



Hearing Transcript

Project:	East Park Energy
Hearing:	Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) - Part 1
Date:	17 March 2026

Please note: This document is intended to assist Interested Parties.

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The video recording published on the Planning Inspectorate project page is the primary record of the hearing.

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Tue, Mar 17, 2026 4:01PM • 1:47:54

00:05

Everyone, the time is 2pm and this open floor hearing for East Park energy is now open. Thank you all for joining us today. Please. Could a member of the case team confirm that it can be heard clearly and live stream. Streaming and recording have started. Thank you. My name is Graham sword, and I have been appointed by the Secretary of State as the examining authority to examine the application by bssl cams, bed one limited for an order granting development consent for this project. I'm supported by the planning inspectors case team. They are managed by Deborah Allen, who is with us today. Today's hearing is a hybrid event, meaning that some of you are present with us, here in the room, in person, and some of you are joining us using Microsoft Teams. I intend to make sure that you will be given a fair opportunity to participate. However you decide to attend today, I will now deal with a few housekeeping matters. So Could everyone please set all devices, smart watches and phones, to Silent to avoid disrupting the hearing. Please keep microphones muted until I invite you to speak. For those of you in the room, I understand there is no fire alarm test planned for today. However, should an alarm sound and please leave using the fire exits, one of which is to the rear of this room, facing the car park. Alternatively, there is another fire escape opposite the entrance door to this room across the hall. Please go to the fire assembly points to the edge of the car parking area, which have green signs identifying them. Should you require the toilet? Then there is signage direct you to them in the main hall outside of this room. A recording of today's hearing will be made available on the east Park energy webpage of the national infrastructure planning website as soon as we can after the hearing has finished, please contact a member of the case team. If you don't know how to find the project page, a link to the planning and Inspectorate privacy notice was provided in my rule six, letter dated the 17th of February 2026 I assume that everybody here today has familiarized themselves with this document which establishes how the personal data of our customers is handled in accordance with data protection law. Please speak to Deborah. If you have any questions about this, I will give the applicant an opportunity to respond to all submissions at the end, what I would say to the applicant is, please, do not feel obliged to respond to every single point made. A brief overview will suffice with a more detailed response in writing. If you so wish to submit a deadline one, I will not invite any introductions. At this stage, there will be an opportunity for you to introduce yourself. Later. If I invite you to speak, I will follow the agenda that was published on the 17th of February 2026 just about to complete agenda item. One. Does anybody in the room have a question about the agenda or the arrangements for this hearing?

03:54

Does anybody taking part using Microsoft Teams have a question about the agenda or the arrangements for this hearing?

04:01

Do hearing. So that concludes agenda item one,

04:11

moving to agenda item two, the purpose of the hearing and how it will be conducted. The purpose of this open floor hearing is to give you an opportunity to raise things that you should be considered, that you think should be considered for the decision about whether development consent should be granted.

You are free to raise any topic that is important and relevant to the examination. This is an opportunity for me to hear your thoughts about the application. At first hand, this hearing is subject to my powers of control over its conduct, as established by the Planning Act 2008 and to be clear, the purpose of this hearing is to assist my examination. The hearing is not to be used as a political platform. And any attempts to do that will be not be tolerated. Each patient person that wishes to speak will be invited to speak at the appropriate time. These oral submissions should be based on representations previously made in writing by the speaker. However, this should simply not repeat matters previously covered in a written submission, but rather provide further detail, explanation and supporting evidence where applicable,

05:38

as set out in the agenda. I have suggested that each speaker completes a submission within three or five minutes, depending if they are representing a group of organization or a member of parliament who will be give given five minutes, individuals will be given three minutes. This will be timed, and I will give you a minute warning before your loaded time expires, in order to manage our time better, today, I propose to invite people up to the microphones opposite in groups of up to eight people. I will, as I consider necessary, ask questions of the speaker, and I will give the applicant an opportunity to respond at the end, all comments questions and answers are to be directed to me rather than anybody else. Does anyone in the room have a question about this? How this hearing will be conducted?

06:45

Oh, get it. Roving microphone, please.

07:01

Thank you. How do we know when our time to speak starts?

07:06

Okay, I'll in the next agenda item, I'll go through groups of people who I'll call up to the desk in front of me. So please listen carefully to your your name being read out and which group you'll be invited to come up.

07:33

Will there be any latitude on timing, or is the three minutes that's cut dead because some of these speeches are fractionally longer, like four minutes, three minutes to

07:48

as you can see, there's a lot of people wishing to speak today, and need to give everybody the opportunity a chance to speak. Couple of seconds might be tolerated, but anything longer than that won't be unfortunately.

08:16

Apparently my name was on the list of people who wanted to speak, but that's not the case. So will the person who checked me in at the door have amended your information? Yes, right. Okay, thank you.

08:35

Anybody else wish to ask a question or make a comment? Okay, anybody on Microsoft Teams I would like to ask a question.

08:51

Okay, so

08:55

I will move on to agenda item three. So when I invite you to speak, please ensure that you speak clearly into a microphone, and please state your name and who you are representing each time you speak. Please remember to unmute your microphone when you speak. If you're taking part using Microsoft Teams, please switch on your camera, if possible. When I invite you to speak, please switch microphones and cameras off again when I move to the next speaker. So I will invite oral submissions in the following order, and then the first group. One these individuals will be given five minutes as they are representing groups or members of parliament. So Tricia price and Kennedy representing the British Horse Society, and Kennedy representing the borough of Bedford, local access forum. Now I do stress that. But that those issues that are addressed in each of those speeches need to be different. No represent replication. Please. Mary stamp, on behalf of the MP for Huntington, Michael Whitlock, representing Purton Hall and Swineshead parish council. Richard Fuller, MP for North Bedfordshire, Andy Bellamy, representing bombhurst and keysore parish council. And finally, Andy Pike, representing stop East Park energy. All of the following groups have three minutes each. So in group two, Emma glass, Helen Stark, Anna Phillips, Jason Yule, Tim price, Carol patson, Mark Hudson, Amy Hill. Group three, Michael Jefferson, Richard finston, Anne Kirk, Patrick Christopher Lacy, Bernard Kingswood, Nicholas, Bolton, Gillian Lane, Sean Woodward. Group, ruff. Elaine Wheeler, William scurry, Alan Wheeler, Oliver Creasy,

11:35

Anthony withers, Simon Christopher Ellis lane, Amanda Patel, Simon Beverly, and in the final group, Tracy Stokes, Sarah coller, Phil Wales, Elizabeth butt, Henry Lafferty, Simon King, Nigel Kirkpatrick and Les Rand are the and anybody in the room that whose name hasn't been called out, who wishes to Make an oral representation, okay?

12:21

Yeah, her name's Roy Palmer and I did submit before the deadline to speak. Okay, thank you.

12:36

Councilor Sharon jetsera, representing why Boston Ward and I had also submitted to speak, as I'm representing all the residents,

12:49

I've added you to the another group of final group of six. I'll call you up

12:59

just to say my name was called out the last group of people.

13:15

I'm Tricia price, I've called out in the first group, and I've actually just submitted it as a private individual, not as a group. Okay,

13:40

excuse me, but a counselor that is late, she should have five minutes, not three, and if you put her in the last group, she'll only get three.

13:54

Okay, thank you for that. Given there's a person dropped out of the first group, then I can put the councilor into that first group.

14:12

Anne Kirkpatrick and Nigel Kirkpatrick have been put down to speak, but we're not. We haven't submitted to speak.

14:19

However, we're talking about same topic. So can we borrow, allocate some of the times to and extend

14:26

it and three minutes or sorry, do you wish to speak or on that? No, I've never asked to speak, right? Sorry, okay, it was on my list that you had, but that's fine, Patrick, okay, okay, I'll remove those names,

14:44

Amanda Patel, Nick Bolton and I were just saying that because these two individuals have been allocated time to speak. If we could have a couple of minutes extra for what what we're talking about this afternoon, that would be helpful, please. I. Sorry, which group are you representing? We're not representing a group. We're talking as individuals

15:05

representing Purdon Hall and the community of Purton Hall.

15:09

Okay, sorry, were your names on the list?

