



High Grove Solar Farm

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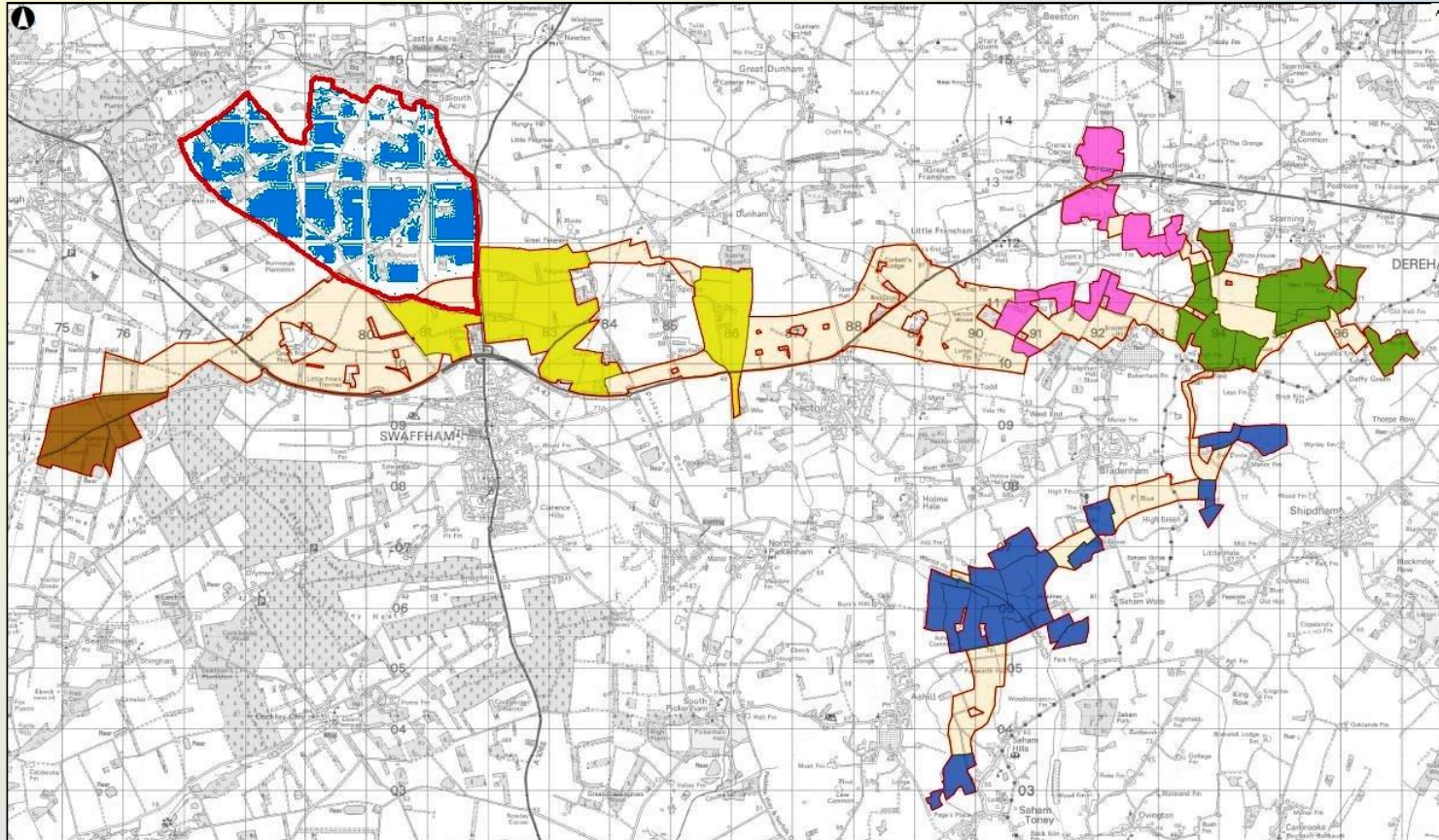
Village Meeting



