CD2.17).

- 6.1.11 No statutory consultee, including National Gas, has objected to the development. The standard holding objection (CD3.25) issued is procedural and does not indicate that the scheme is unacceptable. Temporary construction crossings will be subject to technical review through established asset protection processes.
- 6.1.12 High-pressure gas pipelines are a common feature of permitted solar schemes, with at least 13 comparable examples nationwide (CD8.28). This demonstrates that such infrastructure can be managed safely through design and coordination.
- 6.1.13 Fire and safety risks have been assessed, and it is agreed in the Statement of Common Ground (CD8.3) and confirmed in the Officer Report (CD4.4, para. 7.157) that any residual risk is very low and can be addressed through standard fire safety measures. There is no conflict with development plan policy or national guidance, and no reason to withhold planning permission on this basis.

[Alternative sites](#)

- 6.1.14 There is no policy requirement to assess alternative sites for solar development. As confirmed in *Bramley Solar Power Residents Group v SSLUHC* [2023] EWHC 2842 (CD9.8), neither the NPPF, PPG nor NPS EN-1 impose such a duty, and certainly not a sequential test. While case law has recognised that exceptional circumstances may justify such assessment (*Westerleigh Group Ltd v SSCLG* [2014] EWHC 4313 (Admin); CD9.29), I do not consider this scheme to raise any such circumstances. It is also common ground with the Council that an alternative site assessment is not required (CD8.3, p18).
- 6.1.15 Nonetheless, the appellant has undertaken a proportionate Site Search (CD2.27), which confirms that the application site is deliverable, avoids sensitive designations, and has a willing landowner. The land is of lower agricultural quality compared to some alternatives and sits on the 3a/3b margin (CD2.24; CD1.19). The Site Search applies clear planning criteria and demonstrates the site is suitable and available.
- 6.1.16 Government policy sets out an unconstrained need for new renewable energy infrastructure. NPS EN-3 (2024) (CD7.4) confirms that while lower quality agricultural land is preferred, this is not a determining factor. The selection of the appeal site accords with the NPPF, NPS EN-3 and Local Plan Policy SP10.1.

- 6.1.17 Overall, I consider that the concerns raised by the Rule 6 Party and third parties are appropriately addressed through the application material, subsequent clarifications, and the detailed expert evidence presented. These matters do not give rise to reasons why planning permission should be withheld.

7.0 The Overall Planning Balance

- 7.1.1 In this section I explain how I believe the decision maker should approach the determination of this appeal, before going on to identify any harms and benefits of the Proposed Development that need to be weighed in the overall planning balance.

Decision-making framework

- 7.1.2 The starting point for the determination of this appeal is the Development Plan. The planning system is 'plan-led', and planning law required that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.1.3 Before reaching a conclusion on this matter I turn to consider whether there are material planning considerations which clearly outweigh any potential harm resulting from the Appeal scheme.

Material considerations and weight

- 7.1.4 In considering the weight that should be afforded to each consideration in the overall planning balance, I apply the following scale:
- Very substantial
 - Substantial
 - Significant
 - Moderate
 - Limited
- 7.1.5 Such weight may also be regarded 'positive' as a benefit, 'adverse' as harm, or where applicable of 'neutral' effect.

Material considerations weighing in favour of the appeal scheme

The need for renewable energy

- 7.1.6 In light of the urgent national imperative to decarbonise the UK's electricity supply, and the scale and deliverability of the appeal scheme, I consider that the benefit of generating up to 49.9MW of renewable energy should be afforded **very substantial weight** in determining this appeal.

Grid connection and early delivery

- 7.1.7 The appeal scheme benefits from a secured grid connection and is capable of delivery in the short term. Given national concerns about the pace of solar deployment and the importance of early contributions to 2030 targets, I consider that this factor should be afforded **substantial weight** in the determination of the appeal.

Climate emergency

- 7.1.8 In the context of the UK's declared climate emergency and the clear need to accelerate progress toward national and local carbon reduction targets and noting that it is common ground with the Council that the scheme would make a very significant contribution in this regard, I consider that this benefit should be afforded **very substantial weight** in the planning balance.

Ecology and biodiversity net gain

- 7.1.9 The scheme delivers biodiversity net gain well in excess of the statutory 10% requirement, with further gains anticipated through the proposed amendments. In this context, and given compliance with relevant local and national policy, I consider that this benefit should be afforded **significant weight** in the planning balance.

Economic benefits and farm diversification

- 7.1.10 The appeal scheme will deliver material economic benefits during construction and operation, alongside supporting the sustainable diversification of a rural enterprise. In light of the findings of the Socioeconomics Impact Assessment (CD8.22) and alignment with Policy EC3, I consider that these benefits should be afforded **significant weight** in the planning balance.

Landscape Enhancements and permissive path

- 7.1.11 The proposed landscape enhancements, including new and strengthened hedgerows, meadow and grassland planting, and the introduction of a permissive path, will deliver meaningful improvements to green infrastructure, connectivity, and public access. These benefits, which align with Policy SP25, should be afforded **moderate weight** in the planning balance.

Soils

- 7.1.12 Mr Kernon's evidence confirms that there will be no permanent loss of best and most versatile land, and that the Outline Soil Management Plan will safeguard soil health during construction and operation. He also highlights the likely benefits to soil condition from long-term grassland use. I consider that this matter should be afforded **moderate weight** in the planning balance.

Only available site

- 7.1.13 The Site Search Report and supporting landowner clarification confirm that the appeal site is the only land made available for solar development within the identified area of search. In this context, and recognising that site availability is essential to delivery, I consider that this should be afforded **moderate weight** in the planning balance.

