REFORM UK
Sleaford & North Hykeham

SOLAR WATCH · RESIDENTS' GUIDE

HAVE YOUR SAY

How to object to a solar scheme

A plain-English guide for residents of North Kesteven: where to find an application, how to register, what counts, and how to write an objection that the decision-maker has to take seriously.

STEP ZERO

Who decides? It depends on the size

There are two routes, and the rules are different for each. Check the scheme's size in megawatts (MW) — it's on the first page of any application or consultation leaflet.

100 MW AND OVER

Decided in Westminster

Big schemes like Springwell, Fosse Green and Beacon Fen are **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects**. The Planning Inspectorate examines them and the Secretary of State makes the final decision.

You must register as an "interested party" during a short window, or you lose your right to take part.

UNDER 100 MW

Decided by North Kesteven

Smaller solar farms, battery sites and substations go to **North Kesteven District Council** as normal planning applications — decided by officers or by the Planning Committee.

Anyone can comment. **No registration needed** — just your name, address and the application number.

The threshold rose from 50 MW to 100 MW on 31 December 2025. Schemes that were already in the system before then — including all the large schemes on our Solar Watch map — stay on the national route.

Where to find applications

National schemes: national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk — search the project name.

Local schemes: planningonline.n-kesteven.gov.uk — search by reference (e.g. 26/0575/FUL), postcode or street.

ROUTE ONE

National schemes (100 MW and over)

1

Respond to the developer's consultation

Before applying, the developer must consult locally. Respond in writing — your points must be reported to the Planning Inspectorate, and early objections can change the layout or kill weak sites.

2

Register as an interested party

Once the application is accepted, a "relevant representation" window opens — **usually around 30 days**, advertised in local papers and on site notices. Register on the project page with a short summary of your objection. **Miss this and you can't take part in the examination.**

3

Take part in the examination

The examination lasts up to six months. Interested parties can send a fuller written representation by each deadline, comment on the developer's answers, and ask to speak at an **open floor hearing**. Hearings are often held locally.

4

Recommendation and decision

The Examining Authority reports to the Secretary of State within three months, and the Secretary of State has a further three months to decide.

ROUTE TWO

Local schemes (under 100 MW)

1

Spot the application

Look out for yellow site notices, neighbour letters and the weekly list on Planning Online. Your parish council is also consulted — tell them your view.

2

Comment within 21 days

The formal consultation period is normally 21 days from the notice. Comment online on Planning Online, or by email or letter quoting the reference. Comments are published, so keep them factual.

3

Ask for it to go to committee

Many applications are decided by officers alone. Ask your district councillor to **call it in** so councillors decide it in public at the Planning Committee.

4

Speak at the Planning Committee

Objectors can usually register to speak for a few minutes before councillors vote. Register with the council in advance — the deadline is a few days before the meeting.

MAKE IT COUNT

Stick to planning grounds

Decision-makers can only weigh **"material planning considerations"**. An objection built on these carries real weight. Use the points that apply to the scheme near you, and back them with what you know about the land.

Grounds that carry weight

- ✓ **Loss of best farmland.** Grades 1, 2 and 3a are "best and most versatile" land. National policy and Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Policy S67 say poorer land should be used first.
- ✓ **Cumulative impact.** The combined effect of several schemes, cable routes and substations on one area — not each one judged on its own.
- ✓ **Landscape and visual harm.** Effects on open countryside, views from villages, footpaths and the Viking Way (Policies S53 and S62).
- ✓ **Heritage.** The setting of churches, listed buildings, conservation areas and buried archaeology (Policy S57).
- ✓ **Traffic and road safety.** HGVs and abnormal loads on narrow lanes during years of construction (Policy S47).
- ✓ **Flooding and drainage.** Run-off from compacted ground, access tracks and hard standing (Policy S21).
- ✓ **Wildlife and habitats.** Ground-nesting birds, hedgerows, verges and Local Wildlife Sites (Policies S59–S61).
- ✓ **Battery safety and noise.** Fire risk, emergency access and the hum of inverters, transformers and battery cooling.
- ✓ **Glint and glare.** Effects on homes, roads and nearby RAF airfields.
- ✓ **Footpaths and amenity.** Rights of way fenced in by panels, lighting, security cameras.
- ✓ **"Temporary" is 40 years.** A generation of farming lost, with no guarantee the land returns to the plough.
- ✓ **Alternatives.** Has the developer properly considered rooftops, brownfield land or poorer-quality land?

Points that can't be counted

- ✗ Effect on house prices
- ✗ Loss of a private view from your home (unless it's overbearing)
- ✗ The developer's motives or profits
- ✗ Opposition to net zero in general
- ✗ Personal attacks on officers or applicants
- ✗ "I just don't like it"

You can still mention these, but they won't be weighed in the decision — so lead with the planning points.

WRITING IT

Seven tips for a strong objection

1. Say "I object" clearly at the top, with the application reference or project name.

2. Use your own words. Copy-and-paste letters are counted, but a personal letter carries more weight.

3. Be local and specific. Name the lane, the field, the footpath, the view. You know the area better than any consultant.

4. One point per paragraph, each with a short heading.

5. Add evidence: photos, flooding you've seen, near-misses on the road.

6. Keep it factual and polite. It will be published.

7. Beat the deadline. Late comments may not be accepted.

Bonus: copy in your district and county councillors.

TEMPLATE

To: North Kesteven District Council Planning / The Planning Inspectorate
Re: Application [reference] — [site name and address]

I OBJECT to this application and ask that it be refused.

I live at [your village or street], about [distance] from the site, and use [the lane / footpath / view] every week.

1. Loss of good farmland. [What is grown here? What grade is the land?] Policy S67 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and national policy say poorer land should be used first.

2. Cumulative impact. [Which other schemes, cables or substations are nearby?] Together they would change the character of this area for a generation.

3. [Your third point — traffic, flooding, landscape, heritage, wildlife]. [What you have seen, with specifics.]

I ask that this application be decided in public by the Planning Committee, and that I be notified of the meeting date.

[Name] · [Full address and postcode] · [Date]

Need a hand? We'll help.

Reform UK Sleaford & North Hykeham will help you find the application, check deadlines and get your objection in on time — whoever you vote for.

sleafordandnorthhykeham@reformuk.com
X @ReformSleaford