

**Pentlow Parish Council: Solar Farm Application 20/01107/FUL
Planning Committee Meeting Statement: 2nd February 2021**

Pentlow Parish Council recognises the climate crisis facing us all and is supportive of renewable energy. However, we object to this application on the grounds that this 70 acre development will have a significant negative visual impact on a historic landscape, will result in the loss of valuable agricultural land and has no suitable route for construction traffic.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment states "*the proposed development will have only minimal effects on both landscape character and visual amenity receptors*". We strongly disagree. The proposed development is on gently sloping, open landscape in a prominent position in the Stour Valley. With 2 metre fencing, panels as high as 3 metres and multiple CCTV cameras on 3 metre poles, there will be significant impact from many viewpoints on both sides of the valley. The proposed hedgerow planted to screen the development will take years to grow to the required height, leaving fencing and panels visible for a considerable time. Allowing this development would appear to contravene Braintree's Core Strategy CS8 Natural Environment and Biodiversity.

The montage images submitted to demonstrate visual impact do not show the proposal's full effect. Only when viewing the extent and location of the development on site can the negative effect on the landscape be fully appreciated.

The Agriculture and Soil report suggests the land is not of good quality for agriculture. There is no evidence of yield records to substantiate this claim. This land has been successfully farmed for generations. Natural England's Land Classification shows the site to be Grade 2. We would regret the loss of agriculturally productive land.

There is no suitable route for construction traffic. The Planning Design and Access Statement states "*the whole route is wide enough to accommodate transport vehicles and allow other traffic to pass.*" This is not the case and we provided a video which shows this clearly. Along this declassified road are badger setts which at one pinch point will be seriously endangered if lorries impact the bank. Given the size of the vehicles and frequency of deliveries over 6 months we have serious concerns for the safety of existing road users - in particular walkers, cyclists and horse riders - as well as the detrimental effect on protected wildlife.

Finally, we regret that there has been limited consultation with local residents regarding a development of such significant public interest. There was little local awareness of the proposals until the planning process was far advanced. We know of schemes elsewhere where full consultation has occurred, in spite of COVID. We had hoped that best practice would have been followed for this application, but do not believe it has.

In summary we believe the negative impact of a large solar farm on this site outweighs the benefits gained. If Members are minded to approve this application, we would request they visit the site to fully assess the impact of the development and the feasibility of the construction traffic route before making a decision.