Meeting Agenda

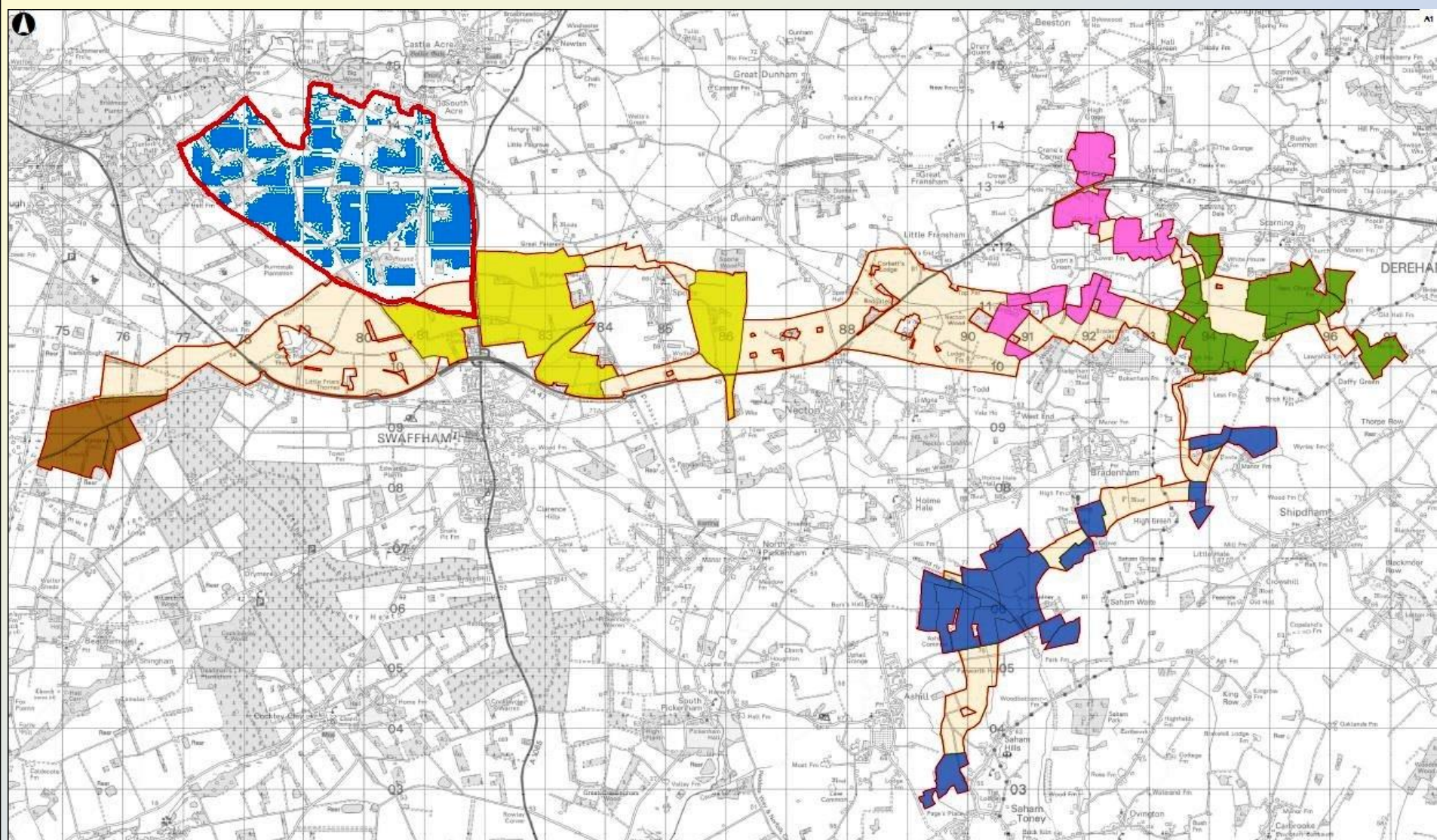
- Scale & nature of the proposed Solar Farms
- Key details of the proposed Solar farms
- Possible impact(s) on Holme Hale – village residents & the locality
- Likely planning / development procedures & timescales
- Action(s) by Holme Hale Parish Council & others
 - *To-date*
 - *Going forward?*
- Questions & Comments

