

EXAMINING AUTHORITY FOR THE DROVES SOLAR FARM (EN0110013)

SUBMISSION FOR DEADLINE 4 (16 September 2026)

The Droves Solar Farm.

Written summary of the oral submission made by [REDACTED], at the open hearing on Wednesday 9 September 2026.

Castle Acre Parish Council Reference [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *Castle Acre Parish Council. I work as a heritage consultant and have a particular interest in landscape history.*

On behalf of the Parish Council, I submitted my response to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology before the June deadline and appreciate this opportunity to add to it.

The undoubted beauty of its landscape and the richness of its historic and natural environment sets Castle Acre apart from many other Norfolk villages whilst its position on the northern slope of the Nar Valley means that it has far-reaching views over the river and farmland. This was acknowledged and stated in Chapter 8, 6.44; 6.48 and 6.49.

What is at risk if The Droves Solar Farm goes ahead, is our rural settlement pattern dating back at least to the Saxons. In fact, even the name 'Acre' comes from the Old English for a plot of arable land.

Our narrow, rural road network is based on Roman and medieval trackways and holloways, bounded by banks and ditches; there are some medieval field boundaries and livestock droeways and the Agricultural Revolution is evidenced in our rectangular fields and marl pits.

This proposed solar farm lies within the setting of multiple designated heritage assets, including Castle Acre's Priory; the Castle and the Bailey Gate.

All three are scheduled ancient monuments and are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires authorities to conserve their settings.

The two Grade 1 listed churches of St James, Castle Acre and St George, South Acre are also in settings which are a major part of their significance. The Droves Solar Installation will deprive them all of their context within this wider historic environment.

Not only the solar panels themselves but the security fences; CCTV cameras; inverters; access tracks, substations and additional pylons will impose a large-scale industrial development on the rural setting of the Nar Valley.

In addition, the proposed Droves Solar Farm lies within an area of high archaeological potential with documented features from the Roman, Saxon and medieval periods. A development of this magnitude risks destroying unrecorded archaeological remains, denying future generations the opportunity to add to knowledge of our history.

Castle Acre Parish Council, on behalf of its residents, considers that The Drovers will cause significant and irreversible harm to the cultural landscape, the beauty and tranquillity of one of Norfolk's most important - and nationally important - heritage clusters. How can this be an appropriate location ?

Additional Submission:

As well as the far-reaching views from the east (Sporle) and from the south (Swaffham) the views outwards from Castle Acre southwards across the Nar Valley will be impacted by the proposed Drovers Solar Farm.

The views south-east and south-west from Castle Acre Castle.



The views southwards from Castle Acre Priory:





Castle Acre Parish Council is concerned at the adverse impact on agriculture and on future food security.

Agriculture currently accounts for 9.3% of Norfolk's total economy (significantly higher than the 4% UK national average).

It employs over 39,400 people across the county, accounting for more than 10% of the local workforce and including agricultural contractors; engineers and inspectors; agronomists and crop technicians; seed suppliers and hauliers.

If less land is farmed because it is given over to solar arrays, these jobs will be at risk as there will be reduced demand for them. The skills and experience required for all agricultural work will be lost within a generation.

Castle Acre Parish Council is also concerned at the adverse impact on tourism as it is the landscape, wildlife and heritage which attracts visitors.

Data released by [Visit West Norfolk](#) and local economic assessments in 2025 outlines the broader impact of the visitor economy on the region.

The tourism economy in West Norfolk is worth approximately £565 million per year, with 10.5 million total visits annually.

Tourism is one of the area's largest economic drivers, supporting over 8,100 direct jobs (and roughly 11,000 total tourism-related roles), accounting for nearly a fifth (15.6% to 20%) of all local employment.

The 'public benefit' quoted by the developers of The Drovers does not take into account that agriculture and tourism together sustain local businesses, support employment and contribute significantly to the local and regional economy.



Castle Acre Parish Council
15 September 2026