

From: Babette Stanton

Sent: Monday, September 21, 2026 16:52

To: Green Hill Solar

Subject: Fw: EN010170 Green Hill Solar Farm – Strong Objection: Agricultural Land, Water Pollution and Failure to Prioritise Rooftop Solar

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Dawkins,

**EN010170 – GREEN HILL SOLAR FARM
FORMAL OBJECTION AND RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S
INVITATION DATED 15 SEPTEMBER 2026**

I ask the Secretary of State to **REFUSE DEVELOPMENT CONSENT** for Green Hill Solar Farm.

I make this objection as somebody who grew up in Mears Ashby, has known this countryside and its water environment for most of my life, and has personally witnessed changes in its streams and wildlife.

My objection is based particularly upon:

- 1. the scale of agricultural land being committed to energy infrastructure for decades;**
- 2. the potential risks to groundwater, springs, streams, lakes and ultimately the wider River Nene catchment;**
- 3. increasing pressure upon regional water resources and infrastructure;**
- 4. the cumulative effects of continuing development across Northamptonshire; and**
- 5. the failure, in my view, to demonstrate convincingly why enormous areas of existing and newly created commercial roof space and already-developed land cannot be exploited much more extensively before agricultural countryside is used.**

This is not simply an objection to solar power.

It is a challenge to whether **this is the right development, of the right scale, in the right place.**

OUR WATER ENVIRONMENT IS NOT EXPENDABLE

Water is my greatest concern.

Mears Ashby is a village whose character and ecology are closely connected with water.

I grew up there.

For many years **my father and I looked after the village well.**

That well is **spring-fed**. It remains an important focal point of Mears Ashby and continues to support wildlife. I regularly see **frogs, frogspawn and newts** visiting and using it.

Mears Ashby also has its beautiful stream running through the village, together with important lakes and other water features in and around the area.

There are further important water environments around **Grendon and Castle Ashby**, and the **River Nene runs through the wider area.**

These features cannot simply be considered separately as lines and areas on a planning map.

Groundwater, springs, ditches, streams, ponds, lakes and rivers form parts of a wider water environment.

Pollution does not respect planning boundaries.

Water does not stop at the edge of a development site.

That is why the potential cumulative consequences of a project of this magnitude deserve the highest level of scrutiny.

I KNOW WHAT THESE STREAMS USED TO CONTAIN BECAUSE I WAS THERE

When I was a child, the streams coming into Mears Ashby and those in the surrounding countryside were alive with wildlife.

I remember the sticklebacks.

I remember seeing great crested newts.

I remember seeing otters around Mears Ashby and the surrounding countryside.

These are not recollections taken from an environmental report.

I personally saw them.

Sadly, I do not see anything like that same abundance of aquatic wildlife today.

During my lifetime I have watched enormous changes take place across this area: housing development, commercial development, infrastructure growth and changes in the way agricultural land is used.

I am concerned about the cumulative effects of development, runoff, pesticides and other pollutants upon our streams, ponds, lakes, springs, rivers and groundwater.

I am not claiming that I can scientifically attribute the decline I have witnessed to one particular source. That requires proper scientific evidence.

But the decline I have witnessed should make us **more cautious about introducing additional environmental pressures, not less.**

The appropriate response to declining water environments should be restoration and protection.

It should not be to continually ask:

"How much more can they take?"

THE APPLICANT SHOULD HAVE TO PROVE THAT OUR WATER IS PROTECTED

For a development of this magnitude, assurances are not enough.

Management plans are not enough.

Promises of mitigation are not enough unless they are detailed, independently scrutinised, enforceable and capable of dealing with foreseeable failures.

I therefore ask the Secretary of State to require clear answers to the following questions **before any consent is granted:**

What is the baseline chemical and ecological condition of every potentially affected stream, spring, pond, lake and relevant groundwater body?

Have spring-fed features been specifically identified and assessed?

What are the groundwater pathways through this area and how confidently are they understood?

What happens if polluted construction runoff escapes containment?

How will sediment, fuels, oils and other contaminants be prevented from entering the water environment?

How will contaminated firewater from a serious battery-storage incident be contained?

What is the maximum volume of contaminated firewater that the containment system is designed to hold?

What happens if an incident exceeds that design assumption?

Could contaminants migrate through drainage systems, groundwater or watercourses towards downstream ponds, lakes or the River Nene system?

Who will undertake independent monitoring?

How frequently will monitoring occur?

Will all results be publicly available?

Who has the legal responsibility to act immediately if deterioration is detected?

Who pays for remediation if contamination occurs?

These are not peripheral questions.

They go directly to whether this development can coexist safely with the water environment surrounding it.

If these questions cannot be answered convincingly **before consent**, then in my view consent should not be granted.

WATER SUPPLY: DEVELOPMENT HAS RUN AHEAD OF INFRASTRUCTURE

There is also a much wider question about water availability.

Northamptonshire has experienced enormous housing, logistics and commercial growth.

Yet residents reasonably question whether the infrastructure needed to support that growth has kept pace.

From my own experience, **water pressure has noticeably deteriorated**, while leaks remain an ongoing concern.

We have also experienced exceptionally dry conditions.

Major strategic reservoirs proposed for the Anglian region remain years away from supplying water.

So I ask a very straightforward question:

Why are we continually approving more housing, more warehouses, more commercial development and more major infrastructure while the strategic water infrastructure needed to support that growth remains years behind?

Where is the infrastructure for capturing abundant winter water and storing it for dry summers?

Where is the resilience?

And where exactly will the water required by Green Hill come from?

The Secretary of State should require the Applicant to state clearly:

the maximum daily and annual water requirement during construction;

the annual operational water requirement;

the precise proposed sources of that water;

the effect during drought conditions;

the number of tanker movements required if water is transported by road; and

the cumulative effect when considered alongside planned housing, logistics and commercial growth.