15:13

Yes, we are registered to speak these two, the two kirkpatrick's registered, but not actually expecting to speak, and so we as the community partner will be grateful if we could have the time that's been allocated to them instead to cover the topics which they would otherwise have covered. So Amanda Patel and myself, if we can have an extra minute each that would be appreciated

15:40

instead of The six minutes that the kirkpatrick's would otherwise have had,

16:14

Sorry, just for clarification, and Kirkpatrick is Not

16:21

speaking okay, I don't know how you

16:58

Okay, anybody else?

17:06

Anybody on Microsoft Teams that name wasn't called out, but who wishes to speak?

17:20

Okay? Thank you.

17:32

So if we can invite the first group up to the tables. Please, please keep your oral statements sick and to the point taking up to a lot of time. I may if you become repetition repetitious, ask you to move on or conclude. I

18:07

so please remember to identify yourself when you speak. Please direct all comments to me, rather than anybody else, and as I said, I will give the applicant an opportunity to respond at the end of the meeting, I will be taking notes as you speak, so please don't be put off if I'm not looking at you. So if we could move from left to right, please,

18:37

thank you all right.

18:41

My name is Kennedy, and I'm the chair of the borough of Bedford local access forum, and I'm also volunteer at the British Horse Society here in Bedfordshire. I am speaking today on behalf of both organizations, but I wasn't actually expecting two slots, so I have only prepared one speech. I hope you'll be lenient if I slightly overrun. I obviously want to talk about the impact of this development on rights of way, but first, I'd like to try and put a human face on the people who use our public rights of way by telling you about a young boy who rides his pony from Brook end in keso. He's recently turned 11, and following treatment for cancer, he can now only walk with crutches at school. He can't join in playground games. He can't take part in sports nor go on some school trips due to his disability. But he has one passion, his pony, and one ambition to represent teen G sorry, break up at this point, to represent Team GP at the Paralympics. He visits his pony after school, at the weekend and during days in the holidays. He is he and his mom often ride up bridal way 40 from Brook end and along bridal way 37 and back, as it's a safe off road route for. Him to use, but during construction, this ride will not be available for them for most of the times when he can ride immediately after school or during the school holidays, his pony gives him freedom exercise, access to the countryside and a passion that defines his young life. So Mr. Sword, when you hear references to rights of way users, please remember they are real people who use these rights of way for their physical and mental wellbeing. This boy is just one of them today. However, I want to focus on the serious and long lasting impact this development will have on our public rights of way network. Around 20 kilometers of rights of way are within the whole site, 15 kilometers of them in bed picture, and they will be directly affected, but many more outside the site will also be indirectly affected. These effects will be felt during construction, throughout the operational life of the development, during commissioning, and permanently thereafter, despite the scale of the adverse impact, the application proposes only very limited new public access. This is in direct contradiction to repeated requests from local stakeholders and to clear national and local policy, including paragraph 210, 36, of en three, which requires that the majority of that major in energy development should consider and maximize opportunities to facilitate enhancements to the public rights of way. Solar farms are industrial installations that bring no direct benefit to local communities, and they inevitably alter the character and enjoyment of the surrounding landscape right away. Enhancements are one of the few ways such a project could provide public benefit and reduce the negative impact on residents. Yet the applicant has chosen not to pursue them throughout the consultation, Bob laff, the VHS and Bedford Borough Council have all proposed practical and coherent improvements the network in Bedfordshire. These suggestions have included, just by way of example, a safe off road link from lodge farm in little Stoughton to the B 660 in Brooklyn, keyso, which will complete an existing equestrian circuit and remove 3.6 kilometers, roughly two miles, of hazardous road work for riders. This could be achieved by upgrading some sections of footpath through Site B. However, these proposals have been dismissed, not on technical grounds, but apparently because the landowners do not wish to permit additional public access. This is deeply concerning. It shows no recognition the harm being done

to a well used and valued community asset, nor any willingness to mitigate that harm. It is also telling that in the applicant's own glossary, the definition of green infrastructure has been altered from the mppf definition to remove any references to health and wellbeing benefits for communities, that omission speaks volumes to me. In conclusion, the applicant has ignored clear policy, disregarded community input, and declined opportunities to offset the damage this development would cause the public rights of way network, whether this is due to land over pressure or simple unwillingness, the result is the same. The proposal fails to mitigate significant and lasting harm to an important public resource. For these reasons, I believe the development in its current form is unacceptable. Thank you.

23:41

Thank you for that. Can move on to next.

23:49

Thank you. I'm Richard Fuller. I'm the Member of Parliament for North Bedfordshire, and I am opposed to this proposal for East Park energy, not for ideological reasons, but for very practical reasons that I outlined in my written submission upon which I would like to expand and update. Those five reasons were the use of best and most versatile land, the cumulative impacts on the area and surrounding area, the role of battery storage in this particular proposal, clarity on financial ownership and its future. Future financial ownership and a very specific point around potential Newtown at Thamesford. So inspector on best and most valuable land this proposal uses of a high proportion, certainly relative to the vast majority of solar farm proposals that have come through the inspectorate to date, but I'm concerned, following a debate in the House of Commons, that there is great imprecision about how to weight best and most valuable land, not only in your own decision, but also in the decision that is subsequently made by the Secretary of State the Minister in reply to a parliamentary debate that I called said, quote, I'm not going to put a figure on it right now, but we have clearly said it is important to find the right balance when it comes to best use agricultural land. I think, sir, there is a sense that there is a lack of grip on the use of best and most valuable land in this process, and from a public point of view, to protest on the one side that we're protecting both best and most versatile land, and yet also see proposals where large proportions go through raises some questions about the validity of the process overall. Secondly, and most importantly, are issues to do with cumulative impacts. My first point would say that, having reviewed the application, the applicant submission, I would say that for my own judgment of what is going on in the area of North Bedfordshire, the applicant has not adequately addressed cumulative impacts, no way whatsoever it has either not recognized or has missed critical matters that will have an impact on this project, or which this project will have an impact upon, I would point out, first of all, there is significant uncertainty about the future land use in this particular area of this development, and there is also significant uncertainty in how future planning decisions will be made at a local level, and also whether there will be national intervention on planning decisions in this area. The applicant talked about East West Rail, but did not adequately reference some of the changes that East West Rail had made. I would like to point out that in this particular area, the end this particular part of East West Rail. East West rail has already changed their route three times, and so we're still not clear what the final route will be. And I'd also point out the East West rail, and this goes to the issue of overlap and congestion impacts in the community, East West rail has said they want to start everywhere, all at once, and that if they do that in this area, will cause significant additional congestion during the period that the proposal. The applicant proposes to develop their site. The applicant refers to Black Cat roundabout, but says that it will be done by the start of the process. That is probably true, God willing. However, there will be considerable follow on developments following on from Black Cat roundabout by highly likely by highways England, including reviews of the roundabouts at Buckton to the north, Sandy to the south, and potentially a rerouting of the a one. There is also concerns about the lack of coordination between projects. It's a pretty much open secret that East West Rail and national highways, in the discussions of what would happen at Black Hat didn't talk to each other at all through the entire process, and probably one of the reasons why east west rail has considered itself three times

so I would just say that finally, on this point, sir on cumulative impacts, Bedfordshire has six nationally significant infrastructure projects. East Park energy is one proposal, Universal Studios, Black Cat roundabout, East West Rail, Luton Airport and Thompson. That is a significant amount of disruption

28:10

in the area. Yeah, have less than one minute. Very

28:13

good. The others, I think, would it be possible on the use of battery storage? If battery storage is a significant part of the proposal, then it raises the question about whether energy price arbitrage is the main cause of this project, or Solar Energy Renewables, and therefore, is it compliant with en one and en three? And finally, it would be helpful if the it is not clear on the if you cannot investigate specific to the financial backing of the company, but it is possible, in the process to look at the future ownership, would it be possible for the applicant to outline its plans refuture ownership? Thank you. Yes.

