



Hearing Transcript

Project:	East Park Energy
Hearing:	Issue Specific Hearing 3 (ISH3) - Part 1
Date:	09 June 2026

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TRANSCRIPT_ISH3_SESSION1_EAST PARK_ENERGY

Tue, Jun 09, 2026 10:00AM • 2:00:10

Good morning, everyone. It is now 10 o'clock, and time for this hearing to begin. I'd like to welcome you all to this issue-specific hearing related to the potential impacts of the proposed development on the public rights of way. Can I just confirm that everybody in the room and online can hear me. Thank you. Can I also confirm with the case team that the live streaming and recording of this event has commenced? Okay. Thank you. My name is Graham Sword. I am a planning inspector, and have been appointed by the Secretary of State to examine this application. I will now deal with a few housekeeping matters for those attending in person today. Can everyone please set all devices, including phones, laptops and smart watches, to silent, please? And if you need the toilets, these can be found on the ground floor. There are no fire alarms due today, so if the alarm does go, we need to treat it as the real thing, and leave calmly and quickly. The fire exit is to the rear of this room, to my right, and the assembly point is to the front of the building, in the car park. This meeting will follow the agenda published on the National Infrastructure Planning website on the 18th of May, 2026 Examination library reference EV 6001 would be helpful if you have a copy of this in front of you. The agenda is for guidance only, and we may add other considerations or issues as we progress. We will conclude the hearing as soon as all relevant contributions have been made and all questions asked and responded to, but if the discussions can be concluded, then it may be necessary for us to prioritize matters and defer other matters to written questions. Likewise, if you cannot answer the questions being asked or require time to get the information requested, and can you please indicate that you need to respond in writing. Today's hearing is being undertaken in a blended way, meaning some of you are present with us at the hearing venue, and some of you are joining us virtually using Microsoft Teams. We will make sure that however you decided to attend today, you will be given a fair opportunity to participate. A recording of today's hearing will be made available on the East Park Energy website section of the National Infrastructure Planning pages as soon as possible after the hearing has finished, a transcript will also be made available, which will utilize AI technology. With this in mind, please ensure that you speak clearly into a microphone, stating your name and who you are representing each time before you speak. For those with a microphone, you need to press the button to work. The red light indicates that microphone is live. If you are not at a table with a microphone, there will be a roving microphone. So, please wait for one of these to be brought to you before you speak. As I have just referenced the use of technology. AI technology. Could I take this opportunity to remind participants that the use of AI in the formulation and submission of representations should be notified to the planning inspectorate in line with the policy document entitled use of artificial intelligence and casework evidence that is available on the government website. We asked for this information, so inspectors and other involved in this examination can understand the source and handling of the material they are assessing. This helps us make fair, transparent, and well-reasoned decisions, the requirements are designed to be simple and not burdensome. A golden rule for any use of AI material is that you must use AI responsibly. It is your responsibility to ensure that the information generated is accurate and appropriate, referring back to this meeting. A link to the planning inspectorate privacy notice was provided in the notification for this hearing. We assume that everybody here today has familiarized themselves with this document, which establishes how the personal data of our. The most is handled in accordance with the principles set out in data protection laws. Please speak to the case team if you have any questions about this. I'm now going to ask those of you who are participating in today's meeting to introduce yourselves.

When I state your organisation's name, could you introduce yourself, state your name, and who you represent, and which item you wish to speak on? If you're not representing an organization, please confirm your name, summarize your interest in the application, and confirm the agenda item which wish you wish to speak upon. And also, please, could everybody please indicate how they wish to be addressed, i.e. mr. mrs. Ms. or Miss. So, could I start with the applicant team, please, and any of the advisors, I

Wrong button. Sorry. Good morning, sir. Julian Boswell, mr. Julian Boswell, solicitor and partner with Burgess Salmon LLP, representing the applicant. I will ask the other members of the team sitting up next to me to introduce themselves, starting on my right.

Good morning, sir. My name is Lady Simmonds, Lady Simmundra, representing the applicant here with Berge Salmon.

Good morning, sir. My name is John Mehan. I'm technical director at Axis. I'm a landscape architect, and will be covering landscape and visual matters in relation to public footpaths, public rights of way, and yeah.

