Nearby homes, screening and construction noise

9 September 2026 – 11 September 2026

A resident asked for a larger gap between homes and the solar farm, and raised questions about screening, drainage and construction.

Names, contact details and home-location references have been removed. Forwarding details, repeated emails and standard footers are omitted. Images referred to in the emails are not included in this transcript.

What the resident asked

In a note shared on 10 October, the resident also questioned whether the temporary construction compound behind nearby homes would have a noise barrier. They were concerned about noise and visual disruption during construction.

- Could the panels nearest homes be removed, leaving a larger undeveloped gap?
- How far would panels and equipment be from homes, and what guidance supported those distances?
- Would screening work from gardens and upstairs windows, including in winter?
- How would drainage, road widening and construction traffic affect homes and existing wastewater infrastructure?
- Where would noisy equipment be, what were the construction hours and routes, and which hedgerows or walls would be removed?
- Would there be a separate benefit scheme for the nearest households? The resident said this was separate from their planning concerns.

What Blackthorn answered

- Blackthorn said an alternative layout had not been assessed because it had no other land under agreement outside the site boundary.
- It said hedgerows would take 3–4 years to reach about 3–4 metres, and that screening was intended to reduce views rather than make the development invisible.
- It described drainage, access, noise and landscaping reports as being prepared. It said a traffic management plan would be agreed with the Council if permission was granted.
- It said there would be a locally administered Community Benefit Fund, rather than a separate direct-payment scheme for the nearest households.
- On 11 September it said measurement graphics were attached and a 2.6-metre timber noise barrier had been added following feedback. The reply does not identify which equipment or areas that barrier would cover.

Email 1 of 4 · 9 September 2026 at 23:16

Resident asks for a larger gap between homes and the solar farm

From: Local resident
To: Blackthorn Solar Farm

Dear [name removed] / Blackthorn Solar Farm Team,

I am a resident of [local housing estate], and I wish to formally record concerns regarding the current Blackthorn Solar Farm proposal, particularly the extensive area of solar development proposed close to the [local housing estate].

I note from the public information material that the project is still at the stage where environmental studies and community feedback are being used to determine the final layout, with a planning application intended for late 2026. I therefore ask that the concerns below are considered before the design is finalised.

My principal request is that the solar arrays proposed in the fields closest to [local housing estate] be removed from the final layout and that a substantially greater undeveloped buffer be provided between the estate and the solar farm.

I am particularly concerned by the combination of the proposed 3.7 metre panel height and the stated minimum separation of only 53 metres from the nearest home. The consultation material also refers to a 22 metre “best practice” distance. I would be grateful if you could identify the precise guidance being relied upon for that figure and explain why a 53 metre separation is considered sufficient in the specific context of an established residential estate.

I would also ask that the following matters be addressed before the layout is finalised:

- [Local housing estate]-specific distances and alternative layout: Please provide a scaled plan showing the distance from the nearest proposed panels and associated infrastructure to the houses in [local housing estate], identify which property represents the stated 53 metre minimum, and confirm whether an alternative layout excluding the fields closest to [local housing estate] has been assessed.
- Visual impact and screening: The consultation material included [local housing estate] viewpoints VP7a and VP7b. Please provide the full-resolution images, exact viewpoint locations and the year represented by the “post-mitigation established” visualisations. I would also ask that representative views from rear gardens and first-floor windows be assessed, as ground-level viewpoints may not reflect the impact experienced from the most affected homes. Given that the proposed panels may be approximately 3.7 metres high while screening is proposed at around 3–4 metres, please explain how effective year-round screening will be achieved, particularly from upper-floor level and during winter.
- Hydrology and drainage: Please provide details of the hydrology and surface-water assessment for the Lackagh Beg lands, including existing drainage pathways and the measures proposed to ensure that the development does not increase runoff, waterlogging or flood risk to [local housing estate] or surrounding properties.

- Access, traffic and adjoining infrastructure: The consultation material indicates that the L21332 entrance would be upgraded, with possible widening, hedgerow removal and roadside drainage works. I understand there may be physical constraints at this access, including limited width for articulated/HGV movements and potential constraints relating to adjoining land ownership. I also understand that land immediately adjacent to this area is associated with wastewater-treatment infrastructure serving [local housing estate]. Please confirm the exact extent of widening required, the lands over which these works would take place, whether all necessary land/access rights are secured, whether swept-path analysis has been undertaken for the largest construction vehicles, and how the works would avoid adversely affecting existing drainage or wastewater infrastructure.
- Construction impact and operational noise: Please provide the anticipated level of HGV and other construction traffic during the stated 12–18 month construction period, together with proposed haul routes and working hours. Please also confirm the location of any inverter, transformer or other noise-generating equipment near [local housing estate] and the residential receptors being assessed.
- Hedgerows, stone walls and biodiversity: The material states that existing hedgerows and dry-stone walls will be retained and enhanced where possible, while also acknowledging that some hedgerow removal may be necessary. Please provide a map or schedule identifying any sections proposed for removal, alteration or replanting.

I also note the proposed Community Benefit Fund. While community funding may be welcome, I consider this entirely separate from the planning merits of the proposal and from the need to protect residential amenity, local infrastructure and the environment.

I support renewable energy in appropriate locations. My concern is the scale and siting of this particular layout in close proximity to an established residential community, where a less intrusive design appears capable of being considered.

Please treat this correspondence as a formal contribution to the current pre-application consultation process and confirm that the request to remove the solar-development area nearest [local housing estate] will be considered by the project design team before the planning application is submitted.

I would appreciate a substantive written response.

