



Noise, homes and school traffic

13 September 2026 – 14 September 2026

An autistic resident raised concerns about noise at home, autistic children at the nearby school, and construction traffic.

Names, contact details and home locations are removed. Forwarding details, repeated emails and standard footers are omitted.

As of 5 October 2026

Two promised answers are still missing

Blackthorn promised to check equipment distances and whether noise sensitivity had been considered.

The resident says neither promised answer had arrived by 5 October 2026.

What the resident asked

The resident said steady hums and low-pitched noise could make it harder to use and enjoy their home.

- How would noise affect the resident and autistic children at the school?
- How close would equipment be, and where was noise measured?
- Did checks cover night-time noise, low-pitched and changing sounds, and equipment running together?
- What were the plans for lorries, working hours, construction noise and vibration?

What Blackthorn answered

- No battery storage was planned.
- Blackthorn named the standards used to assess noise.
- It said night-time noise had been assessed and predicted low noise levels.
- It said construction vehicles would avoid school drop-off and collection times.

What remains unanswered

These gaps are in the email replies:

Distance from homes

No measurements were supplied. Blackthorn promised to ask its engineers.

Autism and noise sensitivity

It did not confirm whether the resident's and schoolchildren's needs had been considered. It promised to ask its noise consultants.

Where noise was measured

No exact locations were given. It did not confirm whether the checks represented the home and school.

Low-pitched noise and sounds that come and go

The reply discussed steady tones and sudden sounds. It did not explain how low-pitched or changing noise had been assessed.

Lorries and construction

No routes, vehicle numbers or working hours were given. The replies did not explain how noise, vibration and traffic would be assessed together.

Resident raises questions about noise and school traffic

From: Local resident

To: Blackthorn Solar Farm

Dear [name removed] and Blackthorn Solar Farm team,

Thank you for providing information about the proposed Blackthorn Solar Farm and for giving local residents an opportunity to engage with the project before a planning application is submitted.

I am a local resident living close to the proposed development, and I wanted to raise a number of concerns at this early stage while the project design and environmental assessments are still being developed.

My principal concern relates to noise, both during construction and throughout the operational life of the development.

I understand from the project website that the solar panels themselves are silent, and that a detailed noise assessment is being prepared in relation to the associated infrastructure. I would be grateful, therefore, if you could provide some additional information about the scope of that assessment and the location of the noise-generating infrastructure.

In particular, could you please confirm:

- the proposed locations and minimum distances from residential properties of all inverters, transformers and the proposed 110 kV substation;
- whether any Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) forms part of the current proposal or is being considered as part of this development, either now or at a later stage and, if so, its proposed location, capacity and distance from residential properties;
- whether baseline noise monitoring will be undertaken at the nearest residential properties and at the nearby school before the noise impact assessment is completed;
- whether the assessment will specifically examine tonal, low-frequency and intermittent noise from transformers, inverters, cooling equipment, fans or other electrical infrastructure, rather than relying solely on overall A-weighted sound levels;
- whether predicted night-time noise levels will be assessed at the nearest residential receptors;
- whether the assessment will model a worst-case operating scenario in which relevant noise-generating equipment is operating simultaneously; and
- what noise criteria and technical standards the assessment will use to determine whether impacts on neighbouring residential properties are acceptable.

There is an important reason I am asking for this level of detail.

I am autistic and have significant sensory sensitivity to persistent mechanical, tonal and low-frequency sound. This means that a noise level which may appear relatively modest when expressed simply as an overall decibel figure can potentially have a substantially greater effect on my ability to use and enjoy my home.

I am not raising this as a general objection to renewable energy, nor am I suggesting that autism in itself should prevent development. I am raising it because it is a known characteristic of an existing residential receptor immediately surrounding the proposed site and I believe it should therefore be considered when assessing the potential impact of the development.

There is also a nearby school which is autism-friendly and attended by a significant number of autistic children. I would therefore ask that the school be treated as an important sensitive receptor within the noise, construction and traffic assessments.

