

Representation to ExA at Deadline 1 – Request for a further Issue Specific Hearing (ISH2)

Sporle with Palgrave Parish Council represented by Michael Bennett RIN [REDACTED]

Within the Examination time table there is a space provided for an additional Issue Specific Hearing (ISH2) during week commencing 7th September 2026. Sporle with Palgrave Parish Council (PC) would request that this takes place to allow further oral representations from interested parties, questions posed to and responses received from the Applicant. The PC notes that during ISH1 the following issues were aired and discussed:

- Site selection and alternatives
- Grid connection
- Cumulative effects
- Aviation
- Landscape and visual
- Cultural heritage
- Flood risk and water resources

However, there was not the opportunity to deal with further issue specific matters relating to:

- Transport and access
- Ecology and Biodiversity
- Community benefits

The PC would request a further opportunity to raise cumulative impact issues particularly in relation to the High Grove scheme.

The reason that the PC wishes these issues to be aired is as follows:

1. *Transport and Access*

Representations have been made which have included concerns relating to construction traffic and access to the site particularly in relation to the cumulative impacts of other solar developments. However, this is one of the most concerning issues in relation to the Scheme because of its effect on communities and local people over a considerable period. This needs more time and opportunity for interested parties to examine, comment and question the Applicants plans in the light of the ExA's questions, answers received and local authority LIR's.

2. *Ecology and Biodiversity*

Significant representations have been made in the Open Hearing OH1 regarding ground nesting birds and other issues relating to ecology and biodiversity, particularly the impact of deer numbers and the lack of deer management plans which were brought up in ISH1. It is noted that the ExQ1 has asked for comments from Natural England and the Applicant in relation to these as well as other ecology and biodiversity matters.

However, this is an issue of considerable significance in relation to the Applicant's claims of obtaining in excess of 10% BNG in the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report (APP – 0184). These claims need further time and opportunity for interested parties to fully examine and respond to Natural England's and the Applicant's comments.

In the PC's RR (RR-054), as well as their statutory consultation response, comment was made on the need for community liaison which was acknowledged by the Applicant. The PC also commented on the need for tight management of the scheme over its 60-year operating life. They were particularly concerned with biodiversity loss due to poor operational management potentially caused by the likely changes of owner/operator

during the operational phase of the scheme. It was noted in the oOEMP that a Community Liaison Manager was mentioned and concern was expressed whether the Scheme Operator would continue through the operational phase to have someone dedicated to that role. This was only mentioned in Table 3-10 Human Health within the oOEMP.

Notwithstanding the significant issues relating to ecology and biodiversity such as those mentioned above, to maintain the claimed BNG, it is important that the issue of the operational management of the scheme is also examined in more detail and again for time and opportunity to fully respond to what is being proposed.

3. *Community Benefits*

There are still no specific proposals as regards to what Community Benefits the Applicant is proposing. This was commented on in RR-054. It is noted that High Grove has extended the number of communities they are willing to help to those who are impacted by the resulting traffic during construction and decommissioning, yet not adjacent to their scheme. This includes those who would also be affected by the Drovers. The PC is asking along with other PC's for detail discussions to take place with the Applicant on what could be expected. If these discussions are not forthcoming the PC is asking that time be set aside to discuss this issue too in ISH2.

4. *Cumulative Impacts*

The PC expressed their concerns both in the PM and ISH1 agenda 3.3 regarding the need for the ExA to be cognisant in his examination of the considerable cumulative impacts of the Drovers and High Grove and their interrelated nature; for example, in terms of traffic, deer management and, importantly, landscape and visual. It is noted that these have been acknowledged by the ExA and requests made for landscape and visual issues to be looked at in more detail by the Applicant.

Many of the PC's concerns stem from the fact that the Drovers Examination is taking place in the light of High Grove not submitting their DCO application until at least October 2026. The PC is unhappy with the level of collaboration and contact between the Applicant and High Grove that we believe has taken place to date, particularly when both schemes butt right up to each other across the A1065 and in adjacent fields on the south side of the Scheme.

Sporle with Palgrave PC, along with other PC's impacted by the Drovers, will be taking steps to engage with High Grove and the Applicant in the coming weeks to see if their concerns can be resolved in terms of the design of both Schemes and the mitigation possible. However, the PC would request that there is an opportunity for this process to be reviewed and further representations made possible by interested parties at ISH2. At this stage there will be approximately 6 weeks before the conclusion of the Examination and hopefully the opportunity for more detailed engagement with High Grove's proposals. (It is noted that when High Grove were proposing to make their DCO application in April 2026 they were looking to have meetings with individual PC's affected in the month preceding the submission to discuss their application. The PC hopes this will still be the case before they possibly submit their DCO application in October.)