

20 April 2026

Q1 - 9.3

WRITTEN RESPONSE ON BEHALF OF A.E.J. & F.J. CLARIDGE

1. Introduction

A.E.J. & F.J. Claridge farm on The Claydon Estate under an Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy originally taken on by the family in 1971.

The business has been developed over several generations into a well-established and efficient pedigree livestock enterprise, farming to a high standard of stockmanship and production with high health status

The current farming operation comprises:

- in excess of 600 head of cattle
- approximately 1,600 sheep

The holding operates as an integrated unit, with grazing land, forage production and livestock management closely linked.

2. Suitability of Replacement Land (Q5)

While the acreage of the proposed replacement land may appear broadly similar, it is not considered to provide a genuinely equivalent or fully effective replacement in practical farming terms.

The existing land has been farmed by the family since 1971 and has been significantly improved over that period. This includes:

- investment in fencing
- installation and maintenance of water supplies
- development of tracks and access routes
- long-term soil improvement through regular mucking and liming

As a result, the land currently farmed is productive, well set up, and fully integrated into the wider farming system.

Discussions have taken place with The Claydon Estate regarding replacement land, and it is acknowledged that the land identified may represent the only realistic option available. However, this in itself highlights that, even at best, the replacement land cannot provide a fully equivalent substitute.

The proposed replacement land:

- lies to the east of Knowlhill Farm steading and is more remote from the main holding
- has poorer access compared to land closer to the buildings
- does not benefit from established water infrastructure
- would require further investment in fencing and other improvements
- relies on access via an existing track, with an expectation of contribution towards its maintenance

These factors introduce additional operational complexity, reliance on shared infrastructure, and ongoing costs.

Accordingly, the replacement land does not offer the same level of functionality, independence, or efficiency as the land currently farmed.

3. Impact on Farming Operation

The land proposed to be taken forms part of the main block surrounding Knowlhill Farm steading and is integral to the day-to-day operation of the farming business.

It is used for:

- forage production
- cereal production for livestock feed
- grazing

Its proximity to the steading allows for:

- efficient movement of machinery
- practical feeding and day-to-day management
- effective integration with housed livestock

Relocating this land to a more distant and less accessible position would:-

- increase travel time for machinery and labour
- reduce operational efficiency
- make the farming system more fragmented and difficult to manage

The proposals would also result in the loss of approximately 160 acres of grass keep currently used by the business on the Claydon Estate, reducing the scale and flexibility of the overall grazing system.

The lay out of the proposed Solar development also results in the sub division of existing fields close to the farmstead of Knowlhill Farm - B18 & B19, SA1 and SA2. The current proposal currently splits these fields into separate parts which is impractical from a farming perspective.

Overall, these changes would reduce the efficiency, carrying capacity, and functionality of the farming business.

4. Impact on Existing Water Infrastructure (Well)

The Book of Reference identifies that the proposed development includes the permanent acquisition of land comprising of the Well on the holding. This is of particular concern.

The Well forms part of the farm's existing infrastructure and is integral to the operation of the livestock enterprise, providing a reliable on-site water source. Its inclusion within land subject to permanent acquisition means that control, access, and use of this asset could be lost.

The loss or disruption of the well would have direct implications for:

- livestock watering and welfare
- day-to-day operational management
- resilience and independence of the farm's water supply

Unlike general land take, this represents the removal of a specific and essential functional asset, which cannot be readily or equivalently replaced without significant cost, time, and uncertainty.

No clear provision has been made within the proposals to:

- safeguard continued access to the well
- maintain its operation during and after construction
- or provide a fully equivalent and reliable alternative water supply

As such, the proposed permanent acquisition of the well would result in a material impact on the farming operation.

5. Impact on Farmyard and Buildings (Plot 2/6)

The Land Plans (Sheet 2) identify Plot 2/6, comprising the permanent acquisition of new rights over approximately 640 square metres of agricultural building and hardstanding at Knowlhill Farm.

This area clearly corresponds to the operational farmyard and building complex, which forms the core of the day-to-day functioning of the livestock enterprise.

This Agricultural building area is used for machinery workshop & machinery storage along with the diesel storage. The hardstanding area is used for winter feed storage of bales for the cattle and sheep.

The proposed acquisition of permanent rights over this area gives rise to significant concern. While the land itself is not proposed to be taken, the rights appear to allow for the installation and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure within the farmstead.

This would have the potential to:

- interfere with machinery movements within the yard
- impact livestock handling and safe working practices
- introduce ongoing access requirements by third parties
- restrict future use or development of the buildings and hardstanding

No clear detail has been provided regarding:

- the precise nature of the rights proposed
- how and when access would be required
- or how disruption to the farmyard would be avoided

Given that this area is central to the safe and efficient operation of the farming business, the lack of clarity and the potential for ongoing interference represent a significant concern.

6. Construction Impact on Farming Operations

In addition to the permanent loss of land, significant concern arises from the impact of the construction phase.

A livestock farming business requires continuous daily management, including:

- movement of livestock
- feeding, bedding, and routine husbandry
- safe and controlled handling of animals

Construction activity across or near the holding would:

- interfere with routine livestock movement
- create safety risks for both livestock and operators
- disrupt normal working patterns
- increase stress on animals due to noise, traffic and general activity
- restrict access for essential farming operations

Unlike other land uses, a livestock farm cannot pause operations during a construction period. Even where described as temporary, disruption over several years would have a sustained and material impact.

7. Measures to Minimise Disruption (Q6)

To minimise disruption, the following would be essential:

- Replacement land should be:
 - located as close as possible to the existing farm steading
 - of equivalent quality and capability
 - fully equipped with fencing, water supply, and access
- Replacement land must be available and operational before any existing land is lost

- Construction activity must:
 - avoid key operational areas
 - maintain safe access for machinery and livestock
 - minimise interference with daily farming operations

- Appropriate controls must be in place to manage access and protect the integrity of the farming system

Without these measures, disruption to the farming business would be significant.

8. Whether Replacement Land Resolves Concerns (Q7)

While replacement land may provide a degree of mitigation in terms of area, it does not resolve the core concerns associated with the proposed development.

The key issues remain:

- relocation of land away from the farm steading
- loss of long-established and improved land
- fragmentation of the holding
- disruption during construction
- ongoing inefficiency

As a result, replacement land does not provide a fully effective or equivalent solution.

9. Security and Continuity of the Farming Business

The proposed development introduces a wider concern regarding the long-term security and continuity of the farming business.

The holding has historically been farmed under an Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy, which has provided long-term stability and enabled sustained investment in the land and business over several decades.

The progression of the proposed development is now influencing changes to the structure of the Tenancy under which the land is held and farmed, altering the basis on which the business has been established.

As a result:

- the long-term stability of the business is affected
- the basis on which the farm has been developed over several decades is changed
- and the continuity of a well-established farming enterprise is impacted

It is also recognised that the proposed development may create incentives for changes to existing tenancy arrangements, which further contributes to this position.

Taken together with the land and operational impacts described above, this reinforces the overall significance of the effect that the proposed development would have on the business.

10. Summary

While efforts have been made, the applicant has not fully demonstrated that:

- the replacement land would provide a comparable outcome in practical farming terms
- the full impact on the farming operation has been thoroughly addressed
- the extent of land and disruption is proportionate to the needs of the development

These proposals would have a lasting impact on our well-established farming business, and **we believe they deserve careful consideration.**