Kind regards,

[Name removed]

Email 2 of 4 · 10 September 2026 at 11:26

Resident asks about benefits for the nearest households

From: Local resident
To: Blackthorn Solar Farm

Dear [name removed] / Blackthorn Solar Farm Team,

Further to my previous email, I would also be grateful if you could confirm whether Blackthorn is considering any specific near-neighbour benefit scheme for residents living closest to the proposed solar farm, separate from the wider Community Benefit Fund, as this development would significantly impact the residents of [local housing estate] due to its proximity.

I understand that some renewable-energy developments have offered direct benefits to nearby households, including electricity-related supports or equivalent arrangements.

Given the proximity of [local housing estate] to the proposed development, I would appreciate clarification on whether any such scheme is being considered here.

For clarity, I regard this as entirely separate from the planning and residential-amenity concerns raised in my earlier correspondence.

Kind regards,

[Name removed]

Email 3 of 4 · 10 September 2026 at 17:30

Blackthorn replies on the layout, screening and assessments

From: Blackthorn Solar Farm
To: Local resident

Hi [name removed],

Thank you for your email.

I note your request for a greater undeveloped buffer to be provided between the estate and the solar farm.

I have done my best to respond to your questions below based on the current draft layout.

[Local housing estate]-specific distances and alternative layout

The GIS team are currently preparing a graphic to show the approximate distance to PV panels from the nearest [local housing estate] homes. I'll send that across as soon as I have it.

An alternative layout has not been assessed, as we do not have any other land in the area under agreement outside the current red-line boundary. In relation to best-practice guidance, in the absence of specific Government guidelines, we are guided by the Best Practice Planning Guidance Report for Large Scale Solar Energy Development in Ireland. Please see Section 3.2.9, Residential Dwelling Proximity.

Visual impact and screening

I have attached the high-resolution versions of the visualisations from VP7a and VP7b.

The proposed mitigation landscaping will be planted during the first growing season prior to the commencement of the development. The hedgerows are expected to reach full establishment, at a height of approximately 3–4 metres, within 3–4 years of planting.

The objective of landscape mitigation is to reduce and manage the visual impact of the development, rather than to ensure that the development is entirely invisible from surrounding properties. There is currently no requirement for solar development to be completely screened from all views from neighbouring properties, including first-floor windows.

The Visual Impact Assessment currently being prepared will assess a series of representative viewpoint locations. All viewpoints are located within the public domain and are representative of views available from main thoroughfares and pedestrian areas within the vicinity of the proposed development. The selected viewpoints are considered comprehensive in communicating the variable nature of the potential visual effects.

In terms of photomontages from individual properties, while it would be unfeasible to visit every location from which the proposed development might be visible, the consultants responsible for the LVIA have extensive knowledge of the Galway landscape and have previously undertaken LVIA work within the county.

Hydrology and drainage

A Surface Water Management Plan is currently being prepared by external consultants based on the draft layout. It is being designed in accordance with the surface water drainage/SuDS policies contained within the Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028, the Greater Dublin

Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS), The SuDS Manual (CIRIA C753, 2015), and the Sustainable Drainage Design & Evaluation Guide (2021).

This plan would be included as part of the planning application.

Access, traffic and adjoining infrastructure

A Site Access Report is currently being prepared by external consultants and will set out the anticipated average number of construction vehicle trips per day. The report will also address the proposed construction entrance at Lackagh Beg, which will be accessed from the existing entrance on the L21332. The road will be subject to upgrade works, including widening and the provision of roadside drainage, to ensure safe access to and egress from the site. This report will be included as part of the planning application.

Construction impact and operational noise

HGV and construction traffic during the construction phase will be addressed in the Site Access Report. A Traffic Management Plan would be agreed with Galway County Council should the proposed development be consented. Delivery vehicles will travel to and from the site outside peak hours to minimise any impact on the local road network. A detailed noise assessment for the construction and operational phase of the proposed development is also in preparation.

Hedgerows, stone walls and biodiversity

A detailed landscaping plan is currently being prepared by external consultants. This will identify any sections of hedgerow or stone wall proposed for removal, alteration or replanting, as applicable.

Specific near-neighbour benefit scheme

In relation to a specific near-neighbour benefit scheme for residents living closest to the proposed solar farm, direct payments to near neighbours are not provided for under the RESS guidelines governing community benefit associated with solar projects.

The development will therefore provide for a Community Benefit Fund in accordance with the applicable RESS requirements, rather than a separate direct payment scheme for residents living in closest proximity to the project.

However, the Community Benefit Fund would be administered locally, with a local evaluation panel established to consider applications and determine how the available funding should be allocated. If the panel considered that a home energy upgrade scheme, or a similar initiative benefiting households in the local area, represented an appropriate use of the Community Benefit Fund, such a proposal could be considered through the local application process.

Our role would be to facilitate the establishment and operation of the fund, including the drawdown of funds in accordance with the agreed arrangements. The developer would not be involved in assessing or deciding on individual applications. Those decisions would be made locally by the appointed evaluation panel.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

[Name removed]

Community Liaison Officer

Email 4 of 4 · 11 September 2026 at 17:34

Blackthorn sends graphics and reports a noise barrier

From: Blackthorn Solar Farm
To: Local resident

Hi [name removed],

Apologies for the delay.

As promised, please find attached measurement graphics from our GIS team.

You will note from image one, as a result of feedback received, we have now included a 2.6m high timber wall noise barrier to further mitigate any potential noise impacts from the proposed development.

Kind regards,

[Name removed]

Community Engagement Manager