

Springwell Solar Farm - Summary of Written Representation by North Kesteven District Council (ID 20054501)

1. Grid Connection

The solar farm depends on a new National Grid substation at Navenby (NGNS), which is still in early planning stages. There is uncertainty about the NGNS being completed in time to meet the solar farm's phased connection dates (2028–2030). NKDC recommends a new requirement to restrict the solar farm construction until the NGNS reaches a meaningful construction milestone. Delays could undermine the project's contribution to the UK's 2030 clean energy targets.

2. Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land

NKDC considers there will be a significant adverse impact at both district and county levels. It has concerns that soil degradation during construction and long-term impacts on land quality could occur. Restoration plans post-decommissioning need to be robust and reconciled with the Soil Management Plan.

3. Landscape and Visual Impact

Significant adverse effects are expected during construction and early operation, especially at Springwell West and Central. Visual impacts remain for several public rights of way and residential properties, even after mitigation. NKDC recommends more detailed landscape plans and long-term maintenance strategies. The cumulative impacts with the NGNS substation could be mitigated through coordinated landscape mitigation along the A15.

4. Cultural Heritage

NKDC has concerns with the broad-brush approach to heritage assessment, with insufficient analysis of individual assets. Several listed and non-designated heritage assets (eg Thompson's Bottom Farmhouse and Scopwick Mill) are inadequately assessed. NKDC requests that these assets to be scoped into the Environmental Statement (ES) and for mitigation strategies to reflect their significance.

5. Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Fire Safety

The BESS will use Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) batteries, considered safer than other chemistries. NKDC supports Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service's (LFRS) request for a financial contribution (£76,335) for ongoing monitoring. The Council urges inclusion of a payment mechanism in the DCO and agreement on battery type to address public safety concerns.

6. Early Decommissioning

NKDC recommends that the oOMP includes a section on period of extended outage.

7. Additional Comments on the Draft Development Consent Order (DCO)

NKDC proposes amendments to several Requirements (eg soil management, landscape, battery safety). It also recommends that provision is made for early decommissioning if the solar farm ceases operation for 12 months. The Council suggests extending consultation timelines and updating fee schedules. It supports a Section 106 agreement to fund biodiversity net gain (BNG) monitoring and a skills and education package, and also to set up an Ecological Steering Group.

8. Conclusion

Whilst the Council broadly supports proposals for renewable energy as per its CLLP policies, it raises an objection to the Springwell Solar Farm based on the five areas of concern listed above.