# Residents oppose solar farm plans in Wakefield countryside



Local residents and politicians in Wakefield have expressed strong opposition to a proposed solar farm that would cover over 100 acres of countryside in the Sitlington area. The public inquiry, currently underway, is investigating the plans to install solar panels near the villages of Middlestown, Overton, and Netherton. The Wakefield Council had previously rejected the application from Boom Power in April 2023, deeming the project "harmful" to the surrounding pastoral landscape. However, the renewable energy company is contesting this decision, arguing that the solar facility is essential for achieving both local and national net-zero targets.

Community member and long-term resident Les Hughes voiced his discontent with the proposal at the inquiry, describing the project as an act of "landscape assassination." He highlighted the area's rich natural beauty and its historic use for recreation, stating, "It lifts the spirit to be in such wonderful surroundings." Hughes expressed his frustration with the company's plans to "cover this green gem of a place with acres and acres of glass panelling and metal," emphasizing the adverse effects on both wildlife and community well-being. He noted the proposed site’s proximity to HMP New Hall women's prison, suggesting that it could diminish the area’s appeal for traditional walkers.

Andrew Shaw, a member of the Sitlington Parish Council, reinforced this sentiment, declaring, "Above all, this is the wrong site for a solar farm." He argued that the Coxley Valley, a vital recreational space, has been cherished since Victorian times and contended that Boom Power did not adequately explore alternative locations for the development.

Conservative councillor Samantha Havery, a former planning committee member, expressed her support for the council's decision to reject the application, citing deep community opposition and alternatives available for sites that do not encroach on greenbelt land. She referred to areas of brownfield or lower-grade agricultural land that should be prioritised for such developments.

Concern from local residents also included practical implications of the solar farm. Overton resident Mark Hinchcliff noted that the high winds in the area could lead to noise issues from the structures, asking, "Would we have to live with the white noise that the structures would give off?" Labour councillor Jordan Bryan reiterated the importance of proper site selection for renewable energy projects, claiming that development in an inappropriate location might cause "devastation" not only to the landscape but to the community.

Local MP Jade Botterill’s concerns were conveyed by her office manager, Councillor Jo Hepworth, underscoring the importance of preserving the area's geography and cultural heritage. She stated, "It is my concern that once these landscapes disappear, so does the culture and heritage that they should provide." Additionally, Mark Corrigan from the British Horse Society raised alarms about potential disruptions to public rights of way, asserting that the rural setting should not be compromised for this type of development.

In a separate development in Cornwall, residents near Truro are similarly opposed to plans for a large energy battery storage facility being proposed on nine acres of land close to the Penrose Water Gardens in Tregavethan. The company Elgin Energy aims to install up to 80 ten-foot high containers intended for battery energy storage. If approved, the facility would provide approximately 100 megawatts of standalone storage with a lifespan of 50 years.

Residents have expressed concerns over safety issues, particularly regarding fire risks associated with battery storage, drawing parallels to previous incidents across the country. Sally Storey, a local resident, highlighted the unpredictability of noise from the fan systems in each container, which may disrupt the peaceful outdoor atmosphere of the water gardens and café. She criticised the lack of formal notification of the consultation process by Elgin Energy, noting many residents were unaware of the project until they stumbled upon information online.

Steve Greener, who manages the water gardens trust, argued that the chosen site is inappropriate due to its status as a haven of wildlife, stating, "It just feels like the wrong place for what will effectively be a large industrial unit." Elgin Energy maintains that the project will contribute to national and local energy targets while complying with noise limits established by Cornwall Council. The company has committed to conducting various environmental assessments, including ecology and flood risk studies, prior to submitting a planning application.

Both situations reflect the tensions between renewable energy initiatives and local community concerns regarding environmental preservation and land use. As the inquiries and consultations progress, the outcomes will be closely monitored by those affected.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.wakefieldexpress.co.uk/news/people/sitlington-solar-farm-public-inquiry-to-begin-over-plan-to-install-solar-panels-across-133-acres-of-countryside-5049868> - This article corroborates the information about the public inquiry into the proposed Sitlington solar farm and Wakefield Council's previous rejection of the plan due to its impact on the rural landscape.
* <https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/public-inquiry-launched-for-rejected-boom-power-solar-farm/> - This article confirms details about the public inquiry into the rejected Sitlington solar farm proposal and Boom Power's appeal against Wakefield Council's decision.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Unfortunately, this URL does not provide additional specific details from the given text but is mentioned as the source. It generally relates to the context of community opposition to renewable energy projects.
* <https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/planning> - This URL would provide information on Wakefield Council's planning decisions and processes, which might include details on the solar farm proposal, though it is not explicitly mentioned in the given search results.
* <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/planning/planning-applications/> - This URL relates to planning applications in Cornwall, which could involve similar energy storage facilities or projects that trigger local debates about land use and environmental impacts.
* <https://www.elginenergy.co.uk/projects/current-projects/> - This URL might provide information on Elgin Energy's current projects, including potential energy storage facilities that face local opposition due to environmental concerns.
* <https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/west-yorkshire-news/sickening-plans-100-acre-west-31289239> - Please view link - unable to able to access data