

Good morning / afternoon. My name is Chris and I live in Potash Lane.

We have lived in Potash Lane for 44 years. My wife and I brought up two children there, now in their 50s. It was a good place to raise children. People tend to stay a long while in Potash Lane, because it is a very nice place to live.

In the course of this enquiry you'll hear all the environmental, legal and political reasons why a solar farm should not be built on the proposed site. I fully support all these but don't intend to repeat them here.

Instead this is a personal and subjective view from a very worried resident. I want to give you a picture of how I believe our lives will be affected if this is allowed to go forward.

My wife and I are in our late 70s. We have loved living in Potash Lane and have appreciated the beauty of the surrounding countryside as it has changed with the seasons. Don and his family have farmed for nature and clearly cared for the land. Now it seems that priorities have changed and we and our neighbours, living with this industrial site only a few metres from our cottages, are feeling very threatened.

Threatened by what? Well, we know that no one has a right to a view. But it is hard to lose it when it's been part of our lives for over four decades; and what are we getting in exchange? From our north-facing windows, as far as the eye can see, acres of glaring black panels mercilessly reflecting the sun. The issue of glint and glare has not, as far as we can see, been addressed. How will these intermittent flashes, which we are told can cause short-term sight loss, affect drivers on Potash Lane and Church Road?

We were told by someone who works near the Parham array that a solar farm is NOT silent: it emits a low level hum which is very audible. How will this affect, for instance, someone with tinnitus?

Perhaps more than anything else we are appalled by the prospect of at least 8 months, and quite possibly a year, of construction within a few metres of our home. The idea of the noise, lights and vibration of construction fills us with fear. That will be the end of our night skies and abundant wildlife. If you were a brown hare or a badger, would you be hanging around? And for those of us who love to work in the garden, there will be very little prospect of that. By the time the building is finished, some of us will be too old to garden.

We're not against solar energy: we were early adopters of roof-top solar panels. But that is where they should be: on roofs and other sites where they inconvenience no one – not on productive farming land. Ed Miliband himself is on record as saying he wants to "unleash a UK solar roof-top revolution". There are other ways of generating electricity, mostly more efficiently; but food needs land. We produce much of our own food, but with the world becoming less safe by the day, producing less looks like madness.

It's understandable that farmers want to provide a firm financial footing for their businesses in the future, and solar farms would appear to provide this. Money for old rope, in fact. But we have children and grandchildren too, and we are just as anxious to see them settled and financially secure. The value of our properties is unlikely to be enhanced by having a massive industrial complex on the doorstep: so the detriment to us residents is financial as well as emotional.

If we had wanted to live in the middle of an industrial site we would have chosen a different location back in 1982. To have one imposed on us with no advantages whatever is a chilling prospect.

I have outlined just a few ways in which we feel our quality of life would be seriously harmed. Although this is a personal view I know many others feel the same.

Thank you for listening.