



The countryside charity  
North and East Yorkshire

PO Box 189  
York  
YO7 9BL

[www.cpreney.org.uk](http://www.cpreney.org.uk)

Tel: 07983 088120  
Email: [info@cpreney.org.uk](mailto:info@cpreney.org.uk)

Branch Chair  
Mrs Jan Arger

**Authority:** North Yorkshire Council (former Harrogate)

**Type of consultation:** Planning Consultation

**Full details of application/consultation:** 25/02694/EIAMAJ - Proposed Installation of a Ground Mounted Solar PV Farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) plus Ancillary Infrastructure and Equipment, Landscaping and Access.

**At land:** Land At Lawrence House Farm, Scotton, North Yorkshire, HG5 9HZ

**Type of response:** Objection

**Date of Submission:** 11<sup>th</sup> April 2026

All responses or queries relating to this submission should be directed to the Secretary for the Trustees at the contact details shown above on this frontispiece.

All CPRE North and East Yorkshire comments are prepared by the charity using professional planners whose research and recommendations form the basis of this response in line with national CPRE policies.

External planning consultant used in this response:



KVA Planning Consultancy  
Katie Atkinson, BA (Hons), Dip TP, MA  
MRTPI  
[www.kvaplaning.co.uk](http://www.kvaplaning.co.uk)

## Comment

CPRE North and East Yorkshire ('CPRENEY') welcomes the opportunity to comment on a planning application for the proposed installation of a Ground Mounted Solar PV Farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) plus ancillary infrastructure and equipment, landscaping and access at land at Lawrence House Farm, Scotton North Yorkshire, HG5 9HZ. The application was submitted to North Yorkshire Council ('The Council') by Boom Developments Ltd. ('the Applicant').

The Proposed Development would supply approximately 47.7GWh per year of renewable energy to the National Grid. The proposed battery storage facility would be utilised to reinforce the power generation of the solar farm.

The proposed site totals 95.5Ha and is located approximately 220m north of the village of Scotton and 430m south of Brearton. Harrogate and Knaresborough are located approximately 2.5km southwest of the Site and 3km to the southeast of the Site respectively. The B6165 is located approximately 570m southwest at its closest point.

The site comprises an area of 11 agricultural fields. The site contains wooded areas and several ponds including Dovecote Carr and many field drains. The northern and southern boundaries of the site are bounded by The Jumwell and Percy Becks. Internally, the fields are bounded by native hedgerows of variable height and quality, interspersed by infrequent trees. There are also some internal field boundaries formed by post and wire fences.

Two Public Rights of Way ('PRoWs') cross the site in a north-south orientation. Footpath 15.115/1/1 extends from Scotton in the south, passing through the farmstead at Lawrence House Farm, and connects with Footpaths 15.16/9/1 and 15.16/7/1 leading toward Brearton. Bridleway 15.115/2/1, forms part of the promoted Knaresborough Round route, runs in a north-westerly direction from the vicinity of Lingerfield School to Brearton.

The applicant has submitted an Agricultural Land Classification in support of the proposal which states that of the 95.5Ha site area is a mixture of Grade 2 (42.4%), Subgrade 3a (41.5%), Subgrade 3b (10.4%) and some Grade 4 (4.0%) with the remaining land categorised as 'other/non-agricultural'.

There are no local landscape designations or nationally designated landscapes within the site boundary, and the closest statutory landscape designation, the Nidderdale National Landscape, lies approximately 6.5 km to the west. Farnham Mires Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies approximately 175m to the east of the proposed site. Hay-a-Park SSSI to the southeast and Burton Leonard Lime Quarry SSSI to the north are within the locality.

There are 14 designated heritage assets within 1km of the site, including the Grade II\* Scotton Old Hall with the remaining being Grade II Listed buildings.

The applicants have stated in supporting documents that the proposed solar farm will have a lifespan of 40 years following a 9 month construction period.

Having considered the documents submitted in support of the proposals including the Environmental Statement, **CPRENEY strongly object to the proposed development** at this location on the grounds that the proposal is contrary to both national and local planning policy.

CPRENEY objects to the proposed development at this location for the reasons set out and detailed below:

- The loss of best and most versatile agricultural land and soil quality;
- The detrimental impact on landscape character and users of the adjacent PRoW network;
- The detrimental impact on the historic environment;
- The proposal is not community owned and does not have the support of the community; and
- The cumulative detrimental impact of both the solar and BESS in the immediate vicinity and across North Yorkshire.

For clarity, CPRENEY do not object to the generation of renewable energy by solar arrays and consider that the generation and supply of low carbon energy will be core to achieving the UK goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 or earlier. This will require a transformation of our energy system over the next 20–30 years. The scale and immediacy of the threat to the climate and our countryside means that change is necessary.

