

3,000 acres of Northamptonshire's countryside and prime agricultural land must not be decimated by Green Hill Solar and it's proposed solar farm. Using productive agricultural land for solar must be a last resort. Solar installations on new houses, factories and industrial buildings and car parks must be explored first. These rural communities will be ruined forever if this proposal goes ahead. This will affect the farming community in addition to their obvious current struggles, particularly those who are tenant farmers and will have land ripped away with no say whatsoever. Some have already been served notice. Some landowner's feel that they have no choice but to accept the rental offers proposed by Green Hill given their sector and it's current has limited stability.

Grazing livestock in the same fields as panels is just not a solution that always works in reality. The breeds of sheep grazed must be carefully considered and it takes them time to adapt to grazing in the fields with the solar panels. Welsh mules sired with Texels were too big to graze under the panels (Farmers Weekly website – October 2022) and in this instance, a smaller type of ewe was sought, Aberfield ewes sired with Primera and Abertex genetics. All equipment also had to be protected with guards so any wiring wouldn't be damaged or indeed, livestock injured. Sheep dogs will also need a significant amount of time to adapt and the times the flock is rounded up has to be kept to a minimum to avoid any injuries. Plus quad bikes don't always easily fit between the panels. The land cannot be reseeded once panels are installed and so the quality degrades and livestock will need to be rotated onto other land to prevent the quality of stock being greatly reduced. This could therefore drive down, already low livestock prices.

"When a solar park is set up, farming isn't a priority for the energy company. They design it to get the highest possible number of panels on the land," explains [REDACTED]. From the Farmers Weekly article.

This is not something most farmers can just do easily. The farm in this particular article had no sentimental value and only had only been in the family for 23 years and so is an entirely different circumstance for many of those farmers who will be affected by Green Hill.

I have chosen to live in a rural location. I have chosen to move away from the town and it's light and noise pollution for a quiet and calmer way of life, to be surrounded by the countryside, agriculture and wildlife, as have many others. Why is this being forced upon us instead of investment in solar being made elsewhere by adapting existing industrial buildings? Rural communities feel under attack and like we're an easy target for developers who are just trying to benefit from subsidies offered in this sector.

Other concerns include the negative impact on the abundance of wildlife living in all of these areas including protected and vulnerable species such as badgers and lapwings. Bats suffer notoriously, when solar farms are installed and these huge sites will cause no end of suffering for bats and bird species, particularly in the areas that have nature reserves in close proximity. The additional fencing needed to secure the sites can also claim victims such as deer and hedgehogs.

This proposal will also go against many Village Design Statements and Conservation Area boundaries and protected views. The visual impact of solar panels will damage these beyond recognition affecting churches, listed buildings and period properties.

The road infrastructure in Northamptonshire and around all of the proposed sites is grossly inadequate and the building and maintenance of these sites will have a negative impact on traffic both on main routes and through small villages that already seeing an increase in traffic. Including HGV's despite many having bans in place on these types of vehicles. Rural crime is on the increase and projects of this scale may attract criminals attracted by the possible opportunities within the sites, making local communities vulnerable.

As a horse rider, we are rapidly running out of places we can enjoy and exercise our horses, these solar panels and their low noise emissions and visual distractions will trigger the flight instinct in some horses and so I worry about people's safety. Accidents on the roads between cars and horses are at an all-time high. Horse riders are entitled to be on our country roads.

I have concerns about the lack of capability in recycling parts of solar panels. Particularly when there are so many large scale solar farms being proposed. The number of individual panels will be extortionate. Options in the UK are very limited and costly and when panels break or are upgraded before the end of their lifespan, these very possibly will just end up as landfill. Not so green after all.

Lastly, despite Green Hill including plans for decommissioning the sites, there will be no guarantees that after decades of use and the sites which could have been broken down into smaller lots and sold on multiple times, will be adhered to.

What would happen if these companies ceased trading and liquidated? Who would take on the responsibility? Once this countryside and productive farmland has been used for solar, it will be lost forever.

Thank you for reading.