28:49

Thank you very much. Moving on to councilor Sierra, I

29:03

thank you. I'm addressing this hearing as the ward councilor for why Boston, representing the concerns of my residents in relation to the proposed East Park energy solar farm. Let me be clear at the outset, we support renewable energy and recognize the importance of achieving net zero targets. However, this proposal raises significant and legitimate concerns about location, scale and impact. This is an industrial scale development proposed within open countryside. Residents are deeply concerned that it will fundamentally alter the rural character of why Boston and surrounding villages. This is not a minor change. It is a transformational visual and landscape impact that risks eroding the identity of our local area. The proposal involved the loss of productive agricultural land at a time when food security is increasingly recognized as. National priority, residents are asking a very reasonable question, why are we sacrificing farmland when alternative sites such as brownfield land and commercial rooftops exist? There are serious concerns regarding biodiversity and wildlife impact, flood risk and surface water management the cumulative effect of multiple large scale solar farm development across North Bedfordshire, taken together, these impacts are not isolated. They represent a wider environmental pressure on the area residents feel there has been insufficient meaningful engagement and limited direct benefit to the local community for a project of this scale, communities expect genuine consultation, transparent communication, tangible local benefits. And at present, that confident has not been confidence has not been achieved. This is ultimately about balance. Renewable energy must not come at the expense of rural communities, agricultural capacity, environmental integrity. There are less intrusive alternatives that should be prioritized before developing large areas of countryside. I am reflecting the collective voices of my residents in stating that this proposal, in its current form, is inappropriately cited. It's disproportionate in scale and presents unacceptable impacts on landscape, Environment and Community. Just to be clear, we are not opposing renewable energy. We are asking for it to be delivered responsibly, proportionately and in the right locations. Thank you. Thank you very much.

32:02

On name is Michael Whitlock, and I'm speaking as chair of Purdon Hall and swinete parish council. The parish council strongly objects to the proposed East Park energy development, and ask the examining authority to recommend refusal. Our objection relates not only to the elements within our parish, but to the entire proposal and its cumulative impacts across neighboring parishes. First, the scale of the development between swine hood and howl Western is overwhelming. When combined with two

existing solar farms and two recently approved schemes, it would create a solar corridor of approximately 2800 acres, highly visible from homes, roads and well used rights of way in the higher parts of our parish. Second, the proposal would lead to the loss of best, the most versatile agricultural land, around 74% of the 1900 acre site is grade two and three, a farmland, meaning highly productive land would effectively be removed from agriculture for more than 40 years, including construction and decommissioning periods. Third, there is a lack of evidence that alternative locations have been properly considered, despite solar being a flexible technology capable of deployment on brownfield land, rooftops, car parks and transport corridors. Fourth, national planning policy is clear. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to protect BMV agricultural land, the national policy statement for renewable energy infrastructure en three states that where agricultural land must be used, poorer quality land should be preferred and previously developed or brownfield land should be prioritized. Fifth, local planning policy is also a material consideration. The Bedford local plan 2030, particularly policies 56 and 57 identify suitable locations for renewable energy as areas of lower quality agricultural land, built up areas and previously developed land. The current proposal fails to meet these policy tests or properly address the required impacts. Sixth, the visual impact on landscape character would be significant around 700,000 solar panels, up to three meters high, across 1900 acres, together with fencing, lighting, CCTV, inverters, substations and battery infrastructure would industrialize an open rural landscape. Proposed screening planting is uncertain and would itself alter the character of the countryside. Seventh, the development would significantly affect the settlement pattern and nearby dwellings. Villages that currently sit within open farmland would instead be surrounded by solar infrastructure. With some homes within 100 meters of solar infrastructure and fencing. Eighth, there are concerns about the historical Environment and Heritage assets. Archeological work has already revealed extensive prehistoric and Roman remains beyond the protected Roman town site, and the development may affect the setting of several grade one listed churches, including that at little stored in ninth the construction phase would cause major disruption. A construction period of around three years would involve 1000s of HGV movements on narrow and ill equipped rural roads, many currently in poor condition and the repetitive noise of pile driving approximately 250,000 posts to support the panels. 10th the scheme could have a significant impact on the natural environment, enclosing habitats behind security fencing and potentially damaging existing ecological areas, including sites that support rare wild flowers. 11th, the proposed battery energy storage system, consisting of around 100 container size lithium ion units, raises legitimate concerns about fire and explosion risks, which are documented internationally. 12th, there are concerns about increased flood risk, particularly along curtentor Brook, which already floods after heavy rainfall, solar panel layouts may

36:30

less than one minute.

36:33

13th, the proposal would significantly affect public rights of way and recreational use, although routes may technically remain open, their character would change dramatically as they pass through fence infrastructure and during construction, many would be adjacent to heavy construction traffic. 14th and finally, there are the long term effects on local residents. Communities face years of disruption, followed by at least 40 years living with this development creating significant anxiety about the future of their environment, their homes and their way of life for these reasons, based on national policy, local policy, environmental protection and community impact, Purton Hall and swine said parish council respectfully asked for the development consent for East Park energy to be refused. Thank you. Thank you.

37:31

Good afternoon. My name is Andy Pike, a resident of Hale Weston and nominated spokesperson for stop East Park energy. Stop East Park energy is a community led, voluntary and unfunded group

established in response to the east Park energy proposal. It comprises around 1000 residents, landowners and stakeholders from nearby settlements who may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed development, a community that participated in the statutory consultation process in good faith with the expectation, expectation that their evidence would meaningfully influence the scheme. Yet the proposal before the examination suggests that this input has had limited effect. I speak today to assist the examination by highlighting matters that affect confidence in the evidence before it. Our submission does not oppose renewable energy in principle, rather, we submit that this particular proposal has not been demonstrated to be appropriately cited, proportionate or supported by sufficiently robust environmental evidence. At the heart of our concerns is a fundamental issue of decision stage confidence. The environmental statement leaves multiple critical matters unresolved, and the draft element Development Development consent order does not secure the mitigation on which the assessment depends. Taken together, these factors raised legitimate questions as to whether the likely significant effects of the development have been fully identified, assessed and controlled to the standard required for a project of this scale and duration. At its core, this case turns on a simple question not whether renewable energy is needed, but whether this project in this location, on this evidence, is justified. Most notably, the scheme would result in the long term loss of a nationally significant area of best and most versatile agricultural land. National policy does not prohibit development on such land, but it does expect a transparent approach, demonstrating that lower conflict alternatives have been properly considered and that the chosen site represents the least harmful practicable option. It is not clear that such a demonstration has yet been provided the proposed development is also unusually dispersed, extending across approximately 12 and a half kilometers as a patchwork of non contiguous parcels. This configuration is not only environmentally extensive, but also operationally inefficient, increasing land take, infrastructure complexity, construction impacts and long term harm, compared with a more compact arrangement delivering equivalent capacity. Closer to the grid connection point in the context of a development consent order where compulsory acquisition powers are sought, the justification for assembling land on this scale and over this distance is especially important. The application does not appear to provide clear evidence that more compact alternatives were fully tested or reasonably discounted. In addition, the claimed public benefits are uncertain in both scale and durability. Generation forecasts appear optimistic relative to both typical UK performance and local comparators, whilst long term operation depends on future equipment replacement cycles and operational assumptions that have not fully been specified or assessed, the examination is therefore asked to weigh permanent or effectively irreversible land use change against benefits whose magnitude and longevity remain only partially evidenced across a wide range of topic areas, including alternatives, environmental baseline, safety, transport, ecology, cultural heritage deliverability and secured mitigation, there is a consistent pattern of incomplete assessment or reliance on information deferred to post consent stages rather than being robustly examined through this examination, this application appears to rely on general policy support for Renewable Energy to carry significant evidential gaps, rather than demonstrating through scheme specific analysis that the proposal is necessary, proportionate and appropriately cited. National Policy recognizes the importance of renewable energy, but it does not mean that any scheme should be approved regardless of its impacts. Decisions must still be based on adequate evidence, a proper assessment of alternatives and confidence that impacts can be acceptedly managed, and that the mitigation will be secured and deliverable on the information currently before the examination, it has not yet been demonstrated that this proposal represents the least harmful and proportionate means of Delivering the stated need in this location, we therefore, respectfully ask that the proposal be judged on the strength of its evidence. Ultimately, the communities affected will live with the consequences of this decision for decades, and they seek assurance that those consequences have been fully understood and justified. Thank you for your time. Stop. East Park energy stands ready to assist the examining authority throughout the examination. Thank you.