Proposed Solar Farms in mid-Norfolk

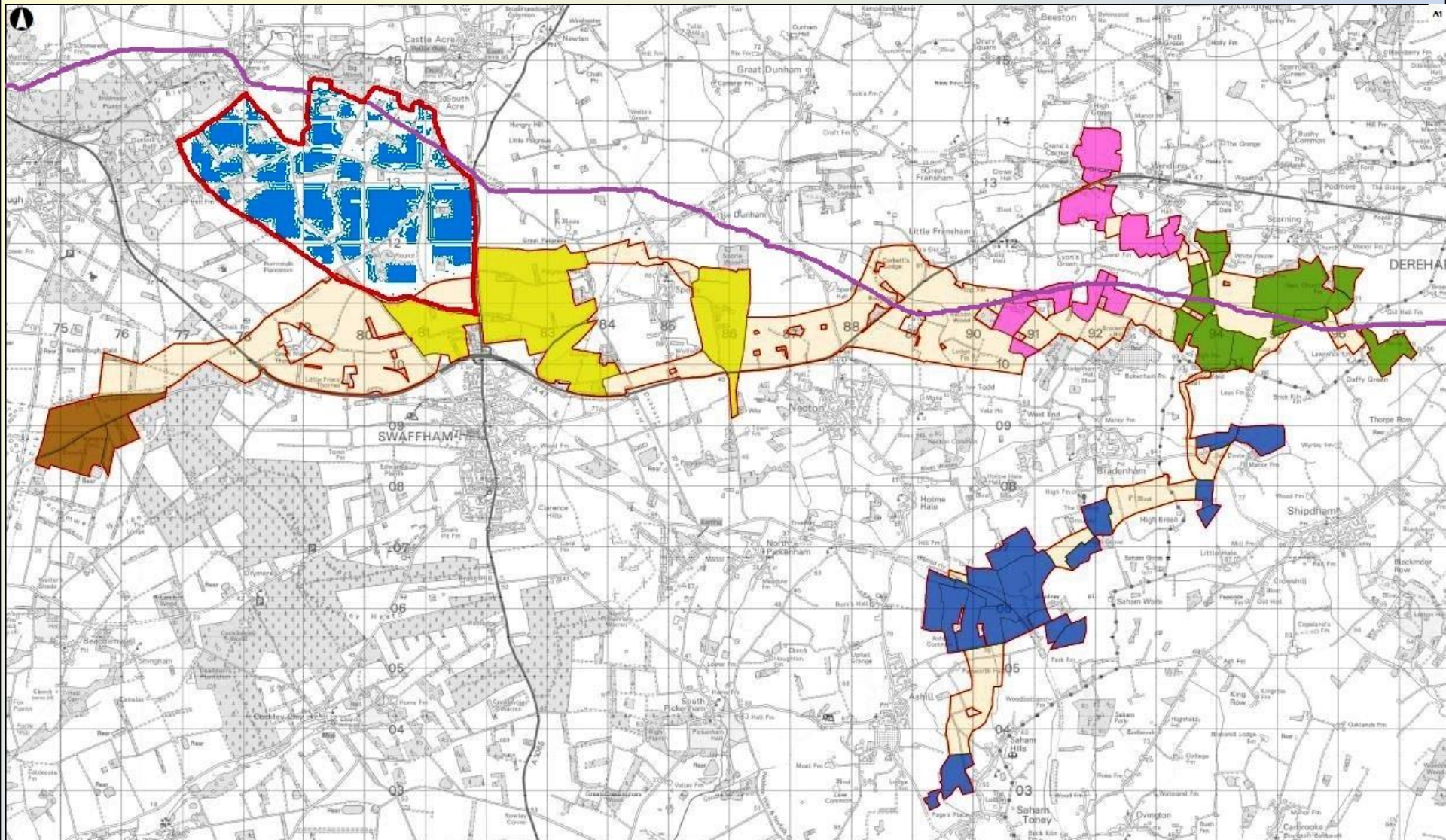


- **High Grove:** ~ 4000 acres along A47 corridor – Marham to Scarning & south towards Saham Toney
→ ~ 720 MW generating capacity – Distributed sites linked by underground cables
- **The Drove:** ~ 2700 acres between Swaffham & Narford - South Acre - Castle Acre
→ ~ 500 MW capacity – Single, concentrated block

