

Weston Colville Parish Council

Response to Kingsway Statutory Consultation October 2025

Weston Colville Parish Council wishes to lodge an objection in the strongest terms to this proposed development in its entirety.

Our response can be applied to the entire development area, but we concentrate on the detrimental effects to Weston Colville in particular. We have grave concerns regarding area C's impact on the villages of Weston Colville and West Wrating. We are especially concerned that the report does not even show Weston Colville or Weston Green as residential areas. We have identified numerous specific concerns regarding the Kingsway proposal which include:

- Site suitability
- Proximity to dwellings in area C
- Agricultural land classification and the loss of valuable land for food production
- Irreversible loss of visual amenity both on village and public rights of way (PRoWs)
- Increased flooding risk
- Biodiversity, habitats and wildlife
- BESS safety
- Traffic and Transport issues and the unsuitability of transport infrastructure for this project
- Cultural heritage
- Compulsory Land Acquisition & Communication
- Health & Wellbeing

Site Suitability

The piecemeal design of panel placement, necessitating the inclusion of more land that required, patently demonstrates the unsuitability of Areas B & C. The parish council believes that with area C being added to the scheme late, the proposals disproportionately affect the residential areas. There is currently no Land Use Framework in the UK but the most respected work to identify where solar panels should be located shows some suitable land in the vicinity of areas A and B but not C. The developer needs to present a much stronger detailed justification for the inclusion of area C in the scheme, and in particular the land east of Coven Wood, which is in isolation, and requiring a connection to the remainder of the development. The proposal as it stands uses only 35% of the taken land for the erection of panels & the associated paraphernalia. Why has the sign failed to use it in a more efficient manner, to reduce the overall area?

Proximity to dwellings in area C

NTS section 4 states "While the Site lies relatively close to these communities, the site has been carefully defined to limit potential impacts. This is achieved by making use of existing natural screening in the landscape and proposed landscape interventions". This is unachievable. Any planting of consequence would take 40 years to grow to any useful size, and no doubt be destroyed during the decommissioning. The vista, the wide open views, the heritage landscape, will be lost forever. Residents in Church End are surrounded on 3 sides by the proposed development, which seems to disadvantage them more than any residents in Areas A & B. The frequent and comparatively high elevation of many of the woods, fields, footpaths, roads and village houses make it very difficult to see how effective 'screening' of glass and metal panels up to 4.2 meters high could be achieved in such a landscape.

Agricultural land classification and the loss of valuable land for food production

The solar farm's development area C is a wooded clayland landscape (4D,4E) which is in good condition with strong character. The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning's landscape assessment judged it to need a management strategy to "conserve" so that the local distinctiveness and sense of place are appropriately protected, managed and enhanced. It comprises of ancient agricultural land (farmed since the neolithic era), and is also hilly and picturesque. Unlike much of Cambridgeshire, which is notoriously flat, the striking vistas of Weston Colville are typical of the gently undulating countryside of East Cambridgeshire as it approaches the Suffolk border. Losing such a large amount of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) graded land would be disastrous. Only 35% of the taken land will be used for panels & connections, should this proposal go forward, and this again points to the unsuitability of the chosen site. According to the NTS two thirds of the considered land is graded BMV. Land marked for mitigation at A1 & B2 would seem better placed to accept any panels than fields around residents in Weston Colville. Protecting the A11 trunk road when there is already a solar farm in the vicinity is fatuous, and land at B2 has already been taken for wind turbines. With global instability and rising prices we must be able to use good land for agriculture. The provision of food from overseas may not be a realistic option, nor should it be required or encouraged. The likelihood that the land is going to be returned to agricultural use in its current condition, is far-fetched, and misleading. As 'brown field' land in 2065+, it is much more likely to be used for development than agriculture. Is this in reality, the long term goal of the developers?

Irreversible loss of visual amenity both on village and public rights of way (PRoWs)

When out walking or riding, being able to enjoy the rolling countryside and wide, far-reaching vistas is an uplifting experience shared by many. It improves mental well-being, and fosters a closer appreciation of our natural, and unspoilt environment. The disturbance to the PRoWs is immense, and unnecessary. Stating any closure would be temporary is disingenuous – no-one can say 40 plus years is a temporary inconvenience. Having ancient & well used routes such as the Icknield Way running between enormous fences many metres high would render them unusable. Clamps Lane & Brook Lane are particularly unsuitable for vehicles. To that end, they have been gated to restrict access during the autumn & winter periods. Use of these byways should be avoided.

Visual impact and heritage – Many houses in the village enjoy far-reaching views which will be destroyed by this development.

Increased Flooding Risk

Surface Water Flooding. The biggest environmental risk for Weston Colville is flooding due to increased rainfall from climate change. There were 6 incidents in 2024 where flooding led to road closures leaving residents unable to leave their properties, and fields and villagers' gardens being covered in flood water. The big concern is that the installation of a solar farm with numerous panels on the fields between West Wrating and Weston Colville will lead to increased rainwater run-off from the fields exacerbating the flood problem with potential to repeat regularly the flood of 28th June 2016. During an extended period of torrential rain led to the worst flood the village had had for 30 years with 12 houses being flooded in both Weston Green and Church end. Weston Colville. The Stour is a major flood risk as shown on the Environmental Agency's Flood risk depth map produced on 22nd February.