Design

- 7.1.14 The scheme's design adopts a landscape-led approach that respects the rural character, minimises visual and environmental impacts, and maintains agricultural use. Key elements such as layout, infrastructure placement, and mitigation planting ensure a sensitive, locally appropriate solution. Although there is some limited short-term policy conflict early on, the residual effects are acceptable, and the design is a clear benefit to the proposal, warranting **moderate beneficial weight** in the planning balance. Material Considerations weighing against the appeal scheme

Heritage

- 7.1.15 I have concluded that heritage should not be a reason to dismiss the scheme. Nonetheless, I consider it should carry weight in the planning balance in the context of the statutory duty under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 7.1.16 Putting aside the public benefits, I give great weight to the asset's harm. Grade II means the asset is the lowest of the 3 grades of importance, the appellant proposes mitigation to reduce the potential harm, Ms Stoten has assessed the harm to be at the low end of less than substantial, and the proposed development is temporary. Taking these together, I consider **Significant adverse** weight should be applied in the planning balance. As conclude earlier, this harm is outweighed by the public benefits.

Landscape and visual

- 7.1.17 Ms Fisher's evidence concluded that the landscape effects are localised and the effect on visual qualities will reduce to an acceptable level as the landscaping matures and so there is minimal conflict with SP27 or NPPF paragraph 165a. I note also, while 40-years operation is not a short

period of time, the appeal scheme is a temporary development and can be completely removed.

- 7.1.18 I have noted above that there will be moderate beneficial weight from landscape enhancements. These will mature rapidly. Conversely, Ms Fisher concludes that landscape effects will be confined to a small part of the landscape character area, there will be Moderate/minor adverse harm to character for all stages of the proposed development and no greater than Moderate adverse effects on visual receptors. Accordingly, I consider that these matters be afforded **Limited adverse** weight in determining the application. This would be largely unaffected by the proposed amendments.

Public Rights of Way

- 7.1.19 The bridleway on the site's eastern edge will remain open throughout construction and operation, with new hedgerows creating a vegetated lane where the PRoW passes through the site. The scheme design follows British Horse Society advice to minimise risks to riders, and no glint and glare impacts are expected after mitigation. Ms Fisher's evidence notes Large Scale Adverse visual effects as the PRoW passes through the site, reducing to Moderate adverse after planting matures, with Medium to Small Scale adverse effects on nearby bridleways and footpaths, diminishing over time to negligible impacts in some areas. Access restrictions and dense vegetation reduce impacts from Sotby Wood to negligible. Overall, due to the limited length affected and mitigation measures, these impacts attract **limited adverse weight**.

Material considerations which are neutral

- 7.1.20 I consider that the following material considerations should be afforded **neutral weight** in the overall planning balance.
- **Agricultural land use and food security:** There is no policy conflict with the use of agricultural land, and the site search demonstrates no availability of lower-grade or non-agricultural land in the area. The land remains in agricultural use during operation, can be fully restored, and offers potential soil quality benefits. Mr Kernon refers to appeal precedents confirming negligible impacts and the temporary nature of solar development.
 - **Amenity:** No harm arises to residential, recreational, or public realm amenity. Ms Fisher confirms the RVA Threshold is not reached, and there is no conflict with users of PRoWs or surrounding roads.

- **Highway safety and access:** No objection is raised by the Highways Authority, and I consider impacts are limited to construction and decommissioning phases, with suitable controls secured by condition.
- **Flood risk and drainage:** The site is suitable in drainage terms, with no increased risk of flooding on- or off-site. Sustainable drainage will be secured by condition.

7.1.21 I therefore consider the appeal scheme to be acceptable in respect of all the above matters. The acceptability of these impacts reinforces the overall suitability of the site for the proposed development and, in line with paragraph 163(b) of the NPPF (Core Document 3.1), weighs positively in favour of granting planning permission.

8.0 Overall Conclusions

- 8.1.1 This Summary Proof confirms that the Hatton Solar Farm proposal complies with the adopted East Lindsey Local Plan and relevant material considerations, addressing the refusal reason and key issues raised.
- 8.1.2 Technical assessments and consultation have resolved concerns on site selection, agricultural land, socio-economic effects, and third-party matters such as amenity and safety.
- 8.1.3 Landscape and heritage impacts are limited and capable of mitigation. The low level of less than substantial harm to the Grade II listed farmhouse is outweighed by the significant public benefits, consistent with the NPPF and statutory duties.
- 8.1.4 The site is primarily lower-grade agricultural land with limited versatility and can continue grazing. There is no policy prohibiting solar development on such land.
- 8.1.5 Overall, the limited harms are clearly outweighed by the scheme's public and environmental benefits. The Local Plan policies remain consistent with national policy, and the planning balance under NPPF paragraph 11(c) weighs decisively in favour of the proposal.
- 8.1.6 I therefore respectfully conclude that planning permission should be granted, and the appeal allowed.

Planning Balance Summary

Matter	Weight
Generation of up to 49.9 MW of clean, renewable electricity	Very substantial beneficial
Climate emergency	Very substantial beneficial
Grid connection secured and deliverable in short term	Substantial

Biodiversity Net Gain	Significant beneficial
Landscape enhancement and permissive path	Moderate beneficial
Soils	Moderate beneficial
Economic and farm diversification	Significant beneficial
Only available site	Moderate beneficial
Design	Moderate beneficial
Heritage	Significant adverse
Landscape and visual	Limited adverse
Public rights of way	Limited adverse
Agricultural land use and food security	Neutral
Amenity	Neutral
Highways and access	Neutral
Flood risk and drainage	Neutral

9.0 Planning Conditions

9.1.1 I am of the opinion that appropriate control over the form of the Proposed Development can be achieved through the imposition of planning conditions.

9.1.2 A set of conditions on a without prejudice basis is agreed with the LPA.