



**Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Northamptonshire**

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CPRE Northamptonshire – Formal Objection to Planning Application 25/01011/FUL

25/01011/FUL – Installation of a Solar Panel Array, with security fencing, CCTV cameras, transformer equipment and connection room and storage container and battery energy storage containers, and associated works to form an access track.

We object to the Application as submitted

CPRE Northamptonshire lodges a formal objection to planning application 25/01011/FUL for a Solar Panel and Battery Energy Storage System installation off Back Lane Desborough. This objection is submitted under our remit to protect and promote the countryside for its intrinsic character, landscape value, biodiversity, and amenity.

Our assessment is based on the applicant's documents on the North Northamptonshire Planning Portal, reviewed against national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS), the Kettering Local Plan, and the .

We respectfully request that this application is refused for the following reasons:

1) Inappropriate development in open countryside and harm to landscape character.
NPPF 187(a)-(b) requires policies and decisions to protect valued landscapes and to recognise “the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”, including “the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land”. The proposal industrialises an open countryside location and fails to conserve landscape character, conflicting with JCS 1, 3 and 25. (See also NPPF section 19.

We also note that the development site falls within a Sub-Regional Green Infrastructure Corridor and fails the safeguarding test set by clause 19 b(i) of the JCS.

2) Loss of agricultural land

BMV protection is addressed in NPPF N2 where it states that where significant development of agricultural land is necessary, areas of poorer quality should be preferred to higher quality land. We acknowledge that the land to be taken out of agricultural use is quality classification 3 (Natural England Mapping) and only quality 3A is included in the overall description of Best and Most Versatile.

The applicant has not carried out any assessment of the land quality and simply makes the statement that it is not BMV (PD&AS ref 5.41). The lack of an accurate land quality assessment should be rectified by suitable testing to substantiate the claim and ensure protection of farmland.

The application seeks planning for a defined period of 30 years after which the site will be restored to its original condition. No binding mechanism is offered to secure restoration and avoid permanent loss of agricultural land.

3) Emergency planning, safety and Environmental Impact

The application includes Battery Energy Storage however there is no accompanying Battery Safety Management Plan. The Planning Design and Access Statement references energy Storage but does not say what capacity it is to have.

No drainage scheme has been included with the submission documents so the impact on this to meet the requirements of a BSMP cannot be assessed. No design for containment and later disposal of any fire-fighting contaminated water has been carried out.

In addition, and contrary to best practice, there is no evidence that the proposal has been discussed with Northampton Fire and Rescue Service.

We note that in the Statutory Comment from the Environment Agency (dated 28 July 26) the absence of a BSMP is not cited as an objection. We find this to be at odds with EA responses to other Battery Storage Scheme applications in the county. The response does, however, emphasise the importance of designing for an emergency and incorporating the necessary protections' to the environment.

We believe that this would mean fundamental changes to the scheme drainage that will render this planning application invalid.

4) Noise

The applicant dismisses the possible environmental impact from noise in the PD&DS (5.44 and 5.45) but appears to have carried out no noise surveys or assessment of the actual noise produced by energy storage and transformer equipment.

5) The Energy Imperative

The document sets out the normal arguments for renewable energy and energy storage. CPRE support the adoption of various forms of renewable energy.

In the case of solar PV schemes we are concerned that frequently the easy and cheap route to provide the energy is to use farmland. Viable and less contentious opportunities exist utilising brown field sites, rooftops and car parks that would completely negate the need to use farmland. Agricultural output can only be obtained from farmland.

While energy security is important so, equally, is food security. In the last year two publications have rated the latter as more critical than energy (DEFRA 2024 and JIC 2025) for the nation.

This proposal is small and will mainly be used by the landowner. The benefit to the local area of surplus energy is highlighted in the PD&AS, but in reality, any surplus energy will be fed into the grid, and so no direct benefit can be attributed locally. As with all solar schemes, maximum energy output is often at a time of minimum domestic consumption and this development does not fully explain the role of the battery storage element that could help with this.

6) Biological Net Gain

Planting in the area of solar panels is proposed to effectively re-wild the area and so satisfy the net gain target. This is achievable.

We note that the PD&AS states this but also states (5.10) that the land below the solar panels can be used for grazing sheep so the land would not be taken out of agricultural use. This is possibly true but in that case the BNG target will not be met. This leaves the actual intention unclear.

Conclusion

The proposal conflicts with multiple development plan policies and the NPPF and NNC JCS. Under the presumption in favour of sustainable development permission should be refused where “any adverse impacts... would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole”. Given the harm to landscape character, loss of agricultural land, and management of water from emergency incidents, the adverse impacts clearly outweigh alleged benefits. The plan led approach therefore points to refusal.

Please record this objection and ensure CPRE Northamptonshire is consulted on all future applications or amendments relating to this site.

Yours sincerely,

A J Lynes

For and on behalf of CPRE Northamptonshire