

**PLANNING ACT 2008**

**APPLICATION FOR A DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER**

**GREEN HILL SOLAR LIMITED  
THE PROPOSED GREEN HILL SOLAR FARM**

**REPRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF**

**STOP GREEN HILL SOLAR  
SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS**

**NOVEMBER 2025**

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## Introduction

1. This is a summary of the representations set out the case of Stop Greenhill Solar against the application for a Development Consent Order (“DCO”), for the development of what is called Green Hill Solar Farm; but is more accurately and appropriately described as an “industrial installation for the production of electricity”.

## Overview

2. The proposal is essentially for the development of eight sites to provide solar arrays and related plant, plus additional land for one or more BESS”) connected separately to each of the eight sites. The total combined area of the nine Sites is approximately 1,200 hectares. Including the corridor routes which are required for cabling to link the various sites the total area is about 1,325 hectares.
3. Each of the eight sites within the scheme includes solar arrays, and necessary infrastructure such as inverters and substations. The LVIA forming part of the Application describes the scheme as having a “disassociated nature”. most of the sites are not located close to the point of connection to the national grid. A viable grid connection was instrumental in defining the search area. In this regard reference is made expressly to NPS EN-3 paragraph 2.10.25 which say that; “applicants may choose a site based on **nearby** available grid export capacity”.
4. The potential benefits of the Application in contributing towards a low carbon economy, the objectives of sustainable development and other benefits are acknowledged. However, the potential adverse impacts are substantial. The proposal is driven by the availability of a grid connection, the requirement to secure generating capacity of 500MW, which dictates the scale of development, and land ownership in that it focusses on large scale landowners willing to sell. Having regard to National Policy which says that developments should be near to grid connection points, the geographical area covered by these proposals has sites proposed for development remote from the connection point. Those distant sites cannot reasonably be described as near to Grendon substation and are not consistent with EN-3 paragraph 2.10.25.
5. The approach to site selection has resulted in critical matters not being given proper consideration including potential impacts on ecology and biodiversity having regard to the RAMSAR and SPA adjacent to the site; the potential for flooding having regard to the policy which aims to direct development to areas of lower risk; the policy guidance to avoid using BMV agricultural land; and the statutory and policy requirements to protect designated heritage assets. Further the proposal would

have a significant adverse impact on the character of the landscape which has not been properly addressed in the Application. Fundamentally, due to the nature of the Application sites proposed for development cannot reasonably be described as being near to the point of connect to the grid.

### **Ecology and Biodiversity**

6. There are gaps in the ecological surveys. Given the sensitivity of the location from an ecology perspective, an inadequate information base and a baseline which relies on assumptions, is inadequate to be able to responsibly predict the potential impacts and determine what mitigation is necessary, or indeed whether satisfactory mitigation is achievable.
7. The Application falls within the FFL for the RAMSAR/SPA and the scheme has the potential to harm lapwing, skylark and other important ground nesting birds. The area of the site is important for bats. There is the potential for harm to the bat population on various parts of the site, but there is an incomplete evidence base. There is a risk of pollution arising from drainage from the development into the River Nene and also potential arising from any incident at the BESS.

### **Flood Risk and Drainage**

8. The site of the proposed BESS falls with Flood Zone 2 and 3. Whilst energy infrastructure is, exceptionally, necessary in flood risk areas when there is no reasonably available site with a lower risk, this is contingent on compliance with the Sequential Test to address the question of whether there is an alternative, where development could be located. The sequential assessment which has been undertaken is inadequate. It fails to address the question of disaggregation and alternatives are dismissed on the basis of constraints which apply equally to the proposal.
9. The flooding problem also raises issues which are of particular concern Station Road, close to the BESS site at Grendon floods frequently. Concerns arise from unplanned routes being used for construction traffic and access for emergency vehicles to the BESS site at times when Station Road is impassable. Another concern is the potential for pollution, particularly from the BESS site, as a consequence of flooding events..
10. A detailed appraisal has been undertaken of the assessment of flood risk for Site G and particularly G-13. Points raised apply to the assessment of flood risk and drainage by the Applicant generally. However, the critique particularly points to the issues at Site G, part of which is in Flood Zone 3 and has a history of flooding. The

Application is likely to increase the risk of flood events with harmful consequences for Lavendon.

