

My Comment on the Foxton Solar Farm application

Please include all the contact details listed below with your comments and indicate whether you can receive further communications from us by email to substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz.

1. Contact Details			
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.			
Organisation name (if relevant)			
First name	Lewis		
Last name	Shailer		
Postal address	[REDACTED]		
Home phone / Mobile phone	[REDACTED]	Work phone	
Email (a valid email address enables us to communicate efficiently with you)	[REDACTED]		

2. We will email you draft conditions of consent for your comment			
☒	I can receive emails and my email address is correct	☐	I cannot receive emails and my postal address is correct

Please provide your comments below, include additional pages as needed.

Introduction:

My name is Lewis Shailer, I own two neighbouring blocks of land, [REDACTED], identified as property [REDACTED], which has just under two kilometres of common boundary with the proposed solar installation and [REDACTED], identified as property [REDACTED], which is adjacent to a 450m length of common boundary separated only by an access strip of 14m width. I first moved to [REDACTED] 52 years ago and have always expected that rural zoning would protect us from this scale of industrialisation in our back yard.

Preparing a submission is new to me and I don't have the technology or resources to compete with the likes of Genesis Energy, but I will do my best to illuminate some issues with the current proposal.

Issues:

On the map below taken from appendix E of the application, I have marked a purple dot for the existing dwelling on [REDACTED] and a red dot showing the proposed building site for [REDACTED]

The property at [REDACTED] was subdivided by us as a lifestyle block around the year 2020 with intention of building our retirement home on the elevated site shown as the red dot. We have already carried out shelter belt planting, driveway shaping, power connection and water supply as part of planning to build. As soon as we learnt that a solar installation of utility scale was planned for next door, we put all planning on hold. This is a very elevated site that looks out across our existing farmland and a large portion of the proposed solar sight. We will see straight over the top of any screening planting planned. This has been a very distressing time for us given the destruction of our retirement dream.

My issue is obvious; The installation of a solar generating complex of this scale has completely ruined our lifestyle block building site and the value of that block with it. I estimate if the solar installation goes ahead, it will devalue [REDACTED] by \$500,000 and devalue [REDACTED] by \$1,000,000 due to the very long shared boundary. Nobody wants to live near a utility scale solar installation; the risk is too real.

This is a rural zoned site with a large number of rural residential blocks in very close proximity to the Motuiti Road part of the planned site particularly the block of about 35 hectares described as 191 to 229 Motuiti Road, Part Himatangi X Block. (The block with a green highlight outlines closest to the red dot in the map below)

