

B2 Reading: The Environment

Read about a proposal to build a solar farm near a British village called Barnley. Then answer the questions.

The Barnley Village Committee is opposed to plans to build a 6,890 panel solar farm on a 15-acre site adjacent to the village recreation ground, currently used for agriculture. Under the proposed scheme, the area will be surrounded by an 8ft-high fence. The panels themselves will be about 7 feet high. The committee has already lodged an appeal to the local authority against construction of the solar farm. The councillors are due to meet on 13th March to vote whether or not plans will go ahead. Local residents are invited to attend. Our objections will be presented before the board, and a representative from the solar firm *SunGen* will put forward the case for the development.

Residents are encouraged to voice their objections to the development. These must address the aspects of the scheme that violate the current planning policy. However, you are welcome to make your objections personal, by stating how the plans will affect you as a user of the recreation ground. Some of the most common objections are listed below:

1. The extensive views from the village and recreation ground across the open country will be blocked by the panels and high fencing. Furthermore, once the site has been built upon, it may be considered brownfield, thus an acceptable site for housing or industrial development. It does not, therefore, comply with the local policy which states that developments must not *adversely effect on the appearance or character of the landscape*.
2. The recreation ground has recently undergone major improvements including a perimeter running track, new playground equipment and seating. It is heavily used by families, sports teams and dog walkers, and is regularly used for village events. Cricket and football teams regularly use the recreation ground and it is not uncommon for balls to enter the field. Cricketers are worried that they may become liable for damage to solar panels. If teams are forced to relocate, this would adversely affect the character of the village, and may jeopardise participation in the children's teams. This goes against the National Planning Policy Framework which requires developments to *promote high quality public space and encourage the active and continual use of public areas*.
3. There has been no assessment of the extent to which noise from inverters and cooling fans will affect local residents.
4. As the ground beneath the solar panels will be surfaced, there will be more additional run-off of rainwater. The recreation ground already has problems with drainage, and these may be exacerbated by this development. A formal flood risk assessment must be submitted.
5. The lighting and security systems have not been outlined, it is not clear how the area will be made safe for children

Email your objections to planning@barnelycouncil.gov.uk, and quote the reference BLY7458/00578 in the subject line.

1 What is the committee's opinion of the development?

- It is opposed to the development.
- It supports the development.
- It is waiting for comments from residents before taking a viewpoint.

2 The solar farm would be built...

- on the recreation ground.
- in an agricultural field.
- on a brownfield site.

3 The meeting with councillors...

- has already taken place.
- will take place shortly.
- has been proposed, but not planned.

4 Which of the following is NOT true of the proposed solar farm?

- It will be surrounded by a high fence.
- It will comprise of 6,890 7-foot high panels.
- The solar panels will be placed directly on the grass.

5 People who want to object the development are advised...

- not to write about their personal feelings.
- to refer to the village's planning policy.
- to send a letter in the mail.

6 What is inferred about brownfield sites?

- It is easier to get permission to develop brownfield sites.
- There are already too many brownfield sites in the village.
- A brownfield site is not a suitable location for a solar farm.

7 Teams may no longer play on the recreation ground because...

- parents will be worried about their children's safety.
- spectators won't want to watch matches at the recreation ground.
- players will be worried about damaging the panels.

8 Which of the following is NOT true of the recreation ground?

- It has recently received considerable investment.
- It occasionally floods.
- It is well-lit.