## **Heritage**

11. The potential impacts on heritage assets is not a factor which has been key to site selection. The quality of the landscape in providing a setting for rural settlements is recognised in the development plan. There are a substantial number of heritage assets throughout the area of the proposed development. Easton Maudit and Mears Ashby are particularly sensitive.
12. The Application identifies four heritage assets for which significant effects have been identified. These are:
  - Easton Maudit Conservation Area;
  - Church of St Peter and St Paul, Easton Maudit (Grade I);
  - 22 High Street, Easton Maudit (Grade II\*); and
  - Mears Ashby Conservation Area.
13. For each, the assessment is that the level of harm would be “less than substantial”.
14. However, there are significant shortcomings in the heritage assessment, particularly in addressing the setting of a heritage asset in the context of visibility only and a failure to address the impact of development on the character of the setting of heritage assets. Whilst the heritage assessment concludes the Application would result in moderate adverse harm to the setting of the Grade I listed Church of St Peter and St Paul, the setting of the village conservation area and to setting of other listed buildings located within the conservation area, it demonstrably underestimates the harms likely to arise. The PPG anticipates substantial harm could arise to the setting of heritage assets from solar development. The proposal would seriously affect the significance of the Grade I listed church at Easton Maudit because the fundamental characteristic of the setting the setting would be lost. If however, it is not accepted there would be substantial harm, the impact must be at the top within the category of “less than substantial harm”.
15. The Application would therefore have a profound impact on the heritage interest of the area. The character of the countryside would be changed and the proposed mitigation to screen the solar arrays would of itself be harmful to the setting of heritage assets.

## **Landscape Impact**

16. The Landscape Statement provides a comprehensive critique on the assessment of the impact of the Application on landscape character. Headline points from the summary of the critique are as follows:
- a. Whilst it is acknowledged that there would be significant adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity, up to year 15, the impacts are understated. It is not accepted that after 15 years the impact will generally be significant beneficial. The difference in opinion arises from different interpretation and/or applications of the published guidance and those flawed assumptions employed in the LVIA.
  - b. The failure to consider the landscape as a resource, especially the complex natural, cultural, social and visual functions and services which the sites and their contextual landscapes perform / provide. This is a major omission. Omissions include consideration of heritage assets and features, the contribution of wildlife habitats to the landscape. PRoW, and the impacts of glint and glare. There is no differentiation between direct and indirect landscape effects.
  - c. After Year 15, the LVIA relies on existing and proposed vegetation to screen views. 15 years for landscaping to mature in these circumstances is unrealistically optimistic. It cannot be assumed that views would remain screened. Not all adverse effects on landscape character can be mitigated by screening.
  - d. The LVIA relies on hedges being managed at 4.5m tall. Tall hedges are uncharacteristic and in these circumstances the proposed mitigation measures would cause adverse landscape effects, particularly where hedges would screen views across characteristically open landscapes.
  - e. The LVIA asserts that after Year 15 there would be significant landscape character benefits. This assertion is flawed is because it inappropriately double counts the mitigation measures.
  - f. The LVIA does not assess effects on the overall character of the sites. It focuses 'landscape fabric'. The LVIA does not follow publish guidance

- g. The LVIA fails to take account of direct and indirect effects. Indirect effects on the overall character of the landscapes closest to the sites would be significant adverse for the duration of the operation.
  - h. The glint and glare assessment is flawed and unreliable with a consequence that the environmental impact is understated.
  - i. Combined, the significant adverse landscape and visual effects that would occur or be experienced within each of the proposed sites' zone of interinfluence. There would be a significantly adversely affect an extremely large area.
- 17. Overall, the significant adverse landscape and visual effects arising from the application would be higher than the LVIA predicts, and the majority of the effects would remain significant adverse from start to finish.