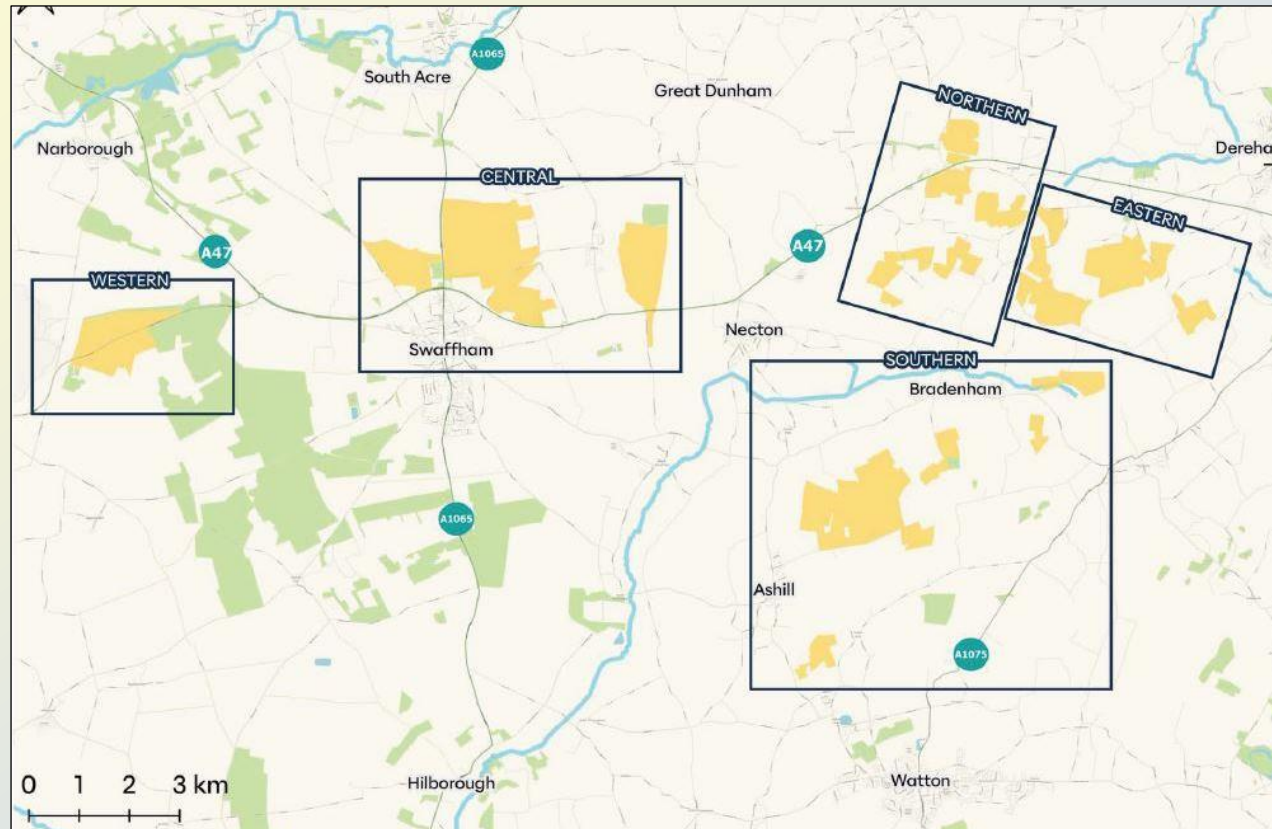
Proposed Solar Farms in mid-Norfolk



Proposed Solar Farms – Why Here?

