

Downing Renewable Developments

Re: Kingsway Solar

Dear Sirs,

As the District Councillor Balsham ward, I would like to add my endorsement to all those individuals and local bodies who have written to express 1) their support for sustainable energy 2) their concern that the local environment be fully respected 3) their extreme dismay at the inclusion of land parcel 'C'.

As a Councillor who sits on the SCDC planning committee, I have an appreciation of the planning process. Since we are not yet in a formal planning process, I'd like to take the opportunity to make some general observations and criticisms and, for the moment, leave 'material' planning issues to SCDC planning officers to list out in the SCDC response, to the extent possible, on the basis of very preliminary plans and where I understand that both SCDC and CCC are critical of DRD on timely engagement and on level of information supplied.

Invested as DRD are, in the future of renewable energy, I do not understand why DRD should want to stoke-up public resentment and opposition to solar energy by proposing a land parcel so deeply unsuitable as land parcel 'C'; it discredits the whole industry. It also discredits DRD to say, as their representatives have, in so many words, 'We are in it to make money and we are going forward with the scheme anyway', knowing the distress this will cause my residents, as they are dragged through a years long process.

In the first public presentation on the 18th of March, DRD stated in their slide deck 'A connection offer for 200MW has been accepted' and 'Working to establish an onsite Point of Connection (POC) to the National Grid through the 400kV Burwell to Pelham line that crosses the site.' Thus a proposal had been presented, supported by the efficient use of existing infrastructure. Later, in presentations to Balsham and West Wrating Parish Councils, DRD denied that this had ever been a plan, and when I pointed out that it was written in the slide deck that that was the plan, the answer was 'If we did say that we did not mean to and should not have said it – the plan was always to build a cable back to Burwell South'. So then, what of the accompanying 200MW offer 'accepted'? It seems that 'smoke and mirrors' or 'bait and switch' tactics have been used to draw support for a rational proposal, and then replace it with a wholly unsuitable one and that by DRD's own admission, we cannot rely on information given, or that it will not be denied at a future date.

The new government has announced in its manifesto that it will be producing a Land Use Framework. Though this is not yet incorporated into a bill in Parliament, a direction

of travel has been indicated and this can be afforded some weight in planning process. The national target for solar amounts to some 0.6% of land area at most. The implication of the current proposal, in the context of a future Land Use Framework, would be that DRD believe that parcel 'C' is in the top 0.6% most suitable land available between Balsham ward and Burwell. That is a quite preposterous assertion.

In conclusion then, I think this a bad scheme. Should it proceed, I hope we can work together to ensure that local people are brought along, are appropriately compensated and do not feel they have had this 'done to them', because that cannot further the wider aim of reducing our dependence on fossil fuel, nor it seems to me, the longer term financial interests of DRD. But in relation to parcel 'C', I do not accept that there is any available compensation which could be imagined, to compensate for the level of intrusion it would bring to those affected. I hope that if it comes defining benefits and compensation for the community, it will be for a scheme that **does not** include parcel 'C', and respects the many other wider concerns raised.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Geoff Harvey – District Councillor, Balsham ward