

Aldington and Mersham Support Group

Deadline 7 Submission – Final Summary - 8th May 2025

At the end of a process lasting more than three years, Aldington and Mersham residents (despite their best endeavours) now have the prospect of this application being recommended for approval. The scheme today is (apart from the new and vast distributed BESS element) almost indistinguishable from that which EPL001 proposed in 2022 when they called themselves Evolution Power.

Throughout the process we have sensed a lack of competence in the Applicant and feel that the best evidence of this, has been their reluctance to be open to working with local people to find commercially workable compromises. This is a scheme where so many opportunities for a much better outcome have been missed quite simply because of this attitude.

There are any number of reasons why the Examiner should recommend that the Secretary of State should refuse to grant consent, and we have written at length about each. However, by way of a summary, at this our last opportunity to comment, we set out below what we consider to be the Applicant's ten worst failings:

1. Failure to consult in a genuine and open way with the community and instead relying on the “tick box” provisions of the Act, paying lip service to this critically important issue.
2. Failure to go about “land assembly” in a genuine way. Delegating enquiries to conflicted third party landowners, which has contributed to a scheme that is not of “good design”.
3. Failure to be honest about the “bolt-on BESS”, the unique dangers of the distributed proposal, the risks to human health (and aquatic life) and the status of water supplies.
4. Failure to “own up” to the significant biodiversity impact. Proposing forms of mitigation without fully funded monitoring and often with impractical means of later adjustment.
5. Failure to undertake an appropriate level of archaeological investigation. Having to be pressurised into further work which was done when conditions were totally unsuitable.
6. Failure to recognise the terrible landscape impact of incorporating parts of Aldington Ridge - and unbelievably, even now, trying to maintain the scheme will be in a “bowl”.
7. Failure to explain the need to include BMV land on Aldington Ridge (when it could have excluded it) and failing to justify why the “Outlier” (50% BMV) was included at all.
8. Failure to explain why the scheme could not accommodate PROW without radical realignment, nor why the site with 16 PROW made it particularly suitable for solar.
9. Failure to be honest about the increased traffic impact at A20 junction, misrepresenting dimensions there, ridiculous talk of two minibuses, and hoodwinking KCC in all of this.
10. Failure to explain why it relies for precedent on historic DCO Orders for the definition of the word “maintain” instead of more recent DCOs which incorporate built-in safeguards.