### **BMV Agricultural Land**

- 18. The issue of the loss of BMV agricultural land goes to the heart of the approach towards site selection by the promoters of this development. The site has a high proportion of BMV land. Policy directs development to land of a lower quality. There is no adequate justification for the use of BMV land in this case.
- 19. The SolarQ research serves to illustrate that policy to direct development away from BMV land is not successful. Giving approval for development on this site, which has a high proportion of BMV land will only further exacerbate that discrepancy.

### **Likely Impacts on PRoW**

- 20. The PRoW are important elements in the landscape for recreation, wellbeing, a means for travelling from place to place, and they are part of the historic fabric of the area. The significance is more than local as evidenced by the Waendel Walks.
- 21. The Application will entail the development of solar array through which the PRoW will travel through or immediately adjacent. The impact on the character of those footpaths and bridleways would be very substantial and would be akin to traversing through or around an industrial site. The connection with heritage assets would be severed. The mitigation proposed of planting and purposefully maintaining high hedges would introduce an element of enclosure compared to the general openness characteristic of most PRoW. There would be substantial harm.

### **Traffic and Transport**

22. The information submitted in support of the Application does not provide any confidence that the proposal would not have a significantly adverse impact on the local highway network; that there would not be a risk to highway safety, or indeed that vehicles of the size required to enable the construction of the BESS can safely be accommodated on local roads.
23. An issue of accessibility to the BESS site by emergency vehicles in the event of an incident during times when Station Road is impassible is a legitimate concern.

### **The BESS**

24. The BESS raises concerns about public safety. There is also a high sensitivity because of potentially environment pollution arising from the location of the BESS site close to the River Nene and the RAMSAR and SPA sites. The risk of flooding compounds the legitimate concerns about the risks of pollution.
25. The accessibility of the Grendon BESS site for construction and maintenance is problematic. There are significant legitimate concerns about access to the BESS site by emergency vehicles should there be an incident at a time when stion Road is flooded.
26. The issues identified above lead to a conclusion that Grendon is the wrong site on which to locate a BESS.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

27. Stop Green Hill Solar acknowledge National Policy is that:
  - (i) the need for solar energy is not open to debate, nor is its urgency; and
  - (ii) substantial weight should be given to this need.
28. In promoting a DCO the applicant should seek first to avoid, failing which reduce, failing which mitigate, failing which compensate for impacts. The urgent need for Critical National Priority Infrastructure and related benefits thereof will in general outweigh any residual impacts remaining; and this policy approach will influence how the Secretary of State considers harm in the context of specific policy tests.
29. However, the construction of this Application falls well short of demonstrating that it has sought to avoid harm in the first instance; that harm arising has been reduced and/or mitigated or that compensation has been made. The approach to site selection is driven by the availability of a grid connection, a requirement to secure

generating capacity of 500MW, which dictates the scale of development, and land ownership in that it focusses on large scale landowners willing to sell. Consideration of legitimate planning issues such as landscape, ecology and biodiversity, heritage, flood risk, loss of BMV agricultural land and other environmental impacts has evidently and demonstrably been a secondary consideration.