Construction traffic is a further concern. The project website indicates that access is proposed from the N83 and L21332 and that a Construction Traffic Management Plan will be prepared. Could you please confirm the anticipated HGV routes, estimated number of HGV and other construction vehicle movements during the construction period, proposed construction hours, and whether movements past the school will be restricted during school arrival and departure times?

Given the proposed scale of the development and the stated 12–18 month construction and commissioning timeframe, I would also appreciate clarification as to how construction noise, vibration, traffic noise and cumulative impacts on nearby residents and the school will be assessed.

I am raising these matters now because your website states that community feedback is intended to help shape the proposal before the planning application is submitted. I would very much welcome the opportunity for these concerns to be incorporated into the design and scope of the assessments now, rather than having to raise them for the first time during the formal planning process.

In particular, I would welcome consideration of locating all potentially significant noise-generating infrastructure as far as reasonably practicable from existing homes and the school, with the final layout informed by the results of baseline acoustic monitoring.

I would be grateful if you could provide a written response to the questions above and confirm that the presence of noise-sensitive residential receptors and the nearby school will be communicated to the acoustic consultants preparing the Noise Impact Assessment.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these concerns. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

[Name removed]

Blackthorn replies about the proposed assessments

From: Blackthorn Solar Farm

To: Local resident

Hi [name removed],

Thank you for your email and for raising your concerns regarding potential noise impacts from the proposed development.

The location of the PV panels and associated infrastructure will be available to view on the final site layout which will be submitted to Galway CoCo and available to view on their planning portal.

There are no plans to include battery storage (BESS) as part of the proposed Blackthorn Solar Farm. If BESS were to be considered in the future by any renewable energy developer, it would be treated as a separate development and would require a new planning application and the appropriate planning consent. The current proposal is therefore for the solar farm and its associated infrastructure only.

A detailed Noise Impact Assessment has been undertaken by external consultants as part of the planning application, which considers both the construction and operational phases of the development. The assessment takes account of the surrounding residential properties and uses a conservative, worst-case approach when assessing potential noise levels.

The assessment concludes that noise from the operational solar farm will be well below the relevant noise criteria at nearby residential properties and is therefore expected to have a negligible impact on residential amenity. Night-time noise levels have also been assessed and are predicted to remain comfortably within the applicable limits.

The assessment also considers construction noise and traffic, with the predicted construction noise levels remaining within the relevant criteria. Appropriate measures, including acoustic screening where required, are proposed as part of the development to further minimise any potential noise impact.

A traffic management plan would be agreed with Galway County Council should the project be consented. Construction and delivery vehicles will travel to and from the site outside the morning and evening peak hours, so the impact on the local road network and local school is expected to be minimal during the construction phase.

In terms of [home location removed], these residential properties are sufficiently removed from the principal noise-generating elements of the development that no significant noise impact is anticipated. The overall assessment therefore indicates that the proposed development should not give rise to any material adverse noise impact for residents in the surrounding area.

All of the above information will be available to view in detail once the planning application is submitted.

I hope this provides some reassurance regarding the noise aspects of the proposal.

Kind regards,

[Name removed]

Community Liaison Officer

BayWa r.e. Ireland Limited

Resident asks for more specific answers

From: Local resident

To: Blackthorn Solar Farm

Hi [name removed],

Thank you for coming back to me and for confirming in particular that BESS does not form part of the proposed Blackthorn development. That clarification is very helpful.

I appreciate that the full Noise Impact Assessment and site layout will become available with the planning application. There are, however, a few specific questions from my original email that I don't think were addressed, and I would be grateful if you could clarify these for me.