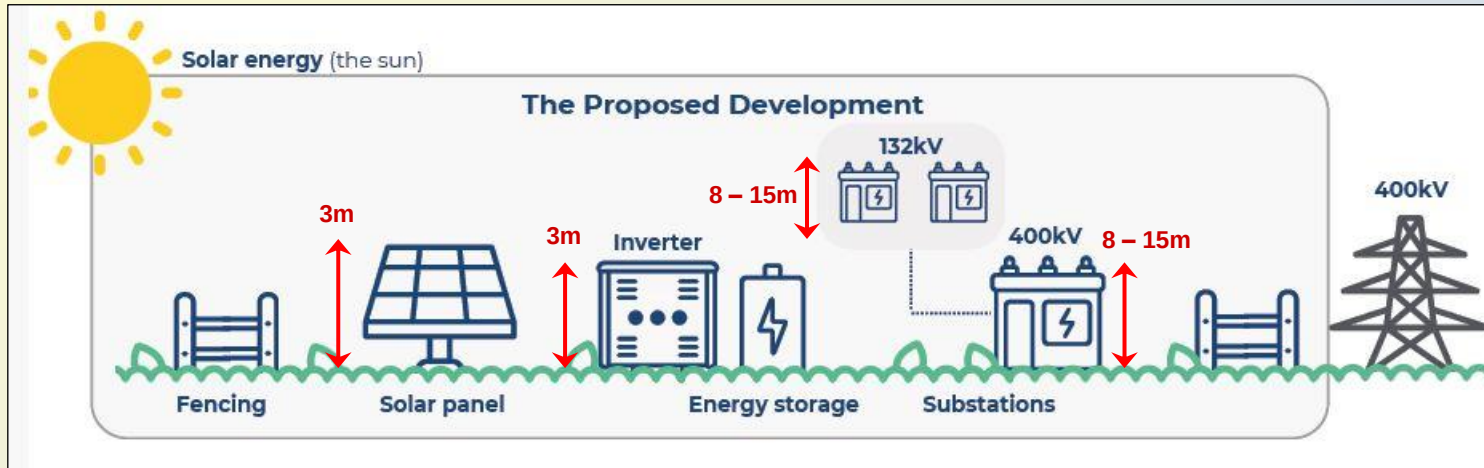


High Grove Solar Farm



- Will cover ~ 4000 acres of agricultural land – leased from Landowners for 40 years
- ~ 720 MW generating capacity
- Proposed development falls across 17 mid-Norfolk Parishes
- Nominally grouped in five 'development areas'
- Significant proportion of proposed 'Southern' area will fall in Holme Hale Parish

What Will it Look Like?



- Rows of solar panels in fields – Grass seeded beneath – 2 metre-high 'deer' fencing around outside
 - May be 'fixed' & arranged in East–West rows **or** 'tracking' & arranged in North–South rows
- Each group of (former) fields will contain:
 - Localised battery energy storage systems (BESS) – housed in shipping containers
 - Inverters – housed in shipping containers – to convert DC to AC electricity for transmission
 - Surrounded by security fencing & security lighting
- A number of 132 kV 'step-up' transformer sub- stations distributed across the 'development' areas
 - Step up voltage before power transferred along underground cables connecting the various sites
- A single 400 kV sub-station located somewhere beside the National Power Grid path (*Scarning?*)
 - Steps up power from entire High Grove venture & transfers to National Grid (pylons)

Possible Impact on Holme Hale Village & Residents?