Morning, sir. mr. Tom Rose Blade, on behalf of the applicant, I'm a planning and EIA coordinator on this project, working on behalf of the applicant.

Good morning, sir. My name's mr. Lee Kendall. I work for Axis as a technical director. I run the transport planning team and the company representing the applicants. I'll be speaking on agenda item three, A, B, and C. Today

morning,

so my name is Nicholas Andrews, and I am the applicant. Thank you,

everybody, for the applicant team. Yes, thank you, so So, moving on to the local authorities that we have in the room today. Could I ask you, introduce yourself, please?

Thank you, sir. I'm Daniel Steadman Jones, counsel for all three of the host authorities, and I will pass to my left,

my morning, sir. Peter Day, case mr. Lead Case Officer for Bedford Borough Council. Thank you,

morning, sir. My name is April Quinn, Miss April Quinn, Bedford Borough Council Public Rights of Way.

Good morning, sir. My name is Greg Logan, Principal Planning Officer, supporting mr. Dakos this morning.

Morning, sir. David Carford from Camussen County Council, with me as well. We've got colleagues behind me, so to save them getting up to the mic, I'll just introduce them myself. So, we have Daniel Ashman and Roger Payne. They're both our Public Rights Away related officers, so they'll be speaking later.

Morning, Sir Lucy Paytman, Ms. Pateman from Huntingdonshire District Council.

And so also, could I invite Miss Condiac, who I think is online from ACOM, to introduce herself as well, please. Thank

you. Of course,

good morning, sir. It's Ms. Rebecca Condillac from AECOM, on behalf of the local authorities' expertise of landscape and visual matters. I'll be speaking on point 3b Thank you.

Yes, thank you. Thank So, if we could move,

Councilor Sharon Sarah, elected local councilor for Y Boston Ward, and I will be speaking on agenda item 3b

Okay. Thank you, Councilor. That mrs.

Tracy Stokes, long-standing resident of Great Stoughton, and I'll be speaking on agenda item 3b

Anyone else that would like to speak today, mrs.

Anne Kennedy. Sir, I'm here representing two organizations, the Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum, affectionately known as Boblaff, and also the British Horse Society. I'm a volunteer in Bedfordshire, my opposite number in Cambridge. Unfortunately, can't be here today due to family commitments, so I'm covering for her as well, and I expect I will be speaking on 3b and C.

Thank you.

My name is mr. Gerald Jerry Santhum, I represent CPRE Bedfordshire, the countryside charity, and I should be speaking on hearing three public rights away.

Good morning, my name is Miss Sandra Kelsey, and I'm here on behalf of the Ramblers, and very much specifically North Bedfordshire Ramblers, and I would like to speak on 3b I

Good morning, Simon Beverley, a resident from Kelle, and I'd like to speak on items three A, B, and C.

Good morning, Emma Glass, resident of Little Stoughton, and I would like to talk on 3b

Richard Finston, local resident and prospective victim. I'd like to speak on three A and B.

Gillian Lane, local resident of Person Hall. I'd like to speak on item three,

just Christopher

Lacey, mr. An individual local to the scheme, and I'd like to address three, generally, but also particularly 3b Thank you.

Okay, so anybody else in the room that would like to speak today. If you just wait for a microphone, please.

My name is Elaine Wheeler, President of the Pert and Hall area, and I'd like to speak generally on item three,

anyone else,

anyone on Microsoft Teams that would like to contribute. Okay, so that concludes the first item on the agenda, and I'm now going to move on to item two, which is the purpose of this issue-specific hearing. Let me briefly explain the purpose of this issue. This issue-specific hearing, first, we firstly, we want, will allow the applicant to outline its approach to the assessment of the public rights of way in the formulation of the application. Secondly, I would like to explore any potential impacts of the proposed development on the landscape when viewed from the public rights of way. On this point, is it possible that the applicant could respond to the submission made by Mr. Sean Woodward yesterday evening? He did intend to attend the meeting this morning, but due to personal circumstances, he can no longer attend. It has been uploaded onto the examination library. If you could address those issues, that would be greatly appreciated, but obviously acknowledge you will want to fully respond in writing following the hearing. Finally, I will ask the applicant to set out progress in resolving concerns about the perceived negative impact on the public right of way network. Sorry, Cambridgeshire County Council and other interested parties will be given the opportunity to set out their concerns, and then we will close. So, can I ask the applicant to keep a record of action points, please, during the course of this hearing, and report back when invited towards the end of this hearing? Is that okay? I.

