

Steeple Renewables Project (EN010163)

Interested Party Reference: [REDACTED]

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing in response to the invitation dated 25 August 2026 to comment on the Applicant's response to the Secretary of State's request for further information.

I remain opposed to the granting of Development Consent for the Steeple Renewables Project.

I would first like to make clear that my objection does not come from opposition to renewable energy. I am a local resident and a [REDACTED] owner of an environmentally conscious business, and protecting the environment and reducing our environmental impact are extremely important to me.

I support renewable energy and recognise the urgent need to move away from fossil fuels. However, I do not believe that this means every renewable-energy development is environmentally acceptable regardless of its location, scale and consequences.

Having considered the Applicant's latest response, I remain particularly concerned about the following issues.

1. Loss of skylark habitat and uncertainty over mitigation

One of my greatest concerns arises directly from the Applicant's own ecological assessment. The Applicant states that its assessment assumes **100% displacement of skylark from all solar-array areas**.

This is extremely significant. It means that the ecological case for the development depends heavily upon the effectiveness of the compensatory habitat being proposed elsewhere.

I am therefore concerned that, when the Secretary of State specifically requested changes to the Skylark Mitigation Strategy to manage areas targeted for breeding skylark using a spring-sown crop regime, the Applicant did not make that commitment. Instead, the Applicant states that its strategy continues to assume autumn-sown cereal crops, with spring sowing only an option where subsequent testing establishes that it is viable.

In my view, where the development itself is assessed on the basis that skylarks will be completely displaced from the solar-array areas, compensatory measures should be demonstrably effective and secured rather than dependent upon future testing and optional management choices.

2. Cumulative impact with Wood Lane Solar Farm

I am also concerned that the cumulative environmental effects of Steeple Renewables and the neighbouring Wood Lane Solar Farm are being understated.

The Applicant confirms that Wood Lane borders Steeple's solar-array areas and that there is also a **415-metre boundary** between Wood Lane and a Steeple skylark mitigation area. Despite this, the Applicant concludes that no amendment to its Skylark Mitigation Strategy is necessary.

I find this difficult to reconcile with the scale of development being proposed across the wider landscape. The Wood Lane plan itself shows extensive solar arrays and associated infrastructure. The Steeple plans show further very substantial areas of solar development.

These developments should therefore be considered not merely as individual sites but in terms of their combined effect on wildlife habitat, landscape character and the experience of the people living within the surrounding rural communities.

The fact that a hedgerow already creates some displacement for skylarks does not, in my view, adequately address the broader cumulative ecological consequences of placing large solar developments alongside one another.

3. Scale and transformation of the rural landscape

The updated Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Strategy reinforces my concerns about the sheer geographical scale of this development.

The plans around South Wheatley and Sturton le Steeple show extensive areas of countryside occupied by solar arrays together with security fencing, access tracks, hardstanding, inverter substations and associated infrastructure.

This represents a substantial change in the character and use of what is currently an agricultural and rural landscape.

I appreciate that hedgerows, woodland and other planting are proposed. However, landscaping cannot alter the fundamental fact that large areas of open countryside would become an energy-generating development containing extensive built infrastructure. The cumulative effect alongside other solar development is particularly concerning.

Renewable energy infrastructure should, in my view, be sensitively located and designed so that the environmental benefits do not come at an unnecessarily high cost to valued countryside, wildlife and local communities.

4. Battery Energy Storage System and visual mitigation

I note that the Secretary of State specifically asked the Applicant to consider additional vegetation screening on the western side of the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). The Applicant has subsequently added another native hedgerow.

While I welcome additional planting, I am concerned that such a late amendment illustrates the continuing need to mitigate the visual effects of this substantial piece of infrastructure.

The Applicant itself acknowledges constraints around the BESS arising from overhead lines, the cable route/easement and safety requirements. A newly planted hedgerow is not equivalent to preventing the visual impact in the first place. Vegetation requires time to establish, may vary seasonally and requires successful long-term management.

I therefore ask the Secretary of State to consider whether the proposed screening provides sufficiently certain and effective mitigation for the lifetime of the development.

5. Environmental benefit must be considered as a whole

As somebody who actively tries to operate my own business in an environmentally responsible way, I find this aspect particularly important.

Sustainability should not simply mean producing renewable electricity. It should also mean protecting biodiversity, maintaining healthy ecosystems, considering land use carefully and avoiding unnecessary degradation of our countryside.

I am particularly uncomfortable with a situation in which extensive wildlife habitat is displaced and then relies upon compensatory management elsewhere to address that loss.

Where mitigation is necessary, I believe it should be clearly demonstrated to work, appropriately secured and capable of being maintained for the lifetime of the development. The Applicant's response concerning skylarks has not provided me with that reassurance.

Conclusion

I recognise the national importance of increasing renewable-energy generation, and my objection should not be interpreted as opposition to that objective. However, tackling climate change and protecting nature should not be treated as competing ambitions.

The scale of Steeple Renewables, its interaction with Wood Lane Solar Farm, the acknowledged displacement of skylarks from solar-array areas, the uncertainty surrounding aspects of the proposed mitigation and the substantial transformation of the rural landscape continue to cause me serious concern.

Having considered the Applicant's latest response, I do not believe those concerns have been adequately resolved.

I therefore respectfully ask the Secretary of State to give substantial weight to these matters when determining the application and **to withhold Development Consent for the Steeple Renewables Project.**

Yours faithfully,

Beverley Brown

Interested Party Reference: [REDACTED]

Administrative correction: Previous Planning Inspectorate correspondence sent to my address incorrectly records my name as "[REDACTED]". My correct name is **Beverley Brown**. Please amend your records accordingly.