Appendix E – Adjacent Land Map

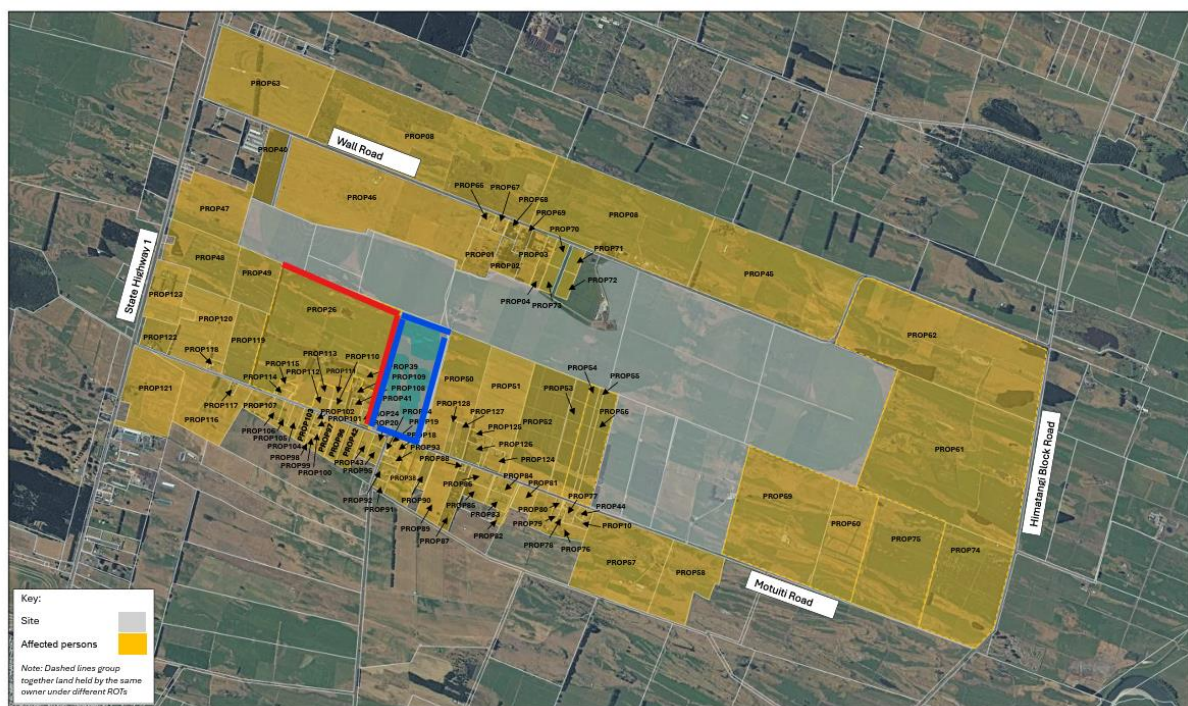


As you can see that puts my proposed elevated building site right in the thick of it. Currently that site enjoys expansive views of pastures and grazing animals with views further to the Tararua Ranges from Palmerston North to Levin.

The reason people choose to own property and live in this location is primarily for the enjoyment of a genuine rural lifestyle setting of green grass and grazing animals, clean air, peace and quiet. This proposal goes against that and is in breach of the Horowhenua District Plan, General Rural Zone. Read page 127 and 128 of the application. As much as SLR refer to the as “tensions”, they are not just tensions, they are blatant non-compliance. SLR do their best to paint a pretty picture across a dirty non-compliant reality.

We are worried about the permanent loss of the rural lifestyle due to the potential for known risks from hazardous substances contained within generation and transformer equipment, some 194 tonnes of environmental disaster waiting to happen and the potential for toxic fumes from lithium batteries burning out of control as they do. We are talking about a 1.75ha paddock allocated to lithium batteries, 66 twenty foot container size units, this is industrial scale, utility scale, which does not belong here. Lithium battery fires in these facilities are a recognised risk internationally.

Appendix E – Persons who may be affected map

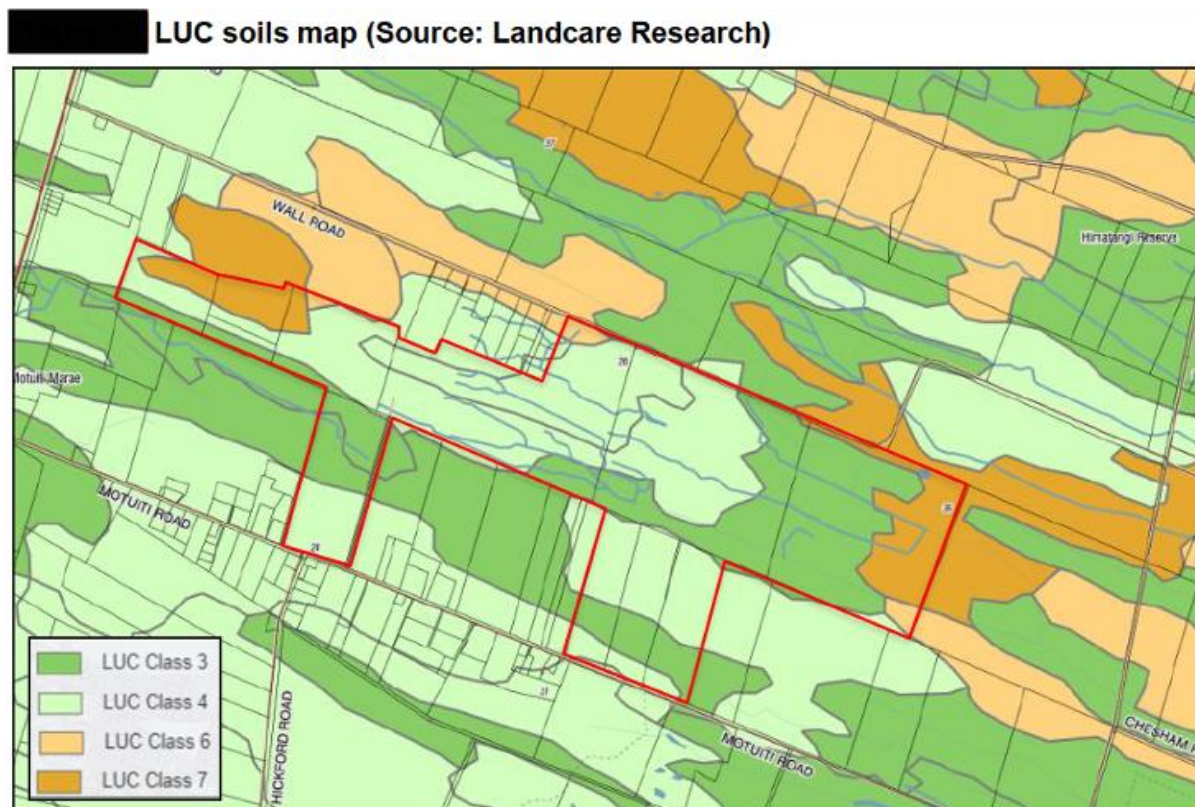


The map above shows my boundary in common in red, and the approximate effective panel cover in highlight blue, of the 35ha block shown with blue outline.