42:29

Good afternoon. My name is Andy Bellamy. I'm a parish councilor representing bolnhurst and keso parish council. We have submitted a comprehensive argument as to why the planning Inspectorate should recommend refusal of the project, and we are also a co signatory of the statement from the five local parishes all opposing the scheme. Rather than simply repeat the many arguments we put forward in our submission, I want to concentrate on just two themes today, like just about all submissions today, the need for sustainable energy is understood and supported by the parish council. However, as a rural community, we understand and support also the need for sustainable food supply as a nation. Both requirements are vital for the country, and given the current global political instability, both should be high on any government's agenda, with equal weighting much of the rhetoric around sustainable energy, and specifically this proposal suggests that solar energy is somehow more important than food security, and it creates a battle of two opposing forces, where what to do with 1900 acres of countryside is an either or choice. It creates a narrative where locals should take one for the team, irrespective of the harm such a scheme will cause to food security. This, however, is not true, and the planning system should consider this in the wider context, rather than on a few fields in middle England. At the heart of this choice should be the options driven by sensible policy and the national planning policy framework should and does reflect this. So what are the choices? Well, renewable, sustainable energy production can be put in fields, but they can also be built in the sea, on brownfield sites, on industrial facilities and even on rooftops. On the other hand, hand, sustainable food crops have a more limited choice. You can't grow wheat in the sea. You can't grow barley on brownfield sites, and the prospect of growing rapeseed on rooftops is a challenge, to say the least. We are determining the future of 1900 acres of prime agricultural land, irrespective of attempts to diminish the value we as residents have seen the food productivity of this land over many years, and what appears indisputable is that some 74% of the land is a high value contributor to the nation's food production. And let's be clear, this is not a temporary project. This is a 40 year commitment with no plan or. Negation to return it back to food production. It will a project. It's a project that will likely generate, on average, 40 megawatts of power when the marginal efficiency of location and current technology are factored in, not the impressive 400 megawatts, which is a theoretical maximum. So for a minute, we strip away the emotive issues of this proposal, we are left with a choice, retain 1900 acres of prime agricultural land for sustainable food production and find somewhere else to produce 40 megawatts of power, or permanently take out of production those 1900 acres with no thought to a wider joined up plan which balances the need for sustainable energy and sustainable food. My second theme, I want to highlight just one word, overwhelming, like most of the area, bonhurst and Keiser is an unmistakably rural parish. Aside from countryside, it has few facilities, little infrastructure, and a road network that is barely able to support its own community and the odd commuter rat run. The development phase of this project will be simply overwhelming, both in terms of traffic movements and the temporary workforce required to build out the proposal. Looking further afield, the scale of this project isn't just an issue for the parish, when put alongside other infrastructure projects, it threatens to overwhelm the whole of the area, East West Rail, thamesford, New Town, Universal Studios, Luton Airport, Hinchinbrook, hospital, industrial and logistics parks along the a one a 14 corridor and the Oxford to Cambridge Grove one minute, these are all major infrastructures initiatives planned already in build in this area, and it appears difficult to argue that this level of development will not overwhelm the region's infrastructure. And finally, what if this project is built? What will we be left with? Well, simply put, we will have a cumulative 2800 acres of industrial furniture, which will be completely overwhelming. The loss of nature will be overwhelming. They will be private properties, footpaths and rural roads that are 360 degree views of industrial plant. We will we will have created something completely out of character to the area when there are much better solutions to the challenges of sustainable energy, in short, we will have created an overwhelmingly poor solution to a valid challenge. And for this reason, the parish council strongly objects to the proposal. Thank you. Okay.

47:36

Thank you very much. Before we move on to the next group there is representative of MP for Huntingdon on the line. If it could ask? Mary stamp,

47:53

yes, that's correct. Okay, if you could, thank you. Proceed.

47:58

Please. Thank you, Mr. Sword. My name is Mary stamp. I'm reading the statement on behalf of Ben obsejecti, the Member of Parliament for Huntingdon, as his chief of staff. Unfortunately, Ben is unable to join us, as he's covering duties in parliament for the shadow teams today, so he's asked me to convey his apologies. Mr. Obese Jackie recognizes the national drive for new renewable energy. However, the national policy statements lan one and en three are clear, national need is not a mandate for unacceptable local impacts or the sacrifice of other vital national objectives. The scale of the land to be used is staggering. This project seeks to occupy 1900 acres, of which approximately 74% is classified as best and most versatile BMV agricultural land, NPS and three at paragraph 210, 29 states that poorer quality land should be preferred. Mr. Obsolete contends that the developer has failed to demonstrate that occupying these high yield food producing soils is necessary when alternative lower grade or brownfield sites exist. This is not a temporary change. It is a 40 year sterilization of productive capacity that undermines our national food security. The scale of the project goes beyond significant when combined with existing schemes, we are looking at a solar corridor approaching 2800 acres for the residents of Hale Weston and great Staughton. This is not just a change in view. It is the total encirclement of rural settlements by industrial infrastructure. This creates a progressive industrialization of our rural landscape that fundamentally alters the character of these historic villages, our rural road network is physically incapable of handling the projected 10s of 1000s of HGV movements over a 30 to 36 month period. These are narrow B and C roads not designed for industrial volume. Mr. Absijekti points to the precedent of the Cleeve Hill. So. Park where management plans failed to prevent sustained damage to road surfaces, verges and village greens. Reliance on a management plan does not guarantee protection for communities like ours, where the basic infrastructure is so unsuitable. Finally, Mr. Absacti is deeply concerned by the long term hydrological impacts. The movement of heavy machinery will cause severe soil compact compaction, while the gutter effect of rain running off the panels with increased surface water runoff, this poses a direct flood risk to the river Kim, a catchment area which is already highly sensitive to flooding. This is a high impact, low yield proposal. It prioritizes developer profit over food security, local safety and environmental preservation for these reasons, Mr. Obviously Jackie would respectfully urge the examining authority to recommend refusal of this development consent order. Thank you. Okay.

50:55

Thank you very much. I believe that covers everybody who was representing the group.

51:05

So if we can now move on to group Two, please do

51:39

Sorry, I can't hear you.

51:46

Okay, so, yeah, if we go in the order. Emma glass, Tricia, price, Helen Stark, Anna Phillips, Jason Newell, Tim price, Carol Patterson, Mark Hudson, could we get a

52:21

couple of more seats. Please,

52:31

hear me Hill, yep,

52:42

you'd like to go, Hello. My name is Emma glass, and I live in the parish of little Stoughton. There are many issues I could raise today, but I want to focus on two critical points, construction, logistics and the availability of workers. First, the proposed 30 month timeline. How has that actually been calculated? Because, in reality, large construction projects are routinely delayed by labor shortages, poor weather and supply chains, and when we look at a similar energy projects already approved, many, to my knowledge, have barely even started. So the question is simple, is this timeline realistic? And more importantly, where is the workforce coming from? From my own experience working on solar projects, I can tell you, finding skilled labor is one of the biggest challenges on sites I worked on, around 95% of the workforce were migrant workers, and these are not roles you can just fill overnight. Workers need training, certifications, CSCS, cards, the right to work in the UK. So with multiple large projects competing for the same limited pool of labor, how would this project be staffed? And that leads directly to the next issue, accommodation and transport, because these workers will not, in most cases, be local, they will need housing in bed and breakfast, HMOs and rental properties within the surrounding communities, even on small projects, this created constant challenges. I personally had to arrange accommodation. In some cases, we had to move on workers due to complaints from residents about anti social behavior, accusing alcohol and drugs. So what assurances are there that this won't happen again? And a much larger scale? We are told workers will use minibusses and shared transport. But in reality, this is very difficult to manage consistently, and we already seen on previous developments, workers end up living in vehicles or makeshift conditions. So I ask, what guarantees are in place to prevent that, and how will it actually be enforced? Then there is the issue of traffic. Over 1 million additional car are expected during the construction. This is simply not sustainable. The B, 645, Is already an accident. Black Spot, HGV, traffic is another major concern. In the early phase, 35% of heavy goods vehicles will take place. Our roads are not built for that to happen. Vibration to historic buildings is the realism and haulage routes. Let's be realistic, will not be adhered to. Drivers will not take those routes. They would take the most economical routes. This is how the industry work. I was a transport manager for 30 years. There is no practical way to enforce what is proposed. Finally, public rights of way, horse riders, cyclists and walkers, this is impractical for them not to be able to use the rights of ways safely, traffic disruption, safety risks, loss of land, and many feel the benefits do not come back to the communities who are being asked to carry the burden. Until these concerns are addressed with clear, credible answers, this project cannot be considered acceptable.

