

**Councillor John Williams – Cabinet Member for
Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy**

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Ref	Direct Line:	Please Ask For
JW/LH	01709 807949	Councillor Williams

20th January 2026

Cllr Taiba Yasseen
Elected Member

Via email: taiba.yasseen@rotherham.gov.uk

Dear Cllr Yasseen,

Council Meeting – Wednesday 14th January 2026

Thank you for your question raised at the Council meeting on Wednesday 14th January. I have set out your question and my response below.

Will the Council explicitly record in its report that the solar farm proposal would take Best and Most Versatile (BMV) productive arable farmland, conflicting with:

- ***Government’s planning policy & ministerial guidance to avoid BMV land & prioritise brownfield/lower-grade land,***
- ***Government’s Land Use Framework***
- ***Local food security aims,***

Therefore, urge the Labour Government to better protect the borough’s best farmland?

I can advise that a chapter within the applicants’ Environmental Statement considers agricultural land classification across the whole site. The local planning authority will therefore undertake its own technical aspects of the planning process, including the production of a Local Impact Report. This process must be undertaken impartially, in line with the requirements of planning rules, in order to protect the integrity of the process, and these issues, including the use of the Best and Most Versatile (BMV) productive arable farmland will form part of its response to the Development Consent Order in its local impact report.

Nevertheless, as you are aware the Council did take the step of passing a motion at our previous Council meeting on the 5 November 2025 which will be sent to the Planning Inspectorate when the DCO is submitted. The motion resolved 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.

In addition, as the motion noted, members on all sides of the chamber have written to the applicant expressing their concerns and the Leader has raised the issue in a letter to Ministers.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor John Williams

Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy / Ward Councillor for Hooper