



Application by Beacon Fen Energy Park Ltd for an order granted development consent for the Beacon Fen Energy Park

Written Representation - Summary

**A report prepared by North Kesteven District Council
(ID F8D379496)**

Planning Inspectorate reference: EN010151

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The Council's Written Representation (WR) regarding the Beacon Fen Energy Park, aligns with its Local Impact Report (LIR). The WR focuses on five key areas of concern: loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, landscape and visual impacts, cultural heritage, battery energy storage system (BESS) and fire safety, and ecology and biodiversity net gain (BNG).

1. BMV Agricultural Land

The development affects 529ha of agricultural land, with 277.3ha classified as BMV. Approximately 20.37ha will be permanently lost due to infrastructure "sealing over." The Council's consultants, Landscape, highlights concerns about soil degradation, long-term drainage issues, and the lack of guaranteed conservation grazing, which could mitigate agricultural loss. The cumulative impact across Lincolnshire is deemed significant.

2. Landscape and Visual Impact

The Council's consultants, AAH, identify significant adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity during all phases of development. The solar farm will alter the open, tranquil fenland landscape (the solar array site is located within the Fenland Landscape Character Sub-Area as defined in the North Kesteven District Council 2007 Landscape Character Assessment), introducing industrial elements. Mitigation planting may reduce visibility but risks changing the character of views. The Council questions the robustness of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), particularly regarding residential visual amenity and cumulative effects with other regional energy projects.

3. Cultural Heritage

The Council raises concerns about impacts on designated assets such as St Andrew's Church, Asgarby Hall, Boughton House, Howell Hall, and Kyme Tower, as well as non-designated heritage farmsteads. The Council calls for bespoke mitigation strategies beyond embedded measures, noting that some assets were insufficiently assessed during construction and operational phases.

4. BESS and Fire Safety

The Council expresses strong concerns about fire risks associated with lithium-ion battery technology, particularly thermal runaway. While the applicant assumes use of safer Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) cells, this is not confirmed. The Council argues that "perception of harm" to public safety is a material planning consideration and urges regulatory clarity and robust safety planning.

5. Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

The Council's consultants AECOM, identifies significant omissions and inconsistencies in ecological assessments. Key concerns include inadequate survey data, insufficient mitigation for protected species, and unrealistic BNG assumptions. The Council urges improvements to the BNG Metric and strategy, advocating for a commitment exceeding the statutory 10% minimum, in line with local policy.

Conclusion

While the Council supports solar development in principle, it objects to the Beacon Fen Energy Park due to unresolved concerns in the five highlighted areas. The Council recommends further scrutiny and mitigation to ensure alignment with national and local planning policies.