The current model of renewable energy development has resulted in some poor outcomes for landscapes, the environment, and rural communities. CPRENEY believes it is possible to achieve net-zero transition, including the introduction of new solar developments, in harmony with our wider environmental and social objectives.

This means taking a strategic planning approach to development of renewable energy assets at the local level and ensuring that local communities are empowered to help shape their local energy response. CPRENEY will, therefore, only support solar developments which:

- minimise impacts on landscapes, tranquility and heritage, through appropriately scaled development;
- minimise the impacts on the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land;
- bring net benefits to biodiversity;
- benefit the rural economy; and
- are supported or owned by local communities.

#### ***The loss of BMV agricultural land and soil quality***

Furthermore, CPRENEY consider that renewable energy generation and climate change mitigation must be maximised within urban areas, including the retrofitting of existing stock, on land and rooftops of industrial and commercial estates and priority given to using previously developed land in line with CPREs ‘brownfield first’ policy. CPRENEY actively supports the future requirement for all new buildings to incorporate solar and / or other appropriate energy generation and efficiency measures incorporated into their design and build as standard.

The proposal subject to this application is situated on circa 95.5Ha of greenfield land currently used for arable farming, therefore, is not in line with the ‘brownfield first’ policy. The applicants commissioned an Agricultural Land Quality Assessment which concluded that 83.9% of land across the site has been categorised as grade 2 and 3a on the Best and Most Versatile (‘BMV’) Agricultural Land Classification which is described as both ‘very good’ and ‘good quality’ agricultural land respectively. The NPPF clearly directs Local Planning Authorities making decisions about the natural and local environment to:

- protect and enhance landscapes, biodiversity, geology and soils
- recognise soils as a natural capital asset that provide important ecosystem services
- consider the economic and other benefits of BMV agricultural land, and try to use areas of poorer quality land instead of higher quality land
- prevent soil, air, water, or noise pollution, or land instability from new and existing development

The Government has provided additional guidance to planning authorities which calls for a “*strong presumption*” against solar farms on the best and most versatile (BMV) land – land that is classified in law as Grade 1, Grade 2 or Grade 3a. This concept is replicated in the adopted Harrogate District Local Plan 2014 –

2035 (2020) at Policy NE8 which only supports development which promotes *'the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land'*.

The applicant has not provided evidence to demonstrate that lower-grade land is unavailable or that the benefits of development would outweigh the loss of this high-quality farmland. The applicant's claims that soil quality would improve through conversion to grassland provide no detail regarding ongoing management practices. These shortcomings undermine national food security objectives, as highlighted in the UK Food Security Report (DEFRA, 2024).

Whilst information contained within guidance in relation to BMV agricultural land is contained in TAN 6 – Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010), pertains to the Welsh planning system, the evidence is still pertinent in this case. Paragraph 6.2.2 of TAN 6 states *'that once agricultural land is developed, even for 'soft' uses such as golf courses, its return to agriculture as BMV land is seldom practicable'*. The Welsh Department for Climate Change recently objected to an appeal for a similar scheme (DNS/3245065 - Wessex solar energy (WSE Pembrokeshire Limited) land at Blackberry Lane, Nash, Pembrokeshire, SA27 4SJ) located on BMV. The inspector set out in his report (para 163) that the DCC objection amounted to [BMV] *'land is a finite and nationally significant resource which needs to be protected in order to secure future food supplies. The Department is concerned that the development could, through matters such as compaction, waterlogging and the mixing of top and sub-soils, cause structural damage to the soil and in doing so reduce its flexibility, productivity and efficiency to such an extent that it would no longer be BMV agricultural land.'*

Maintaining agricultural capacity to deliver significant levels of domestic food production is critical. This must be achieved in the context of addressing and adapting to climate change, reversing the loss of nature and meeting increasing demands on land for other social goods — not least affordable housing and renewable energy. CPRENEY believe that with enough previously developed 'brownfield' land to provide 1.2 million homes, and south-facing rooftops that could meet much of our energy needs, we have a chance to tackle the climate, housing and cost-of-living crises without sacrificing our farmland

Further, 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' sets out the government's 25-year plan to improve the health of the environment by using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently. It plans to: protect the best agricultural land; put a value on soils as part of our natural capital; and manage soils in a sustainable way by 2030 amongst other things.

#### ***The detrimental impact on landscape character and users of the adjacent PRow network***

CPRENEY has significant concerns that the development of such a substantial-scaled solar array and BESS across the proposed 95.5Ha site will inevitably change the landscape character of the site and its surrounding environment, introducing a modern industrial aesthetic which is incongruous with the existing rural landscape. Much of which will still be considered significant after 15 years when a lot of the mitigation landscape planting will have started to mature. As such, the impact on the landscape is considered to be so detrimental as to be a reason for refusal in itself.