56:02

Thank you. Thank you.

56:06

My name is Tricia price. I'm a UK level three coach. I've operated my equestrian training business from lodge farm and casorton for the past 25 years.

56:17

Stop the floor, but don't think the microphones working properly?

56:27

Okay? Is that better? Hello. My name

56:30

is Tricia price. I'm a UK level three coach, and I've operated my question training business from lodge farm little Stoughton for the past 25 years. I wish to formally raise significant concerns regarding the proposed solar park development, particularly in relation to its impact on my business, the welfare of horses and the wider equestrian use and use in the local area. My business is centered on training of young horses and developing up and coming equestrian athletes. I also offer horse accommodation for amateur local riders who ride for pleasure. The construction phase of this scheme is likely to cause severe disruption to all of these activities. Training schedules will be significantly affected, and the safe exercise of horses on local roads, which is an essential component of their development, will become increasingly difficult. My daughter is currently competing within the youth ranks of Team GB, and road work forms a critical part in maintaining horses fitness. The presence of heavy construction vehicles and increased traffic movements poses a serious, serious risk. Many horses are highly sensitive to large vehicles, and such exposure can cause extreme distress, potentially leading to injury or even fatal incidents. Road riding is fundamental to both competition horse fitness and the education of young horses. Since relocating to little Stoughton, the quiet, rural nature of the road network and the bridal ways has been a key factor in the success of my my business, for example, the Brazilian event team based themselves with me in the lead up to the 2012 Olympics, specifically because of the suitability of our rural setting and the network for maintaining their horses condition, the proposed development has already had a tangible negative effect on my business. I had been due to take on a member of the Indian equestrian team as a client in preparation for the Asian Games in Tokyo. This arrangement has now been canceled due to concerns about disruption associated with the solar park, particularly during construction phase. The anticipated noise and vibration from construction activities, especially the piling are of serious concern. One minute left, young and sensitive horses are particularly vulnerable to such disturbances and which can negatively impact their behavior, training and overall welfare. Considerable weight is rightly given to the protection of wildlife such as newts, bats and badgers in the planning process. However, it is equally important to recognize the welfare of domesticated animals. Horses, like other animals, are highly sensitive to environmental change, their welfare, safety and livelihoods that depend upon them should be given appropriate consideration. I'm also aware that other local animal based businesses, including the kangaroo kennels, share similar concerns. In conclusion, I believe this development poses a significant and unacceptable risk to my business, the safety and the welfare of horses and the character of the local area. I strongly urge that these concerns are given full and proper consideration in the decision making process. Thank you.

59:41

Hello. My name is Dr Helen Stark. I'm a chartered environmental scientist with specialisms in terrestrial and freshwater ecology, environmental impact assessment and environmental policy, procedure and management. I've worked on a variety of projects, including wind farms, housing developments and habitat creation projects. During my career in civil engineering, I also acted as an environmental clerk of works, and I've trained contractors on site. I am a volunteer for this proposal. In the past, I've led ecological walks for primary school children in keyso and upper Dean, teaching them about the environment. They are very enthusiastic about being outside and looking at habitats and species I've taught them bird watching, which they adore. I would like to address the proposals impacts on ecology and biodiversity, particularly in relation to habitat species and overall ecosystem functioning. The applicant has presented an incomplete baseline and omitted protected species data, multi taxa and multi survey data is missing and is critical as conclusions about impacts, residual effects or biodiversity, net gain cannot be reached at present, examples of these emissions include understatement of the importance of an impact on farmland birds such as Skylark, approximately 125 territories noted by the applicants ecologists, no targeted invertebrate surveys have been undertaken, even though these are an important element of the ecosystem functioning. For example, providing food sources for birds and bats. The baseline for great crested newts, a European protected species, is incomplete. In this case, the ponds excluded or emitted from the survey cannot be assumed to be functionally irrelevant. It

should also be noted that terrestrial habitat is important for great crested newts. The existing data was obtained in June 2022 government advice states that data is only valid for a four year period one minute left, notwithstanding the further work required to fully determine the baseline, it is clear the proposal will have negative, direct and indirect impacts on habitats and species. These include loss of habitat and habitat mosaics, both in space and time, altered flight paths and foraging behavior in birds and bats, polarized light, attraction and trap effects, the cumulative effects of these impacts with other projects and in combination, effects are inadequately assessed. In addition, ecosystem services have not been assessed, including habitat connectivity functions and flood alleviation. Much of the proposals area is habitat. Habitat loss, fragmentation, loss of species and potential colonization by non native species are significant outcomes. Conclude, please, residual, long term impacts, even with mitigation in place, the mitigation proposed by the applicant is inadequate. For example, how can small hedge plants replicate mature species? Rich head roads?

1:02:59

If I can stop you there, please. Thank you. If you have any other points to make, please follow the writing. As I said, principal means of evidence in this examination is through the written process. Thank you.

1:03:21

My name is Anna Phillips, good afternoon. I am a volunteer from the villages of Dean and upper Dean and lower Dean, neighboring villages. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today to address the proposal's impact and environmental statement on agricultural land, particularly best and most versatile farmland. BMV, for short, National Planning Policy recognizes this land as a finite and nationally important resource for domestic food production. The evidence currently available indicates that large parts of the proposed site consist of grade two and grade three agricultural land, both of which fall within the BMV category, the environmental statement relies on a field soil classification exercise undertaken at only half the recommended sampling rate. Without a proper survey, it is difficult to determine how much high quality farmland would actually be affected, or whether the scheme has genuinely avoided the best land where possible. Furthermore, the developer's estimate of the proportion of BMV land appears to be understated. The calculation includes areas where solar panels cannot be installed, roads, woodland and other non productive land. These areas should be excluded from the calculation to show the true increase in the proportion of BMV land within the developable area. The scale of the proposal is also significant. The scheme would take hundreds of hectares of BMV land out of conventional agricultural use. This intensive arable farming land in this area can produce 1000s of tons of cereal crops each year over the lifetime of the project, that represents a substantial loss of domestic food production. Yet the environmental statement does not clearly quantify this loss. Importantly, this impact should not be viewed in isolation, but be considered alongside other solar developments that have already been consented in the immediate area, several operating, one under construction, another due to begin the cumulative effect would see around 2800 acres of farmland removed from food production, a financial loss in one rural area. The development is described as temporary, because panels and related infrastructure may be removed after 40 years. But in farming terms, that is a generation with no guarantee the land would ever fully return to farming, current energy policy strongly supports the repowering or re energizing of renewable energy sites. For example, the current owner of one of the local solar schemes, Manor farm has already applied to extend its lifetime, barely a decade into its original 25 year operational term. At present, key questions remain unanswered about the true quality of the land, the scale of food production lost, whether the survey was conducted properly and lower quality land options were properly considered. Thank you.

