PROJECT REF: EN0110013

THE DROVES SOLAR FARM.

Dear [redacted],

I am writing to request that the Examining Authority considers my representation regarding The Droves Solar Farm application.

I am aware that I have not registered as an official 'Interested Party'. Nevertheless, I hope the Examining Authority will consider these reflections as the decisions that he will be making could fundamentally alter our landscape forever.

To keep this submission concise and avoid repetition, I wish to state at the outset that I fully support and reiterate the detailed objections raised by Castle Acre Parish Council, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council, Breckland Council, Norfolk County Council, our local MPs James Wild and George Freeman, and CPRE Norfolk. Rather than retracing the arguments that they have expertly laid out regarding the Droves project and the 'wall' of solar projects threatening over 6,700 acres of our local countryside. I would like to offer a simple musing on what we stand to lose.

I am a resident of Castle Acre and object to the Droves Farm application for a siting of Solar PV panels, a substation, a BESS also National Grid substation and grid connection covering approx. 2,800 acres of BMV Grade 3 or above agricultural land in an area in very close proximity to the historic village of Castle Acre with its Grade 1 Castle which dates back to shortly after the Norman Conquest (1070s) and also the Grade 1 Priory, Bailey Gate and Church. This is a beautiful and historic landscape that is the almost unchanged setting for this largely undisturbed and rare Norman planned settlement.

If you have read this far then please indulge me for a minute more....

We have recently seen much national press interest surrounding the blockbusting exhibition of the Bayeux Tapestry, which has been loaned from France at extraordinary diplomatic and financial expense. Clearly this period of history is most important to UK citizens as well as to Europeans. The exhibition opened on Thursday the 10th of September on the day that the Examining Authority for the proposed Droves Solar Farm held an accompanied site inspection visit. People are paying premium ticket prices in London (£36 with the first release of 100,000 tickets sold out on the first day) just to catch a short first hand viewing of our shared 11th-century history stitched onto fabric almost 1000 years ago in England.

William de Warenne fought alongside William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings and is thus likely depicted within those threads. Yet, his real-life actions on the battlefield secured his legacy far better than any illustration—as William the Conquerer granted him the land and the wealth that allowed WdeW to build the lasting monuments we still see at Castle Acre today.

Here in West Norfolk, these contemporaneous 'free offerings' of that exact same Norman era—the magnificent ruins of Castle Acre Castle and the Cluniac Priory—stand proudly in the rural landscape. They are freely enjoyed every day by visitors from near and far. Many of these visitors arrive precisely as their medieval ancestors did by journeying through the

landscape via the ancient Peddars Way an historic pilgrims' route to find a place of unique peace and timelessness. Castle Acre is very popular with ramblers etc and is often the starting point for walks all around the wider area. This morning on my daily jaunt I was in conversation with a visitor from nearby Swaffham who had come to walk with her dog in the environs of the village and to "soak up some peace" in this "special and atmospheric" place.

If Island Green Power's application to blanket 2,800 acres of this historic landscape with industrial solar arrays is approved the profound historical connection will be damaged..if not severed.

If the needlewomen of 1066 were to consider depicting the Nar Valley at this point in time the potential juxtapositions would be almost surreal. Along with the medieval battlements and historic paths and droves they would have to embroider vast, glinting fields of photovoltaic glass, all the while attempting to stitch the supersonic vapour trails of RAF Marham's F-35 Lightning fighter jets roaring overhead.

King Harold famously met his end via an arrow to the eye and tomorrows pilgrims and journeymen when stepping off the historic trail or striding along the droves may be thoroughly blinded by the industrial glare of 500 megawatts of solar infrastructure cutting through our virtually unchanged rural landscape.

Surely we must not treat our living heritage and our productive agricultural land as secondary to commercial energy convenience or dogma.

Renewable energy is vital for our future, but it must not be permitted to overwrite irreplaceable local history or replace productive soil especially when there are other alternative and less valuable locations.