Julian Boswell for the applicant. Yes, sir.

Okay. Thank you. So that concludes this item, and we will move now on to item three, the overall approach to the design of the proposed development in relation to the public rights of way, so could I invite the applicant to explain its approach to this issue? Please

join me in for the applicant. Sir, this issue essentially has two separate strands that we are going to set out: firstly, the design approach to public rights of way and the impact and amenity of users, and secondly, the impact of the development-related traffic on public rights of way users, which my colleague Lee Kendall will set out. All references to national policy statements, EN one and EN three, made by the applicant, will be to the 2024 National Policy Statements, unless stated otherwise. The reasons for this are set out in the notes on updated national policy statements reference PDA 018. In response to the first point on the design approach to public rights of way and the amenity of public rights of way users, the applicant has adopted a design-led approach throughout the evolution of the scheme, consistent with national policy and guidance on achieving good design for nationally significant infrastructure projects. This is summarized within the Design Approach document reference APP 034. The scheme has been developed through a multidisciplinary and iterative process involving landscape ecology, heritage engineering, and planning specialists supported by consultation with local communities, stakeholders, and statutory consultees. Design decisions have been informed by site context, environmental constraints, and opportunities, technical requirements, stakeholder feedback, with the objective of delivering a scheme that makes a significant contribution towards renewable energy generation, whilst remaining sensitive to its surroundings. The interaction with public rights of way and impact on public rights of way users has been a consideration in site selection and design evolution from the outset of project development. Early design principles sought to ensure that the scheme would be sensitive to landscape character, views, heritage assets, and biodiversity, whilst also seeking opportunities to deliver wider environmental and social benefits. These early design principles inform both the identification of land suitable for development and the subsequent evolution of the scheme layout. This is reported on within section 5.3 of the land identification report reference APP 059. The public rights, the public right of way network within and around the site comprises a series of public

footpaths, bridle ways, or byways that provide local access to the countryside. There are no national trails in the local area. There are also no promoted long distance recreational trails, which cross the order limits, with the closest being the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail, which is located on footpaths within the southwestern extent of the study area between Risely and Keyso Row, and the Three Shires Way, which is located on footpaths within the northern extent of the study area, just to the northeast of Great Staunton. There are also no nationally designated landscapes, such as national parks or national landscapes in proximity to the site, and neither are there any local, locally designated landscapes. The applicant is also not aware of any promoted viewpoints, such as those identified in ordinance survey mapping that overlook the order limits and would serve and could serve as a destination for additional visitors. There are also no country parks or similar outdoor destinations in proximity to the site that would be expected to attract recreational users to the area. Therefore, whilst the applicant acknowledges that the effective public rights of way and access to the countryside are locally valued, there are no indicators of regional or national interest. Accordingly, in developing the scheme design as a general approach, there were no specific public rights of way where avoidance of impact was considered a necessity. The design approach instead focused on master planning around the public rights of way that crossed the order limits to minimize effects as far as practicable, whilst ensuring the scheme responds positively to the characteristics of the receiving landscape and the design principles established for the project, with reference to section 5.2 of the design approach document, reference APP 034. These design principles include firstly, principle 2.1 protect views towards tall church spires, which are visually prominent landmarks in the landscape, and contribute towards creating a sense of place. Principle 2.2 protect the sense of openness, wide views, and skylines within with long views from elevated positions across the Kim Valley. Principle 2.6 protect recreational access via rights of way by rights of way network and the network of quiet lanes. Evidence on how the scheme design responds to these design principles is set out in section 5.6 of the design approach document.