You mentioned that the Noise Impact Assessment has already been undertaken by external consultants. Could you please confirm:

- whether baseline background noise monitoring was undertaken at or representative of [home location removed] and the nearby school, and if so, where the monitoring locations were;
- whether the assessment specifically considered tonal, low-frequency and intermittent characteristics of noise from the inverters, transformers and substation, rather than assessment solely by reference to overall A-weighted noise levels;
- which noise criteria, guidance and/or technical standards exactly were used in reaching the conclusion that operational noise will be "well below the relevant noise criteria";
- the approximate minimum distance between [home location removed] and the nearest inverter, transformer or other significant noise-generating infrastructure;
- whether the acoustic consultants were informed that the receptor population includes an autistic resident with significant sensory sensitivity to persistent mechanical, tonal and low-frequency sound, and that the nearby school serves a significant number of autistic children; and
- whether those receptor characteristics were specifically considered within the Noise Impact Assessment.

I appreciate that the full technical results will be published with the application, so I am not asking you to provide the report in advance. I am simply trying to understand the methodology used, particularly given that the assessment has already been completed.

On construction traffic, thank you also for confirming that construction and delivery vehicles will operate outside morning and evening peak hours. Could you clarify whether this specifically means that HGV movements past the school will be avoided during school drop-off and collection times, rather than referring only to general commuter peak hours?

Thank you again for engaging with me on this. I appreciate the opportunity to clarify these matters before the planning application is submitted.

Kind regards,

[Name removed]

Blackthorn answers and promises two follow-ups

From: Blackthorn Solar Farm

To: Local resident

Hi [name removed],

No problem at all, I'm happy to help.

I've done my best to answer your questions below based on the information I have available to me at the moment:

1. Whether baseline background noise monitoring was undertaken at or representative of [home location removed] and the nearby school, and if so, where the monitoring locations were

The report does undertake both attended and unattended baseline monitoring for areas closest to the southern parcel including residential developments in Lackagh village. The report categories by radius locations rather than individual estate names or schools.

2. Whether the assessment specifically considered tonal, low-frequency and intermittent characteristics of noise from the inverters, transformers and substation, rather than assessment solely by reference to overall A-weighted noise levels;

The report explicitly considers tonality and impulsivity. It says the operational noise comprises mechanical plant noise from the inverter units and states that any potential tonal characteristic would be masked by the existing ambient noise because the predicted levels are low. At night, the predicted noise would be masked by existing ambient noise and therefore considers it absent of a tonal acoustic characteristic

3. Which noise criteria, guidance and/or technical standards exactly were used in reaching the conclusion that operational noise will be "well below the relevant noise criteria";

EPA NG4 – guidance from the Environmental Protection Agency on assessing noise.

BS 4142 – a standard for assessing noise from industrial and commercial sources.

ISO 1996-1 – an international standard for measuring and assessing environmental noise.

BS 5228-1 – guidance on controlling noise from construction and outdoor works.

BS 7385 – guidance on assessing the effects of vibration on buildings.

BS 5228-2 – guidance on controlling vibration from construction and outdoor works.

Galway County Council Noise Action Plan 2024–2028 – the Council's local approach to managing environmental noise.

The report also refers to the consultant's previous experience on similar projects of this nature.

4. The approximate minimum distance between [home location removed] and the nearest inverter, transformer or other significant noise-generating infrastructure;

I will ask the engineering team for this information as I do not have exact measurements to hand.

5. Whether the acoustic consultants were informed that the receptor population includes an autistic resident with significant sensory sensitivity to persistent mechanical, tonal and low-frequency sound, and that the nearby school serves a significant number of autistic children; and whether those receptor characteristics were specifically considered within the Noise Impact Assessment.

I will have to get clarity on this from the consultants

6. On construction traffic, thank you also for confirming that construction and delivery vehicles will operate outside morning and evening peak hours. Could you clarify whether this specifically means that HGV movements past the school will be avoided during school drop-off and collection times, rather than referring only to general commuter peak hours?

Yes, it would avoid school drop-off and collection times.

If I can be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Kind regards,

[Name removed]

Community Liaison Officer

BayWa r.e. Ireland Limited