

East Park Energy response 28.04.26

General Support for the scheme

The applicant states that some of those that submitted RR's indicated their general support for the scheme. How do they define support for the scheme? General support for solar energy, yes. General support for these large industrial solar plants is however, negligible, particularly on productive farmland.

Statement that solar energy is inefficient

The proposed site is on predominately north facing land, this is particularly the case in the area around Pasture Farm. Not far away, Anglian Water Authority have some ground mounted solar panels on north facing land. During the winter months 20% of these panels are permanently in the shade generated by the row of panels immediately to the south of them. This will have a significant impact on output. I'm a great advocate of renewable energy (I work in offshore wind) and have solar on my own property. The applicant claims that they can produce enough energy to power 108,000 homes. At what time of year/day would that be? Solar energy production in the UK is inverse to household demand. My own output could power the whole of my street in the summer at midday, but wouldn't boil a kettle in the winter. Energy output from offshore wind turbines ties in more closely with household demand for energy, maximum output in the winter months and works in the dark. The cost of offshore wind farm construction has gone down significantly over the years and the size/output of wind turbines has increased significantly. Just 7 of the latest 15MW offshore turbines would produce more energy than the proposed East Park Energy site, without impacting food production. Many people comment that some UK farmland is used to produce biofuel, without pointing out that biofuel works in the winter and in the dark.

General concern regarding safety

Battery safety management plans were no doubt in place in Liverpool and East Tilbury when they experienced BESS fires. In the event of a fire on the East Park Energy site, what are the arrangements for preventing toxic runoff draining into the Kym, the Ouse (which is where Grafham Water reservoir pumps its water)?

CCTV and perimeter fencing may act as a deterrent for petty criminal acts, but are woefully inadequate as a deterrent to the type of sabotage that has taken place to energy infrastructure in the Baltic sea. With inward facing CCTV cameras as described in the privacy section of your report, you wouldn't even be able to identify youths with catapults etc carrying out acts of vandalism.

2.7.7 Privacy.

If all CCTV cameras are fitted with inward facing viewshields and only capture the perimeter fence and the area inside the fence, what is there as a deterrent to stop arson attacks etc from starting just outside the perimeter fence?

Statement that other energy generation is more efficient/preferred

See notes above – solar energy production is inverse to our household demands. Nuclear and/or gas will always be needed as a backup to renewables. Battery storage on an industrial scale is just a very small temporary plaster.

Recognition of need for energy security

Energy security is important, but food security is even more important. Current World conflicts have obviously impacted fuel prices, however, fertiliser/nitrate prices and availability have also been affected. This will ultimately have a knock on effect on crop yields and prices. Another reason to retain as much farmland as possible for food.

Statement that the developer only cares about profit

Other sites on less productive land and not in close proximity to rural settlements would be available were it not for the "need" to be less than 15Km from a substation. This requirement is based on technical requirements that can be overcome, but it costs more. East Park Energy don't want to spend this money. Energy is supplied to the UK from offshore windfarms and the continent. The power cable from Caen to Southampton is 240km long and from Dogger bank energy is transferred via a 180Km cable. Being less than 15Km from the substation is all about the applicants profit margin.

Statement that the scheme impacts food security

Claiming that we have "ever improving crop production as a result of developing farming methods" does not reflect the need in the future to decrease the use of fertilisers due to extremely high levels of pollution on non-agricultural land and our rivers as a result of runoff. Reduced use of fertilisers and the subsequent loss of yield will already be occurring due to the significant increasing price of fertilisers as a result of current world conflicts.

Statement that local infrastructure is inadequate to handle the scheme

The B645 is already in need of significant repairs, particularly near the A1 and the bends between Hail Weston and Gt Staughton, these bends may not satisfy the authorities definition of accident blackspot, but there have been multiple accidents, deaths and injuries at this location. Instructing staff to avoid using roads through villages and encouraging car sharing to reduce traffic? I think we can safely say that staff won't adhere to this. Will working hours during construction be such that school related traffic isn't affected by the increased vehicle movements?

