



Clerk:

Tel:

Email: clerk@bozeatparishcouncil.gov.uk

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

PINS ref: EN010170

Bozeat Parish Council ()
Response to DENZ Questions and Responses
Deadline: 29th April 2026

Introduction

This document contains the reaction of Bozeat Parish Council to the questions raised by DENZ and to the content of the responses received.

As with our previous representations I am representing both the Parish Council and CPRE Northamptonshire. The Parish Council supports the response from CPRE but will restrict our response to issues that specifically relate to Bozeat and not to the whole scheme.

The Questions

The questions asked:

1. the applicant to update their outline Operational Environment Management Plan to ensure protection of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area and the Upper Nene Valley Ramsar Site from operational disturbance,
2. Natural England and the Environment Agency to confirm that the Applicant's proposed mitigation in the outline Battery Storage Safety Management Plan [REP5-075] fully addresses their concerns regarding the waterborne pollution impact pathway to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area and the Upper Nene Valley Ramsar Site,
3. the applicant to justify their claim that the land beneath the BESS could be restored to its current condition and
4. the applicant and NGET to provide an update on whether agreement had been reached over the protective provisions for the grid assets at Grendon.

Protection of the SPA and Ramsar sites

These sites are not only important to wildlife, but are important recreational assets for the residents of Bozeat. We remain convinced that the proposal does not contain adequate plans to ensure that

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these internationally important wildlife sites are protected in the event of a battery fire. We felt that the evidence put before the examination was wholly inadequate and was generally dismissive about the likelihood of a fire and its potential consequences. We certainly did not feel that it addressed the method and consequences of managing a prolonged battery fire.

One such consequence would be that it is likely that it would be necessary to evacuate occupants of properties in Grendon for the duration of the fire (potentially days). The Parish Council would wish to see evacuation plans because, as one of the nearby villages, we need to consider whether it is necessary to update our Emergency Plan in order to support such an evacuation.

However, the most shocking issue that we found in the responses was that the most relevant and important interested parties had not been involved in agreeing the plans. We are therefore not at all reassured that these sites can be protected.

Restoration of Land

The Parish Council doubts that any restoration of land will take place at the end of the scheme's life because there is no provision to secure funding for decommissioning within the DCO. We fully expect that the owner of the scheme at the end of its life will declare that there are insufficient funds to restore the site and then abandon it.

Setting that aside to address the specific question, while the methodology put forward by the applicant could restore the site, we do not find it credible to suggest that it could be restored to the agricultural quality that it currently has especially after so many years of the underlying soils being covered in concrete and heavy equipment and the stored topsoil being largely inert having been piled in heaps.

Protective provision

While we cannot comment upon the appropriate level of insurance for the scheme, the responses are extremely concerning. The Grendon substation is highlighted as critical infrastructure and is in fact the end of the grid upgrade that starts in Lincolnshire. The response raises concerns that the proposed scheme could result in delays to the grid upgrade and that there is an ongoing risk to the substation once the BESS is operational.

The size of cover being requested from NGET indicates that harm caused could be substantial which raises a number of questions about what could be the consequences of an incident. In particular, is there a potential for loss of power for those supplied through the substation? If so, what is the likely duration until power can be restored? Battery fires last for days, so would work not even start until the fire has burnt out? Those supplied through Grendon would suffer enormous consequential losses if their power was lost for any length of time, who would be responsible for compensating residents and businesses for their losses? How many homes and businesses would lose power?

In our view the substation at Grendon is too vital to accept even a small risk.

Conclusion

Bozeat Parish Council has already stated that it strongly objects to this uniquely harmful scheme and recommended that it is not approved. The issues raised in the responses to the DENZ questions make us even more convinced that the scheme carries a high risk of both harm to the wildlife sites and to the disruption of the power supply to our village and many other communities.

The planning system is awash with proposals for solar farms and so we consider that there can be no justification to allow such a high risk and harmful scheme. We therefore urge you not to approve it.