

**PROPOSED WINDFARM AT SPRING FARM RIDGE, HELMDON/GREATWORTH,
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE (SOUTH NORTHANTS COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATION S/2010/1437/MAF)**

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO APPEAL AGAINST REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION

APP/Z2830/A/11/2165035

STATEMENT BY NATALIE ATKINS OF GRANGE FARM, HELMDON

My name is Natalie Atkins and I have lived at Grange Farm, Helmdon for 6 years in a small community of four houses with 14 residents ranging in age from 6 to [75]. Each of the four properties is marked on the attached plan of our area. Grange Farm is 840 metres from turbines 4 and 5 which forms part of a wider area subject to the application by Broadview Energy Developments Limited for five wind turbines at Spring Farm Ridge ("the Proposal").

I have been asked by the residents of Grange Farm to make this statement to explain to the Inquiry how the Proposal would affect us. Each of the households at Grange Farm objects to the Proposal for broadly the same reasons although there are some matters that will affect certain households more than others. The combination of noise and visual impact for us is substantial and something that will unacceptably affect our ability to enjoy our home, gardens and surrounding land. This I believe is referred to as "residential amenity".

1. Visual Impact

- 1.1.** Every time we approach our houses, we will see a clear uninterrupted view of all five wind turbines get closer and larger until we reach our front doors. The turbines would be visible from our houses and gardens – there really will be no escaping their dominance. Broadview accept that views of the turbines from Grange Farm will *"dominate the small scale enclosed nature of the view and would represent a major new element in the view"*. All of the residents of Grange Farm will have to bear the overpowering presence of these enormous structures.
- 1.2.** Broadview Energy's photomontage 1b from Viewpoint 1, purports to demonstrate how the turbines would look at Grange Farm - whilst we think this montage under represents the impact, nonetheless, it is frightening to us. The montage in question shows a small horse jumping area to the rear of the Granary. We were all a bit confused when we first saw this picture as it seemed to be a strange place to take the photo from. I now understand however that they emphasised this view in an attempt to persuade that the turbines would not look out of place in an area where there were already tall structures i.e. the lights used to illuminate the area when in use. This is simply ridiculous – the turbines will be 125m tall. The lights are 3-4m in height.
- 1.3.** This image also reinforces to me that these turbines are too close to our properties and would have an overbearing effect that we would not be able to escape. These are our homes. We have all made choices in living in the countryside – to live a quiet, rural life. Had we wanted to be surrounded by enormous manmade structures we would have chosen to live in built up areas.

- 1.4. I note with interest that Broadview's Landscape & Visual Impact witness, Jeffrey Stevenson refers to the "Lavender test" – whereby visual intrusion is of such magnitude to render a property an unattractive place in which to live. The Lavender principle seems to find its tipping point when turbines are present in such number, size and proximity that they represent an unpleasantly overwhelming and unavoidable presence in *main* views from a house or garden.
- 1.5. We believe that the owners of both The Granary and The Old Farmhouse in particular, fall into this category. Main amenity rooms, their associated views and their gardens are directly exposed to the site. These areas are currently enjoyed because of their open aspect to the surrounding countryside. The Old Farmhouse has no screening from the views of the surrounding fields. The Granary has some bushes that offer little shielding for the majority of the year. The placement of wind turbines into this landscape would mean that there would be no escape from these enormous structures even when the owners of these houses were inside, unless the curtains are drawn - clearly not something that should be expected or endured. We would like to invite the Inspector to see this for herself on her site visit.
- 1.6. I would also like to point out that the view of turbines in this location cannot be described as a "balanced composition". Four of them will be lined up in such a way that the effect of rotating blades will be irritatingly cluttered and overlapping.
- 1.7. The owners of Orchard End operate a small holding with livestock spending a significant amount of time outside. The owners of The Granary operate a farm and livery business and they work in the fields bordering the wind turbine site. Some of these fields would be within 500m of one of the turbines. So in all aspects of their lives the turbines would dominate.
- 1.8. The views from Grange Farm towards the wind turbines would be to the west. This area enjoys fantastic sun sets. We are all really concerned about our afternoons and evenings being disturbed by the flicker that would be produced when the turbines would be operational through these sun sets.
- 1.9. Light flicker is of particular concern to owners of The Granary and the way that this may impact the horses that they care for. A number of their customers have already expressed concern about the Proposal and have said that if it goes ahead, they will remove their horses. They are also concerned about their own horses. This proposal could therefore have a significant impact on their business leading to loss of income. I understand from Broadview's application that light flicker would be apparent from April to October.
- 1.10. One of the owners of The Old Farmhouse operates his business from home and so he too will have to deal with the presence of the turbines in his work place as well as his home.

