

Kingsway Solar Farm Objection Letter.

West Wickham Parish Council.
West Lodge, 88 High Street,
Balsham,
CB21 4EP.

27 October 2025.

To Kingsway Solar Limited.

The West Wickham Parish Council wishes to respond to the Statutory Consultation on the Kingsway Solar Farm.

There is support for the development of greater diversity in energy generation. The national need is recognised and there is a positive view towards renewables, in principle and in operation. Existing solar and wind projects, near to the village, are well-regarded and a photovoltaic project for the village hall was part-funded by our residents.

Cambridgeshire is recognised for ground-breaking work and innovative solar projects, which are appreciated for creating revenue and benefits for communities. The solar and EV charging hub at Babraham Park and Ride, the community-owned project in Reach producing clean energy for the village, the discrete use of solar on the historic site of Anglesey Abbey, solar powering a waste treatment plant near Waterbeach, are all local examples.

Notwithstanding a shared understanding of the direction in which national policy and investment is moving, the parish council is in agreement in wishing to object strongly to the plans for the solar farm scheme proposed by Kingsway Solar Limited.

We object on the grounds of unnecessary scale, inappropriate siting, damage to communities and their quality of life, the threat to wildlife and habitats and insufficient information provided by Kingsway Solar Limited. We are also concerned that there are issues which have not been addressed well enough.

1. Unnecessary scale

Whilst reduced, the use of more than 3,000 acres remains a vast area and is still equivalent in size to a major international airport.

More efficient solar panels require less space to generate the same amount of power; in the near future, the overall footprint could be smaller and much of the current scale could become surplus.

There is no reasoned assessment or business justification provided for the need for such a large amount of acreage and no clear strategy for how to make the best and most efficient use of it.

The scheme offers less efficient land use than other solar farms. For example, the Meridian Solar Farm proposes to generate up to 50% more electricity output over less acreage.

Large amounts of land are currently undefined. In addition to indicative areas of solar panels, the scheme identifies “Solar PV development areas”. Overall relative percentages, which would clarify density, are not provided. Future expansion of solar panels was not ruled out.

The case for large scale solar installations is acknowledged to be high investment value. The average return on investment for a solar farm is between 10% to 20%. Most solar farms pay off their installation costs within five to ten years, after when money is made.

At its current scale the scheme will fundamentally change the character of a widespread rural area, impacting negatively on farmland, food production, wildlife habitats and village communities, with no direct benefit.

2. Inappropriate siting.

The National Planning Statement and the Solar Roadmap, both confirm that decisions should recognise the benefits of best and most versatile (BMV) land when plans are brought forward.

There has been insufficient consideration of alternative and better sites, including brown-field sites. Rather than setting out a case which shows how suitability has been scrutinised, consultation documents state simply that the scheme provides an “opportunity” with “fewer constraints.”

The scheme will occupy land which primarily consists of high grade agricultural land. BMV land has been identified across each land parcel and the connection corridor. PEIR Ch. 10.

Land Parcel C contains almost entirely very good or good quality land; accordingly, there should be very strong reasons for taking this land out of agricultural production.

South-East Cambridgeshire already has two operational solar farms located entirely on BMV land. Compounding the loss of productive agricultural land in this area should be avoided by re-siting the scheme.

In Land Parcel C, the fragmented pattern of smaller, dispersed land enclosures, increases the extent of the boundary and correspondingly, increases the number of households in close proximity and adversely affected. A carefully constructed site plan should start by ensuring that the solar panels clustered around residential communities in Land Parcel C are re-sited.

There are no specific proposals for alternative uses of the significant amount of land that is not allocated for solar panels, battery infrastructure, planting or screening, or how this land will be managed.

There is no evaluation of the suitability of the land for dual use, such as grazing under panels. Given the amount of ‘unallocated’ land areas, there is no commensurate consideration of a potential strategy for combined solar/food production.

3. Damage to communities and quality of life.

Siting a large proportion of the scheme (43.55%) on 1,341 acres encircling two small historic villages, is not reasonable and not acceptable.

Family homes of all periods, including 127 listed buildings, will be surrounded by acres of land which will house industrial equipment and will in large measure, no longer exist as a natural environment. The scheme states only two individual heritage assets could be subject to adverse effects. PEIR CH. 8.