Furthermore, the introduction of such widespread tree planting alongside the proposal to allow the existing hedgerows to be maintained at a height of 3.5m for the purposes of mitigation screening, is not suitable within this landscape character area which is much more open offering long ranging rural views.

CPRENEY are aware that the PRow network in the area is well frequented by pedestrians and equestrians in the local area. We concur with both the Council's Landscape Architect and the applicant's own LVIA assessment which states that users of the PRow network will experience major-adverse effects as a result of the development, even after 15 years.

CPRENEY are aware that more and more people are accessing the countryside to experience the benefits to both physical and mental health. The network of PRoWs within the vicinity of the site enable residents and visitors to Scotton to access their local countryside with ease. CPRENEY are concerned that the impact of changes to the landscape character will deter people from using these networks impacting upon residential and visual amenity and thus impacting health.

***The detrimental impact on the historic environment***

The proposed site is located within close proximity to Grade II\* Listed Scotton Old Hall and several Grade II Listed Buildings. CPRENEY does not understand why a Grade II Listed agricultural barn is located only 30m north west of the Old Hall has not been assessed despite being connected to the Old Hall. Furthermore, the Listed Building has a strong historic connection with the rural and agricultural countryside surrounding it, and we consider that the surrounding countryside contributes significantly to the setting of the Old Hall. We therefore agree with the assessment presented through the applicant's addendum that the proposal will impact on the immediate and wider setting of the Old Hall, however we believe that this 'impact' will be more detrimental than the applicant has set out.

Thus, the applicant appears to have failed to acknowledge the contribution the application site and wider agricultural landscape setting make to the significance of the heritage assets.

It is therefore considered that without this information, the Council cannot conclude that the proposed development *will not* result in harm to the significance of the Grade II listed building, and as such is contrary to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework. CPRENEY also considers that the Proposal fails to meet the statutory duties set out in Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

***The proposal is not community owned and does not have the support of the community***

CPRENEY's policy stance on large scale solar development is set out at the start of this representation. CPRENEY, therefore, objects to the proposed scheme (inter alia) on the basis that it does not have the support of the community as evidenced by the numerous letters of objection on the Council's planning portal from the Parish Council (and adjacent Parish Council's) and members of the public, alongside members of this charity.

***The cumulative detrimental impact of both the solar and BESS in the immediate vicinity and across North Yorkshire.***

CPRENEY are concerned about the numerous applications for large scale solar projects being proposed and approved across the county of North Yorkshire. Given that there are several protected landscapes within the county, the majority of the potential 'area of opportunity' for development is effectively 'squeezed' into a central strip between Selby and Richmond. The majority of which are all also located on land categorised as Grade 3a and above. Each permission seems to be predicated on the fact that there is a need to transition away from fossil fuel to renewable energy and that there is sufficient Grade 3a and above land left 'elsewhere' in the county. Whilst CPRENEY acknowledges and supports the need to transition to renewable energy sources, we do not support the industrialization of the countryside.

The cumulative impact of all such sites across the county will result in large swathes of viable, good quality arable land being lost to such developments. Furthermore, sites across North Yorkshire are being promoted for the development of BESS, which again when assessed cumulatively alongside the industrial scale of solar arrays, deliver a substantial cost to the landscape, ecology, and local communities. North Yorkshire's capacity for further development is finite and CPRENEY considers that no new developments of solar arrays and BESS should be approved without an appropriate landscape-led approach to development which could identify sites which would truly be suitable for such development, i.e. on areas of commercial/industrial land, lower value agricultural land parcels and on rooftops.

## Conclusion

CPRENEY welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed solar farm and BESS at land off Lawrence House Farm, Scotton, North Yorkshire, HG5 9HZ.

CPRENEY strongly object to the proposal at this location for the reasons set out above which demonstrate lack of conformity with local and national planning policies. In particular, Policy CC3 from the Harrogate District Local Plan (2020) states: *“Renewable and low carbon energy projects, including incorporating small-scale renewable and low carbon energy generation into the design of new developments where appropriate, feasible and viable, will be supported provided that:*

- I. The proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape, the natural environment, biodiversity, the cultural environment, the historic environment, adjoining land uses and residential amenity; and*
- II. Appropriate mitigation measures would be taken to minimise and, where possible, address adverse impacts; and*
- III. The proposal avoids unacceptable cumulative landscape and visual impacts”*

The applicant has failed to demonstrate that there would not be an unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape, natural environment, cultural environment, historic environment, adjoining land uses and residential amenity, or that appropriate mitigation measures would address these impacts.

CPRENEY reserves the right to comment further should any additional information be submitted in support of the proposal.