

Mears Ashby Issues and requests. Mar 2026

Mears Ashby residents and Parish Council are vehemently opposed to this project and have submitted multiple pieces of evidence and comments across a whole range of subjects during the examination process. The sheer size of site C, D and E will swamp Mears Ashby on three sides of the village and will cause major disruption on 4 out of 5 roads in and out of the village. These roads are all narrow with soft verges that are not suited to high volumes of traffic especially HGVs and abnormal loads. We recognise the need for renewables to support our energy security but not at the risk of food security and the industrialisation of our countryside. In our area, Northamptonshire is the largest hub in the UK for warehouses and all new developments will have to have rooftop solar. With plug in facilities coming soon and mandatory residential rooftop solar, this is growing at a significant rate and will reduce the need for these over expensive contracts being awarded to foreign companies, who import from abroad and have no real plan for recycling at the end of their lifecycle. ***We maintain our view and respectfully request that this project should be declined.***

As this project is about to enter the Examiners review stage, we would like to submit further recommendations, without prejudice, in the event that the examiners approve the DCO. We believe these recommendations would make it more acceptable to the local community.

SV Panels

We recommend that the panels in fields, where they will be visible to local residents or near PROW, should be smaller, keeping the very large panels reserved for locations that are out of sight. This will make them less oppressive and help to protect health and wellbeing to all users of the countryside.

EN 3 Paragraph 3.10.28 "Applicants are encouraged where possible to minimise the visual outlook from existing public rights of way, considering the impacts this may have on any other visual amenities in the surrounding landscape."

Site D - D1,2, & 3 We request that you move the panels back away from the road in these fields to provide a bigger buffer. We suggest by at least 10m.

Site E - Currently panels are proposed on both sides of Wilby road. This is already a major accident hazard area, particularly past the Cadent Gas Compound and on to the double bends where cars regularly end up in the ditch. We recommend EF4, 5, 10, 11 12, have a larger buffer away from the road and the panels are pushed back northwards by at least 30 metres so that traffic is less affected from glare. We recommend that same with fields EF13,14,15,16, and 17 to push the panels southwards to create a larger buffer than is currently on the plan.

Site E - We request the same consideration along the public footpath to Field Barn to make the PROW a much better experience. EF13 and EF14 should have an increased buffer adjacent to the path by moving panels northwards. We suggest the same on the other side, EF21 and 22 to move panels southwards creating a much better buffer against the path. In addition in EF22 we request you square off the top NE part of the field so its not as close to existing houses at the SE east side of Mears Ashby which includes the Jacobean Grade 2 Mears Ashby Hall. Many of these fields are within 1 km.

HGV major roads

The proposed major haul road from A4500 along Mears Ashby Road is not an HGV route. It is a residential road as it has houses all along one side and is also a busy commuter route through to the A45. The GH proposal for this access point is to one field only EF33. We recommend

removing this field completely and therefore remove the need for extensive traffic and HGV's which will cause significant disruption in the area. EF33 could be accessed from EF23.

Access points

Highfield Road. Please can you review the 5 access points (which includes the cross-over for the cable route) on this road into sites D & E It is a short narrow country road, only 7m wide. The verges and road edges will not survive the number of HGV's you propose to service these areas. This is also a very busy commuter route and 4 sets of traffic lights will cause absolute chaos for commuters and school traffic.

Cable Route

The proposed cable route on Mears Ashby Rd between the pylons and the wood spinney have not been investigated thoroughly enough. At the outset there was undue pressure from the sales agent on the landowner for which a formal apology has had to be made. GH have set up meetings to discuss options but had not even visited the site so were presenting from maps which seems incredulous! We understand that meetings planned very recently for the first time! Distinctly unprofessional and not worthy of being awarded this contract. (apparently SGHS have suggested an alternative route but GHs said they can't make right hand turns. However, they have managed them elsewhere, surely this is just a function of radius?

