



The countryside charity
Nottinghamshire

8 December 2025

Interested Party Reference [REDACTED]

Representation in objection to EN010162 - Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park

To the Planning Inspectorate

Please consider our objection to this proposal, in the planning balance to counter current government policy in renewables, on the following grounds:

1. Landscape character

The proposed development would industrialise massive swathes of open countryside, out of scale and context with the rural area. CPRE's *Getting Solar off the Ground*, 2025 report highlights how mega-solar schemes erode landscape character, particularly when clustered around grid connections. It is clear here that grid capacity for an 800MW mega solar and battery installation has driven the sub-optimal location and design of this proposal, rather than a suitable location identified in the first instance.

The circular design of this project would surround and overwhelm rural settlements, industrialising their setting and fundamentally altering the visual identity of the Trent Valley.

Designated landscapes are rightly protected from such schemes, but equally, undesignated landscapes of high local value deserve safeguarding for current and future generations. The visual dominance of this scheme would destroy tranquillity, dark skies and the sense of openness that defines the area.

The proposal for an additional 64,500 trees and 50km of hedgerow would normally be supportable in appropriate locations, however the sheer scale of this development cannot be visually mitigated or offset by new planting, nor is this an appropriate use of productive agricultural land.

2. Cumulative impact

The sprawling nature of the proposed installation would surround some rural settlements and overwhelm others. The nature of the design, comprising multifarious parcels of land, is in itself a cumulative impact issue, about which any decision-making authority should have serious concerns.

Equally, this proposal cannot be considered in isolation. We note that the County Council, Parish Councils and local communities have rightly raised concerns about the unprecedented cumulative effect of multiple energy and infrastructure projects across North Nottinghamshire and the surrounding area, including Cottam Solar, West Burton Solar, Gate Burton Solar, One Earth Solar, Steeple Renewables, National Grid's Brinsworth to High Marnham reinforcement, as well as substantial local authority decided projects such as Kelham Solar and Foxholes Solar.

This concentration of industrial-scale energy infrastructure risks overwhelming the district's capacity to manage environmental change, creating irreversible impacts on landscape, biodiversity, and amenity.

3. **Food Security**

The application documents suggest that over 60% of the land impacted by this proposal is Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. CPRE Nottinghamshire believes that impact on food security carries equal priority to fuel security. CPRE has consistently warned against the loss of productive farmland to solar development. Our *Building on our Food Security*, 2022 research reveals that 60% of England's best farmland is already at risk of flooding due to climate change. To cover such land with solar panels and battery for forty years is reckless when rooftop alternatives exist now and technology improvements will render current renewable installations obsolete within this period.

The Great North Road site includes significant areas of Grade 2 and 3a land, classed as BMV under the Agricultural Land Classification system. CPRE's analysis of operational solar farms in *Getting Solar Off the Ground*, 2025 shows that nearly two-thirds of large-scale schemes already occupy such highly productive farmland. This proposal would exacerbate that trend, undermining national food security goals and displacing agricultural production so that food imports become more prevalent.

Claims of sheep grazing beneath panels are not credible. The inevitable shading from industrial sized solar panels reduces grass quality, animal husbandry is impractical within fenced arrays, and sheep numbers are declining nationally. Using prime agricultural land for inefficient grazing is a poor substitute for food production.

4. **Amenity**

The amenity value of public rights of way would be severely diminished by this proposal. Walking, cycling, and riding through open countryside cannot be compared to traversing tunnel-like corridors hemmed in by industrial solar and battery infrastructure.

CPRE's *Tranquillity Map*, 2007 and subsequent exercise with local authorities *Give Peace a Chance*, 2015 evidences the health and wellbeing benefits of access to open green spaces: *"Tranquillity is not just a valued pleasure: there's plenty of evidence it has important benefits. Research has demonstrated that exposure to nature and, better still, immersion in it, is good for our health and wellbeing. It reduces our stress levels, improves our mood and makes us feel good about ourselves. Areas that are tranquil give us the chance to get away from the pressures of modern life and recharge our batteries. They are part of our natural health service."*

The proposed diversions and new permissive paths do not compensate for the loss of existing routes through open farmland. The scale of inverter noise, battery storage cooling noise, glint and glare and visual intrusion would degrade the countryside experience for generations.

5. **Flooding**

Large-scale solar can alter hydrology, increasing runoff and localised flooding, putting rural communities at even greater risk. We are pleased to see that the County Council has instructed an independent consultant to review these proposals and ensure clear, enforceable drainage strategies that protect farmland, villages and nature reserves.

6. **Ecology**

We share Nottinghamshire County Council's concerns about sites designated as Local Nature Reserves being assessed for decommissioning impacts against the current baseline, rather than the future baseline. Over a forty-year lifespan, habitats and species will change, potentially making sites more sensitive. We would like to see future-proofed ecological assessments in this regard.

7. Health and well-being

Local residents face the prospect of significant health and wellbeing impacts. Inverter noise and noise created by the cooling of battery energy storage systems (BESS) are intrusive to local receptors, particularly those with medical conditions, now common in the UK, which increase sensitivity to noise and infra-noise. BESS installations also pose risks of thermal runaway “fire” resulting in dangerous fumes, toxic water run-off and long-term soil contamination.

The psychological impact of losing open countryside for forty years cannot be underestimated. Office of National Statistics data shows declining access to nature since 2020, with measurable health costs. This proposal would accelerate that trend, depriving communities of restorative landscapes.

8. Temporary Nature

Although described as “temporary,” a forty-year consent represents a lifetime impact for many residents and at least two generations of families. Construction and restoration of the site to its current condition would add many years beyond that. In practice, this is permanent industrialisation of the countryside. In refusing a 49.9MW solar farm in December 2022 (appeal reference 3299953), the Inspector said *“I consider that 40 years is a very significant period in people’s lives during which the development would seriously detract from landscape character and visual amenity”*

9. CPRE’s Alternative Vision

CPRE believes climate change is a major threat to the countryside and supports decarbonisation, but we insist that it can be achieved in a better way:

- Rooftop Revolution: CPRE’s *Shout from the Rooftops*, 2025 report shows potential for up to 117 GW of solar from roofs and developed spaces by 2050.
- Brownfield First: Solar should be prioritised on warehouses, farm barns, car parks, and brownfield sites.
- Better strategic planning ahead of long-term planning decisions:
 - Land Use Framework: As CPRE argued in its consultation response, multifunctional land use must balance food, nature, housing, and energy. Productive farmland should not be sacrificed when alternatives exist and tenant farmers should be protected.
 - Strategic Spatial Energy Plan: Should apply on implementation to early-stage mega-energy projects as well as new projects and must integrate both landscape protection and early, meaningful community involvement.
- Community Energy: Smaller-scale, locally owned projects can deliver clean power without overwhelming landscapes.

Conclusion

The Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park proposal represents an unacceptable use of productive farmland, an extreme industrialisation of the Trent Valley landscape and a failure to prioritise rooftop or brownfield solar. It undermines food security, biodiversity and community wellbeing, contrary to CPRE’s national policies and evidence.

We urge the Planning Inspectorate to refuse this application and we call on government to deliver a strategic, countryside-friendly approach to clean energy that maximises rooftop solar and protects our most valuable soils and landscapes.