I urge the Examining Authority to protect this unique landscape, ensuring that your final recommendation is as protective of our irreplaceable past as the Tapestry itself.

Yours sincerely,

Su Turner

I have appended some information about Castle Acre and its surrounding landscape which was sourced online. I hope that it might be read and be useful.However I thank you for reading this far.....

THE DROVES

The majority of the surrounding drove roads do not originate from the Norman era—they are much older.

While the Normans built the castle, the priory, and the town grid, the famous, unpaved "drove roads" and tracks that run *around* and *through* Castle Acre have a history that stretches back millennia before William the Conqueror arrived.

The chronological timeline of Castle Acre's surrounding drove roads reveals an layered history:

1. Pre-Norman Roots: Prehistoric and Roman Origins

The most important trackway passing right through Castle Acre is the Peddars Way National Trail.

- **Roman Engineering: While it is famously categorized as an "arrow-straight" Roman military road built in the 1st century AD, archaeologists believe it was actually**

constructed on top of an even older, Neolithic or Bronze Age trackway.

- **Ancient Corridors: For thousands of years, these unpaved tracks were used as safe, well-drained ridgeways across Norfolk for ancient peoples to move their livestock away from the muddy, densely forested valleys.**

2. The Norman Era: Modification and Control

The Normans did not create these surrounding drove roads, but they radically adapted them to seize economic and military control.

- **When the de Warenne family built the castle and the fortified town grid, they realized that travelers and livestock drovers were bypassing their land.**
- **To exploit this, the Normans intentionally rerouted the ancient Peddars Way. Instead of letting it bypass the area, they forced the track directly through the heavily fortified town walls and right past the castle gatehouse.**
- **This allowed the Norman lords to tax the merchants and drovers, while the monks at**

Castle Acre Priorymanaged the massive sheep-farming and wool trade that relied on these routes.

3. The 18th & 19th Century: The "Golden Age" of Droving

If you walk the green lanes around Castle Acre today and notice how incredibly wide they are, you are seeing a feature formalized long *after* the Normans.

- **Between the 1600s and 1800s, droving became a massive, highly organized national industry.**
- **Millions of cattle and sheep were walked hundreds of miles from Scotland, Wales, and Western England down into the rich grazing pastures of Norfolk to fatten them up for the London markets.**
- **When the British government passed the Parliamentary Enclosure Acts in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, they legally preserved these ancient tracks. They deliberately left them very wide so the animals would have a "long acre" of grass to graze on as they walked**

CASTLE ACRE AND THE SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE

Both Castle Acre Castle and Castle Acre Priory are of Norman origin. They were founded in the late 11th century by William de Warenne (the 1st Earl of Surrey), a close associate of William the Conqueror, and his family.

The site is widely celebrated because it represents a rare and complete survival of a Norman planned settlement. Rather than just surviving as isolated ruins, the entire layout of the modern village still mirrors the organized military, religious, and civic landscape established by the Normans nearly a thousand years ago.

The Norman footprint at Castle Acre extends far beyond the castle and priory walls:

- **The Town Layout & Grid: The village itself is a "planned town" built by the Normans to service the castle. It sits directly between the castle to the east and the priory to the west. The street layout still adheres to the medieval grid pattern established by the de Warennes.**

- **Town Earthworks and Walled Defences: The village was entirely fortified. Massive Norman earthwork banks and deep ditches still encircle the town.**
- **The Bailey Gate: This stunning stone gatehouse was built around 1200 to defend the town's northern entrance. The main road into the village still drives straight through its narrow archway.**
- **The Parish Church: The Church of St James the Great was originally established during the Norman period to serve the local community.**
- **Road and River Infrastructure: The Normans explicitly planned the settlement at the crossroads where the River Nar intersected the Peddars Way (an older Roman road). They even rerouted the Peddars Way so that all travelers and trade had to pass directly through their fortified town and past the priory.**
- **Field Patterns & Land Use: While centuries of subsequent farming (including the 18th-century parliamentary enclosures) altered the open-field strip systems, the broader landscape boundaries still echo Norman design. The de Warennes**

established a massive deer park nearby for hunting, and the water meadows along the River Nar still follow the boundary footprints dictated by the priory's historic agricultural land.

