

Submission to Examining Authority's written questions ExQ

Applicant The Drove Solar Farm Ltd

Planning Inspectorate Ref EN0110013

Interested party : [REDACTED], Castle Acre Parish Council(CAPC) member and resident.

Unique Ref number of CAPC: [REDACTED]

Date of submission 24.7.2026

Dear Examining Authority,

I wish to suggest the following additional questions to the Applicant, in line with those listed in ExQ2. I am unable to attend the September week of issue specific hearings but wish to continue receiving all the updates by email , hopefully also suggested clarifications .

Q1.0.2 General and cross topic- Human Health

Looking at the Applicant's document Chapter 15 Human Health, I would request more detail on their statements.

The document emphasises how the scheme would provide training and jobs to help improve health and wellbeing. I would request the Applicant provides actual numbers on how many additional local people will actually gain employment or apprenticeship from this scheme, and for what duration, so that positive impact on the local population can be gauged. Mental health is listed as part of health, but no further review or mitigation is offered in this document. I would ask the applicant to provide relevant research information on the effects on mental health of the loss of green spaces, more traffic, more noise over years of construction and operation .

In my opinion no compelling benefits for mental health are evident from the loss of the current landscape, so I wish to question how the Applicant can conclude in 15.9.1. that no significant adverse effects are identified after mitigation (by some training and employment spots and PRoWs through an industrialised setting).

The Applicant mainly offers improving health by better provision of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) , suggesting that this single activity would help raise local health indicators. But I would request that the Applicant provides written evidence of whether and how much PRoWs sited through or next to large fenced-in newly established solar farms have been of benefit elsewhere, compared to PRoW through intact countryside. Figures on what proportion of people actually engage in rambling to improve health are also required

Q2 Aviation

Being aware that the risk from solar farm glare etc to military aviation has not yet been resolved and may need consecutive adjustments, I would ask the Applicant to clarify how certain they can be to mitigate and avoid potential future air accidents or near misses as a consequence of siting a large solar farm in an area used by military aircraft.

Q6 Cultural heritage and archaeology

I note that the Applicant states in 8.5.5

"Direct impacts upon below ground archaeological remains caused by groundwork during the construction phase resulting in their partial/total loss • Direct impacts upon heritage assets beyond the Scheme boundary remains caused by traffic and piling vibration during the construction and decommissioning phases

• Beneficial impacts upon below ground archaeology by removing fields from agricultural use during the operational phase of the Scheme; and • Indirect impacts on the significance of heritage assets brought about by changes to their setting and the way in which they draw significance from that setting during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Scheme.

I wish to question the validity of these stated benefits listed, given that removal of fields from agricultural use in no way benefits the archaeology below these fields, as they are then filled up with steel and cement from the proposed construction projects.

In paragraphs 8.6.44 and 8.6.45 the Applicant states :

"The setting of Castle Acre is predominantly agricultural in character, with large arable fields spreading into the distant landscape beyond the village, and smaller areas of pasture fields immediately adjacent. Castle Acre is prominent in this landscape and has a clear skyline, particularly of the castle, priory and St James church, visible from this wide reaching rural landscape beyond the village limits.

The Site is situated to the south-west of the Conservation Area and forms part of the larger arable fields in the distant higher ground forming part of the Conservation Area's wider setting. There are some views between the Conservation Area, particularly from the prominent structures of the village's skyline including the priory, castle and St James church, and the north-western most fields of the Site. However, these views tend to be partial, filtered or oblique."

I question the validity of the second paragraph, given the many pages describing the very significant historic and archaeological importance of all the Castle Acre, South Acre, West Acre and Newton features, and the Castle Acre Conservation Area. The suggestion is made that the Applicant's proposal will have little if any effect on the multiple features of this area and its surroundings, a reason of historic significance and much valued by residents and visitors. The final sentence in 8.6.93 says "should the Scheme not proceed and the Site remain under arable farming there would be a continued deterioration of archaeological remains brought about by truncation from ploughing". I wish to question the applicant whether this cannot be considered misleading, as if putting in a solar farm for 60 years were the better option for any archaeological preservation or future research, currently in open countryside.

Q8 Flood risk, hydrology and water resources

I have not seen any documents regarding the issues of low water levels and low water pressures that have become very common in Castle Acre and probably other areas surrounding the proposed site. The water requirements of the proposed solar farm will be considerable and water levels are likely reduced since previous studies; we even have a hosepipe ban in place currently. I would like to get written assurance from the Applicant that their water will be sourced from outside Norfolk and that it will not affect other water levels elsewhere.

The documents that describe mitigation of visual impact also mention a lot about hedges and trees. I would ask the Applicant to confirm that irrigation measures will be used where required to maintain healthy vegetation and that regular surveys and action would be taken to have a healthy hedge and tree population for the full duration of the project.

Q9 Grid connection

In the summary p3 of the document Statement of need, the Applicant states:

“Subject to NESO’s ongoing Connections Reform process, the Scheme has a connection agreement for up to 500MW of export capacity to the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS) from October 2033. The proposed Point of Connection to the existing and available overhead line which passes through the Site is appropriate for the Scheme. The Scheme will not cause grid constraints or experience excessive curtailment in this area of the NETS.”

I wish to request clarification of this statement, as in fact the scheme has not been given a Gate 2 connection offer -and the National Grid is already over- supplied especially in the constraints of Norfolk, with no planned expansion to accommodate schemes such as this.

Q15 Transport and access

I would ask the Applicant for evidence that the deer fencing is actually appropriate and effective in this area, given increasing numbers of deer and their unpredictable behaviour with roads, traffic and obstructions. I would envisage that there is a real risk of trapped deer on the road from fencing , even with some gaps, leading to more accidents and vehicle damage

[REDACTED]