Construction time impact on Mears Ashby

Sites Mears Ashby impacts	Length of construction in months	Impacts
Site C	1-8	Sywell Rd, Glebe Rd junction, Highfield Rd junction and moonshine gap.
Site C BESS	8-25	Sywell Rd, Glebe Rd junction, Highfield Rd junction and moonshine gap.
Site D	5-23	Highfield Rd and Moonshine Gap - key access into MA
Site E	1-21	Highfield Rd, Moonshine Gap, Wilby rd, Wilby Rd /A4500 junction, Earls Barton Rd from MA to A4500
There will be particular pressure on Sywell Rd, Glebe Rd junction, (Beckworth Emporium), Highfield Rd, and Moonshine Gap, for the whole period of construction. (25 months if approved) Mears Ashby will only have one access road out of the village that is unaffected, that is the road to Sywell. Totally ludicrous and cause chaos in Sywell and Overstone		

Volume of workers in locations affecting Mears Ashby.

As the Mears Ashby sites combined is the largest area we have looked at the worker impact. According to GH Ref EN010170-000160-GH6.3.13.2. The key volumes of workers coming into the sites C,D & E only are as follows: _

Description	Daily Volumes	Notes

Total volume of workers	335	Between 39% and 60% on buses depending on site/skills
Vol. Shuttle buses anticipated	22	
Vol. of cars/vans	230	Assumes car sharing at 1.5 per car
Total vehicle movements by workers alone	504	This is a high volume impact for one small village of 207 households and 457 residents and represents more than a third of total worker with little phasing/relief on local residents.

Stewardship of the land

We are concerned that the contractors will not adhere to the works plans and that the relevant bodies/Councils will not have enough resource to manage and hold them to account. One farmer who currently manages land within our area has had investigative work completed by GHS. This was supposedly made good for future crop management but they have left furrows in the land and there is already a compensation claim submitted because it's not been returned to its original form. This raises, significant concerns, over the long term stewardship. GHS state that all haul routes will be left in situ when works are complete, which renders the farmer being able to return to use which is acceptable for farm subsidies. To be eligible all land must be returned in full to the original state otherwise it is not eligible. This would mean the costs would revert to the landowner which would be unacceptable. Are landowners aware of this? It should be clear and transparent in any documentation. It clearly is not!

Increased Traffic

A paper has been submitted under traffic and transport Issues to compare Cottam Solar Farm to GH. Both Cottam and GH are 1200 hectares therefore transport requirements for deliveries should be similar. This paper identified 10,000 two-way movements less at GHS, compared to Cottam and this did not include all the ancillary movements required for water, compound facilities etc. Is this a deliberate ploy to make the scheme look more attractive with less traffic?

Road Accidents

The double bends after the (Cadent) gas station on Wilby road are notorious for accidents and whilst we know that major accident hot spots have been assessed, it should be noted that there is quite often vehicles in the ditch here.

PROW

The public footpath in which cuts across EF34 actually runs along the field side through EF33 until a gap in the hedge where walkers can cross the road to walk diagonally across the footpath to Sywell Country Park. Mrs Beeby has already raised the issue that this PROW may end up being a corridor which could feel unsafe and oppressive. The local residents agree with this. We therefore ask you to, remove this field or push all panels back behind the natural hedgerows in the middle of that field.

Community Benefit Fund - We acknowledge that the examiners are aware SGHS want the Community benefits fund to be a mandatory part of the DCO, however we want to reiterate this point as evidence from other sites which have subsequently been sold on, and have not adhered to their commitments. We insist that GHS hold regular meetings with the Mears Ashby Parish Council to ensure the needs of local residents are met. This could include but is not limited to; children's play areas, pocket parks, better signage to ensure HGVs during the operational phases

do not use the village roads. Updated mapping apps with authorised routes. New pathways from Mears Ashby to Sywell Country Park especially if there is no change to EF34. We would also like to point out that GHS did not set up public meetings in our village when this was the largest site of 1000 acres - quoting they couldn't find a venue when the village hall had multiple free slots which we think is deliberate and does not win any hearts and minds of the local community.