The Kingsway Stage 2 consultation document pays scant attention to the risk of flooding in Weston Colville and how the erection of vast numbers of solar panels could exacerbate that risk. In the Consultation Document, flooding is considered under water resources as part of a section entitled 'Other Environmental topics', so not considered a priority. The village of Weston Colville has ongoing problems with flooding of, mostly, its roads when heavy rainfall causes the river Stour to flood. A major event in June 2016 also led to inundation of water in several properties in the Weston Green part of the village and major disruption to traffic. Such is the concern about the likelihood of more frequent flooding in the village as a result of climate change, that the Parish Council developed a Community Flood Plan, endorsed by the Environment Agency, that identifies areas liable to flooding and puts in place measures to take to prevent flooding and to assist parishioners in the event of further flooding events. The Flood Plan is a living document with 5 Flood Wardens appointed to deal with situations as they arise. A copy of the Community Flood Plan was provided to Kingsway in our response to the scoping document.

The area in the current stage 2 document that is most at risk of additional flooding as a result of the proposed solar panel development is Chapel Road, area C5 on the map on page 28. Chapel Road is prone to flooding during periods of heavy rainfall with water running down the road into the village and threatening properties. The positioning of **any solar panels adjacent to Chapel Road** will only increase the risk of flooding along Chapel Road with the further risk of properties being inundated.

If the project should go ahead then panels currently proposed for area C5 on the map should be relocated well away from Chapel Road.

Biodiversity, habitats and wildlife

The Stage 2 Consultation document suggests that the scheme has been designed to avoid or minimise effects on ecology and wildlife habitats. However, it is blatantly poor in detail and grossly underestimates potential substantial effects on wildlife, not only during construction of a major engineering project, but also ongoing effects during its operation over 40 years. The sheer size of the project will necessitate major disruption to large numbers of plant, insect, bird, amphibian and mammal species due to vehicle access and the work required on the vast area of land to locate the panels and corresponding infrastructure like inverters, inter-array connectors, BESS and overhead connection lines.

The concept of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a particularly difficult topic to grasp, let alone casually suggest that the project will deliver a 10% gain in BNG. Without comprehensive and time-consuming studies both before and after construction, it is impossible to suggest a positive outcome for wildlife. Biodiversity does not only cover macro-organisms like birds and mammals but also micro-organisms that live in and on vegetation and soil - will such studies be carried out and if not, it is disingenuous to make unscientific claims about biodiversity.

The stage 2 consultation document, does not mention, let alone take note of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy which is a key component of the Environment Act 2021. Land Parcel C East is within the area covered by the strategy and would appear to fly in the face of the objectives of the strategy. Cambridgeshire County Council should be consulted as to how, and if, Parcel C fits into their Nature Recovery Strategy. Indeed, it would seem that neither parcel A, B or C would meet their objectives of **Nature Recovery**.

A particular problem associated with large areas of fenced off land is in providing 'wildlife corridors.' These have long been a strategy, particularly for the farming community, to provide areas of land that are left uncultivated so that wildlife can move freely from one area to another. They are all about taking down barriers and providing hedgerows and field margins so that animals and birds can move freely around. Therefore, the erection of any form of fencing is contrary to this concept. Fences also impede the free movement of larger mammals, such as deer, across the landscape.

Land parcel C is set in an area of south Cambridgeshire which is essentially suitable for arable farming with scattered woodlands, stables, ponds and grassland. The area is pleasant to live in and provides ample opportunity for walking and other country pastimes for local residents. The imposition of a major industrial installation right in the middle of village communities will destroy the cherished nature of the landscape making the whole area a less attractive place to live. No matter how many hedges and trees are planted, the spectre of the panels and associated infrastructure will haunt the local residents for the life of the project and beyond. The place for such projects is on brownfield or industrial sites which will be minimally influenced by additional industrial development.

BESS Safety

BESS risks of fire, explosion, toxic smoke, and whether emergency services can cope with an emergency at the BESS site. Routes to/from the BESS location have yet to be detailed, but is it in the right place? The BESS sits on top of the shallow chalk aquifer which provides drinking water for Cambridge & the surrounding villages. If there is a fire, how will the water used to contain it be dealt with, so that it does not pollute the aquifer? There have been many cases of the extensive damage from BESS fires, and we would like to be reassured that the local, often retained fire fighters are sufficient to the task. The presence of the BESS, in the proximity of the headwaters of the River Stour and to the underlying principal chalk aquifer further calls into question the suitability of the site.