AGRICULTURAL LAND SHOULD NOT BE TREATED AS EMPTY SPACE

My second fundamental objection is the extraordinary use of agricultural countryside.

A field is not "unused land".

It produces food.

It forms part of our landscape.

It absorbs rainfall.

It supports soils and ecosystems.

It forms part of the rural character of our communities.

We need energy security.

But Britain also needs **food security and water security.**

It makes no sense to pursue one form of security while unnecessarily damaging another.

Calling a development "temporary" does not alter the reality that land could be committed to energy infrastructure for decades.

That is not temporary in any meaningful human sense.

THE M1 CORRIDOR EXPOSES THE CONTRADICTION

Drive along the M1 and the contradiction becomes obvious.

Around **Junctions 14, 15, 16 and 17**, enormous logistics and commercial buildings have been and continue to be constructed.

Amazon is one highly visible example, but this is much bigger than one company.

There are vast warehouse and distribution roofs throughout the corridor.

Why are we covering fields before covering roofs?

Why should a huge new warehouse be allowed to create acres of artificial roof without maximising solar generation wherever structurally and technically practicable?

A warehouse roof can generate electricity **while the warehouse continues operating underneath it.**

A solar canopy can generate electricity **while the car park underneath continues functioning.**

Previously developed land can generate electricity **without unnecessarily removing another agricultural field from production.**

This is surely basic common sense.

SHOW US THE ALTERNATIVES ASSESSMENT

I therefore ask the Secretary of State to require a clear answer to a fundamental question:

How much electricity could realistically be generated if suitable warehouse, logistics and commercial roof space around Junctions 14, 15, 16 and 17 of the M1 were comprehensively utilised for solar?

Not theoretically.

Not as a vague policy aspiration.

Quantify it.

How many hectares of suitable commercial roof area exist?

How much already carries solar?

How much technically suitable area remains?

What generating capacity could that provide?

Then undertake the same exercise for:

major commercial car parks suitable for solar canopies;

industrial estates;

brownfield and previously developed land;

appropriate motorway-associated land; and

other existing major infrastructure corridors.

Only then can there be a meaningful comparison with the agricultural land proposed for Green Hill.

If that work has not been undertaken, then I question how anybody can confidently conclude that development on Green Hill's enormous scale is necessary in this location.

RENEWABLE-ENERGY TARGETS DO NOT MAKE LOCATION IRRELEVANT

Whatever national renewable-energy targets Government chooses to pursue, those targets cannot logically mean that **location no longer matters**.

Even accepting the Government's case that substantially more solar generation is required, there is still an obligation to make sensible decisions about where that infrastructure goes.

The question is therefore not:

"Do we need solar?"

The question is:

"Why here, on this scale, and why agricultural countryside before less damaging opportunities have been properly exploited?"

That question deserves a substantive answer.

WHAT ARE WE LEAVING THE NEXT GENERATION?

For me, this is ultimately about something much more important than a collection of planning documents.

It is about the place where I grew up.

I remember looking into the streams coming into Mears Ashby and seeing sticklebacks.

I remember the great crested newts.

I remember the otters.

I remember looking after the spring-fed village well with my father for many years.

That well remains a focal point of Mears Ashby today.

It still attracts frogs, frogspawn and newts.

The beautiful stream running through Mears Ashby remains part of the identity of the village.

The lakes and water environments around Mears Ashby, Grendon and Castle Ashby matter.

The River Nene matters.

Our groundwater matters.

Our agricultural land matters.

These things should not be treated as obstacles standing in the way of development.

They are part of what development policy should be protecting.

I want children growing up in Mears Ashby today to experience what I experienced.

I want them to look into their streams and see them alive.

I want them to see frogs and newts.

I want our waterways to support fish and otters.

I want the spring-fed well that my father and I cared for to remain a living focal point of Mears Ashby long after my generation has gone.

And I want future generations to inherit productive countryside rather than being told that previous generations allowed it to be industrialised because putting solar panels on existing buildings was considered too difficult.

MY REQUEST TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

I therefore respectfully but very strongly ask the Secretary of State to **REFUSE DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR GREEN HILL SOLAR FARM.**

At the very least, no consent should be granted until the Secretary of State is independently satisfied that:

- 1. Groundwater, springs, streams, ponds, lakes and downstream watercourses are comprehensively protected.**
- 2. Proper baseline water-quality and ecological monitoring has been secured.**
- 3. Monitoring will be independent, long-term and publicly available.**

4. Pollution and contaminated firewater can be contained even during a serious incident.

5. Green Hill's water requirements will not place unacceptable additional pressure upon regional supplies.

6. The loss and long-term use of agricultural land has been fully justified.

7. The realistic generating potential of commercial rooftops, car parks, brownfield land and already-developed infrastructure corridors has been properly quantified and compared with Green Hill.

If those matters cannot be demonstrated convincingly, the appropriate decision is refusal.

We should not continually sacrifice countryside because it is easier to cover a field than solve the harder problem of making proper use of the enormous artificial surfaces we have already created.

Put solar on the warehouses.

Put it on suitable industrial and commercial roofs.

Put it above suitable large car parks.

Use appropriate brownfield land.

Use suitable already-developed infrastructure corridors.

Make major new commercial developments maximise rooftop solar wherever practicable.

And above all:

Protect our agricultural land. Protect our groundwater. Protect our springs. Protect our streams. Protect our lakes. Protect the River Nene and the wildlife that depends upon this water environment.

We have inherited these places from previous generations.

We have a responsibility to hand them to the next generation in better condition, not worse.

I ask the Secretary of State to refuse the application.

Yours faithfully,

Babette Stanton

Sywell, Northamptonshire