This makes Castle Acre and its locality exceptionally rare in the UK. For whilst England has plenty of Norman castles and numerous ruined abbeys, it is incredibly unusual to find a castle, an associated monastery, a fortified town, and a parish church all surviving together in their original, unmodified spatial relationship.

In most British towns and cities, centuries of industrialization, modern expansion, and rebuilding have completely erased or buried the original medieval town planning. Because Castle Acre shifted from a major center of medieval power into a quiet, rural farming village after the 14th century, its Norman blueprint was effectively frozen in time. Historic England considers its massive defensive earthworks to be "among the finest surviving in England."

READING THE HISTORY IN THE LANDSCAPE AND HOW IT SHAPED THE DEVELOPMENT OF CASTLE ACRE INTO A REGIONAL POWER CENTRE AND RELIGIOUS HUB.

The landscape around Castle Acre is an extraordinary, open-air history book. In fact, you cannot truly understand the architecture of the castle or the priory without looking at the terrain they sit on.

The architecture didn't just happen to be built here; the landscape dictated exactly where the Normans built, how they made their wealth, and how they controlled the population.

The landscape around Castle Acre reveals several historical layers that give vital context to its ancient architecture:

1. The River Valley Explains the Location of the Priory

If you stand at Castle Acre Priory, you notice it sits low down, right on the edge of the River Nar valley floor.

- **The Landscape Context: Monastic orders, particularly the Cluniacs who built this priory, required water for daily life, brewing, milling, and sanitation. The surrounding landscape consists of low-lying, damp water meadows.**
- **Reading the History: Look closely at the ground around the priory today. You can still see the earthwork impressions of medieval fishponds and channels carved into the landscape. The monks used the natural marshiness of the river basin to create a highly sophisticated, self-sustaining food and plumbing network.**

2. The High Chalk Ridges Explain the Castle's Might

In contrast to the low-lying priory, Castle Acre Castle dominates the highest ground to the east.

- **The Landscape Context: The castle is built on a natural spur of Upper Chalk. The Normans chose this high point because it overlooked the river crossing, giving them total strategic military vision over miles of open country.**

- **Reading the History: The staggering depth of the castle's dry moats and ditches is a direct result of this geology. The Normans didn't just dig dirt; they hacked deep into the solid white chalk landscape. The bright white walls of the freshly excavated chalk ditches would have been visible for miles, acting as a massive psychological display of Norman power over the Anglo-Saxon locals.**

3. The Crossroads Explain the Wealth Behind the Architecture

The sheer scale and luxury of the priory ruins—with its intricately carved West Front—and the massive stone walls of the castle tell you one thing: this settlement was incredibly wealthy. The landscape explains where that wealth came from.

- **The Landscape Context: Castle Acre sits precisely where the Peddars Way (the high, dry, ancient ridge road) drops down to cross the River Nar (a navigable water highway leading to the sea at King's Lynn).**
- **Reading the History: By looking at how the green drove roads converge on the modern village, you can read how the Normans funneled the region's trade. They**

used the high-ground tracks to march vast numbers of sheep into the valley. The wealth of Castle Acre was built on wool. The surrounding landscape was essentially a massive medieval factory floor for sheep farming, which generated the massive profits needed to build such grand stone architecture.

4. The "Frozen" Village Layout Reflects Medieval Social Class

You can read the strict medieval social hierarchy just by looking at a map of the modern village layout.

- **The West (The Church): The quiet, spiritual valley floor belonged to God and the monks.**
- **The Center (The Market): The flat ground in the middle became the bustling civilian town, packed inside defensive earth walls.**
- **The East (The Lord): The highest, most imposing ground belonged to the Norman Lord in his castle.**

Because Castle Acre never industrialised, this layout was never built over. The modern

roads and property boundaries still perfectly preserve this 11th-century socio-military zoning.