Noise levels from Inverters vs safe ranges

Examples of noise for comparison	Comparison noise levels dB
Rural areas nighttime	20 30 dB
Rural areas daytime	30 - 50 dB
Urban areas nighttime	40 - 50 dB
Normal conversation	60 dB
Urban areas daytime	50 - 80dB
Vacuum cleaner	60-85 dB
Food processor	80-90 dB
Horizontal directional drilling	70-100dB
Storms	120dB
Pike Drivers	120 dB
Fire works	140-150dB

Safe dB levels for humans and large animals

Humans and large mammals hearing ranges	Humans	Horses	Cats	Dogs
Range of hearing	12 Hz to 28 kHz,	55Hz - 33500 Hz	48Hz to 85kHz	67 Hz to 45 kHz.
Safe dB range	70-75 dB	Stress threshold 65dB	80-90 dB	45-55dB
Harmful dB range	>85dB	>85dB	>85dB	> 85dB

Unit		Octave Band Centre Frequency Hz
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	Sound Power Level SWL [dB]	63	125	250	500	1000	2000	4000	8000
SMA inverter with silencer (4600 kVA)	83.4	60.1	66.8	72.1	69.2	68.2	72.8	81.0	75.5

GH - Table 1.6: BESS Storage Inverter Input Data - Source:- GH Noise Addendum Nov 25

Unit	Sound Power Level SWL [dB]	Octave Band Centre Frequency Hz							
		63	125	250	500	1000	2000	4000	8000
Transformer	88.0	88.0	94.0	93.0	86.0	80.0	62.0	60.0	54.0

Table 1.7: Transformer Input Data - source GH Noise addendum Nov 25

As you can see from above the dB levels are very close and exceed safety levels in certain circumstances. A major concern is the pile drivers working at night, and when the horizontal directional drilling will be taking place, especially near the villages.

Cats have excellent hearing range and can detect an extremely broad range of frequencies. They can hear higher-pitched sounds than humans or most dogs. Mears Ashby has many household cats which enjoy exploring the countryside. These clearly haven't been considered. Neither have dogs. Mears Ashby has many households with dogs and also has two trainee guide dogs for a blind resident in the village. According to:-

██████████ researchers concluded that noise should be 20 decibels less than what is recommended for humans and consideration should be given to normal noise levels in rural areas which is less than urban sites.

Horses at East Lodge riding School near Sywell Country Park have not as far as I can see been identified as a receptor. ██████████ They often have hacks with children and adults all around these country lanes.

NESO TEC Register

There is no confirmed gated status on the register and whilst GHS are negotiating with NGET on protective rights, currently there is no agreement in place. We believe that this project should be declined as it has no connection dates and currently the list goes to 2035 with ready to go projects. This totals over 200 GW of solar and the country only needs 70-80GW.

Tourism

Northampton balloon festival - Annual event

[REDACTED] For many years the balloons have taken off at sunrise and sunset during the three day festival and often fly NE from the Northampton Racecourse, due to prevailing winds, and land in the fields around all of the sites (apart from Lavendon). No consideration has been given to balloonists, and the inherent dangers of landing in fields of solar panels.

[REDACTED] Is a destination location in the area and can cater for over 500 cars in the car park, 700 plus shoppers on any one day. It employs a large number of local people and consistently has a high volume of visitors especially at key dates, Easter, Mothers Day, school holidays, and Christmas. It will be severely affected by the construction at BESS C as most traffic comes from A509 or Sywell to help reduce traffic through Mears Ashby. This remains a key concern.

Northamptonshire Walks - This group was set up over 10 years ago by a local couple and it has grown in that time especially during covid and now has over 44k followers across the Northamptonshire and surrounding areas. They have over 200 walks with detailed instructions and pictures to guide people. Many of these cross the GH proposed sites. It gives many walkers great pleasure and they often have group walks which are often oversubscribed for health and wellbeing. [REDACTED]

These are just a few key organisations that will be affected in the area.

In conclusion, this is the wrong proposal in the wrong place. It is ill-thought through and its driver for award has been greed and the £millions, that has been thrown at this project by speculative investors. Little consideration has been given to the locals, the environment, the road users and the countryside users. A huge blot on the landscape, ruining the lives for us residents, our children and our children's children.

Please recommend this project for DECLINE.

Prepared by Kay Brown and [REDACTED] Mears Ashby residents