

I note that the No To Longfield committee have put forward comments representing a large number of residents from across Terling & Fairstead, Boreham and Great Leighs. I fully support their comments.

I have already made a submission on the themes of land use and food security, however I feel very strongly that in light of the continued [de facto ban on solar farms](#) by Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey, I would like to include the following additions:

Coffey said *“It’s really important we make the best use of our land to have food security. It’s also really important when considering land use to consider the best place to put renewable energy, which by and large most people would agree, **let’s use our best agricultural land for farming and make use of brownfield sites for a lot of these energy projects, too.**”* I completely agree with this statement and while I am in favour of sustainable energy production, I believe it must be planned in alignment with food security to be truly future proof.

The previous Secretary of State George Eustice, along with his successor, have a preference for 3b classified land to be included as BMV. This would put the 100% of the proposed development on BMV land which directly conflicts with the Environment Secretary’s statement above. At best, it is premature to make an important decision based on land use classification until the criteria of what constitutes best and most versatile land, specifically pertaining to grade 3b, is agreed.

Just this month (November 2022) **DEFRA** stated: *“We must ensure we have the right balance between food security and delivering long-term energy security. Planning guidance continues to encourage placing large solar projects on previously developed and non-greenfield land, provided it is not of high environmental value.”* While this appears to be common sense, sadly the reality is that this isn’t happening, proposals are frequently approved on greenfield land. Developers are moving swiftly to get their proposals approved partly because on paper land classified as 3b appears to be low value (it isn’t, as mentioned above) and partly because at present there are no official attempts to monitor and calculate land given to solar development across the UK as a whole.

The government’s [food strategy published June 2022](#) by the Rt Hon George Eustice MP states: *“Successful domestic production is what gives us national resilience in an uncertain world. Those countries that are entirely dependent on imports for their food supplies tend to be characterised by less choice and higher prices.”* The UK cannot afford higher prices.

The Office for National Statistics [reported in October](#) that food prices rose by 16.4% in just 12 months. If the Inspectorate continues to approve NSIP solar developments of this scale on high quality agricultural land, it will have terrible consequences. There are alternative options for sustainable energy production. There are no alternative options to food security. Favouring more imports is not an efficient or environmentally friendly solution.