

From: Walgrave Parish Clerk <clerk@walgraveparishcouncil.gov.uk>

Sent: Friday, October 24, 2025 16:10

To: Green Hill Solar <greenhill@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

Subject: Walgrave Parish Council Comments

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Hello,

Please find attached comments from Walgrave Parish Council. When submitting comments to meet the August deadline, it was stated that additional comments could be submitted at a later date. Walgrave Parish Council have now had the opportunity to conduct a Village Survey and have produced a response in line with the outcomes of that.

We would be grateful if you could include the comments attached.

Kind regards,

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Name]

Parish Clerk

Walgrave Parish Council

T: [Redacted Phone Number]

[Please note that I work part-time](#)

Walgrave Parish Council response to the Greenhill Solar Farm DCO

Size and Scale Sites A and A2

The proposed development spans a substantial area, transforming a large expanse of rural agricultural land into an industrial-scale solar power installation. This development is too large for the landscape and context in which it is proposed. The surrounding area is rural countryside and rural residential, the development would dominate the landscape which cannot absorb a large-scale solar development.

Visual Impact

The vast physical footprint of this proposal would significantly alter open views due to the huge scale of the proposed development and the proximity of solar panels to the road.

Site A2 would cause a major visual impact along Kettering Road, one of the main approaches into Walgrave. This currently open, rural vista will be replaced by a prominent, industrial-scale installation, which will dominate the landscape and detract from the village's countryside setting.

Site A will similarly cause a significant visual intrusion along Newlands Road, altering key views in and out of the village and permanently impacting the rural character of the area.

The proposed development does not comply with key National and local policies aimed at preserving the rural character and visual appeal of the open countryside. The size and scale of the proposed power installation, particularly the visual impact of Sites A and A2 would lead to irreversible harm to the landscape.

Loss of Agricultural Land

The National Planning Policy Framework indicates giving substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land and not prime agricultural land. The fields being proposed are prime agricultural land.

Environmental Impact and Biodiversity Loss

The large-scale loss of greenfield or agricultural land for such a development raises concerns regarding local biodiversity. Development may result in substantial habitat loss for local wildlife. The area includes hedgerows, mature fields and open farmland, all of which support a wide range of species. The installation of solar panels and associated infrastructure will disrupt wildlife corridors. Walgrave's close proximity to Pitsford Reservoir - a designated nature reserve and important habitat for migratory and resident bird species, places the village within a key flight corridor. The proposed development risks disrupting this.

Impact on Newlands Road as a designated Quiet Lane

This narrow single-track road is used by residents for recreational purposes, including walking, cycling and horse riding. It is not designed to accommodate construction vehicles, which will inevitably use this route. Please refer to the Highways department comments on planning application DA2025/0886/MAO on West Northants planning portal, which highlights highway safety along this road. Any increase in volume of traffic on this road would exacerbate the existing pressure on a road that already struggles to cope with current levels of use.

Decommissioning.

This stage raises several significant concerns which must be fully addressed.

It is anticipated that solar panels will require replacement at least once during the operational lifespan of the power installation, (this replacement will result in a renewed period of increased traffic to and from the site).

In the event that the solar farm becomes no longer economically viable, it is unclear what means are in place to ensure full decommissioning. Without enforceable conditions, there is a real risk that the infrastructure could be abandoned, leaving both physical and environmental degradation behind. There must be a clear and legally binding plan to return the land to its original agricultural condition. This includes the full removal of solar panels, and any other infrastructure introduced to the site. It should be clearly stated:

- Who bears responsibility for removing the panels and associated infrastructure
- Who is obligated to restore the land back to a viable agricultural state, and within what timeframe?
- What financial security or bond is in place to ensure that decommissioning and land restoration will occur, regardless of the financial standing of the operating company at the time?

Furthermore, the recyclability and disposal of solar panels is an increasingly pressing issue. Clear commitments and acknowledgement of which parties are responsible must be provided regarding how panels will be handled at the end of their life, specifically, for ensuring that disposal is carried out safely and in an environmentally responsible manner.

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Safety Risks

Emergency response protocols for BESS incidents are still under development, raising serious safety concerns. BESS fires cannot be extinguished with water and are typically left to burn out, increasing the risk of toxic chemical release,

contaminated runoff into nearby protected areas, and damage to local ecosystems. Given the proximity to environmentally sensitive areas, these risks must be fully addressed.

Heritage

It should be noted that the proposed development at Site A2 lies in close proximity to a designated Scheduled Monument. The site includes the earthwork remains of the original medieval village, which are protected by English Heritage. This area, known as Atterbury's Field, holds significant historical and archaeological value, and any development in its vicinity must take into account the potential impact on this nationally important heritage asset.

Lack of Community Benefit

Clear confirmation of community benefit must be addressed should this proposal be granted. There is currently no mention if the fund will be available, how it will be available and how it will be payable to the community for the duration of the life of the solar farm

National Planning Policy Framework 2023:

The proposal conflicts with this policy.

Paragraph 174 states that planning decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Paragraph 180 (b) states that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (including characteristic landscapes) should be refused if significant harm cannot be avoided or mitigated.

Paragraph 155 supports renewable energy projects but requires that they are appropriately sited and designed to minimise impacts, including on landscape character.