

Richard Redford,
Senior Planning officer,
Rugby Borough Council,

26 Feb 2016.

Dear Richard,

I write to give additional comments to ASWAR's earlier objection to R13/1401.

Landscape

The issue of Landscape was considered at the recent Government Public Inquiry into wind turbines at Churchover.

The following is one aspect of ASWAR's 'closing submission' 2 para 3. "The village heritage assets are a comfort to the community and an important reason for many for living in Churchover. They are importantly linked to the surrounding countryside that creates the wide and open setting for the church".

This unspoilt, wide open landscape as the setting of the Church was confirmed by the Inspector and its importance recognised by the Secretary of State.

(IR 258) 'The site visit demonstrated a high degree of tranquillity around Churchover itself combined with an unusual sense of isolation, This is an aspect of the area that is highly valued by local residents'.

(IR 256) 'In terms of local landscape character, the area west of the A5 is characterised by wide views and a strong impression of emptiness and space ... around Churchover, the eye is drawn to distant skylines rather than foreground views. The most important feature of the Open Plateau is the remote rural quality of the landscape '

(SoS 11)

The Secretary of State has had regard to the Inspector's remarks on the setting of the Grade II* listed Holy Trinity Church (IR248-249). He further agrees that the rural setting adds to its historical significance.

(SoS 15)

The Secretary of State has given careful consideration to the Inspector's analysis at IR256-265. He further agrees that the proposed development would conflict with the landscape protection aims of the development plan, specifically policies CS14, CS16 and LP policy GP5. It would also not conserve or enhance remote rural character as set out in the management strategy of the Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines (IR266).

RBC needs to understand that the attempt to hide the solar park behind high planting, will not be in keeping with the rural open landscape that the Inspector and Secretary of State recognised as an important aspect of the setting of and significance of the heritage assets.

Quality of the agricultural land.

The ACL designation of this land is grade 3 as determined in the 1980s. BMV land which is taken to be at least partly grade 3A or better therefore requires a determination whether this land is wholly 3B or partly 3A or better. Even the subsidy speculator's survey admits the land is not wholly 3B.

Following the inconclusive view of this survey and with further questions raised by comments by Reading Agriculture, we remind you that the best people to advise about the quality of the land are those farmers who have farmed this specific area of land for the last forty years.

You have received an objection from the wife of the late farm manager who farmed the solar park land for 20 years up to 20 years ago on behalf of the father of the present land owner, and she states it was always considered some of the highest quality land in the area.

You have received an objection from the farmer (the nephew of the present land owner) who has farmed the land for the last 20 years saying it is of high quality.

You have received an objection from the farmer who farms the land on the same plateau and next to the proposed solar park. He sent you the attached graphic of a map of the land around Churchover. The yellow shaded area (classified ACL grade two) and the blue boxed area (originally classified ACL grade three as it used to be for grazing) is what he farms, both areas are now farmed as arable.



He had no hesitation in telling you that the highest quality land (blue boxed) is that next to the red shaded area (on which the 60-acre solar park is proposed).

This land he has described as light, good soil, easy to work, is good productive land, and grows excellent crops better than my other land that is ACL graded two. He sees no reason why the land just over the hedgerow would be any different in quality.

Government policy.

Attached is a letter to the local MP from George Eustace, Minister at DEFRA making clear government policy that solar parks should not be any longer on high quality agricultural land. Can RBC say it is necessary to use this high quality agricultural land for a solar park?

Media interest.

you will have seen the recent BBC TV Midlands Today programme on solar parks in the West Midlands where Churchover was featured and spoken about as a beautiful conservation village by the BBC, with myself and the land owner interviewed. The piece the BBC used from my longer interview was: **“The council needs to lift the siege on this community after six years of a David and Goliath struggle against the renewable energy speculators’ subsidy scam”.**

Even the people interviewed selling solar to land owners at their trade show admitted that applications and permissions for solar parks had dried up in the West Midlands and that the only way forward was to find a way to store the intermittent solar electricity.

Is RBC, after their comprehensive defeat at the Public Inquiry, going to continue to ignore government policy and the wishes of the local community and all of its democratically elected representatives from parish councillors, local councillor, county councillor and MP?

In summary it would be a desecration of good agricultural land to industrialise it with a solar park and the village calls upon you to recommend refusal to the planning committee.

Yours sincerely
Lorne Smith
ASWAR Coordinator