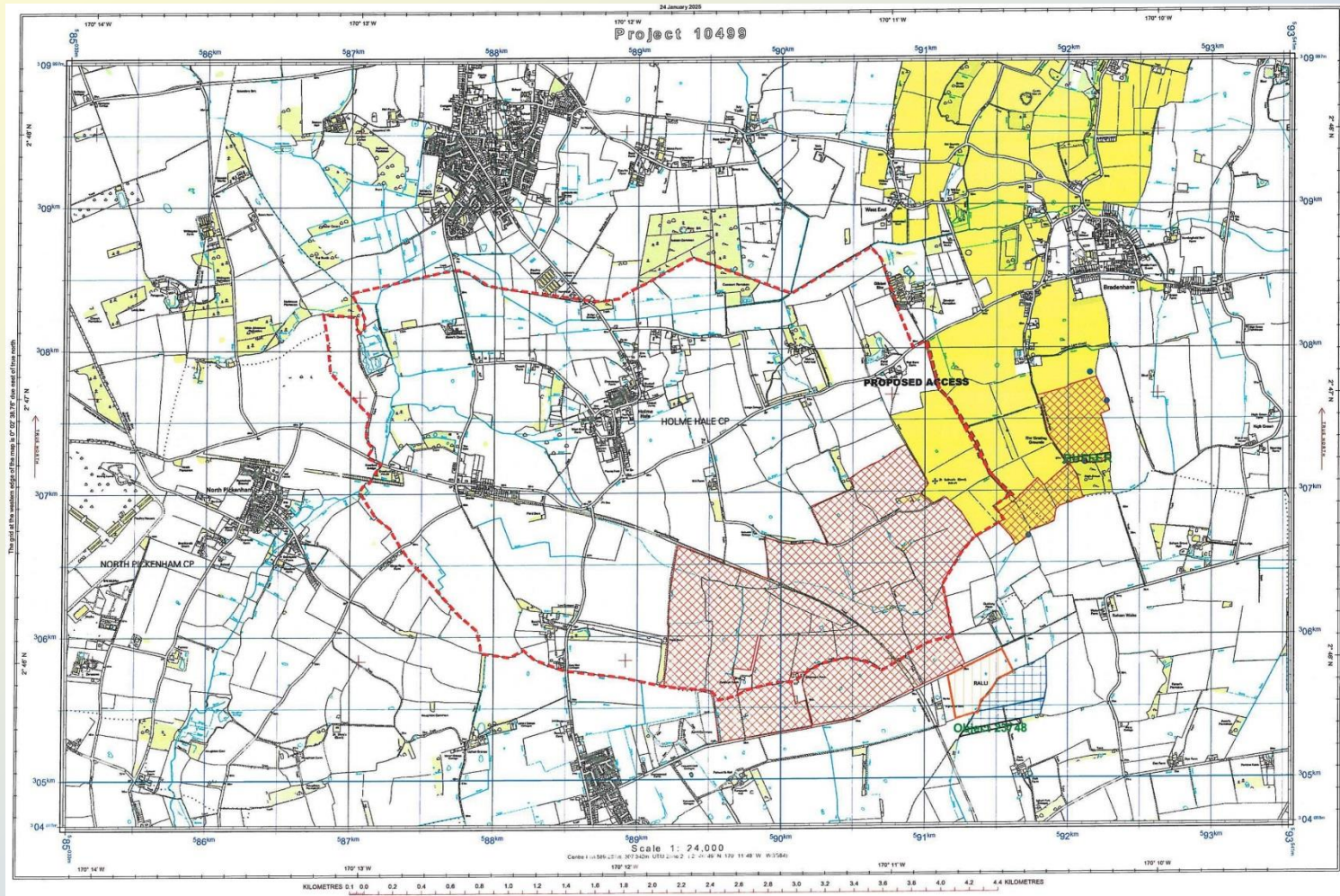
Positive?

- Contributes to 'green' energy generation
- May be certain environmental benefits
 - Possible slower surface water run off
 - Reduction in watercourse pollution?
 - Probable reduced chemical usage
If not used for panel cleaning
- 'Community Benefit' Fund to be made available by RWE – worth £287k p.a.
Across entire area affected by development
- **N.B.** Additional 'public access' routes are proposed in certain locations, but won't benefit Holme Hale residents directly

Negative?

