Campaign to Protect Rural England Northamptonshire

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8th April 2026

PINS ref: EN010170

Application by Green Hill Solar Farm Ltd. for an Order granting Development Consent for a proposed solar development on land between Northampton and Wellingborough

CPRE Northamptonshire
Summary Statement
Deadline 7, 8th April 2026

Introduction

This document contains a summary of the position of CPRE regarding the above scheme.

We consider that the scheme would be uniquely harmful when compared to previously approved NSIP schemes and that it does not meet planning policies in many areas. We feel that the Application does not fairly assess the scheme, and that the design actually creates a greater impact than assessed upon the countryside and the rural communities that live within it.

Quality of the Application

We found the following issues with the application that compromise or understate the impact of the scheme:

1. The LVIA concentrates on landscape fabric and does not adequately consider impact on landscape character. The impact on the landscape character has now been acknowledged to be significant and adverse
2. The viewpoint selection was agreed with the LPAs before the layout of the panels was disclosed which compromised their value
3. The methodologies used frequently result in lower assessments of harm than those used in comparable applications
4. The assessment of sequential cumulative impact was unduly restricted and it only considered concurrent visibility of sites on a journey
5. The noise modelling used the highest level of attenuation (soft ground) when predicting noise levels and used “representative locations” for background noise levels at noise sensitive properties that were at noisier locations than the properties that they are supposed to represent making. Because of this we consider that the results re unsound. Concerns apply to both the solar farm infrastructure and the BESS
6. The consideration of the risks from fire in the BESS is inadequate. This is unacceptable for a BESS that is sited uniquely close to both residential properties and RAMSAR and SPA sites where the consequences of a fire could be extreme
7. The Glint and Glare assessments omitted local roads that are well used routes because of the limitations of the local road network

Design of the Scheme

It appears that the scheme was more assembled than designed and that each parcel of land from willing landowners was added to the scheme as they came forward. This has resulted in a piecemeal scheme spread over a very wide area. We consider that the resulting design is uniquely harmful because of the following factors:

1. The use of many sites liberally distributed across the landscape creates harms over a far wider area than a more concentrated scheme. This would uniquely create a new widespread landscape character area whose defining characteristic is that it is dominated by solar infrastructure. This constitutes a significant adverse impact on the landscape character.
2. The land used by the scheme comprises 65% Best and Most Versatile land with the remainder being predominantly Grade 3b – moderate quality agricultural land. Approximately 3,000 acres of land would be taken out of its current use of food production. This fails to seek the use of poorer quality land and to avoid BMV.
3. The land take of the scheme is significantly greater than comparable schemes which is unnecessarily wasteful of productive agricultural land
4. The collection of sites oppressively surrounds conservation villages creating an industrialised setting for the villages and their residents

Socioeconomic Impacts

The Application admits that there would be a net loss of local employment resulting from the scheme. It claims that this would be compensated by the income paid to landowners but this would not be the case because most are absentee landowners who do not participate in the local economy.

A Community Benefit Scheme might be considered to contribute to the local economy but because the Applicant has resisted any means by which this can be guaranteed, this must be discounted as such schemes often do not materialise.

The following adverse socioeconomic impacts would be caused by the scheme:

1. Tenant farms would lose some or all of their land impacting the viability of their businesses and creating a loss of income in the local economy for their suppliers
2. Equestrian businesses that rely on pleasant rides on the local bridleways and quiet lanes would lose vital routes and would cease to be viable. The impact would be greatest during construction but even if a business survives that phase, their business would be severely compromised
3. The local wellness and tourism businesses would also lose their rural setting that is integral to their offer

Safety

The Application is generally dismissive of the safety concerns relating to the scheme. We have already noted above that we consider that the application contains inadequate detail regarding the emergency plan for a fire in the BESS but it is also dismissive of the impacts during construction. Particular concerns are:

1. The Grendon BESS is very close to both residential and business premises. It is not unlikely that a fire would require an evacuation of the village and other nearby premises but no refuge is identified that could accommodate the significant numbers that would need to be evacuated.

2. BESS fires create toxic fumes and toxic runoff from firefighting. These could pollute the adjacent highly sensitive RAMSAR and SPA sites. The Applicant dismisses the danger from toxic fumes based on average conditions and not worst-case conditions. The Application also proposes a limited facility to contain toxic runoff but does not include evidence to show that this would be adequate to contain the runoff from a prolonged fire such as those that have occurred elsewhere nor from a second fire occurring before the toxic waste from a previous fire has been removed from the site.
3. The Grendon BESS is proposed on a floodplain which would not normally be considered a suitable location for such infrastructure. It is proposed to elevate the BESS but there is no certainty that the measures proposed would be adequate to prevent flooding in the long term should flood levels increase.
4. Cyclists, equestrians and pedestrians would be exposed to increased risk where the routes that they use are also used by construction traffic or construction activity. This is of particular concern on village roads, PRoWs but also on the country lanes that are also used by these groups.

The 60-year Permission

The Applicant has not provided any rationale to support the need to grant such a long permission. In our view it is not in the national interest to unnecessarily commit such a large area of predominantly Best and Most Versatile agricultural land for such a long period. The impacts of climate change are unpredictable and so in our view, it is extremely likely that even by the time of repowering that the national needs will change. If the national need is still for ground mounted solar over food production, then the permission could easily be extended. It is in the national interest to retain flexibility and restrict any permission to 40 years should the scheme be permitted.

Decommissioning

At the end of the scheme's life the Application states that the scheme will be removed and the land returned to its previous use. However, the DCO does not include a Requirement for a mechanism to ensure that funds would be available to ensure that this takes place. We are concerned that this would not happen because the final operator would not have insufficient funds to do so.

Benefits of the Scheme

The only reason to permit a harmful scheme is if it is considered that its benefits outweigh the harm. There are two claimed benefits of the scheme; the generation of renewable energy and the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). We note that it is no longer claimed that grazing would take place across the scheme.

We have already submitted evidence that while the "enough electricity to supply 115,000 homes" may be factually correct, it is extremely misleading both because the electricity would not be generated at times that match the demand from those homes and because domestic electricity use only accounts for just over 1/20th of the national energy mix[i]. The use of annual consumption also fails to account for the seasonal disparity between energy consumption and solar generation meaning that in winter the scheme would struggle to reliably supply the total energy needs of the residents of even 1,500 homes.

While we acknowledge that there would be a BNG onsite, but we suggest that in order to replace the food production lost from the 3,000 acres of productive land, it is almost certain that there would have to be a biodiversity loss elsewhere. The biodiversity loss may well exceed the onsite BNG.

Conclusion

The number and extent of the harms that would be caused by this scheme and the risks involved in the Grendon BESS are unique. In most cases large renewables projects create mixed opinions within the communities that might be affected by them, but with this scheme we have encountered no support for the scheme. We acknowledge that planning is not a plebiscite but the level of objection to this scheme is an indicator of the extent of the harms that it would create.

This scheme would be uniquely harmful and oppressive and we believe that the benefits of the scheme are insufficient to warrant the number and extent of harms that it would cause and so should not be permitted. If it is permitted, we would question what level of harm would be necessary for an NSIP scheme to be refused.

CPRE Northamptonshire
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[i] Energy Consumption in the UK, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 18 Dec 2025, ECUK 2025 Primary Energy Consumption data tables, https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/26afb14b-be9a-4722-916e-10655d0edc38/energy_consumption_in_the_uk