Traffic and Transport issues and the unsuitability of transport infrastructure for this project

The current transport plan within the Weston Colville area (Area C) would have drastic effects due to the current narrow roads and their condition. These are either classified as 'B' or 'C' roads and are not suitable for any HGVs, in fact the majority are not currently suitable for any two-way traffic. The effect of HGVs or additional vehicles would cause major disruption; these roads are used in the mornings as various school double decker bus routes and a 'rat run' between Haverhill and Cambridge. HGVs from local companies such as Field Compost and Home Brands, and the agricultural vehicles necessarily on the roads, particularly around harvest, cause enough damage at it is The increase of any vehicles could lead to accidents, disruption, congestion and extended travel times, especially if a 'one way system was implemented. Safety of pedestrians is also a major concern as there are very few pavements and limited street lighting. No consideration has been taken of the impact to the current diverse wildlife within the banks and hedgerows should traffic levels increase significantly.

As the working hours are listed as 7am – 7pm Monday to Friday and Saturday 7am – 1pm, the noise and disruption will affect all ages, children / students studying for GCSE / A Level exams, Shift Workers, etc. This will affect quality of life and could lead to mental health issues especially with an aging population.

No consideration has been included to build a 'Green Energy Solar Farm' whilst using diesel polluting HGVs either driving and idling plus the vibration contribution not only to the residents, historical buildings but also to the diverse wildlife living beside our roads.

Cultural Heritage

Throughout the PEIR, there is a lack of consideration for listed buildings. In Weston Colville alone, we have Lane House, Pound Farm, Three Horseshoes Farmhouse, Weston Colville Hall, and grade II* St Mary's Church amongst many others, totalling 19. The plans show these properties being engulfed. We have moated or medieval manors, including 'Thorseby' on Common Road, which is believed to be the oldest property in the village, bar our church. The owner already notes her property shakes when the grain lorries head past. This burden cannot be increased if substantial damage is to be avoided. The proximity of panels & a proposed substation close by our church, and Weston Colville Hall impinges on the curtilage of these 2 well-loved listed buildings. This siting of these industrial structures should be reconsidered.

Compulsory Land Acquisition & Communication

Local landowners have received limited and confusing information about possible compulsory acquisition of land or access rights. The correspondence so far provides no clear maps, explanation of statutory powers, or reassurance that voluntary negotiation will be pursued before any use of CPO powers. This has created uncertainty and anxiety for those whose livelihoods depend on this land and the current approach to land acquisition and engagement risks alienating the very community whose cooperation is essential for responsible delivery. Some working on behalf of Kingsway have tried to access private property without any permission, or letter of authorisation from HM government. This behaviour is not acceptable.

Communication, specifically with regards to the inter-array corridors which will link separate solar sites across working farmland, has been poor with information and responses to queries being slow, non-committal and contradictory. Residents have not been given reliable details of routes, impacts, or reinstatement plans. The proposed corridors are not temporary construction routes, they represent a permanent alteration of the agricultural landscape which risk fragmenting farm operations, damaging soil and drainage systems, and leaving long-term restrictions on productive agricultural land.

We therefore ask that Kingsway Solar Farm Ltd publish accurate, up-to-date maps of all proposed inter-array routes through Weston Colville. Confirm that CPO powers will only be used as a last resort, after full voluntary negotiation. Provide clear information on landowner rights, compensation, and reinstatement of agricultural land post-construction and improve engagement with directly affected residents through proper, well-publicised local meetings.

Health & Wellbeing

There are many concerns being raised about the light and noise pollution that will arise during the construction stage of any solar farm and residually following the completion of the construction phase. As such a large project is proposed there is the potential for miles of fencing, lighting, and CCTV. The residents have emphasised the importance of dark skies in the village for themselves and the wildlife. Another consideration about light pollution is the impact of glint & glare from the panels themselves. Large fields of panels will give off a glare of reflected sunlight that will impact residents especially with them being so close to homes that overlook the fields in question. Kingsway have said there will be restrictions on the construction activities but also it has been noted in published material they will work 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday and half days on Saturday. The noise and vibrations from the trucks coming and going from the construction sites through the village for months/ years will have a major impact on residents and wildlife. There is also the question of the 2x 132kv substation, the BESS and the inverters at the end of each row of panels. Parcel C6 is so close to people's houses on Horseshoes Lane and Common Road in Weston Green there is a serious concern that the noise from the inverters will be a major problem. It is also noted that these inverters can become louder in damp and foggy conditions. Horseshoe Lane sits in a hollow which will exacerbate the problem. Kingsway have acknowledged the 'potential for significant operation noise effects at properties within 200m of the overhead line, which lends weight to the view that cables should be buried. Many chose to live in Weston Colville precisely for the peace & tranquillity of the area. This proposal puts residents' health & wellbeing at risk.

Conclusion

This proposed development is in the wrong place, will irreversibly change the heritage landscape of our parish, endanger the health & well-being of residents, in some cases the very ancient buildings they live in, the flora & fauna alike, expose the water courses & aquifers to greater risks, make our roads more dangerous, and **ruin land & lives**. A development of this size & scale will destroy the very things renewable energy sources, and successive governments tell us they are trying to save.

Bridget Durham
Vice Chair
Weston Colville Parish Council