

Rosefield Solar Farm development application

Comments by Tom Morrison 28 July 2026

About me

I farm at Hogshaw Hill Farm which is immediately south of the proposed Rosefield development site. HHF shares a common border with Preston Farms. We've been here since 1992, 34 years. I have a Master's degree in Agriculture, and have been a consultant for the Food and Agriculture Organisation on the UN, World Bank, the UK's Department for International Development, the European Commission, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, etc. For three years 1971-74 I was a Land Use Planner and Soil Surveyor.

In short, I feel qualified to talk about soils and land use, particularly in this area.

The mistake in Rosefield's application that this note addresses

Rosefield's application states that the soils that would be affected by their proposed development are largely infertile and in most areas are Grade 3B.

There is some truth in this. But this Grade 3B classification has been caused by bad farming practices since the 1950s. These bad practices include over-use of nitrogen fertiliser, failure to follow sound crop rotations such as grass fallows with sheep or cattle, excessive use of heavy farm machinery, and over-reliance on the convenience of agro-chemicals.

This is a nation-wide problem which is well recognised by DEFRA and is being robustly addressed through the encouragement of regenerative farming. (Hogshaw Hill Farm is one such regenerative farm.)

Before and during the 2nd world war, these soils were largely Grade 3A and Grade 2. The nation (and Hogshaw Hill Farm) understandably drew down in this inherent fertility and was able to grow enough food to feed itself and much of Europe as well after the war. The problem was that in the 1950s we didn't revert to rebuilding that lost fertility. Farmers liked the new way of farming too much. So here we are – excessive flooding, lost biodiversity, over-reliance on “chemical” farming, and a landlord:tenant arrangement which has provided little incentive to regenerate the soils' natural potential fertility. But, to repeat, DEFRA is now robustly encouraging regenerative farming. One doesn't have to be a soil expert or practising farmer to recognise this. Our media are pushing the message strongly. These soils have the potential to return to their original fertility, to Grade 3A and Grade 2.

This mistake in Rosefield's application (one of many, but here I deal with just one) is to take a snapshot of the soils as they are, not what they have been and can be again.

How the inspectors might wish to react

They should ignore the applicant's implication of soil infertility. They should recognise historical and potential soil fertility and balance that against considerations of sustainable national food security.