

From: Gareth Elliott <gelliott@melton.gov.uk>
Sent: 19 Dec 2022 09:55:07
To: dms.development.management@melton.gov.uk
Cc:
Subject: FW: 22/00537/FUL - Muston Solar Farm
Attachments:

From: Toby Ebbs <tebbs@melton.gov.uk>
Sent: 16 December 2022 16:50
To: Gareth Elliott <gelliott@melton.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: 22/00537/FUL - Muston Solar Farm

Hi Gareth,

I have reviewed the submitted plans. I have also read through MBC's independently commissioned report by Cornwall Environmental Consultations (CEC).

It is clear from their findings that the applicant's own assessment is not sufficient to be applicable because it does not consider the cumulative impact of the solar farm in alignment with the 4 solar farms that have been approved in close proximity.

The salient paragraphs in their report with regards to this are as follows:

It is considered that were the Cumulative Report to have assessed the potential cumulative landscape effects of the Development with the other 4 solar farms within the 5km study area, it would have concluded that solar farms were now a key characteristic of this landscape, and this landscape could be described as a landscape with solar farms where: • Solar farms now influence the character of the local landscape • The 5 separate developments now form a high density cluster of solar farms in the 5km study area which is the greatest density of solar farms in the wider landscape

*It is considered that were the 4 solar farms included in the baseline assessment of the 'Vale' character area, that the local landscape character would have a greater sensitivity to further large scale solar farms. **The magnitude of change to landscape character created by the introduction of this 103Ha solar farm within the 5km study area is considered to be High.** It is therefore considered that there is the potential for the Development to create significant cumulative effects on the landscape character.*

I have highlighted in bold the key sentence within their text, namely that they consider the impact on landscape character to be 'high'. The impact on the setting of designated heritage assets are as follows:

- Impact on character of Easthorpe Conservation Area, Muston Conservation Area and Bottesford Conservation Area, as well as the setting GI listed Church St Mary the Virgin,

When I was consulted as part of 19/01312/ENQMG, for a solar farm on the adjacent site to this application, I objected to the proposal on the same grounds. The Vale of Belvoir is one of the most distinctive character elements within the Borough of Melton and is defined by the extensive network of low-lying, neatly formed C18 / early C19 Enclosure field systems. The very gentle topography of the Vale allows each of the villages to be read as separate elements when travelling through this landscape, with the Belvoir ridge an ever-present and defining feature. Belvoir (beautiful view) Castle is indeed the monarch of the landscape. The Grade I listed building forms a direct, tangible relationship with large swathes of the Vale and even if there are not direct tangible views, there are intangible views, both to / from the Castle as well as the relevant conservation areas identified above.

It is considered there will be less than substantial harm to the setting of the above stated conservation areas, as well as to the Grade I listed Belvoir Castle and the spire of St Mary the Virgin's Church in Bottesford, in accordance with Paragraph 202 of the NPPF. I cannot identify the level of public benefit to outweigh this harm, but it is presumed the Belvoir Estate has already maximised opportunities to lease their land to solar farm companies. At some point this piecemeal erosion of the Vale's historic character will have to stop. Further approvals will only set a precedent for even further potential encroachments.

Toby

From: Gareth Elliott <gelliott@melton.gov.uk>
Sent: 08 December 2022 13:34

To: Toby Ebbs <tebbs@melton.gov.uk>
Subject: 22/00537/FUL - Muston Solar Farm

Hi Toby,

We have an independent landscape review that we've commissioned in relation to this application. It's been made public and available to view now. The document does contain commentary on the historic landscape, field boundaries and setting of important heritage assets impacted by the proposed development.

I'd be very grateful for any additional input from you on this.

Thanks

Gareth

Gareth Elliott
Planning Development Officer

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