1:06:22

Thank you. Hello. My name is Carol Patterson. I live in the small village of lower Dean, near to the affected villages. This proposal is intended to cover 1900 acres of prime agricultural land currently being used to grow crops with nearly 700,000 solar panels. This, in its entirety, is bigger than Gatwick Airport. The applicant themselves admit that the whole site is high or good quality agricultural land, as the array sites are not contiguous, it also means large access tracks, battery arrays and huge cabling corridors. So it's not just land lost to the panels themselves. This will mean the loss of 1000s of tons of food per year, roughly equivalent to 3.5 million loaves of bread per annum. This is at a time when food security is an oft mentioned phrase, the nearly 700,000 solar panels, some three meters high, will have a direct detrimental effect on nearby settlements. In particular, keyso, little and great Stoughton and pertinent owing to existing solar arrays, to the extent that the panels, in some cases are right up to the gardens of houses and some villages will be surrounded by solar arrays. The noise for these householders during the suggested three years of construction, which will include the use of pile drivers, will be appalling, visually. The applicant suggests that tree planting will screen the houses from the view of panels. However, these trees will, in fact, be whips young trees, approximately one year old and unlikely to screen anything for over 25 years. This brings up the problem of the longevity of the site the applicant proposes. This will be a temporary scheme of 40 years. This is not temporary by then, current voltaic technology will have long been superseded, but none of the applicants or members of the government will be by then in a position to make sure that the site is properly decommissioned, so the land may never be able to be able to be used for agriculture. Again, solar panels could be installed on nearby warehousing of which there is a large quantity, instead of on this prime, prime landscape. No contingency appears to have been made to change some of the solar panels for onshore wind turbines so the land can still be farmed and to cover what the sun doesn't shine. All of these options were raised with the applicant and dismissed. There is also the issue of the large battery storage array of 100 megawatts. These are all lithium batteries the size of large shipping containers. There is a risk with all lithium ion batteries of experiencing what is called thermal runaway a phenomenon where a chain reaction in one battery cell causes it to increase in temperature at an astonishing rate, eventually leading to all the other cells in the battery catching fire or exploding, the fires are extremely difficult to put out owing to their feeding on themselves. So are naturally treated as control burns. The smoke from such fires is highly toxic and highly flammable. The chemicals, both from the battery array and the firefighting solution ask you to conclude, please, okay, our contaminants can continue to long term water and land contamination. Many people have seen the effects of lithium fire in news such as Thurrock battery array in February 25 which took 200 firefighters and still had to be left. Burn itself out, and this local area has nowhere near 200 firefighters.

1:10:05

Thank you. Thank you.

1:10:12

Hello. My name is Tim price, and my family's property will be surrounded by the proposed development in the little Stoughton area. We've already heard how national planning policy, which has been supported by ministerial statements from both the current and the previous governments, is clear that the BMV best and most versatile land should be prioritized for food production as we now, as we know, 74% of the East Park application is classified as BMV land. The point I wanted to pick up on was planning guidance requires developers to undertake a sequential test when proposing development on BMV land, demonstrating that no more suitable, lower grade land is reasonably available. Whilst I understand that this is difficult in the case of East Park, as the whole area is made up of high quality farmland, I would question how much of the East park site is being wasted through the fragmented and inconsistent design. The plan comprises multiple parcels of land spread across a wide area, and there are clearly more logical and less harmful configurations that should be considered, including alternative land owned by the same landowners. There are a number of solar developments in the area, including those at personal little Stoughton airfield, and the scheme currently under construction at bushmead,

which is right next door to the grid. The addition of the East park development would and in my opinion, result in an unacceptable cumulative impact, effectively turning this part of North Bedfordshire into a dumping ground for solar infrastructure. This industrialisation of the countryside places increasing pressure on the local landscape, rural character and community amenities. I feel that landowners have been selective in the land put forward for this development and have excluded areas of personal importance. For example, land use for Game Shooting, the principal land contributor has ensured that his shooting grounds remain unaffected, despite and in my opinion, those areas being more suitable for solar in terms of proximity to the grid, greater distance from residential areas and a closer alignment with the existing solar park at little Stoughton airfield and close and close to the new solar park being constructed in bushmeat developing these alternative areas would help to reduce transport impacts and construction related disruption. I wonder if these options have been considered. If the scheme is East Park is deemed necessary as part of UK's Net Zero targets, then the planning Inspectorate should look closely at the configuration and general layout of the site in conjunction with other sites locally that have either been built or are currently under construction, if high quality farmland is to be lost to net zero. It is my view that these losses should be minimized through superior quality site design and integration with other local scheme schemes. I believe the proposed development is inappropriate in its current form, and it would result in significant and lasting harm to agricultural land, the local environment and the community. Thank you.

1:13:33

Hi, I'm Amy Hill. I'm a purple resident, and I represent the young families with young children, whilst we're for renewable energy and understand the benefits for our children's future, our focus is on the inefficiency of large scale solar power. Solar produced energy in this in the summer, when there is the least amount of demand for it, and the battery storage facilities can only offset demand by hours, not whole seasons. I have a large solar array on my house. It's east west orientation. It produces very little energy between October and April, virtually none. And whilst that's a justifiable return on investment for my own rooftop, how is it justifiable on best and most versatile land, Bedfordshire, averages 1500 hours annually of sun, and that's on a good year. Spain averages up to 3000 hours of sun per year, and even they struggle to make it economically viable, with investors pulling out of projects once the subsidies have stopped, leaving half built abandoned solar facilities littered across Mediterranean countries. The economic model being put behind this installation is fundamentally flawed and significantly biased in favor of the developers. Thank you.

1:14:54

Jason Newell from great Stoughton, I'd like to just cover two points, please. Evidence for a modeling of grid. Scale solar generation in Great Britain highlights the key limitation, solar performs relatively poorly in our climate particularly during the periods when electricity demand is highest. Average solar capacity factors in the UK are typically around 9.5 to 11% meaning that solar panels operate at only a fraction of their theoretical output over the year. More importantly, solar generation peaks during the summer months, when electricity demand is generally lower, while output is lowest during the winter, when the demand is higher. Modeling suggests that even if the UK reaches the government's 2030 target of around 45 gigawatts of solar capacity, solar would only supply 14.6% of national electricity demand, rising to roughly 16% with storage, battery storage, even if solar capacity reached the government's vast target of 75 gigawatts by 2035 against a rising demand, the contribution could fall to around 12.9% again, only increasing very modestly with storage. This highlights a significant seasonal mismatch between the solar produced electricity and when electricity is most needed, raising legitimate questions about the efficiency of deploying very large ground mounted solar schemes on good agricultural land, and the role of battery energy storage in the scenario. The second point I'd like to raise is, according to the developers construction traffic management plan, the construction phase would involve 5278 HGV deliveries, equivalent to 10 and a half 1002 way heavy goods vehicle movements, along with 790 light goods vehicles deliveries, creating over 15 102 way movements over

the construction period. In addition, during the 18 month peak construction phase, there would be 700 to 854 daily two way traffic vehicles associated with the workforce. Even taking these figures at face value, this represents many 1000s of additional vehicle movements on rural roads that were never designed to accommodate sustained heavy construction traffic. Local roads such as the B, 645, b, 660, and B 661, are narrow rural routes used daily by residents, cyclists, equestrians, agricultural vehicles and school busses, even now, they are littered with potholes. In addition to the narrow road network, there are also concerns regarding local bridges. Bridges, great Staunton, for example, were not designed for the weight and the volume of heavy construction traffic associated with a project at this scale. Although the proposed suggests construction vehicles should be avoid certain bridges, there is no robust or enforceable measures to guarantee this over a long construction period, it is inevitable that the HGV is another construction would use other routes. The proposal combines a development whose energy contribution would be limited by the recalties of the UK climate. I'll stop there. Thank you.

1:18:17

Thank you again. Please follow up any additional information in writing. Thank you, Mr.

1:18:23

Sword, can I please step out? I have to go and pick up my children. Thank you. Thank you. Good

1:18:40

afternoon. My name is Mark Hodgson. My wife and I are long term residents of little Stoughton. It's clear beyond peradventure, that if this application proceeds, it will occupy a massive swathe of prime agricultural farmland. But it also has to be self evident that in order to proceed, the application needs to satisfy not just prevailing government policy, but also the law of the land. And that's where I struggle a bit, since as far as I can see, the law and government policy are an item on the point. Now with respect to the law, I refer to the high court judgment of in London and solar farms from two years ago. In that case, his honor, Mr. Justice Jarman, upheld the planning inspectorates decision to reject the application. And the ratio of milwin Jarman's judgment in that case was that the putative developers had failed to show any serious efforts to identify alternative target sites based on non BMV land. Now as to government policy, the revised N double pF, published in February of last year, states on page 54 and I think we've heard this already, but the quote where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary air. Areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of higher quality. Now I've heard it argued that the NPPF doesn't apply to these mega NSA IP applications, but that's a fallacious argument. It ignores chapter five of the preamble to the NPF, N double pF, which confirms that its provisions and I quote are a material consideration in relation to NSIP applications. So as I say, both the law and the policy favor citing where possible new solar farms on non BMV land. So what have these putative developers done to meet those requirements and establish that in the current circumstances, there's no sensible option but to cite their solar farm where they propose and the answer would appear to be next to nothing. Paragraph 7.1, dot two. Of the site identification report. That's a double P 58 in your library states search zones have been identified following a desk bound review, and that desk bound review would appear to amount to a couple of hours leafing through some brownfield land registers. To be charitable, blrs are a blunt tool, while in many quarters, they're considered as totally unfit for purpose. Lichfields, the planning reputable planning consultancy, independent, no ax to grind. Concluded, our research finds brownfield land data to be lacking in the comprehensiveness, accuracy and detail required to facilitate effective policy and decision making. So I asked, therefore, whether a cursory desk bound review four or more years ago of an ill regarded system is sufficient to meet the goal set by both case law and government policy, to try, where possible, to avoid site and use solar farms or non BMV land. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

