

## **PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF GLENMORE FARMING COMPANY LTD**

### **RE THE SUBMISSION HEARING FOR THE PROPOSED SOLAR ARRAY**

#### **FARM BROOKSIDE**

Good morning / afternoon

My name is Donald Green, and I am speaking on behalf of the Glenmore Farming Company for which I am a director along with my wife Anne and our two sons Christopher and Timothy Green.

I wish to speak to our written Submission as an affected party opposing this application to erect a Solar Array on the stated farmland.

My wife and I are also part of the Brookside Submitters Group opposing as well.

My presentation is that of a concerned Brookside resident and local farmer as to the effect, if granted, this proposal will have on this close rural community as well as the many issues that would occur with a change of land use of which I intend to mention.

My background is that I have lived in Brookside for most of my life and my family have Dairy farmed our current neighbouring property for the past 62 years. During this time, we have experienced the highs and lows of the farming economy and various climate conditions. Over this period, we have seen many changes to the land use in the Brookside area.

I have read the reports of the various expert witnesses in favour of the applicant. One thing that is apparent to me is that most are desktop produced using overseas research and information, due, I feel to the lack of information from the very few commercial solar array farms operating currently in New Zealand.

For every evidence in favour of the applicant there appears to be more compelling evidence against.

My first concern is for the way that this application has been handled. Given the objection of the Brookside residents to a previous application twelve months ago which was declined, I would have expected more public notification given the size and scale of this proposal.

The personal and financial costs incurred by the residents to make submissions at the last hearing was huge and now here we are again expecting to finance our case again to have this application rejected. The main investor behind Kea X appear to be Ethical Power an international company with a strong portfolio in solar energy and I would suggest in a strong financial position to support this application. There are other investment energy companies out there also looking invest substantially for suitable properties to establish solar farms just ask the local real estate agents.

Contamination from the solar structures onto the land beneath and the wash into the natural gully's and on to neighbouring land eventually ending up in the water ways that drain the Brookside area then onto lake Ellesmere is a major concern. I note that neighbour Micheal Dalley has had soil tests collected and processed independently on the land under the solar panels on his property and the results show elevated levels of contamination when compared to other areas of his property. The results and reports of these tests are noted by other submitters.

Contamination of the land would lead to other issues when it comes to share farming the land beneath and between the solar panels, the viability of grazing sheep or growing crops could well be compromised with animal health and food quality standards unable to be met.

As farmers in the Selwyn District, we are strictly monitored with our F E P (Farm Environment Plan ) because of our proximity to Lake Ellesmere and the effects that our farming operation could have on the well being of the lake and its future as a food source and recreation area. I do not see any mention of a joint farming and monitoring plan if this application was approved.

Much reference has been made on the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land which came into effect October 2022. The applicant believes that they should be exempt from this clause due to being able to convert the land from dairying to sheep farming. Ask any sheep farmer in Canterbury and they will tell you that the profit in sheep meat and wool is nowhere near that of dairying returns. I am not convinced that sheep farming is an option on this property particularly because of the heavy nature of the soils.

A recent conversation with an agricultural student from Denmark working on our property last spring expressed concerns about the land that was leased and used for solar farming in Denmark when returned to the landowner after 25 years was no longer suitable for agriculture and food production. He mentioned that it is now common practice for the energy companies to purchase the properties and are having to pay exorbitant prices to secure the land.

The risk of fire I believe will be a big issue no matter where in Canterbury this solar farm is located. This Summer the Selwyn District has been under a total fire ban and rightfully so, most of the proposed area is normally what I call a green belt along with neighbouring farmland is able to be irrigated and grazed to keep the pasture under control.

Whilst the batteries and inverters may have fire protection, I would be more concerned with the risk of wildfire in the dry under growth. Recently in the area, a power pole on Stewarts Road carrying high voltage snapped following high winds downed wires were beginning to spark amongst the under growth. It was fortunate that the surrounding area was under irrigation; the green nature of the growth and the damp soils prevented a major fire. Incidents like this happen, as we have seen with the fires around Canterbury particularly the Port Hills in the past few weeks.

I would have thought that at the very least a Fire Emergencies Mitigation Plan would have been prepared for fire and air pollution and presented to this hearing. To date, I have not seen a plan or report.

The Orion Brookside Sub Station is located on a busy rural intersection six roads merge to one point over the years I have witnessed and assisted at numerous traffic accidents mostly due to vehicle speed and weather conditions. It is the pickup and drop of point for the local school bus and in the very near future there could be as many as ten to fifteen school children getting on and off there. We often have correspondence with Council staff regarding safety issues at this corner only to be told that funding was not available at the time.

The existence of the Brookside Sub Station seems to be the attraction to developers in this case, whether it will be big enough in the future is up for debate. Whilst this application is reduced in size to the previous one twelve months ago it is local knowledge that if successful a new Resource Consent application will be applied for to include the land from the previous application that was refused by the previous Commissioner. I believe that Orion already have plans in place to expand the Sub Station if more land was approved for solar panels.

If the Sub Station area was to be increased in size, then I would be concerned about the effect of the increased electromagnetic fields that would be emitted from this site and impact that it would have on the health of the people living and working close by, also the health of our dairy herd and the



resulting drop off in production. Also, the effect it would have on the bees and insects that play a significant role in the ecology process.

As I said in my submission last December, the fact of the location of this Sub Station need not be the determining factor when making a final decision. I have noted other reports of applications for solar farms throughout New Zealand with no such facility available. I am sure that the developers have taken this into consideration.

In summary, I believe that this is a bit like a David and Goliath situation on one hand we have the need to power up the nation with sustainable energy and reduce Green House Cases with national regional and district supporting policies supporting energy development and on the other hand we have a rural community that is very passionate about the health and welfare of the residents that live close by. Also, the argument that this site is not suitable for a solar farm because of the High Productive Land currently used for dairying and the heavy nature of the soils and contamination to the land and the air.

As a dairy farmer if this application is granted and further down the track our dairy factory advised that they would not pick up our milk because of contamination then it would be disastrous for my family's long-term business. It has happened before back in the 1960s DDT was mixed in fertilizer and applied to the pasture to kill grass grub, then when the dairy conversion was expanding from the 90s the DDE was detected in the milk and milk supply from affected farms was rejected by the dairy companies

My other main concerns are around the possibility of fire and air pollution and increased traffic around the busy rural Substation corner.

The residents of Brookside are a close knit, caring . The farms are all family owned and operated and have been for several years. We have seen many people move to the area seeking peace and quite and a rural outlook within easy commuting to the main centres for what ever their needs are. Long may that continue.

I find my self-confused with some of the reports in support of this application they are not specific to the area, and I do wonder how much information is being withheld by the applicant.

Given the evidence presented by the various submitters against this proposal as to the dire effects it could have to the environment and the health of the residents of local community I am firmly opposed to this application

Also, I would like to thank the Commissioner for the opportunity to present my thoughts to this hearing I do realise that some consents get approved without the chance of submitting objections.

I would like to mention that my own family has been divided as to our views of this application, to the Ward family. Preparation of this presentation has been very awkward as our families have been neighbours and good friends across generations for over fifty years and whatever the outcome, I hope our friendship continues.

Donald Green.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D Green', written over the printed name 'Donald Green'.