

Bradenham Parish Council's Response to RWE's Statutory Consultation on the High Grove Proposal

Bradenham Parish Council acknowledges the statutory consultation initiated by RWE on the High Grove proposal. After comprehensive discussion, analysis, and feedback from members of the local community and in particular the mandate that was given to the Council arising out of our Public meeting with Villagers and RWE on the 29th October 2024 was and is to oppose the industrialisation of the Countryside.

Whilst accepting that there is a need for greener energy there is a right and a wrong place to sight such proposals. The Countryside is not an appropriate place whereas rooftops, brownfield sites, Government buildings and land, over car parks, factories and other industrial rooftops would be appropriate. Research as shown that such places would more than adequately serve the Nations needs.

Our Village is completely against this horrendous blight on our beautiful countryside.

This proposed development is not appropriate for Bradenham and never will be.

It is not any sort of answer to an energy crisis. What Bradenham has always been able to do is provide food and sustenance to the community throughout the whole year. Simply being a location for panels that will only sporadically operate to supply energy is pointless and a waste of valuable arable land.

Chinese involvement is a stain on Bradenham which has a long and proud history and is mentioned in the Doomsday book. It is an offence to every fallen hero in the St. Andrew's and St. Mary's Churches, China is the major supplier of raw material and hardware whatever the promises are and the supply chain claimed it can all be traced back to the far east. That means exploitation and proven slavery. Bradenham will not want to be associated with that appalling record in any way whatsoever.

Bradenham is a quiet and cohesive community and should not be disrupted or disturbed by thousands of extra heavy vehicle movements for many years which will destroy and alter the road infrastructure irrevocably. The village has a right to be able to easily travel on the small roads that leave the village to access work, leisure and education and continuous traffic control systems will prevent this and cause extreme delay and disruption for years. The influx of unverified workers from outside of the area is also very unwelcome to what has always been a quiet and safe place. The solar developments will also be a magnet for thieves and crime in general.

The construction and imposition of what as an industrial development on an area that has been rural since the beginning of time will not be tolerated by the parish of Bradenham and the people who represent them. Certainly the disruption that will be caused by several years of commercial construction will destroy any semblance of normality.

The Residents of Bradenham have a legal right to a peaceful, quiet and rural way of life. Allowing this development to go ahead is a clear infringement of this under the Human Rights Act.

Fire is not something we have had to worry about but the addition of flammable lithium batteries add a level of real danger that we are not prepared for. One only has to look at what occurred in Ashill in recent years with the field fire that devastated a large number of dwellings due to the crop catching fire and that was without lithium batteries being in situ! Indeed the local fire brigade would not be able to cope with any conflagration.

This is clearly an ongoing problem, worry and concern as recently as the 18th June 2025 there was a battery fire in Middleton, Rochdale which caused complete devastation. Never mind fire, Water and flooding now becomes a very real risk because of locating so many panels on fields previously

used for natural irrigation and propagation. The runoff to homes and businesses would be devastating.

Wildlife does not need to be interfered with. Left to their own devices the deer, bats and other darlings of the nature spotting set get on fine without artificial provision for bat boxes and other aids. There is nothing that a company best known for mining and other mineral exploitation can possibly offer one of the most beautiful areas in the country.

As part of this overview it seems that throughout this process you appear not to offer any protection to the agricultural economy and food security issues as part of your design principle. We have concerns about the disproportionate impact of large solar farms such as this on best and most valuable agricultural land within this project. The East of England's agricultural output totalled £4.4 billion in 2024, with poultry worth £836 million, wheat £725 million and fresh vegetables £458 million.

In addition to the above we summarise our Grounds for objection to this proposal as follows:

1. Human Rights Concerns

The proposal is seen as a potential infringement on the rights of residents to enjoy their homes and community without undue interference. The development risks violating the basic principles of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Which guarantees respect for private and family life. The proximity of the proposed sites to residential properties threatens to significantly impact residents' quality of life.

2. Wildlife and Biodiversity

The High Grove proposal poses a severe threat to the diverse wildlife that inhabits the area. Bradenham and its surrounding countryside host a range of protected species and fragile ecosystems. The development risks disrupting habitats, Leading to the displacement or extinction of both common and rare species. Such environmental degradation is contrary to national and international commitments to protect biodiversity.

3. Flooding Risks

The proposal raises serious concerns regarding increased flooding risks. The proposed industrial development could exacerbate surface water runoff, reduce the area's natural ability to absorb rainfall, And impact existing drainage systems. This is alarming for a community already grappling with changing weather patterns and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events.

4. Fire Hazards

The potential for fire hazards associated with the proposed development is another significant concern for reasons already explained. Industrial developments of this nature often involve processes or materials that elevate the risk of fire, Endangering both human life and the surrounding natural environment.

5. Water Shortages

The increased demand for water resources resulting from the High Grove proposal could strain existing water supplies. The region already faces challenges related to water management, and additional pressure could result in shortages that impact both residents and local agriculture.

6. Noise Pollution

The proposal's industrial activities would likely introduce persistent noise pollution, disrupting the tranquilly of the area. This would not only affect human residents but also disturb wildlife reliant on peaceful surroundings for survival.

7. General Environmental Damage

The construction and operation of the proposed development are anticipated to cause widespread environmental damage. This includes soil degradation, pollution of water bodies, and a decline in air quality. Such long term consequences directly contradict the goals of sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

8. Light Pollution

The development would contribute to significant light pollution, eroding the dark skies that are a cherished feature of Bradenham's rural environment. Excessive artificial lighting would have adverse effects on nocturnal wildlife and diminish residents' ability to enjoy natural nightscapes.

