

Spoken Evidence given to Inquiry by ASWAR:

Firstly, I would just like to say, Sir, that the whole appeal inquiry process, and the giving of evidence and cross-examination is rather alien to me so please forgive me if at times I do not appear as comfortable and slick in my execution as many of the others present here will be. I am merely a concerned resident of Churchover, not a planning or legal professional, representing, through ASWAR, the feelings of equally concerned local communities.

As the ASWAR Proof of Evidence sets out, there are several key issues which demonstrate that planning impacts have not been fully addressed and therefore this development should not be allowed to proceed. I do not propose repeating aloud the entire Proof of Evidence here, but I would like to draw your attention to what ASWAR sees are several important points worth elaborating on.

On the issue of the adverse impact on heritage assets and their setting, the Conservation Area covering the village of Churchover and the Public Rights of Way, our colleagues representing Churchover Parish Council will cover these in detail. However, on the subject of medieval Ridge and Furrow which exists at the appeal site, it is significant that the UK's leading expert on this subject, David Hall, classifies it as "of very exceptional quality" and feels strongly enough about its preservation to oppose this development. Unfortunately David Hall is unable to attend this inquiry, but you can read his evidence in full in Appendix 2 of the ASWAR Proof of Evidence.

Personally, I was born and bred in West Sussex from the parish of Sullington under the South Downs at their highest point, where my family had resided for two centuries and some ancestors father and son had been the Vicar of Sullington each for 50 years. Which I imagine is a record. So you will understand that my blood sees the flatter Midlands landscape in which I have lived now for 40 years as generally less attractive plus with all of its industrial conurbations. Nevertheless since coming to live in Churchover in 1985 I have come to love the subtle landscape around Churchover with the wonderful walks around the meandering upper swift river valley and from whatever 360 degree angle with always the sentinel church spire dominating from its hill top. There is a very special connection between the land and the settlement with the tranquillity of the rural river valley between Churchover and Cotesbach where the nearby modern edifices do not intrude, needing to be experienced to be fully appreciated. We look forward to helping you experience this from the best vantage points on your site visit.

On the subject of the adverse impact on Public Rights of Way, many local people, and indeed frequent visitors from much further afield, enjoy walks along various paths and bridleways through the unspoilt rural surroundings of the meandering Upper Swift Valley. Quite a few of the objection letters from people who live in Rugby are ramblers and almost every week we see from our house ramblers congregating outside the church before they set off for a ramble across the valley. It is one of Warwickshire's hidden beauty spots.

It is true that you can walk through the Swift Valley and be completely oblivious to the fact that it is so close to the M6 motorway and A5 road network, and industrial developments further beyond. It really is a beautiful unspoilt piece of countryside holding back the horizontal industrial development from distribution centre warehousing, the Rugby Gateway to the South, and Magna Park to the North. It is fair to say that by allowing the erection of 4 huge vertical wind turbines five times the height of the church spire as proposed would destroy the rural character and render the area undesirable for people wanting to enjoy a walk, to fish (the upper swift is one of only two stocked trout rivers in Warwickshire), to hunt (when horses will be shocked by moving blades), to just ride

(the un-kept road is within fall-over distance of Turbine 1), to walk dogs or simply enjoying the gorgeous countryside with its birds and wildlife.

Moving onto the issue of whether the local community supports or opposes this proposal, it is clear from every conceivable angle that the local affected communities of Churchover and Cotesbach overwhelmingly oppose this development. All consultation on this proposal, the subsequent invalid re-application, and also even further back to the previous Bransford Bridge application has consistently and continually revealed that there is quite simply no meaningful local support. The fact that this has been ongoing for 5 years now and that opposition to this proposal is as strong, if not stronger than ever, is testament to the determination and strength of the local communities who have resisted the inevitable fatigue associated with such a long fight.

The Rugby Borough Council planner acknowledged there is significant local opposition and the appellant's own detailed analysis of consultation responses damningly highlights the clear fact that there is no meaningful support for this development locally. Officer Lowde has confirmed to us that he has received 275 letters and emails objecting with five in support of the re-application. That is 98% against. This is backed by analysis carried out by ASWAR and detailed in Appendix 1 to the Proof of Evidence.

You have photos of some of the community rallies in our proof of evidence all of which with numbers of between 50 and 80 which from a small village of just 100 dwellings must be one of the largest turn-outs to a windfarm protest seen across the UK. And these took place before Cotesbach residents became organised more recently, when they held an open meeting of 60 residents three months ago, which voted 95% against with just one person in favour and two abstentions.

There are many local residents of Churchover, Cotesbach, Montilo lane and surrounding communities who have requested to address you directly, Sir, during this inquiry, and I am sure that having listened to what they have to say you will truly feel the strength of the significant opposition here.

Putting this into context following Greg Clark's Written Ministerial Statement of 18th June, it is impossible to contemplate allowing this development to proceed in light of the significant opposition to it.

Next, on the subject of the unacceptable impact on the living and visual amenity conditions of Mr and Mrs Boyes living at Ringwood, Moorbarns, here we have a couple living in a bungalow specially built for their parents with a southerly aspect, when they took over the main farmhouse from Rob's parents. Their parents have died and so Mary and Rob have now passed on the main farmhouse to their son and his wife. Rob while continuing to work on the farm and it is a busy time of year, wants to speak with you Sir about the prospect they face of having to look at and not being able to escape from four huge wind turbines when looking out from the key rooms and outdoor space of their property, to such an extent that it would, for them, be an undesirable place to live. For this reason, and despite what the appellant's landscape expert claims, the "Lavender Test" must be failed for this property.

It has many similarities to Warren Grange at Bythorn which as you will know the secretary of state rejected the appeal partly on visual amenity grounds. The relevant paragraphs in his report are on Page 5 para 25 and page 8 para 36 then in the Inspectors report page 102 (page 113 of the total document) and para 499 onwards.

Although the wind industry has been in public denial as to the unhealthy noise effects of wind turbines, ASWAR is aware of the growing concern around the world about the unhealthy aspects of 'Extreme Amplitude Modulation' as well as 'Low Frequency Noise'. The Australian Senate has just concluded a long inquiry into the subject while there are an increasing number of instances of people finding it impossible to live near wind turbines around the world.

ASWAR cannot afford to retain advisors to be witnesses about these unhealthy aspects of wind turbine noise but Professor David Unwin will be giving evidence concerning our concerns with regard to Noise Impact Assessment and the need for particular conditions to be made to protect the community.

For all of these reasons, Lack of local backing, Heritage, Landscape, Amenity and Noise we ask you to reject this appeal.