

Thank you for having me at this hearing today, I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak. I'm really sorry that I can't be with you in person; Parliamentary business has kept me in Westminster today. My name is Katie Lam, I am the Member of Parliament for Weald of Kent. The village of Aldington falls within my constituency and, as you probably know, I have previously made a representation raising various concerns about the scale of this project and the significant adverse impact it will have on our rural community.

I want to focus today on the issue that's been raised with me most frequently, which is Battery Energy Storage Systems. This was my chief concern when I originally raised objections to this scheme. I am also sorry I can't join the specific session on this tomorrow but I will follow it closely.

These battery units (and their associated infrastructure — including the aboveground water tanks) will of course have a major impact on the landscape, which is currently enjoyed by those who walk the many footpaths that were the subject of this morning's Hearing on public rights of way. But I am above all concerned that evidence points to these batteries presenting an unacceptable risk over at least the next 40 years.

Nothing that I have read or heard since I made my submission in December last year provides me with any comfort. Indeed, as has been mentioned, the terrible fire at Handen Farmhouse in Adlington only last month brings into sharp focus the issue of the adequacy of water supply there for firefighting. As you probably know, this major incident was attended by multiple fire engines and many firefighters, and there was such demand for water that the local network couldn't adequately supply the homes in the area during the course of the operation. Water had to be tankered in from some distance in a relay of engines. Access to that farmhouse is not easy, but the task of putting out a battery fire at this solar farm would be much harder: it will be even more difficult for fire engines and tankers if they have to cross the network of tracks within the proposed development, quite possibly at night, while at the same time working in an environment of toxic fumes caused by battery thermal runaway and managing a potential evacuation of residents downwind. I understand that, through various iterations of the scheme, some battery emplacements have been removed from some areas (including the Southeastern block and the floodplain areas). Consequently the density of battery emplacements in the remaining area has gone up. These batteries are now clustered to the west of the village and depending on wind direction in the event of a fire, toxic fumes may well be driven by an easterly wind towards the central part of the village and to homes along Aldington Frith.

Whilst this dispersal of batteries over a wide area may not be a unique proposition internationally, I believe this may be the first of its type in England in this sort of undulating rural setting, close to a village community. Whilst the developer may believe there are advantages in not combining batteries at one location, I'm not convinced that proper

consideration has been given to the advantages of this alternative approach. Were other sites, with less tortuous and safer emergency fire service access, considered for such an alternative arrangement and dismissed? Did any of them have a more substantial mains water or natural water resource close by which could be relied upon if there was a fire? Equally, it's my understanding that guidance on critical safety aspects provided by the Fire Service is unclear and still developing.

I'm really pleased that concerns about batteries are one of the two Issue Specific Hearings that you have felt it necessary to hold this week. It speaks to the very real concerns about the safety of the scheme. You have seen and heard the representations already made about this issue – including representations on behalf of our community from those that are clearly extremely knowledgeable and experienced in this field. Nothing so far has been presented that has begun to allay their worries (or mine) about the risks these batteries pose.

My constituents are not guinea pigs, and shouldn't be treated that way. It's not acceptable to expect them to bear this burden of risk and tolerate the dispersal of batteries around the village in the design proposed. They have my full support in their reasoned opposition. I feel that this element of the scheme by itself represents an unnecessary danger to our community and should, I believe, be reason enough for you to recommend refusal of this NSIP application.

Thank you for your time.



Claire Ayres

Constituency Manager and Senior Caseworker

Office of Katie Lam MP, Member of Parliament for the Weald of Kent

Sign up to Katie's newsletter: katieforkent.com/newsletter

Facebook: facebook.com/katieforkent | **Instagram:** instagram.com/katieforkent

If you are a constituent who would like to contact Katie, simply fill out [this form](#) and we will get back to you ASAP
You can complete Katie's Transport Survey [here](#).

All correspondence received by the Office of Katie Lam MP, is treated in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018. A copy of the office Privacy Notice is available online at www.katieforkent.com/privacy.

UK Parliament Disclaimer: this e-mail is confidential to the intended recipient. If you have received it in error, please notify the sender and delete it from your system. Any unauthorised use, disclosure, or copying is not permitted. This e-mail has been checked for viruses, but no liability is accepted for any damage caused by any virus transmitted by this e-mail. This e-mail address is not secure, is not encrypted and should not be used for sensitive data.