

From: Aaron

Sent: Friday, September 11, 2026 12:29

To: Green Hill Solar

Subject: Fw: Green Hill Solar Farm – EN010170, Comments on responses to the Secretary of State's First Request for Information

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Dear Sir or Madam,

I am an Interested Party in respect of the Green Hill Solar Farm application and am responding to the Secretary of State's invitation dated 28 August 2026 to comment on the responses to her Request for Information of 10 August 2026.

I do not seek to repeat the general representations already made during the Examination. My comments are limited to two matters arising directly from the Applicant's and National Grid Electricity Transmission plc's responses: **restoration of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land**, and **the unresolved protective provisions relating to National Grid infrastructure**.

1. Restoration of agricultural land to its former ALC grade

In paragraph 5 of the Secretary of State's Request for Information, the Applicant was asked to provide further justification for its conclusion that approximately 4.3 hectares of land beneath the substation and BESS could be satisfactorily restored to its former Agricultural Land Classification grade following 60 years beneath hardstanding.

The Applicant's response provides considerably more detail about the proposed methodology for stripping, storing and ultimately reinstating the soils. I recognise that the Applicant proposes, amongst other measures, separate storage of topsoil and subsoil, professional soil-scientist oversight, reinstatement in the correct sequence, remediation of compaction and drainage problems, and an aftercare period.

I also acknowledge the Applicant's clarification that the entirety of the relevant BESS area would not necessarily comprise continuous concrete hardstanding, with alternative foundation techniques and areas of gravel potentially being used.

My concern is therefore **not that restoration measures have not been proposed**. It is whether the evidence provided is sufficient to support the stronger conclusion that the affected land can reliably be restored to its **former ALC grade after an operational period of up to 60 years**.

The Applicant refers to published research concerning soil stockpiling. However, its own response notes research involving sandy topsoil stored for periods of **up to 10 years**, while also referring more generally to longer-term mine-site stockpiles and changes in soil conditions and microbial communities.

That evidence appears to demonstrate that restoration of long-term stockpiled soils is possible in principle and that recognised restoration techniques exist. It does not appear, however, to demonstrate the successful restoration to the same Agricultural Land Classification grade following a storage and development period approaching the **60 years proposed for this Scheme**.

This is particularly relevant because the Applicant's own response states that the eventual decommissioning Soil Management Plan will seek to return the Sites to their original use and condition "**as far as practicable**".

That qualification seems materially different from the firmer conclusion later expressed by the Applicant that it "will be possible to restore soil characteristics and land grades satisfactorily".

I therefore respectfully ask the Secretary of State to consider whether the Applicant has demonstrated, rather than simply asserted, that restoration to the **former ALC grade** can be relied upon after such an unusually long period.

If the Secretary of State is minded to grant consent, I would also ask that she consider whether the DCO should contain sufficiently robust requirements to ensure that:

- restoration to the previous ALC grade is an explicit objective rather than simply restoration "as far as practicable";
- adequate baseline soil information is retained for the lifetime of the development;
- restoration is undertaken under the supervision of an appropriately qualified soil scientist;
- post-restoration ALC assessment is required; and
- there is a sufficiently long and enforceable aftercare/remediation period if the former agricultural capability is not initially achieved.

2. National Grid protective provisions and BESS safety

I am also concerned by the apparent difference between the Applicant's description of the state of agreement with National Grid and National Grid's own response.

The Applicant states that the revised protective provisions are:

"agreed, save for the definition of 'acceptable insurance'"

and characterises the outstanding issue principally as whether operational insurance should be £20 million or £50 million.

National Grid's submission dated 24 August 2026 appears to describe a broader disagreement.

National Grid states that agreement had **not yet been reached** and identifies three key outstanding issues: safeguarding provisions for its existing and future projects, the definition of acceptable insurance, and the use of "authorised works" rather than "specified works" within the indemnity provisions.

National Grid also states that the Applicant's proposed protective provisions are inadequate to avoid **serious detriment to NGET's undertaking**.

In addition, National Grid raises a separate concern regarding the BESS Safety Management Plan. It notes that Requirement 6 does not require consultation with or approval by NGET and specifically requests that Requirement 6 be amended to require NGET approval because of the potential risks associated with Work No. 2 in proximity to Grendon Substation.

The Applicant disputes the need for this additional protection and relies, amongst other matters, upon the separation distance between the BESS/substation work areas and Grendon Substation and the proposed Battery Storage Safety Management Plan.

I do not suggest that an Interested Party is in a position to determine the correct technical or commercial drafting of National Grid's protective provisions.

However, I respectfully submit that it would be unsafe to treat this matter as merely an unresolved disagreement over the amount of insurance when National Grid's own submission identifies **several wider substantive concerns**, including the adequacy of the indemnity, safeguarding of other electricity infrastructure and its requested role in BESS safety approval.

Before any DCO is granted, I therefore ask the Secretary of State to satisfy herself that:

1. the full extent of the outstanding disagreement between the Applicant and NGET is accurately understood;
2. NGET's existing and future nationally important electricity infrastructure is adequately protected;
3. the reasons for rejecting any protective provisions specifically requested by NGET are clearly justified; and
4. the Secretary of State has considered NGET's request for an amendment to Requirement 6 concerning the BESS Safety Management Plan.

Conclusion

The additional information submitted by the Applicant has addressed some of the matters raised by the Secretary of State. Nevertheless, in my view the responses leave two material issues requiring further consideration.

First, the Applicant has provided a detailed **methodology** for soil restoration, but the evidence cited does not appear to demonstrate with equivalent-duration evidence that agricultural land can confidently be returned to its former ALC grade after a development period of up to 60 years.

Second, there remains an apparent material difference between the Applicant's and NGET's descriptions of the outstanding protective provisions, including issues extending beyond the level of insurance and into the protection of existing and future National Grid infrastructure and BESS safety.

I respectfully request that these matters are fully resolved, or appropriately secured through the terms of any Development Consent Order, before the Secretary of State reaches her final decision.

Yours faithfully,

Aaron Ward,
Resident of Earls Barton