# North Yorkshire solar farm plans spark fresh concerns over loss of prime farmland



The proposal for a 49.9MW solar farm and battery energy storage scheme in North Yorkshire, situated between Cawood and Wistow, has ignited a robust debate surrounding land utilisation in the region. Advance documents submitted to North Yorkshire Council detail plans that would allow the site to continue grazing alongside the solar project, purportedly generating enough power to supply around 15,150 homes. However, concerns have emerged from local residents and officials about the impact on high-quality agricultural land, which is often classified as 'best and most versatile' (BMV).

The applicants have positioned their plan as one that exceeds national biodiversity enhancement standards, committing to a range of ecological benefits beyond the minimum 10% required. Supporting documents claim that all solar equipment would be removed after an operational lifespan of 40 years, allowing the land to revert to agricultural use. Yet, critics argue that this return may not materialise, questioning the long-term viability of such promises when companies often have limited accountability once projects are completed.

Councillor Stephanie Duckett expressed apprehension about the strategy of utilising valuable agricultural land for solar energy projects, stating, "The main problem is that they are being planned on good agricultural land." This sentiment echoes a wider concern in the region, particularly given a recent uptick in solar farm proposals within the former Selby district. Plans for other solar farms, including a considerable 39.3MW project covering 82 hectares near Brompton on Swale, have also sparked discussions regarding food security. Locals fear that developments of this nature threaten the productive agricultural land that is critical for maintaining local food supply chains.

Previous decisions by planning authorities in North Yorkshire illustrate the contentious nature of these proposals. In one case, North Yorkshire Council rejected a proposed solar farm on green belt land near Hillam despite the project's potential to supply energy to 17,000 homes and significantly offset carbon emissions. Concerns about the detrimental impact on high-quality farmland and the environment were paramount in the committee's decision. Additionally, the rejection of a large solar project near Husthwaite was driven by fears of compromising the scenic beauty of the North York Moors National Park and the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

As applications for solar farms surge across North Yorkshire, debates intensify over the balance between advancing renewable energy goals and preserving agricultural land. Advocates for solar power highlight the environmental benefits of transitioning to renewable energy sources, particularly amid growing concerns about climate change. However, the lack of consensus on land prioritisation raises critical questions about the future of local agriculture and food security in an evolving energy landscape.

As local councils and residents grapple with the implications of these solar projects, it becomes increasingly clear that future developments will require careful consideration to align energy needs with agricultural preservation, ensuring a sustainable approach to land use.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0lnjrp2wd0o), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0lnjrp2wd0o)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0lnjrp2wd0o), [[2]](https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/24489635.food-security-concerns-north-yorkshire-solar-farm-plan/), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0lnjrp2wd0o)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/country-and-farming/councillors-reject-plans-for-solar-farm-on-good-quality-agricultural-land-in-yorkshire-5031219), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-64330644), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0lnjrp2wd0o)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clyvqnrld2do), [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4nnj7dp632o)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0lnjrp2wd0o> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/24489635.food-security-concerns-north-yorkshire-solar-farm-plan/> - Residents in Brompton on Swale, near Richmond, have raised concerns over a proposed 39.3MW solar farm covering 82 hectares of farmland. They fear the loss of productive agricultural land and its impact on food security. The development, which would generate enough power for 11,445 homes, is under consideration by North Yorkshire Council, with debates focusing on balancing renewable energy needs with preserving high-quality farmland.
3. <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/country-and-farming/councillors-reject-plans-for-solar-farm-on-good-quality-agricultural-land-in-yorkshire-5031219> - North Yorkshire Council councillors have rejected a proposal for a 49.95MW solar farm on green belt land near Hillam, Selby. The decision was based on concerns over the loss of good quality agricultural land and the development's location within the green belt. Despite the potential to supply energy to 17,000 homes and offset 107,500 tonnes of CO2 annually, the committee voted against the scheme.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-64330644> - Plans for a 200-acre solar farm near Husthwaite, North Yorkshire, have been rejected by Hambleton Council. The proposal was opposed due to its proximity to the North York Moors National Park and the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Councillors expressed concerns that the development would negatively impact 'England's finest view' and the surrounding landscape.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0lnjrp2wd0o> - A proposal for a 49.9MW solar farm and battery energy storage scheme on farmland between Cawood and Wistow, near Selby, has sparked debate over land use. The developers claim the project would power 15,150 homes and allow for continued grazing. However, local councillor Stephanie Duckett raised concerns about using good agricultural land for such developments, advocating for the use of poorer quality land or brownfield sites instead.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clyvqnrld2do> - A large solar farm proposal in North Yorkshire has been approved despite concerns from residents about potential flooding. The 66-hectare site near Ripon would generate enough energy to power 12,000 homes annually. While the development aims to provide renewable energy, local residents fear it could exacerbate flooding issues in nearby villages, which have experienced increased flooding in recent years.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4nnj7dp632o> - Plans for a 94-hectare solar farm in Pilmoor, North Yorkshire, have raised concerns due to the concentration of renewable energy projects in the area. Residents and local councils have expressed worries about the cumulative impact of multiple solar farms on the local community and environment. The proposal has attracted numerous objections, highlighting the need for careful consideration of land use and community impact.