1:22:06

So if I can ask the next group, please, group Three, come to the table. Do

1:22:59

like to go, please. Hello. You hear me? Okay. My name is Sean Woodward. I'm living one of the name properties in the application which are affected by the application. I strongly oppose this scheme. I respectfully ask the inspector to consider the mental health impact on people who live in our rural communities when confronted with unexpected plans for massive, unwelcome solar projects, I refer to the cumulative effect of years of stress and worry, particularly for those living in close proximity to the proposed site where landscape and homes are severely compromised, mental stress cannot be appeased by community fund offers, which mean little to families, dreading the thought of years of intense engagement with the planning process and the eventual disruption of the three year construction phase. The prospect of major projects close to communities is detrimental to health, and I'll explain why. The anxiety begins from the moment the first innocuous leaflet drops on our door mats. From that point on, communities are blighted by the prospect of a huge unwanted development being forced upon them, and they worry about how to oppose it through the complex and intimidating. N sips, project process, sorry, this is heightened for families where the site runs adjacent to surrounds their homes or is highly visible along arterial village roads and rights of way, always detracting from the landscape and the ability for residents to relocate. Maybe you have a new job. Maybe you need to move to look after elderly parents. Maybe you need to downsize due to old age, illness and divorce or divorce, all of which are impacted from statutory consultation to the operational stage is about eight years, eight years of cumulative worry. And stress contributes to poor mental health. Understanding the nsips process also takes a mental toll. Residents have to learn quickly about complex national planning processes, and for many residents, full engagement at this level is an impossibility when they have full time jobs such as the volume of documentation to be digested. This application, 220 documents, some over 170 pages long. Others are just bewildered by the process and feel helpless to engage less than one minute. Others are resigned to the fact that whatever they do, it'll be just built anyway, and feel resentful and angry. All affects mental health negatively, whether the scheme is finally accepted or rejected. I suggest, the blight on residents mental health still continues, particularly for those wanting to move house. Firstly, if granted, three years of heavy construction, traffic disruption and noise, particularly pile driving, will put off most prospective home buyers, while impacting on the mental well being of existing residents. Secondly, after construction, there's little enticement to buy properties in the landscape spoiled by seas of industrial solar panels with a questionable 10 year estimate for effective screening and worries about best safety. Can I Scott conclude please? Finally, there's always a nagging doubt that once built, the scheme will be extended again in the same way, the East Park energy scheme extends the existing mana farm solar scheme and is adjacent to others near zone D, which are also to be extended. Thank you. Thank you. Thank

1:26:48

Michael Jefferson, living in melchbourne, though I've been in touch with the stop East Park solar scheme people quite a bit over the last few months. My main background is over 50 years of relevant Energy Energy Policy and climate change experience. This proposal is flawed in two major respects. First, the level of annual solar radiation in the UK is much too low to justify such a scheme, the World Bank's energy sector management assistance program covers global photocopy potential by country. It places the UK by comparing looking at countries and locations, 229th out of 230 countries in the world, this is not the place to have solar power. We should, as I mentioned later on, be much more effective on wind power. It is interesting that this scheme believes that it could achieve a annual load factor of 12.4% the existing schemes nearby, little Stoughton trail, Western 11.5% and 10% on rolling average. Although the latest one for the 10% one is 9.6% so the 12.4% is very high figure. The highest figure in this country is Arbor field in Rochester at 13.7% and triangle farm in Cambridgeshire at 13.5% the second point has been covered by a number of speakers, which is the heavy import dependency for food in this country, close on 48% and which some people believe could rise by some 23% points. But

between 2050 and 2070 if we really do think that you have something like 70% import dependency for our food in present, the possible future geopolitical conditions, this would be very unwise. Finally, I'm not indifference to climate change and the efficacy of energy schemes. Indeed, I believe that ranging wind powers contribution, it would should be relatively easy and also small modular nuclear power facilities. I mentioned my experience over 50 years. I became chief economist of Shell back in 1974 and I spent a number of years in Shell and Senior Planning and energy supplied positions there. I was chairman of the policy committee of the world renewable energy network for about 17 years. I was senior editor to the general energy policy and currently on third place Deputy Secretary General of the World Energy Council, where I spent 10 years being attacked by. Climate change inspectors, 28 years, closely involved with it for 25 years, close involved into government Panel on Climate Change, have gotten their certificate for the thank you for contributing to their Nobel Peace Prize. And I am an associate professor specializing in energy and commodities.

1:30:18

And I ask you to conclude there, please and submit any additional information and ranking, please.

1:30:27

My name is Bob Kingswood from Hale Western for 14 years, I was in the nuclear industry, and for the remainder of my working life, I was involved with computers in control in steel works, in coal fired power stations, in desalination plants in South Africa, Venezuela, Nigeria, Middle East and Europe. First of all, I would like to say that the I agree with a lot of the comments made to my right here, it's very low efficient the solar farm solar panels. Also, when you add to this the distribution, your distribution efficiency is only 48% as well, and they tend to be in remote locations, so again, you're losing more of your power. The National Energy System Operator nisso We're supposed to have a strategy in this country for power generation, but it's time that niso got a grip of the development of renewal energy in April 2025 it was stated that we required, I think a gentleman here said before that we needed 43% gigawatts of solar power by 2030 In April of this last year, we already had 65 gigawatts in the development pipeline, so we were 60% over the top already. Why do we need more? The also the council preservation rural England, they say it's time they got a grip of the of the strategy for the generation. Let's look at pricing. At the moment, we pay way over the top for solar energy because of the pricing structure we have. It's geared to the price of generation by gas, and we pay even more when the solar panels are disconnected from the system, one minute left, I'll jump on then the I'd like to also mention AI Artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence is not going away. It's here to stay now, based on the data centers and the supercomputers you need to have a reliable power source, and we're going to the increase in requirement for power. 30% of this is for artificial intelligence data centers. Now it's no good connecting them to solar power because solar power is spasmodic. It comes and goes. Depends on the weather. You can't even consider it for AI. AI is a major, major factor for the future. So we need to conclude, yep, we need to have the the nuclear power from the small modular reactors produced by Rolls Royce, these will produce 470 megawatts, sorry, gigawatt megawatts of power on 10 acres, as opposed to 1900 acres. And we also need to start digging into the North Sea again and get some of this gas and oil out as well. Can I just Yeah, stop? Okay, all right, as well. Okay, yes, please. Thanks a lot. Thank you. Thanks.

1:34:12

Thank you. Can you hear me brilliant? Good afternoon. My name is Christopher Lacey, and I live close to this project. I object strongly to the proposal and encourage inspectors to recommend refusal. My representation on is on heritage where the applicant's approach is flawed and understates the impact of the proposal. Like to make three points, the baseline characterization and evaluation coverage for three of the four sites and along the cable connection corridor is insufficient. The applicant's geophysical surveys and a limited trial pit evidence highlights the high archeological potential across these sites.