Whether residents live inside or close to a boundary, or are travelling through the area, the alteration will be dramatic and the impact will be profound.

The scheme admits, “Significant adverse effects on the landscape and visual amenity are likely during construction and operational phases.” PEIR Ch. 7 and there will be potential effects, “as a result of noise-generating infrastructure.” PEIR Ch.12. Effects of glint and glare will also be wide-scale.

The loss of public amenity space and the impact on wellbeing will spread well beyond residents in Balsham, West Wrating and Weston Colville, to have effects on surrounding villages, farms, businesses and other landowners. This may become somewhere people would opt not to live and work in.

There is no assurance of community benefits. A community fund has yet to be defined. The possible figure of £300,000 per year is at the discretion of Kingsway Solar Limited. It is not index-linked and is related to costs, rather than production or profits, minimising available funds.

4. Threat to wildlife and habitats.

The scheme acknowledges that “Due to the scale...there is the potential for some likely significant effects on ecology and biodiversity.” PEIR Ch. 6.

Biodiversity Net Gain 10% targets are welcomed, with tree planting and reserved areas noted. Promised mitigation measures are yet to be described.

Two years of construction, followed by fencing, lighting, infrastructure, sub-stations, pylons, battery storage, hard surfaces; will be unable to not subtract from the natural environment and disrupt ecosystems.

The scheme acknowledges the need for gates, gaps and corridors to allow for natural behaviour and habitat connectivity. The scale and extent of boundary and internal fencing, areas of hardstanding and panel installations will create a fragmented landscape. The effects risk reducing foraging and isolating populations over time, especially for species sensitive to barriers, such as amphibians, reptiles and small mammals.

A landscape permeability plan, with geographical mapping, a full range of measures and proof of success by species-specific study should be devised with expert involvement and implemented prior to construction and throughout the entire lifetime of the scheme.

There is little information or commitment beyond preliminary surveys and environmental plans that are yet to be submitted. There is no clarity on where responsibility will rest, or which authority will investigate and monitor mitigation effectiveness, ensure protections are successful and targets are achieved fully.

5. Insufficient information.

There is a great deal that we don't know.

The absence of the following management plans (MP) restricts the scope for feedback: construction environment MP, construction traffic MP, landscape and ecological MP, operational environment MP, soil MP, public rights of way MP.

The information gaps in vital aspects of the scheme degrade the value and effectiveness of the formal consultation and necessitate further opportunities for raising questions in the application process. Too much of the PEIR work is desk-based study; the distance from on the ground evidence is striking.

Generalised answers to questions create a feeling of frustration. For example, what is the policy on arbitrage? It is deemed an operational matter. How was the decision to use the east connection corridor made? It is deemed to be a "better" option. Design flexibility is the open-ended response to many and various questions.

Accountability is very woolly and local authorities may face additional responsibilities and costs. These may include actions to monitor and reinstate where environmental breaches occur, such as road conditions/safety, land contamination, fire services, habitat deprivation.

There is particular concern that there is no decommissioning management plan and many unanswered questions about what happens at the end of 40 years. What different kinds of land use might occur, mid-term and end of contract? How will oversight be managed? Will compensation apply if land quality is downgraded? Who will be accountable if ownership has changed? Who meets the costs of decommissioning? Could contracts be extended beyond 2070?

There is also concern that the thinness of information is a tactic, impressing the view that the scheme is too big to be challenged. If information is not available it can't be commented on.

West Wickham Parish Council will opt to register as an interested party and wishes to participate in future consultation with stakeholders, supporting the communities who will be most directly affected.

We put forward the following request for actions.

1. Reduce the scale of the scheme.
2. Justify a 3,000 acre project on prime land.
3. Remove Land Parcel C from the scheme.
4. Set out land use criteria, with detailed site plans, including dual uses.
5. Investigate further the environmental impact of glint and glare.
6. Give a commitment that costs will not fall on local authorities/taxpayers.
7. Improve formal methods of consultation with stakeholders and communities in the continuing application process.

Julie Copas, for and on behalf of West Wickham Parish Council.