

Cllr J Devine UPDATE – WALLERSCOTE / WINNINGTON LIMEBEDS

The Environment Agency has now formally confirmed that the current investigation proposals submitted by the developer are NOT sufficient to discharge the planning conditions relating to ground investigation and land stability. Their observations align with those submitted by TFT.

Importantly, the Environment Agency states that:

- significantly more intrusive investigation points are required
- the entirety of the site and waste mass must be investigated, characterised and assessed
- further phases of investigation may be needed depending on what is found

The regulator is now saying that the site has not yet been properly characterised and that substantially more work is required before safety and environmental risks can be properly assessed.

This is precisely why TFT has consistently argued that:
The current submissions were too vague and under-scoped
Key evidence was being deferred to "later stages"
Proper investigation must come BEFORE approval, not afterwards

The likely consequence is that the programme now becomes a major staged investigation exercise involving additional boreholes, monitoring, contamination assessment and further technical review. All at additional costs to the Developer and a potentially significant delay to the project implementation.

TFT - WINNINGTON SOLAR FARM – REQUEST FOR ACTION

Following technical submissions regarding the contamination review, the Environment Agency recommended rejecting the developers' flawed plans:-

- Significantly more intrusive investigation points are required
- The entirety of the site and waste mass must be investigated, characterised and assessed
- Further phases of investigation may be needed depending on what is found
- The current submissions were too vague and under-scoped
- Key evidence was being deferred to "later stages"
- Proper investigation must come BEFORE approval, not afterwards
- Broken Data: Historic pollution monitoring infrastructure was physically broken or missing.
- Connected Danger: The lime beds connect directly to the River Weaver and residential properties
- Shortcut Tactics: Attempts to delay critical safety checks until after they get permission.

Subject: OBJECTION to Planning Application **23/02519/FUL**

“Re-engineering, remediation and restoration of the Wallerscote Limebeds, Northwich, and installation of a commercial-scale solar park and battery storage facility.”

Submitted by **Infinis Solar Developments Ltd** and **Green Earth Developments**.

Contamination Remediation Strategy for Wallerscote/Winnington Lime Beds
planning@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk]

Dear Planning Officer,

Barnton Parish Council wish to place on record their formal objections to the current Contamination Remediation Strategy submitted for the Wallerscote solar scheme development.

We fully endorse the technical and policy concerns raised by local residents and the Environment Agency regarding the complex industrial legacy of this landscape. The current proposals are legally and environmentally deficient for the following reasons:

1. Failure to Recognise a Connected Hydro-Geological System

The Winnington, Wallerscote, and Lostock areas form a deeply connected industrial landscape featuring former lime beds, landfill cells, and active environmental permits. This site cannot be treated as an isolated parcel of land. Any failure in remediation poses a direct and immediate threat to the adjacent residential developments, public open spaces, and watercourses, specifically the River Weaver. The threshold for precaution must be set significantly higher than what the developer has proposed.

2. Fragmented Baseline Data and Broken Monitoring Infrastructure

Evidence obtained through Environmental Information requests demonstrates that historic monitoring infrastructure across these interconnected sites has suffered periods of disrepair and replacement. Because the historic datasets are fragmented and incomplete, the current risk cannot be reliably characterised. The Council must not accept this strategy until a complete, continuous environmental baseline is reconstructed and verified.

3. Reliance on Future Conditions is an Unacceptable Risk

Deferring critical contamination investigations to post-permission planning conditions is entirely inappropriate for a site of this complexity. Where baseline data is missing and neighbouring land includes high public access, ground-disturbing works must not be permitted to progress until a verified environmental baseline is fully documented and made public.

4. Failure to Account for Off-Site Receptors

The developer's strategy relies on an "absence of evidence" regarding contamination pathways. However, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. The strategy fails to explicitly protect neighbouring housing, recreational green spaces, and downstream environments from migrating contaminants via surface and groundwater pathways.

5. Lack of Interface Between Planning and Pollution Control

National planning policy allows authorities to rely on pollution control regimes only when monitoring is demonstrably active, compliance is current, and enforcement is visible. The current strategy fails to show how CWAC will verify these regimes or how residents will be protected if monitoring infrastructure fails.

Conclusion & Request

For the safety of our community, we request that CWAC refuses to discharge or approve these contamination conditions until the developer is forced to:

Disclose and rectify all historic monitoring gaps.

Establish a verified, complete environmental baseline before any ground-disturbing works begin.

Provide a transparent, publicly accessible register of the site's monitoring status.

Please record our objections in full on the planning portal.

Yours sincerely,

BARNTON PARISH COUNCIL