Despite this recognition, the trial pit analysis for sites A, B and D omit large parts of the project area which remain unevaluated. As an example, it's important to understand the interrelationship of the Romano-British features, including roads linking these the evidence may sit under any of the four sites within the project. The archaeological features will be put at risk of serious damage by intrusive activities without a fully evasive, invasive evaluation and fines assessment across all areas, including the cable and grid connection corridor, this examination cannot reliably assess and meaningfully reach conclusions on the likely presence of an extent of remains the relative significance in a local, region or national context, and the multitude of the magnitude of the harm from piling entrenching works, whether avoidance or preservation in situ, has been adequately or properly considered, there is an over reliance on no dig and written statement of investigations post consent. This is not sufficient and does not provide a reliable basis for examination to consider the potential risks and harms second the applicant's assessment to the impact on settings of designated sensitivity and harm classifications is dispute local authority heritage comments identify a potential under ins, under assessment of the impact on the settings of designated assets, the contribution made by the surrounding farmland and historic landscape character to significance. This may lead to harm to those assets being material. Understated. Thirdly, the distance of the project boundaries to important heritage assets is wholly insufficient. It is vital to acknowledge the massive size of this solar plant, where the arrays are twice, will sit the panels sit twice my height. It is several times the height of existing solar parks such as that little store and Manor farm within 250 meters or less of the project boundaries are grade one assets, including St Peter's Church, St Peter's Church, Purton Hall, St Andrews church, Stoughton, the two grade two star old rectory, grade two star place house, great Staunton, and schedule ancient monuments of the Roman town. And above the and above it the villa, Roman villa and the two bath house. These two latter features overlook sites C and D. It should be noted that excavated by Ernest Greenfield of the Ministry of works in 1958 to 59 there was, there was clear knowledge of Roman heritage of great Staunton and Staunton more well before the discovery of the Roman town also impacted other views from the corridor between All Saints Church and the the Cretan brewery house. Thank you. Thank you very much. For those reasons, I object and believe this is the wrong project in the wrong place. Thank you.

1:37:49

Richard finston from thurton Hall, this scheme is an act of cultural, economic and environmental vandalism. It's the industrialization of a cherished and productive landscape. It is a loss of immunity for residents with the impacts on mental their mental health through the process and beyond, on biodiversity, on housing valuation, on their quality of life. For people who live there, it exacerbates the impact of existing solar farms and other big infrastructure projects we've had to put up with. As we just heard, it's far too close to grade one and grade two. So on grade two listed heritage sites, there is a total inadequacy of decommissioning and remediation plans the applicants, lawyers have confirmed they haven't even calculated what the cost of remediation is likely to be, let alone made provision to pay for it. The is an impact on construction and traffic and noise, it's another impact on biodiversity, as we've heard, and there's building on floodplains and the risk associated with that. But I could go on great length, which I won't do, but I want to talk about the land value, land use, the amount of BMV land is way higher than in most similar schemes. Most UK schemes have been accepted. It's been deemed acceptable to have 31% BMV land. We are 75% two and a half times higher than the average UK scheme, and that it probably understates it, because, as we've heard, the soil surveys have been done at half the recommended density in a slapdash way, frankly and have included, as we've also heard, buildings and roads and trees in that BMV calculation, artificially understating it, this land has been used for arable farming for decades or centuries, for proper farming, farming to feed people, not subsidy farming to line the pockets of unknown investors. This developing this site would remove productive farmland for 40 years, impacting on domestic farm food production that's inconsistent with the NPPF and the NPS en, three policies and such reduced production would increase reliance on food imports. Are increasing prices, low interestability, one minute and food security, increasing a carbon

footprint, and all this at the time of a cost of living crisis, as it is UK, soil production has fallen about 8% in recent years, while food imports have increased by about 20% over that period, the construction on clay soil will cause significant soil compaction and long term damage, potentially taking decades to recover. And research shows that solar panels can degrade soil, increasing compaction, reducing organic matter, increasing carbon footprint and water runoff. So in conclusion, this will damage high quality farmland or reduce food production security, increase prices, harm, soil health. It's the wrong scheme in the wrong place with the wrong developers, and I beg you, Mr. Sword, to listen to our concerns and to protect us from this vandalism. Thank you.

1:41:04

Good afternoon. I'm Gillian lane and live in person Hall, one of six small villages directly impacted by this scheme covering 1900 acres of prime agricultural land, which is a country we can ill afford to lose. This is the most inappropriate location with developers seeking to manipulate the scheme around small historic settlements on heavy clay soil that floods regularly, rather than select a more suitable site adjacent to the grid access, of which I would suggest there are many my home abuts proposed site a near Manor farm solar commissioned in 2016 the bill for the 15 megawatt site, covering approximately 75 acres, took more than three months. It was a horrendous experience for those of us living close by with large vehicles awaiting access to the site from 6am daily before negotiating a long unmade gravel road from 6am until 6pm each day. Piling could be heard for miles. So you can imagine the noise living 150 meters away. In addition to all the deliveries, the workforce traveled to the site daily, creating havoc to locals trying to go about their normal lives, the dust and relentless noise disruption was unbearable. Having gone through this build, it appears we could well be faced with another. The construction period for Epe is in the region of 30 months, so 10 times longer than that already endured. The local network of roads simply will not cope, especially in winter, when many are impassable due to flooding. Lanes are barely wide enough for two cars to pass. So imagine facing an articulated lorry traveling towards you on unfamiliar roads. The only large scale project has yet constructed in the UK is at Cleve Hill. I would urge the inspector to look at accounts given by locals of the build of a site that is only half the size of that proposed by East Park energy. In addition to the solar panels, East Park energy are proposing to include battery units to store up to 100 megawatts of electricity. Not only are these proven to be dangerous, producing thermal runaway and toxic fumes in the likely event that they will break down during their lifetime, they are a cynical way for the developers investors to make money from a scheme sold as green due to the poor efficiency of solar in the UK, only achieving 10% output figures versus nameplate output, the best would not charge if reliant on solar. Therefore, for over six months of the year, these batteries would import energy from the grid, energy that includes electricity from gas fired power station. These were charged from the grid at nighttime, when wholesale prices are low, and released back to the grid at higher prices, the best then operates as a trading asset, rather than on site, storage of solar using any available electricity from the grid. I would urge the inspector to look at the work recently done by Professor Tony Dale when considering his recommendations. Thank you.

1:43:59

Thank you very much. Good afternoon. Thank you. Nicholas Bolton from Purton Hall, my objection is on health and safety grounds to the best under in relation to policy statements en one and en three, we've heard a lot about the scarcity of UK sunshine hours. This is a very large best proposed that would store patchy daylight solar and release it to the grid later, when demand is high. It's presented as an NSIP, but it will not be owned or controlled by the government or the communities. It will be owned by international investors, requiring a commercial return on their investment, as evidenced by other large scale solar on farmland developments, including a best like this, will be run to engage in Supplementary activity, importing non solar power from the grid when prices are cheap and exporting it back to the grid by choice when prices are higher, to engage in for profit arbitrage trade. Being so for significant periods of its life. This proposed Bess will hold very little solar from the east Park energy site, and the required, required return will come from for profit exercises. This is not contributing to energy

security. Now on the technological side, lithium ion cells, as we all know, are not consistently stable thermal runaway is the is what happens when they're stressed or damaged, basically meltdown, leading to very high temperatures, 800 to 1000 degrees centigrade, and the release of very toxic gasses, including hydrogen fluoride. There are plenty of papers the government has issued on those the best will likely experience such events, possibly more than once. The risks are unfortunately inherent in the technology the fire and rescue services will need to be given in advance the equipment and training they require. These are not fires, but they're chemical reactions, and can be can become prolonged emergency situations. All the Fire and Rescue Service can do is attempt to cool the units with vast quantities of water, hoping to prevent thermal runaway spreading to the next adjacent unit water vapor. However, combined with hydrogen fluoride, creates highly toxic gas plume which will be carried by the prevailing wind. Think of World War One, trench warfare and mustard gas, whilst toxic, huge quantities of toxic water impacts the ecology and water table left beyond what is called the attenuation basin. This is going to be in happening in proximity to hail Western Eaton Ford Eaton soaking and great Stoughton communities, which include schools and care homes. This is where en one and en three are really important. The authorities will need to maintain active evacuation procedures use the proximity to populated areas. This is serious and has to be planned in advance. Lithium ion cells have limited life, and the replacement and disposal will be equally serious hazards. Again, the National Fire Chiefs Council has identified further risks to firefighters in the community during transport. It may not be nuclear waste, but it is seriously hazardous waste also, also the huge carbon footprint of the best is not being made apparent to the public, and nor is the high frequency noise and the impact of that from the inverters on community health. I please ask the inspector to reject this, this developments application on those those grounds as well. Thank you.

1:47:27

Thank you very much. Now, proposed to adjourn for a very short break, conscious that we've been going nearly two hours. So I will recommence at four o'clock, when I will move on to the next group, which is group four. Okay, so.