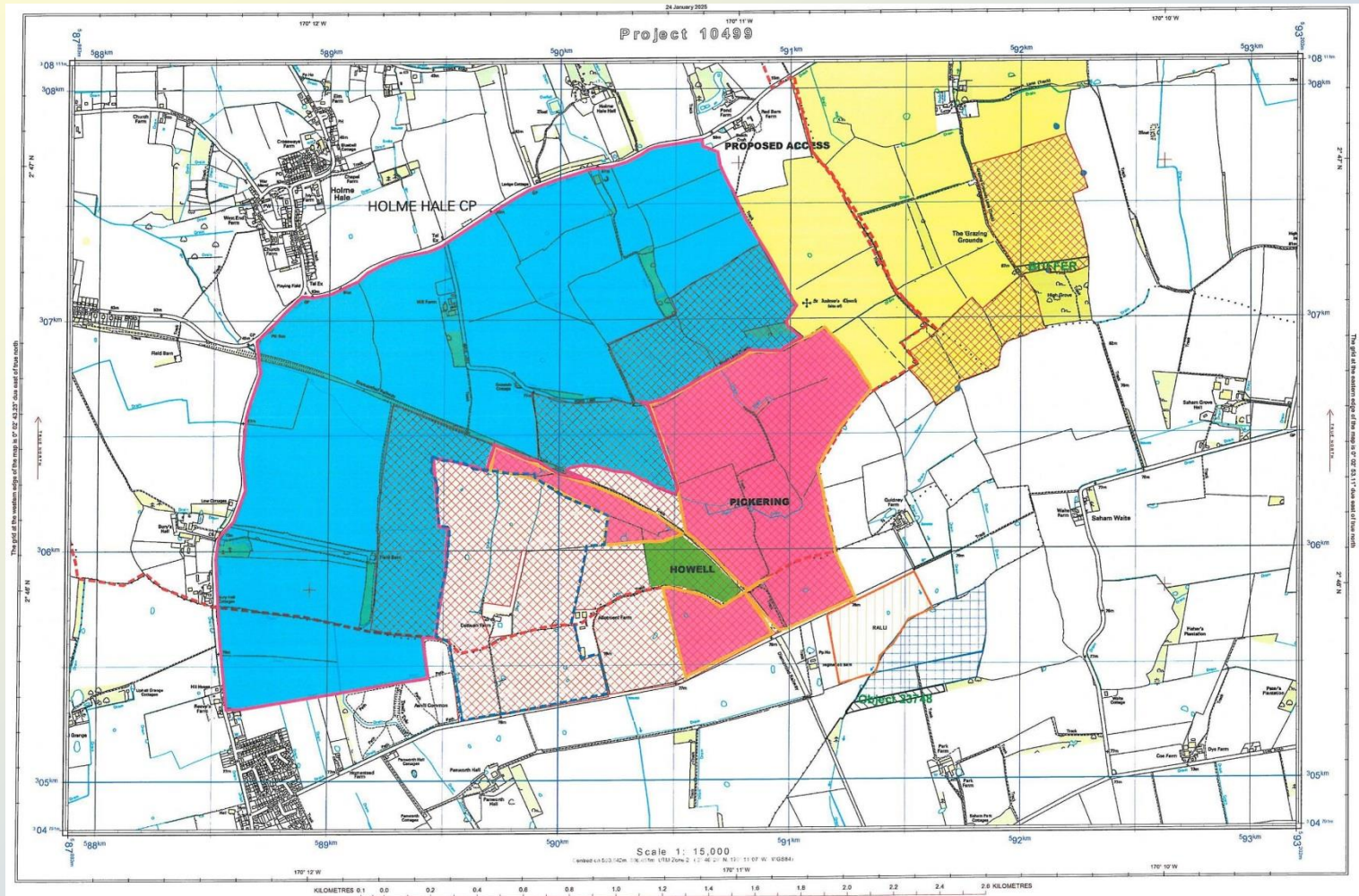
- Solar panel areas will be directly visible from
 - Holme Hale Playing Field
 - Many locations along the A47
- Potential environmental impact(s)
 - Noise from inverters & cooling fans?
 - Light pollution from security-fenced areas
- Significant loss of agricultural land from food production
- Proposed development area includes site of the former, ancient village of 'Holm'
- Significant increase in traffic volumes on rural roads during construction & de-commissioning
 - Likely to result in greater road damage
- Wildlife (Deer) will be displaced from the sites
 - May cause greater damage elsewhere
- Local government (Breckland Council) receives no income from the development
- Generated power is unlikely to benefit local residents