2. Noise

- 2.1. Adding to the distress of a close uninterrupted and dominant view of the turbines, we will also be able to hear them – something which Broadview's MD Mr Corrigan personally assured me at an Open Evening in June 2010 would not happen. This assurance as it turns

out was quite incorrect as the data submitted by Broadview with their planning application clearly states that we *will* most certainly hear them.

- 2.2. Little, if any regard has been given to the impact of the Proposal outside of ETSU requirements. ETSU permits quite substantial increases in actual noise and I would therefore urge the Inspector to have regard to how increased noise levels caused by the turbines would affect us. The prospect of the peace and quiet that we currently enjoy being taken away by a mechanical or unnatural swooshing noise is deeply upsetting to all of us.
- 2.3. The residents of Grange Farm have all chosen to live in a quiet rural area, away from the noise of busy main roads and other distractions. The owners of The Old Farmhouse have asked me to point out that the reason they chose to live here when they moved 6 years ago was because they wanted a home that would give them some respite from the many miles that they have to drive in connection with their jobs. Likewise, when my family and I moved to Grange Farm, we did so because it was in a quiet rural location which we thought at that time would be immune from any form of development.
- 2.4. Being inside and shutting out the noise is something that is not possible for us (and certainly is not something that we should be forced to do). If the wind turbines are erected we may all be subjected to an intrusive mechanical, unnatural noise at levels which we will find unacceptable in these rural surroundings.
- 2.5. However, we are most concerned about the night time noise increases at this location which I am told, in average wind conditions will be clearly audible (over 5dB (A)). If the standard margin of error is included night time noise may be almost double (9.4 dB (A)) louder than the current levels.
- 2.6. I understand a recent report from Hayes MacKenzie has identified that turbine noise may result in an inability to return to sleep once woken during the night. My nine year old daughter is a very light sleeper. She often wakes during the night and will then wake others in the house when she seeks some comfort and reassurance. It is a real worry to me that noise from turbines will further disturb all of our sleeping patterns.
- 2.7. I am also partially deaf. The irony here is that in fact I may suffer more than others as background noise (particularly low frequency noise) significantly affects my ability to hear what people are saying. In addition I suffer from intermittent tinnitus. The occasions on which I hear nothing are a blessing. With the noise produced by these turbines, I fear I will not be able to enjoy those periods of silence in my own home and garden.
- 2.8. The owners of Orchard End are also particularly concerned about this potential issue. One of them is an epileptic and has been warned by his doctor that any disturbance to his sleep patterns could make his condition worse and cause him to have seizures.

3. Connection to the Grid

How can it be that Broadview is not forced to outline its definitive route for connection to the Grid with all that may entail when it may involve the construction of tall pylons where there were previously none? Is the visual impact to our homes even greater than they are prepared to admit? This is not acceptable.

4. Flooding

The village of Helmdon was subject to flooding a few years ago. When there is a lot of rain, it runs like a river down the track from Grange Farm and the soil on the land at Grange Farm becomes waterlogged in places. The tonnes of concrete that will have to be used to support any turbines would increase the risk of flooding and we believe it will cause our gardens and fields to become waterlogged. This is a further thing for us to worry about in connection with this proposal and it is not one that has been addressed properly by Broadview.

5. Summary

My neighbours and I have thought about the impact this proposal will have on the way that we live our lives at Grange Farm and how it will make us feel about our homes. Taking into account the impact that all of the above issues will have on our lives; I have to conclude that if I had a choice, I would not want to live here. My neighbours feel the same. The turbines are simply too close.

However I will have no choice but to live here. Local estate agents have already indicated that it would prove difficult to sell our properties given the outlook to the site. We, along with some of our neighbours, have developed our properties to comply with local planning laws to ensure that our houses are in keeping within its local environment. If the wind farm goes ahead I would ask why we bothered – what is the point in trying to ensure something is in keeping with the local area when there are five 125m steel structures only yards from our door?

I would ask that the Inspector gives due consideration to our concerns when making a decision in this appeal.

Map of Grange Farm in Relation To The Spring Farm Ridge Site.