One particular issue I see with the proposal is the loss of very productive agricultural land to allow for a low performing electricity production system. By low performing I make a comparison where 30 wind turbines on the Tararua ranges will generate the same amount of power as does a 436ha

solar farm. This 436ha is a very highly productive dairy farm with very good infrastructure in place due it being a recent dairy conversion.

The best part of the existing farm is the area I referred to earlier as 191 to 229 Motuiti Road, a 35ha block opposite the end of Hickford Road, Part Himatangi X Block, AKA Title WN16B/1446. The soils in this block are predominately unaltered by the levelling of sand dunes that happened over the other areas further to the north and the majority of the portion of this block to be covered by panels is LUC 3, see map above shown as highlighted blue. See LUC map below taken from page 36 of the proposal.



The soils in the darker green area LUC 3 are known as Puke Puke Black Sand which are classed as a LUC 3 due to limitations, drainage and summer moisture and the lighter green area is known as Himatangi Sand, LUC 4 due to summer moisture deficit. The LUC classifications refer to the natural potential of these soils. With modern drainage and irrigation, both of which are present, these become as productive as LUC 1 and LUC 2 soils. The Northern section of the 35ha block I refer to was once used for market garden vegetable production. This is highly productive land.

When we look at the very productive 35ha block as portion of the entire proposal, it would be an insignificant loss to the project to withdraw that area from the proposal. In fact, there will be some advantages to the applicant including a much shorter perimeter to be security fenced and planted, A much larger set back from the most populated part of the neighbourhood being the section of

Motuiti Road south west of the proposed development. All the construction noise and vibration will be moved that much further away from the most densely populated area. A win-win for all.

I also know from personal experience that there is a high concentration of native logs and stumps below the sand on this particular block which will be sure to interfere with pile driving and trenching plans. All in all, best to stay away from that block.

I know the Fast Track Act (FTA) was designed to help get things done, including big infrastructure projects like this, but that should not mean at the expense of neighbours. There is no doubt that my two properties will take a significant drop in value. I implore the panel members to set a precedent here to compel the applicants to compensate neighbours for loss of value. That would be in keeping with the intent of the FTA to get things done and at the same time go some way to recognise the impact on others.

Other Matters:

I notice the application refers to riparian planting the northern side of “Drain 3” which is in part on my northern boundary. To enable spraying and mechanical cleaning for normal maintenance to happen, any planting of that section will need a setback of eight to ten metres.

During a meeting with Genesis representatives, they promised that any boundary planting species choices would need to be approved by us. The application merely refers to consultation with neighbours, that needs to be worded as “must be approved by us” in relation to our section of boundary.

The consultation approach from the applicants’ representatives has been very poor. When we suggested glint, glare and reflections would be a huge issue for our building site SLR did some modelling. The levels were completely wrong, showing our building site almost with no elevation. When pointed out to the applicants’ representatives they promised to revise and correct the model. Even after I pursued them for this update, it was never forthcoming. All talk and no do.

I am left with a feeling the applicant is confident they can rely on the Fast Track Act to get them what they want and therefore need to have little regard for us as affected neighbours.

Options Available to the Panel:

1. Say no. This is the wrong place for a solar farm in its present form, due to high agricultural value of the land and too close to residential development.
2. Take out the 35ha block from 191 to 229 Motuiti Road, Part Himatangi X Block , AKA Title WN16B/1446. That creates a very good set back from the most populated area on Motuiti Road and preserves the most productive agricultural land. Also allows my building site to survive. This option in particular would put many Motuiti Road neighbours at ease.
3. Compensate the effected neighbours for the impact on property values.

Invite:

I would like to invite the panel members to visit my building site at [REDACTED] and see the damage for yourselves. Get a real picture rather than a sanitised version from SLR on behalf of Genesis Energy.

There are a number of local residents affected by this proposal who have said they felt putting in a submission was a waste of time. Please prove them wrong.

Thank you