

East Park Energy Solar Project

DCO Application 010141

Post-hearing submission by Phil Wayles of the oral case heard at the Open Floor Hearing

Introduction

My name is Phil Wayles, and I have lived in Little Staughton for [REDACTED] years. I am a Chartered Civil Engineer, and I led the DCO process for the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet project. I am opposed to the project, and I will now set out some main concerns.

Site Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives

The Applicant did not consider all “reasonable alternatives” during the flawed site selection and assessment process.

The Site Identification Report confirmed the ‘*Factors Influencing Site Selection*’ for the three Zones. The use of poorer quality agricultural land was not prioritised. Importantly the assessment failed to consider other relevant factors in the assessment process, including effects for:

- Cultural Heritage
- Landscape and Visual impacts
- Ecology
- Flood Risk
- Traffic and Transport

Only the Eaton Socon substation was assessed for the Point of Connection. Little Barford substation was not considered as a reasonable alternative. If Little Barford substation had been considered for the Point of Connection, then Zone C could have a “Green” rating in every category and would be the preferred option.

Also NGET’s Relevant Rep appears to say the Point of Connection at the Eaton Socon substation is not secured. This questions the viability of the East Park Energy scheme.

Traffic and Transport

Construction traffic will have a significant adverse impact on local communities and cause damage to the local roads. Many are already in a poor condition requiring regular repairs and are unsuitable for HGVs. Cambridgeshire County Council has imposed 18T weight restrictions to the west of the A1 as shown the Cambridgeshire Advisory Freight Map. This could result in more HGVs being routed via roads and villages in Bedfordshire.

I have significant concerns about the traffic impacts at Green End through introduction of the satellite compound, access SA09, highways improvements and impact on the well-used Footpath 4. It is important to note that the site access points and satellite compound locations were not disclosed during the consultation process.

There are key omissions from the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (oCTMP) including:

- Need for a Traffic Safety Control Officer during the construction, replacement works and decommissioning.
- Need for detailed permitted routes and restricted routes plans for all construction vehicles. These routes restrictions must be enforced and align with the Design Approach Document which helpfully states access to the site should avoid “narrow routes through villages of Great Staughton, Little Staughton, Keysoe, Pertenhall and Swineshead.”
- Need for agreed dedicated traffic diversion routes plans

Effects on the environment

The project will have a significant adverse effect on some important cultural heritage assets, including the setting of the prominent Grade I listed All Saints Church at Little Staughton and the Cretingsbury Scheduled Monument.

The project will also have an adverse impact on the landscape character, views and key receptors in the area. Proposed planting and screening will not mitigate the visual impact, as evidenced by the failure of planting and screening of existing solar farms in the area, for example Little Staughton airfield.

Many of these environmental adverse effects are permanent, not temporary.

Cumulative Effects

I am concerned the cumulative impacts are understated in the ES assessment.

The cumulative effects of the numerous energy, infrastructure and development projects built or planned in the area are already having an adverse impact on local communities, and this cannot continue unabated. The projects include many solar farms and other major projects including East West Rail and proposed Tempsford New Town.