Formal Submission to the Secretary of State

Gislingham Parish Council – EcoPower Suffolk Solar Farm NSIP For the attention of: The Rt Hon Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero

Date: 20th October 2026

Introduction

Gislingham Parish Council writes to formally request the intervention of the Secretary of State regarding the proposed National Grid Norwich to Tilbury and EcoPower Suffolk Solar Farm projects, currently progressing as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). The scale of disruption anticipated during construction, combined with the cumulative impact of these aligned energy infrastructure projects, poses a severe and unacceptable burden on the residents of Gislingham.

The Council supports renewable energy where it is proportionate, responsible, and sensitive to local communities. However, the current proposal does not meet these criteria and requires urgent ministerial scrutiny.

1. Extent of Disruption to Residents During Construction

The construction phase of these NSIP's will impose **extraordinary levels of disruption** on a rural community served only by narrow B-roads and single-track lanes. The promoters have not provided adequate mitigation or any realistic alternatives.

The Council draws the Secretary of State's attention to the following documented concerns:

"National Grid will employ over 270 HGV vehicles per day on these roads in addition to the Solar Farm construction traffic." "How can our community cope with this influx?"

This volume of heavy vehicle movements is incompatible with:

- Rural lanes with no pavements
- School routes used daily by children
- Historic buildings vulnerable to vibration
- Emergency service access
- Agricultural and local business traffic
- Residential travel to work and essential services

The combined construction traffic from the solar farm and the Norwich–Tilbury pylon project will create **gridlock conditions**, with severe consequences for safety, mobility, and wellbeing.

2. Impact on Heritage Assets and Village Infrastructure

Gislingham contains *38 Grade II listed buildings, 3 Grade II* buildings, and one Grade I listed church*. Construction traffic is expected to pass:

- **Within 3 metres** of St Mary's Churchyard wall
- **Within 15 metres** of the church entrance porch

These structures are highly sensitive to vibration and require specialist protection. The promoters have not provided any adequate assurances.

3. Landscape and Environmental Harm During Construction

Residents have expressed grave concern that construction will cause:

- Destruction of hedgerows, mature trees heritage assets and historic sites
- Loss of wildlife corridors and deer habitat
- Damage to fragile drainage systems
- Increased flood risk
- Industrial pollution entering the River Dove and its tributaries

The Council notes:

"Miles of natural farmland and delicate natural habitats are wilfully destroyed and replaced by intrusive industrial infrastructure." "This can only create further flooding and the additional threat of industrial pollution."

Given the severe flooding experienced in 2024, any further disruption to drainage channels is unacceptable.

4. Mental Health and Community Wellbeing

The cumulative pressure of multiple NSIPs has already caused significant distress. Residents report:

- Anxiety about landscape loss
- Fear of industrialisation
- Stress caused by technical documentation and compressed consultation timelines
- Uncertainty about property values and long-term amenity loss

The uploaded report states:

“The constant threat to our community from these aligned energy-related infrastructure projects… is extremely stressful and worrying.”

The Council requests that the Secretary of State recognise the **psychological burden** placed on rural communities facing simultaneous NSIP schemes.

5. Inadequacy of Consultation and Information

The consultation period was:

- Only six weeks
- Overlapped with public holidays
- Supported by technical, inaccessible documentation
- Launched before key public information events

Residents felt that:

“Worthy critics within our communities… are being denied the opportunity to contribute.”

The Council requests ministerial direction requiring:

- Extended consultation periods
- Accessible documentation
- Early scheduling of public events
- Direct engagement with parish councils

6. Community Compensation and Fairness

The proposed community fund is wholly inadequate given the scale of disruption.

Residents note:

- Palgrave received approximately £11,000 for a much smaller scheme
- Gislingham requires a minimum of **£100,000 per year**
- Compensation could be distributed directly to householders
- Alternatively, free or subsidised electricity could be provided to Gislingham’s 1,100 residents

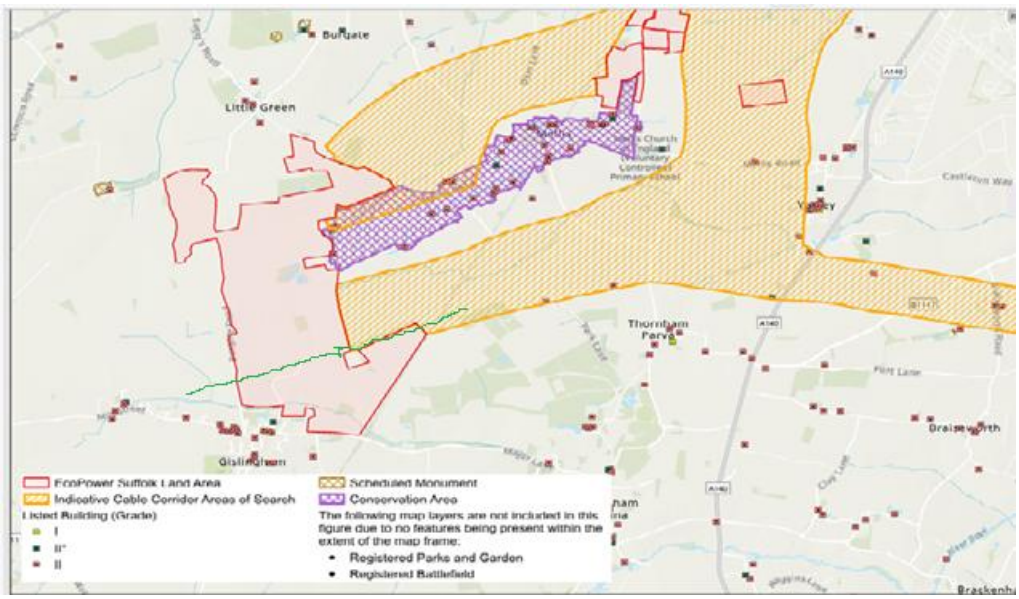
The Council requests that the Secretary of State require promoters to revisit and revise the community benefit package.