30. The consequence is that Impacts have not been minimised/adequately mitigated. For example at ISH-1 in response to a question from the lead Inspector as to why further mitigation of heritage impacts on Easton Maudit had not been undertaken, the response was that the removal of solar arrays from a further field or fields would affect the viability of the project. No evidence whatsoever has been presented to support this oral assertion; and given the size and extent of the project, the assertion does not appear credible. The urgent need for CNPI should not therefore be regarded as outweighing impacts when those impacts are not residual.
31. In respect of ecology and biodiversity, policy does not prohibit development on sites recognised for ecological importance. The Grendon BESS is adjacent to a RAMSAR and SPA and Sites are within the FFL. The problem is that the evidence base is incomplete. The consequence is that the extent of the harm is not known. Mitigation and the extent of residual impacts are not known.
32. Flood risk and drainage has implications ecology and biodiversity, highways and public safety. The Grendon BESS site falls with flood zones 2 and 3. The Application is not policy compliant because the requirements of the sequential test have not been addressed with regard to flood risk. Irrespective of the propensity of the BESS site to flood with the risk of pollution and harmful consequences for ecology and biodiversity, the local highway network has a record of being impassible because of flooding. There are serious questions about the ability of emergency services to access the BESS site in the event of an incident. There is potential risk to public safety.
33. Regarding the impact of heritage assets, there are the statutory duties arising from Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A balancing exercise is required to consider whether loss or harm to the significance of a heritage asset is outweighed by substantial public benefits, in this context, the positive role of large-scale renewable projects. However, harm will not be outweighed when the approach to the site search has been flawed. Further, the approach taken in the Application to addressing the setting of heritage assets is defective. The consequence is that the harms identified are understated and consideration of mitigation and the identification of residual harm are incomplete



and deficient. Notwithstanding, the mitigation has not done what could be done to respond to harm because it is asserted it would not be viable to do so.

34. Regarding landscape impact, it is acknowledged that locally valued landscapes should not be used in themselves to refuse consent, as this may unduly restrict acceptable development. However the assessment which has been undertaken focuses on the impact of development and mitigation measures on the fabric of the landscape. There is no consideration of impacts on landscape character. Mitigation of harm to the character of the landscape is not addressed and consequently there is no proper assessment and consideration of residual harm.
35. Policy also does not prohibit development on BMV agricultural land although it directs development to brownfield, industrial and low and medium grade agricultural land where possible. The Applicant has not sought low and medium grade agricultural land (or industrial or brownfield land). Approximately two third of the site are BMV. Whilst high quality agricultural land is characteristic of this area, no alternative connection point has been considered, the amount of land is greater than required to deliver a scheme to generate 500MW, and one of the key facts in the site search was large sites with willing landowners. This demonstrates ambivalence to the clear preference in policy to avoid the use of BMV. In a national context, the SolarQ evidence about the effectiveness of policy to protect BMV land is compelling.
36. The presumption in favour of granting consent does not apply to residual impacts which present an unacceptable risk to (or interference with), inter alia human health and public safety. The proposed BESS at Grendon presents an unacceptable risk to human health and public safety.
37. Overall, the Application is based on a site search which has not considered alternative points of connection to the grid; it has only considered large sites with willing landowners; and is driven by a requirement to deliver 500MW at the point of connection to the grid (and then takes more land than necessary to satisfy this self-defined requirement). The site is not suitable. It is open therefore to the decision-maker to refuse to make the DCO when no alternative points of connection to the grid have been investigated by the Applicant. Further, there are important shortcomings in the assessment harm to landscape character, heritage assets and ecology and biodiversity within the Application. The mitigation proposed cannot therefore properly address the real world harm likely to arise. Even then, with regard to heritage, the Applicant has not taken obvious mitigation measures

because it is asserted (orally) that it would not be viable. There is no evidence before the Examination about viability.

38. For the reasons outline above, this Application is misconceived, it does not adequately address NPS and other policy requirements, it does not provide a sound assessment of the impact of the proposal and as a consequence mitigation is misdirected and or inadequate. The residual harmful effects include, but are not limited to, substantial harm to heritage assets, harm to ecology and biodiversity and harm to the character of the area. There is also a risk to public safety. Whilst acknowledging the contribution the proposal could make towards national policy objectives, this is a misconceived scheme on the wrong site. The Development Consent Order should not be confirmed.