East Park Energy enquiry

Sara Collar (interested party ref [redacted]) text of oral representation made at the Open Floor Hearing (OFH1) held on Tuesday 17 March 2026

I would like to further develop the points made in my previously submitted Relevant Representation (RR), particularly around the impact of the scheme on the local landscape, the impact of construction and maintenance and the efficacy of the scheme.

Examining authority: Graham Sword

Arguments/written text of my submission

As a long-standing resident of the local area – [redacted] years locally and in Keysoe since 2006 - this large-scale solar-powered electricity generation scheme strikes alarm bells for many reasons, a number of which I included in my Relevant Representation (RR). However, today I wish to highlight three specific areas of concern for the Examining Authority's further consideration.

Firstly, I am concerned about the impact of the scheme upon the local landscape and the way in which it will alter the distinctly rural nature of the area. As any site inspection will show, the solar panels and their accompanying infrastructure, together with the associated Battery Energy Storage Systems, will cover vast areas of local countryside amounting to a large-scale industrialisation of the landscape despite the documented intention in existing local plans and landscape character assessments to protect and preserve the distinctly rural nature of the area. These local plans and landscape character assessments have not been put together at random but represent careful assessment of the features and attributes of the landscape and its historic and present-day use and are used by our local authorities to inform the permitted development of the area.

Additionally, the local countryside is frequently described in these plans and assessments as undulating, meaning that even after the trees and hedging planted by the developer have had time to grow – in some cases taking up to ten years to reaching a height capable of screening the development from level ground – there will still be many higher-level vantage points from which the site will not be screened at all. The site will not simply disappear from view but will irrevocably change the nature of the landscape, not only for the remainder of my lifetime but, with a planned lifespan of 43 years, also for that of my children. I respectfully request the Examining Authority to take these existing local plans and landscape character assessments into account in his assessment of the impact of the scheme.

Secondly, I have concerns about the capacity and suitability of our local road network to support the large number of commercial vehicle movements that the construction, maintenance and eventual decommission of the site will require. I have highlighted some specific concerns in my separate request for site inspection but, in summary, I am concerned that the additional heavy vehicle traffic (both from construction vehicles and the large number of worker movements) will result in heavy wear and tear upon our local roads (who pays for this and where does it feature in the project budget?), create hazardous conditions for local residents and reduce our ability to go about our daily lives, whether by car, motorbike, bicycle, horse or on foot, safely and without detriment to our time, convenience and personal/work obligations. I respectfully request the Examining Authority to consider this in his assessment of the impact of the scheme.

My final point concerns the efficacy of the scheme and the national advantages that it will bring. The principal arguments in favour of such schemes are that they will increase the amount of UK electricity to be generated from renewable sources, reducing dependence on sources such as oil and gas, and reducing and stabilising the cost of electricity to consumers. However, there is increasing evidence that large-scale solar farms are not the most efficient way to achieve this. As others will show, the UK is not cut out for harvesting of sunlight and figures show that most solar farms produce very limited returns. Despite having a headline capacity figure of 400MW, modelling suggests that it is unlikely that the East Park Energy site will produce more than 11% of its maximum capacity (or a mere 44MW) per year. Is it really worth the cost and impact of such a large-scale scheme to generate such a small amount of electricity, when other forms of renewable energy are more efficient, and taking into account the non-renewable and non-recyclable nature of the components involved?

I am also concerned about the inclusion of a large-scale 100MW battery installation in the proposal. Yes, it will be used to store the scheme's excess solar output in the spring and summer months for delivery back to the grid on a day by day basis, but in autumn and winter when solar output massively drops, the battery system would instead charge from the grid when prices are low and sell electricity back to the grid when prices are high. The battery system is also likely to provide 'grid services' under contract. In practice, this is how the developers will intend to make a profit from constructing and operating the site. However, this concept completely undermines the principles behind establishing the solar farm in the first place, as the electricity bought from the grid cannot be guaranteed to have come from renewable sources and the practice of buying low and selling high will contribute to a perpetuation of the current oil and gas energy markets where prices are volatile and the consumer ends up paying the price, both literally and in terms of price instability.

As my final point, I would therefore urge the Examining Authority to dig behind the figures presented by developers to establish how green, sustainable and beneficial this

scheme is. If the developers cannot make a profit from the solar farm without the battery installation, would they be making this application at all? And if the project is to be justified on the basis of the 100MW battery installation rather than its ability to generate electricity from renewable sources (i.e. through the large-scale installation of solar panels), why not build just the battery installation, with consequently far and prevent the loss of 1,900 acres of prime agricultural land which could be put to better use in providing food security for our nation whilst still preserving and providing a beautiful rural amenity for the use of generations to come?