Deadline 5 Submission

The Droves Solar Farm Development Consent Order Application
Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN0110013
Deadline 5 – Friday 16 October 2026

From

[redacted]
Interested Party Reference: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

1. Introduction and Overall Position

I am a local resident of Castle Acre, directly affected by this massive development, and a registered Interested Party. I submit this representation for Deadline 5.

I object in the strongest possible terms to the Droves Solar Farm application and urge the Examining Authority to recommend that development consent is refused.

This proposal is an unnecessary, inefficient and destructive industrialisation of our countryside. It fails the basic tests of planning efficiency, community safety and environmental protection under National Policy Statements EN-1 and EN-3. It must be rejected.

2. The 2,800-Acre Land Grab, BMV Farmland and Spatial Inefficiency

The sheer scale of this project is a reckless land grab. It seeks to lock up approximately 2,800 acres of productive Norfolk farmland and open countryside for up to 60 years.

Crucially, the developer's own surveys confirm what local residents have always known: more than 50% of this site is Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Taking thousands of acres of higher-quality, top-tier food-producing land out of production during a national food security crisis is indefensible. This directly undermines the core tenets of NPS EN-3, which requires solar developments to preferentially seek lower-quality land and avoid disruption to prime food production.

This cannot be assessed in isolation. When viewed cumulatively with the neighbouring High Grove Solar proposal, our local communities face a combined 6,700-acre devastation of Norfolk farmland. This is an unprecedented and irreversible threat to regional food security and the rural economy.

Modern, land-efficient alternatives such as small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs) – of the type now being actively advanced in the UK, including projects associated with Anglesey – prove that reliable, continuous, low-carbon power can be secured on a fraction of a percent of the land area required by this bloated solar installation. Sacrificing thousands of acres of productive farmland when far superior, compact technologies exist is a profound failure of proper planning.

3. Pressing Legal Flaws and Unresolved Examination Issues

The documentation submitted by the Applicant reveals an application that is poorly prepared and riddled with unresolved problems and potential loopholes:

Decommissioning Loophole (ExQ3 Q7.1.1)

I strongly support the Examining Authority's scrutiny of the Applicant's use of vague language such as "applicable period" instead of a fixed, non-negotiable end date in the draft DCO requirements. This drafting creates a clear risk of a permanent land grab by stealth, allowing the developer to delay or bypass the return of this ground to full agricultural use. The ExA must protect our land and reject any wording that fails to impose a rigid, non-extendable operational lifespan with clear decommissioning obligations.

Radar Mitigation and Visual Intrusiveness

It is unacceptable that, at this late stage of the examination, safety issues regarding RAF Marham's Precision Approach Radar remain unresolved. Worse still, the developer's proposed solution involves erecting industrial earth banks and/or walls/fencing up to 4.5 metres high to block radar interference. Adding 4.5-metre-tall engineered structures across our open horizons proves this project is being forced into a completely inappropriate location. These mitigations introduce severe, additional landscape harms that have not been properly assessed and demonstrate a profound failure of basic site selection.

A1065 Traffic Risks (ExQ3 Q15.0.1)

The persistent discrepancies between the draft DCO and the outline Construction Traffic Management Plan regarding temporary speed limits on the busy A1065 show a disregard for local highway safety. Our roads cannot safely absorb the intense and prolonged construction traffic that this scheme would generate. Clear, legally binding mitigation is required upfront – something the Applicant has so far failed to provide.

Wildfire and Battery Safety (ExQ3 Q16.0.1)

As highlighted by Sporle with Palgrave Parish Council, the industrial-scale battery systems and extensive solar arrays pose serious, unmitigated wildfire risks in a deeply rural area with constrained emergency access. These risks remain a major threat to our community and have not been properly addressed.

4. Severe and Unmitigated Local Impacts

The historic Nar Valley and the open spaces separating Swaffham and Castle Acre will be irrevocably ruined. The scheme will permanently destroy the historic visual relationship between these settlements and the historically sensitive landscape, including the settings of Castle Acre Castle and Priory. No amount of slow-growing hedge planting can mask or restore the industrialisation of thousands of acres of open countryside once it is lost.

The cumulative landscape, agricultural and community impacts of this scheme, taken together with High Grove and other proposals, represent a fundamental and unacceptable change to the character of this part of Norfolk.

5. Closing Demand

This application fails the basic tests of planning efficiency, community safety and environmental protection. It is legally flawed, spatially inefficient, and inflicts severe cumulative harm on Norfolk's agricultural land, landscape and rural communities.

I urge the Examining Authority to look at the massive, cumulative damage this project will cause and to recommend that the Secretary of State refuses development consent.

Consent should be refused.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]
Local Resident and Registered Interested Party
Interested Party Reference: [redacted]