7. Request for Secretary of State Intervention

Given the scale of disruption, the Council respectfully requests that the Secretary of State:

1. **Review the cumulative construction impact** of the solar farm and the Norwich–Tilbury pylon project.
2. **Require a joint Construction Traffic Management Plan** between EcoPower Suffolk and National Grid.
3. **Mandate alternative transport routes** that avoid Gislingham's narrow rural lanes.
4. **Ensure protection of heritage assets**, including St Mary's Church.
5. **Require strengthened environmental safeguards**, including flood mitigation and habitat protection.
6. **Direct the promoter to revise the community benefit package** to reflect the scale of disruption.
7. **Ensure meaningful, extended consultation** with Gislingham Parish Council and residents.

Pictorial evidence: Plan & example photographs



Revised East -West alignment showing limit of solar installation (indicated in green). The site to the North, East and South East of Gislingham village will also contain the National Grid Norwich to Tilbury pylon route.
We request all solar panel construction and related infrastructure should not exceed any further South than this line. *See 3 of report above.*



View of Gislingham from the north showing our community in its historic

landscape setting.

Guidelines to National Grid's Design Development Report on infrastructure development refer to the Historic Environment (para 2.26-2.29 referring to NPS EN-1 Par 5.9.11. 5.9.24 and 5.9.30) in particular the "nature of the significance of the heritage assets and the value that they hold for this and future generations." As the National Grid and Eco Power Suffolk are aligned industries, we would expect both to abide by similar guidelines and preserve this protected view. *Adhering to the construction limit indicated above would achieve this.*



View of the proposed site from Thornham Road as you enter the parish of Gislingham, showing the ridge forming the highest point in Gislingham above the River Dove valley. Greens Farm on the ridge and the historic woodland enclave to the right of this picture. Unless restricted, both developments would dominate this landscape leaving Greens Farm and adjacent woodland as "islands" in a vast industrial complex. National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury pylon route will pass directly through this site. Consequently, the necessity for EcoPower Suffolk to combine its plan with the National Grid proposal and underground the proposed pylon route.



The ancient bridleway *linking single track Mellis and Burgate Roads to be replaced by a construction service road necessitating felling of all trees and complete hedge removal. This pathway and linking pathways (an important community resource) will be permanently defaced or lost.*

Due to the restricted width of the adjoining roads, there will be inevitable conflict between essential community use and simultaneous use by the National Grid and Eco Power Suffolk construction vehicles.

This is representative of a number of instances where ancient footpaths and bridleways are to be re-purposed to provide construction service areas and project access points.



The narrow railway bridge, *constructed in 1849, to be at the epicenter of the Thornham Road construction compound. This occupies the only east/west entry/exit to the village and a conflict of use between large volume construction traffic and normal community use for 3 years and envisaged to facilitate project maintenance of the "power corridor" indefinitely thereafter.*



A 500yr. old Oak Tree and the historic avenue to Spring Farm, destined to be felled and replaced by the Thornham Road construction compound.

All trees and the eco-sensitive water meadows between Gislingham and Swattisfield, (an area comprising approx. 2 Hectares) will be removed.

This is an example of several instances within our parish where historic trees, sensitive pasture and historic sites are to be willfully removed.

There can be no "bio-diversity net gain" because of this development. We fear this example is replicated throughout the entire National Grid Norwich to Tilbury project and many associated solar farm developments.

Conclusion

The proposed National Grid Norwich to Tilbury project and the associated EcoPower Suffolk solar farm, in its current form, represents an unprecedented level of disruption for a rural community. The Council urges the Secretary of State to intervene to ensure that the development is proportionate, responsible, and sensitive to the needs of Gislingham.

We wish to make you aware of the significant level of disruption these projects will impose on our community. The cumulative impacts on landscape, heritage assets, public rights of way, amenity, and community wellbeing are severe and long-lasting. The Council therefore requests that these concerns are fully addressed and that meaningful revisions are made to protect the character, cohesion, and quality of life within Gislingham.

Gislingham Parish Council