

NOTICE OF MOTION	Date of Council Meeting: 05/11/25
	Mover: Councillor Baggaley
	Seconder: Councillor Duncan
	Title of Motion: Proposed Whitestone Solar Farm

Summary/Background:

The proposal for a 750 MW solar farm across Rotherham and Doncaster is likely to be the first Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project to apply for planning permission in the local authority area. The motion calls on the developers to hear the concern of the community, withdraw their proposal, and significantly scale back any future proposals.

That this Council notes:

1. Proposals for the Whitestone Solar Farm, which would stretch from Conisbrough in the north to Woodall in the South, a total area of 2,000 hectares, have recently completed their pre-statutory consultation phase. It would potentially be the largest solar farm operating in the United Kingdom.
2. The proposal has already attracted significant local concerns. It would disrupt more than 60 rights of way, force significant traffic for construction and maintenance along narrow countryside roads, remove land from agricultural use, and alter the appearance and "landscape value" of miles of local countryside. It would be an impact on an historic scale.
3. If developed as it is currently proposed, there is no clear benefit to local communities. Residents who would face the most direct consequences of the development are not currently expected to see any direct benefits to their energy bills, or local employment.
4. The concern of residents about the nature of the consultation taken so far, which have been technical and abstract, with hard copies of materials only available at considerable expense to consultees.

Further notes:

1. The objections made to the developers by all three Rotherham MPs, and by a cross-party group of local councillors, as well as a number of affected local parish councils.

2. The January 2025 motion agreed by this council on a cross-party basis, which calls for solar panels on buildings to be prioritised over those in undeveloped countryside.
3. The Leader of the Council has written to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero to express the concerns of the community that allowing a development free for all, rather than a managed process of solar farm expansion especially in more rural areas, will undermine support for the government's Net Zero ambitions.
4. Moreover, there is a risk that confidence in potentially more acceptable, smaller scale solar farm proposals is undermined by industrial scale proposals of this nature.
5. The Whitestone proposal is not expected to make a formal application to the Planning system until May 2026 at which point it will be determined by the government as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).
6. That technical aspects of the Planning process, including production of a Local Impact Report, will be undertaken by the Council's Planning officers. This process must be undertaken impartially, in line with the requirements of Planning rules, in order to protect the integrity of the process and the best interests of council tax payers. This work will be reported to the Planning Board on a quarterly basis, in accordance with the decision of Cabinet on 20th October 2025.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Express its view that the current Whitestone proposal does not enjoy the support of this Full Council.
2. Calls on the developer to heed the views of the borough's elected representatives at all levels, withdraw their current proposal, hear the voices of local residents, and significantly scale back any future proposals.
3. Support steps to ensure that local communities are fully informed about the process should a Planning application be made, to ensure that local views, experience and expertise can be heard throughout.

To be completed by Governance

Date received by Governance/Head of DS:	
Date sent to Monitoring Officer:	
Date approval from Monitoring Officer received:	