

# MEARS ASHBY PARISH COUNCIL

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## Formal Written Representation and Statutory Objection to the Green Hill Solar Farm DCO Application (Ref: EN010170)

I write on behalf of the parish council which at its meeting held on the 14 September 2026, having considered the above, would make the following representations.

### 1. Introduction

Mears Ashby Parish Council, representing the statutory interests and welfare of the residents of Mears Ashby, formally objects to the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the proposed Green Hill Solar Farm. While the Parish Council fully acknowledges the national strategic objective to expand renewable energy capacity, it has a statutory duty to protect its local environment, heritage, and communities from inappropriate, disproportionate, and unmitigated industrial development. The Council maintains that the Mears Ashby allocation of this scheme represents an unacceptable contravention of both national and local planning policies.

### 2. Grounds for Objection

- **2.1 Unacceptable Proximity of the 9.2-Acre BESS to Sywell Ancient Woodland**  
The applicant proposes to construct a **9.2-acre industrial Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)** facility directly adjacent to **Sywell Wood**, a designated ancient, irreplaceable woodland. Under Paragraph 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats must be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons. The construction and operation of a massive lithium-ion storage hub within the immediate root protection and hydrological zones of Sywell Wood will cause irreversible ecological degradation. The Parish Council strongly objects to the placement of heavy industrial chemical infrastructure against a critical, ancient ecosystem.
- **2.2 Severe Environmental Risks and Thermal Runaway Safety Hazards**  
The location of a 9.2-acre BESS facility next to ancient woodland presents a severe, unmitigable public safety and environmental hazard. Lithium-ion BESS installations carry a well-documented risk of **thermal runaway**, which causes explosive, toxic fires that emit hydrogen fluoride gas. In the event of a BESS fire, the immediate proximity to Sywell Wood risks a catastrophic forest fire that could destroy the irreplaceable ancient canopy. Furthermore, the toxic chemical runoff from firefighting efforts would inevitably poison the local water tables and the Nene Valley catchment area. The rural fire service lacks the specialized, localized infrastructure to contain a toxic event of this scale without devastating the surrounding parish.
- **2.3 Permanent Harm to the Mears Ashby Conservation Area & Heritage Assets**  
Approximately 90% of the Mears Ashby village nucleus falls within a designated Conservation Area, containing 28 statutorily listed buildings. The proposed installation of sprawling, 4.5-metre-high solar arrays in the immediate setting of the village will fundamentally industrialise

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the open, rural landscape that defines this historic settlement. This directly breaches Section 16 of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) the conservation of the historic environment, as the public benefits of this specific site layout do not outweigh the permanent, irreversible harm to these heritage assets.

- **2.4 Conflict with Local Spatial Policy and Loss of Amenity (Areas C and D)**

The project design places intensive infrastructure across Areas C and D, explicitly enveloping Wood Lodge Farm. The proposed layout for Area D will dissect and destroy the integrity of the parish's primary and most heavily utilised public right of way (PROW). This constitutes the loss of a vital community amenity and an established wildlife corridor. This layout directly conflicts with Policy 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, which mandates the protection and enhancement of local green infrastructure and community vitality.

- **2.5 Destruction of Sub-Surface Archaeology (Area E)**

The fields designated as Area E, located immediately east of the village, are known to contain highly significant, unexcavated archaeological remains. The extensive sub-surface trenching required for the high-voltage grid connection cables will cause catastrophic, irreversible disruption to these prehistoric and historic substrata. The developer has failed to demonstrate adequate mitigation or avoidance strategies for Area E, violating national directives on archaeological preservation.

- **2.6 Highways Inadequacy and Severe Road Safety Risks (Wilby Road)**

The developer's Transport Assessment relies heavily on rural, minor routes for HGV construction traffic. Specifically, Wilby Road features acute blind bends, restricted width, and soft, uncurbed verges. This route lacks any pedestrian footpaths or cycle infrastructure. Introducing multi-ton HGV movements onto Wilby Road presents an unacceptable, severe risk to highway safety, active travel users, and structural road integrity—rendering the site logistically unsustainable during the prolonged construction phase.

### 3. Conclusion

Mears Ashby Parish Council submits that the applicant has entirely failed to satisfy the sequential test required by national policy. **The proposed development would result in the permanent loss of an unprecedented 66.6% of "Best and Most Versatile" (BMV) agricultural land across the site, directly undermining national food security in open defiance of NPPF directives to safeguard high-grade soil.** The localised harms inflicted upon Mears Ashby—most notably the profound ecological and safety risks of placing a 9.2-acre BESS facility alongside an ancient woodland—heavily outweigh the scheme's wider national benefits. If approved this would set a precedent that goes against the guidelines of EN1 and EN3 and would be a vast jump to other projects.

Consequently, the Parish Council strongly urges the Planning Inspectorate to recommend the refusal of this DCO, or at a minimum, demand the total exclusion of the BESS facility and Areas C, D, and E from the final order.

Yours faithfully

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