Impact on Holme Hale Parish

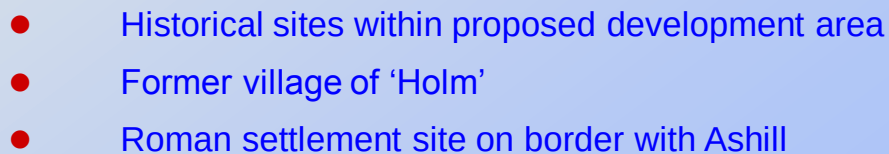


- Red dotted line = Holme Hale Parish Boundary
- Significant proportion of 'Southern' area of High Grove falls within Holme Hale

Impact on Holme Hale Parish



- Coloured areas = Different Landowners
- **Note:** Solar panels (+ battery storage & inverters) only in 'cross-hatched' areas



Visual Impact on Holme Hale Parish



- View from corner of Holme Hale Playing Field – Looking south west

Visual Impact on Holme Hale Parish



- View from corner of Holme Hale Playing Field – Looking south west
- Orange-shaded fields will be solar panels and/or battery storage

Visual Impact on Holme Hale Parish



- View from Ashill Road, just through Railway Arch – Looking west

Visual Impact on Holme Hale Parish



- View from Ashill Road, just through Railway Arch – Looking west
- Orange-shaded fields will be solar panels and/or battery storage

Planning Process & Timescales

- Development is too large to be considered by Local Planning Authority (*Breckland*)
 - Regarded as 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure'
 - Must be considered / examined by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS)
 - Planning Inspectorate recommendations can be overruled by government
 - Any decision can be subject to legal challenge

- **Two parallel & separate consultation / examination processes**

RWE (the applicant)

- Non-statutory consultation (Sept – Oct 2024)
- Statutory public consultation with refined plans (Spring 2025?)
- Submit finalised application to Planning Inspectorate (Autumn 2025)

Planning Inspectorate (the examining authority)

- Environmental Impact scoping consultation (Sept – Oct 2024)
- Official Examination Input welcomed from 'interested parties' (2026)
- Decision / recommendation to Secretary of State (2027)
- Secretary of State makes the final decision (2027)

- Construction unlikely to commence before 2028
 - Begin energy generation ~ 2032-33 ? - Precise date not yet known

Actions by HNPC & Other Parties

Holme Hale PC

Participated in:

- *High Grove & The Droves non-statutory consultation webinars (Sept 2024)*
- *The Droves Co-Design Workshop event (Oct 2024)*
- *George Freeman MP mid-Norfolk Solar Farm Steering Group meetings (Oct & Dec 2024)*
- *Swaffham Town Council solar farm meeting (Jan 2025)*

Other Parish Councils

- *Some have responded directly to the Planning Inspectorate*
- *Some have joined the George Freeman MP steering group Others have not*
- *Regrettable lack of coordinated action*
- *Bradenham PC: Consultants have developed detailed plans for Visual Mitigation measures (hedgerows, tree planting, buffer zones) & other environmental measures, to lessen impact in their parish. Have also suggested not siting panels in certain prominent locations*

Others

- *CPRE: (Council for the Protection of Rural England) – have launched the ‘Anti-Mega Solar Alliance’*
- *Opposes solar development on farmland*
- *Lobbies for rooftop solar on domestic & business premises*

Questions?

- **Can the Development be stopped?**
 - *Possibly ... but Probably Not*
 - *Not without a change in Government policy*
 - *Government indicating will limit / block challenges to National Infrastructure Projects*
- **Can the Development's impact on Holme Hale (and mid-Norfolk) be minimised?**
 - *Probably but will require:*
 - *Plans for viable measures to mitigate impact at a reasonable cost*
 - *Strong, reasoned argument(s) Ideally supported by data*
 - *Arguments should probably be directed to the Planning Inspectorate*
 - *Affected villages must act together in a coordinated manner Not currently happening*
- **What else should Holme Hale Parish Council do?**

Questions & Comments Welcome