



The countryside charity
Norfolk

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Working locally and nationally to promote, protect and enhance a beautiful and thriving countryside for everyone's benefit.

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The Drovers Solar Farm – Registration of Interest

Dear Madam or Sir,

We are writing to you to register to have our say in the examination of the NSIP proposal 'The Drove Solar Farm'.

CPRE Norfolk supports the transition to renewable energy and recognises the urgent need to decarbonise electricity generation. However, this support is not unconditional. Renewable energy developments must be appropriately sited and designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the countryside, landscape character, agricultural land, and rural communities. In our view, the proposed Drove Solar Farm fails to meet these requirements.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires planning decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, including by protecting valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

While the NPPF supports renewable energy development, it also makes clear that proposals should be acceptable in planning terms and not result in unacceptable impacts. The scale and siting of the Drove Solar Farm would result in significant harm to the open rural character of this part of Norfolk, contrary to these core principles.

The proposal would introduce an industrial-scale development into an open agricultural landscape, fundamentally altering its character. CPRE Norfolk is particularly concerned about the cumulative impact of large solar installations across rural Norfolk, which risks the industrialisation of the countryside.

The submitted information does not, in our view, demonstrate that landscape and visual impacts have been adequately avoided or minimised, as required by both national policy and good planning practice. Screening and mitigation cannot fully address the long-term change in land use and character that this development would introduce.

CPRE Norfolk has longstanding concerns about the loss of agricultural land to large-scale solar development. The NPPF seeks to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a). Where such land is affected, applicants are expected to demonstrate that poorer quality land is unavailable and that the development is necessary in that location.

We are not satisfied that the application robustly justifies the use of productive agricultural land, nor that alternative locations—such as previously developed land, commercial rooftops, car parks, or less sensitive sites—have been properly explored.

CPRE has consistently advocated a “rooftops first” approach to solar deployment. Large-scale ground-mounted solar should not be treated as the default option where less harmful alternatives exist. The application fails to demonstrate that a sequential approach to site selection has been applied, contrary to the principle of sustainable development.

The proposal is inconsistent with the objectives of local planning policy, which seek to protect Norfolk’s distinctive landscapes, support sustainable rural communities, and direct inappropriate development away from the open countryside.

For the reasons set out above, CPRE Norfolk considers that the Drove Solar Farm would result in unnecessary and avoidable harm to the Norfolk countryside and is not justified by planning policy. We therefore urge the Local Planning Authority to refuse planning permission for this application.

Yours sincerely,
Barbara Adamski (Planning Officer / CPRE Norfolk)