Statement that the scheme will not make the UK more energy secure

2.1.57 & 2.23.2/18/19 If the solar panels are orientated exactly south, useful production will be 2.5hrs either side of noon in the winter and 5hrs either side of noon in the summer. Outside these hours generation is either very little or nil. Winter generation is approximately 30% of summer generation. For domestic heating in a typical UK house, solar energy doesn't work well. This project would take 1900 acres of high grade land out of grain production and instead produce a questionable amount of solar energy, mostly at the wrong time of year and the wrong time of day.

Concern regarding the applicant's experience or credibility

Using predominantly north facing land, a disjointed site requiring 40 miles of fencing for a 3sq mile site. Inability to explain why a 15Km proximity to substation was a key requirement, not being able to provide information regarding a decommissioning plan, failing to give an answer to many questions (other than "we'll take that one away") at the planning meeting on March 18th, I could go on. It looks more like a gold rush than a well-considered plan.

Concerns about risk of fire

Focusing all the BESS in a single compound is not without risk. Fires involving Lithium batteries in the past have been allowed to burn themselves out. This may work with just 1 isolated unit, what is the plan with multiple units close together? Boundary cooling to prevent a fire spreading looks like a dangerous option because of the violent reaction between water and lithium.

General negative comments on consultation and engagement

The consultation meeting that I attended in Gt Staughton was staffed by representatives of East Park Energy that had very little technical knowledge. They were unable to answer what should have been quite simple questions regarding fire risk, site security and construction traffic. It felt like a box ticking exercise.

Application insufficiently addresses ecology and wildlife

Quite apart from the obvious disturbance to wildlife during the period of construction, 40 miles of fencing around the site is going to have a major impact on larger mammals. What's the plan when larger animals get inside the site and can't get out?

Applicant insufficiently addresses landscaping and visual mitigation

Pasture Farm is on a significant slope, north facing as I may have mentioned before. It would take densely planted full sized trees to hide the site from the road.

2.2.14 BESS - Refers to safe and proven technology. Would this be the safe and proven technology that's caused fires through equipment failure in the UK and elsewhere?

2.4.21 Battery duration 2-4 hrs, earlier it stated 4 hrs?

2.4.333 The applicant states "No significant major accidents or disasters anticipated during construction, operation and decommissioning phase of the scheme". The major accidents that occurred in Liverpool and East Tilbury probably weren't anticipated by the operators.

Concern regarding origin of workers 2.21.24

Addressing the risk of anti-social behaviour – Having worked on many renewable energy projects, I know that drug and alcohol abuse is going to be an issue, how will this be addressed? On one project that I worked on in particular "random" D&A tests were carried out daily, but only on the known non abusers. Had the tests been genuinely random, the project would never have got completed. This was not a unique problem.

Scepticism about the implementation of agrivoltaics

The reason for scepticism is because we already have industrial solar sites in the area, but have yet to see any agriculture taking place on these sites. Perhaps if it was a legal requirement for the site operator to graze the land it would make the scheme slightly less unpalatable?

2.21.27 "no anticipated effect on accommodation availability"

My personal experience of working on renewable energy projects, is that local accommodation becomes very expensive and difficult to obtain. Property rental prices in Sizewell doubled when work started on the latest construction phase.

Decommissioning 2.25.2

"Solar panels can potentially last for up to 40 years". Solar panels degrade over time and technology moves on to make panels more efficient. In 2023 you needed half the panel area that you would have needed in 2010 to generate the same amount of energy.

Statement that the scheme is not in the national interest

Solar on buildings and carparks and agriculture on farmland is in the national interest. Industrial solar plants mainly benefit multinational companies and a few landowners. If the governments interest was genuinely energy security, a requirement for solar on new buildings would have been their first priority, not solar on farmland. The A14 in Suffolk has large, new warehouses, there's not a solar panel to be seen on any of them. When I look at some of the companies getting involved with UK renewable energy, I see a company called Giant Ventures. One of its advisers is a close relative to [REDACTED]. This does makes me wonder who's interests are really being served?

Assumption that BESS is manufactured in China

Wherever the equipment for this site is sourced, it will have monitoring equipment installed, what security measures are in place to prevent unauthorised access either from the manufacturers or hackers? Some countries are more trustworthy than others when it comes to cyber security. I asked this question before, there's no response in the Applicant Responses to Relevant Representations