

I have reviewed the Applicant's Responses to Relevant Representations – Thematic Responses (Document Reference: EN010141/DR/8.9). While I note the Applicant's attempts to address the concerns raised in my initial submission, their responses fail to alleviate the fundamental issues with this Proposed Development. The justifications provided rely heavily on generic national priorities while dismissing the severe, highly localised, and irreversible harms this scheme will inflict on the rural communities of Hail Weston, Great Staughton, and the wider Huntingdon constituency.

I maintain my strong objection to this Development Consent Order (DCO) for the following reasons:

1. Unjustified Loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land

The Applicant states that they reviewed brownfield sites within a 15km radius of the Eaton Socon grid connection and found them incapable of supporting a 400 MW scheme. This geographic restriction is entirely arbitrary and serves only to justify the developer's preferred, highly profitable greenfield site. The admission that 446 hectares of panels will be built on agricultural land—roughly 74% of which is classified as BMV—is unacceptable. While renewable energy is a "Critical National Priority" under NPS EN-3, the policy is clear that developers should avoid BMV land where possible. The Applicant has not sufficiently demonstrated that this massive clustering of solar infrastructure must occur on highly productive soil rather than being dispersed across lower-grade land or rooftops nationally.

2. The Dismissal of Food Security

The Applicant points to government statements that climate change is the greatest medium-to-long-term threat to UK food security. While climate change is undeniably a threat, the Applicant uses this as a blanket excuse to permanently remove high-yielding arable land from the domestic food supply chain. True sustainability requires a balance between decarbonisation and agricultural resilience. Sacrificing 1,900 acres of productive farmland exacerbates immediate domestic food security risks and forces a false choice between energy generation and food production.

3. Inadequate Mitigation for Soil Compaction and Flood Risk

The Applicant points to an outline Soil Management Plan (SMP) as the solution to soil compaction from 30 months of heavy machinery operations. In practice, outline plans often fail to prevent the irreversible degradation of soil structure during complex, multi-year construction phases. Furthermore, the Applicant's dismissal of the "gutter effect" relies heavily on the assumption that maintaining vegetation beneath the panels will perfectly replicate pre-development runoff rates. Given the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, shielding vast swathes of earth with non-permeable glass will inevitably alter surface water dynamics, posing a sustained and unacceptable flood risk to the River Kym catchment.

4. Ecological Fragmentation and Security Fencing

The Applicant highlights the inclusion of "mammal gates" for badgers and hares, and 12-meter wildlife corridors. This response misses the broader point regarding the industrialisation of the landscape. A 12-meter corridor across a 1,900-acre site acts as a restrictive bottleneck, not a natural habitat. The erection of miles of industrial security fencing will permanently alter the transit routes of larger mammals—such as deer, which the Applicant readily admits are not accommodated by the fencing—and severely disrupt the ecological balance. A spreadsheet promising a "70% Biodiversity Net Gain" through area-based habitat units does not compensate for the qualitative loss of an open, connected, and functional rural ecosystem.

5. Prolonged Construction Misery

While the Applicant notes they have designed a temporary access strategy from the B645 to bypass Great Staughton, the reality of a 30-month construction window involving thousands of HGV movements cannot be entirely mitigated. The noise, dust, vibration, and disruption will inflict years of misery on Hail Weston and surrounding villages, fundamentally destroying the rural amenity of the area for the foreseeable future.

Conclusion

The Applicant's responses at Deadline 1 are theoretical mitigations that fail to survive contact with reality. The East Park Energy proposal remains a high-impact, land-hungry development that prioritises corporate generation targets over local safety, food security, and environmental integrity.

I urge the Examining Authority to rigorously scrutinise the Applicant's claims regarding site selection and land grading, and I continue to respectfully request that development consent be refused.