9. Proximity to Residential Properties

The close proximity of the proposed industrial site to residential properties is particularly concerning. Residents would face an increased risk of health issues, loss of privacy, and a diminished sense of safety. See one above contravention of Article 8 of the European Convention on human rights. Moreover, property values are likely to suffer as a result of the development.

10. Visual and Scenic Impact

The proposal would drastically alter the scenic beauty of the countryside surrounding Bradenham. The construction of industrial structures would replace rolling fields and natural vistas with an industrialised landscape, undermining the area's historical and cultural character.

Bradenham parish council urges RWE to reconsider the High Grove proposal in light of these significant objections outlined above. The council remains committed to protecting the rights, well-being, and natural heritage of the community it serves. It is the council's firm belief that developments of this nature must prioritise sustainability, Environmental Protection, and the rights of local residents.

We trust that these objections will be taken into serious consideration during the statutory consultation process.

To conclude this response if this proposal were to be given the go ahead by the Secretary of State we would refer you to our email dated 5th November 2024 (copy of which is enclosed) detailing our major objections and concerns.

During this consultation the four major areas of concern have been

1. **Fire safety** - Due to a combination of a recent field fire within the project area and the rising concerns around the safety of battery technology.
2. **Water Security** - In the last 10 years Breckland has experienced 7 years of drought, and three years with July and August having temperatures exceeding 40°C.
3. **Traffic** - specifically the movements of trucks and hardware to and from the proposed solar and battery sites during the two to three year build process.
4. **Safe residential distances** - The distance from all proposed hardware on solar sites that will allow for low sound levels, high safety, no environmental damage, and easy ongoing maintenance without any interruption to the lives of local residents or wildlife.

Fire Safety The RWE report suggests that internal fire prevention gel will subdue any battery fire until local fire services arrive. There are currently 6 full-time firefighters within 5 miles of the majority of the High Grove site, and none have battery firefighting training.

High Grove is one of five proposed battery and solar proposals within 5 square miles. Field fires within the project area in the last three years have cost 40 acres of farmland, 11 homes, and had fire crews arrive from as far away as Newcastle to help subdue flames. The grassland proposed will still dry out in June, July, August as the crops before them, and the main technique to prevent fire spreading i.e. Farmers ploughing fire breaks in the fields involved is not possible with solar panels distributed across fields. The documented required 250,000 litres of water across the High Grove project according to BYD and National UK and US fire safety requires standing water to be available in order to prevent vegetation around the hardware catching fire and spreading. We require more detail with regard to the "Let it burn into the environment" Statement as this would cause unknown damage to the local residential and national environment.

Water Security The current report proposes only using external water supplies for panel cleaning, worker toilets, and no standing water supply for fire resources or animal resources.

We would suggest that RWE acquire 250,000 litre reinforced cube water carriers, 15 per site. The cubes can then be filled with rainwater for free during the winter months by Daisy chaining the gutters of existing farm buildings and when full can be placed on pallets and moved and distributed around the field sites. Then in field fire season this water This water can be used on the surrounding vegetation in order to prevent the potential of fires spreading thus acting as a firebreak. This would provide an extra level Of protection to nearby residents. This will bring RWE's High Grove proposal into the same agreed areas of fire safety as the Drovers and the Regener8 power solar and battery proposals that are also under consideration at this time.

Entrances / Exits Your report details only one entrance and exit per site, but National Fire safety details two just in case a fire blocks off one option. Obviously those residents that live nearby these sites would welcome the opportunity to save there properties if a fire were to ensue And therefore by having the required suggested number of entrances and exits assists in that respect.

Traffic / Trucks Based on the 48 trucks per day, 96 truck movements, over two sites during the build process. This calculates down to three trucks per hour over 8 hours. If RWE follow this method of not overloading the road network and keeping on white line roads as much as possible the build traffic should merge into local life without too much disruption. We would request that the Parish Council be kept fully informed about Construction vehicle movements so that all efforts can be made to minimise disruption.

Safe Distances The desired distance of the sites from residential areas should be at least 350 metres. Such sites should include Soundproofing fences either side of the battery units to channel sound away from residents, put in extra mature hedge and tree bordering 4 metres high to obscure the visual impact and any other method to lessen the impact of such a project. Dealing with specific areas within the parish of Bradenham we would request that the following happen:

High House Put the 132 MW site on the other side of that site, and move the hybrid batteries and inverters to the other side of the site away from the residents building, and please provide another green corridor down the eastern side of the property 50 metres wide.

Comar Lane If the desired siting Of 350 metres cannot be achieved here with regards to the panels then at least 50 metres should be a bare minimum to reduce visual impact on the residents together with additional hedging / trees.

High Green Move all hardware away from border nearest to Residents properties over to the Eastern border surrounding site with mature hedging / trees and sound proofing.

Southend It is understood that you have already agreed to remove the access point here to the track named Green Lane opposite the area known as the Gibbet.

In respect of all sites all necessary steps to be taken to lessen impact and discussions to be had with this Council and individual Residents if those requests are not met.

We further request that the wildlife across the sites be monitored after the build in order that such sites can be adapted to deal with any bird or deer migration issues that may arise.

The Future The truth with regard to the High Grove proposal is that no company worldwide has the experience of delivering a solar project of this scale across a UK mainland environment, and as such the solutions on paper may need to be adapted. In the spirit of ongoing dialogue all parish councils and residents would expect any future issues, with regard to safety or adverse sound defection towards residential areas, would be dealt with in a speedy and professional manner that causes the least amount of damage to residents or RWE's reputation.

It should be noted that the above submissions which purely and solely relate to if this project were to be given the go ahead by the Secretary of State is in no way shape or form to be construed as an acceptance of this project in any way whatsoever.

Yours **Bradenham Parish Council**