The applicant has designed the scheme to retain all existing public rights of way within the order limits throughout the operational phase, where solar panels might be located on either side of any public right of way, these routes will have a minimum 10 meter buffer between the centreline of the definitive right of way alignment and the solar fence line on either side. This will result in a minimum 20 meter wide corridor where solar development occurs on both sides of the public right of way, which will incorporate grassland, hedgerow, trees, and woodland planting. The applicant considered both narrower and wider corridor widths as part of the design process, but concluded that 20 meter wide corridors generally represented the right balance between efficient land use and the protection of amenity. To provide some context to the scale of the proposed 20 meter wide corridors, the applicant notes that the width of local roads around the site, which include hedgerows, is generally between 12 and 18 meters wide. The applicant's proposed routes are therefore consistent with, and generally slightly wider than local road widths. The applicant has refined development parcels and fencing lines to provide separation from routes, setbacks from selected footpaths, and bridle ways, retention of existing hedgerows and field boundaries, and the provision of landscape buffers and woodland planting. Some specific examples of the design approach include firstly, at the western extent of the site, the applicant has avoided introducing solar development on the southeast side of Bridleway, Balmhurst, and Keyso 37 to protect views out across the Kim Valley towards the east, while solar development will be visible at the base of the valley across East Park Site B. This will be seen in the context of the extensive tree and hedgerow cover within Site B. The openness of views across the landscape will remain intact, and photomontages to demonstrate this are available from Viewpoint 12, reference APP 131. Secondly, on the western side of Little Stones, and the applicant's design response within the southern extent of Site B has been to provide a wide setback, circa 50 meters, to development on the northern sides of public rights of way to retain views looking out over the top of solar arrays towards the distant horizon. Therefore, whilst the solar development is visible in the foreground of views, the connection with the wider landscape of the Kim Valley to the north would not be lost. Photo montages

to demonstrate this are available from viewpoint 33 reference APP 136 In addition to setting back the solar development, the applicant's proposed planting design does not attempt to provide a complete visual screen of the scheme, but instead allow filtered views out across the valley. In this way, there will be less enclosure for users of the route wishing to look out over the valley, but effective screening of oblique views for solar development in views along the footpath. at the eastern extent at the eastern end of the ridge line to the sorry, thirdly, at the eastern end of the ridge line to the south of East Park Sea, the applicant has taken a similar design approach, providing wide setbacks between the public rights of way along the ridge line and the solar development to the north. Therefore, whilst the development may be visible, the openness of views across the Kim Valley to the north would not be lost. Photo montages to demonstrate this are available from Viewpoint 57 reference APP 139 The design is therefore sought not only to reduce visual effects where practicable, but also to retain landscape legibility and the relationship between settlement rights of way and the wider rural environment, the applicant has had regard to the experience of users of the public rights of way network throughout the design process. Whilst the network primarily comprises local connections between roads, farms, and settlements, it also provides opportunities for people to experience the landscape at close range, and therefore forms an important consideration in the assessment of visual effects. The layout of the scheme, retention of existing landscape features, where practicable, and development of the environmental master plan have all sought to reduce effects on public rights of way users, while. Responding positively to local landscape character. I will now pass to my colleague Lee Kendall, who will provide a response regarding the impact of development-related traffic on public rights of way users.

Thank you, John. Lee Kendall, for the applicant. So, just further to mr. Millions discussion about the design, as he just said, I'd like to talk about the impact on traffic, or the impact about development-related traffic on the public rights of way users. Now, the most significant significant period of impact or interactions between public right of way users. Just I'd like to use the acronym PROW, if I may, just to make it easier. Between Prow users and vehicles will occur between the 30 month will occur during the 30 month construction phase. I'll return to the construction phase shortly. Now, during the operational phase, the number of maintenance vehicle movements traveling across or alongside the affected prows are likely to be very low and would be comparable to or less than the normal agricultural traffic levels that would otherwise occur if the scheme did not come forward. Nonetheless, in both the construction and operational phases, the applicant has sought to minimize the interface between public rights for users and vehicles, where practicable. The majority of interactions between on-site traffic and prows will be where vehicles will simply simply need to momentarily cross straight over the alignment of a prow at a perpendicular angle. This will be managed in accordance with the measures set out in the outline public rights of way management plan, which is document ref rep 3058 3058 This will include warning signage for both drivers and prow users, the deployment of banksman during busy periods, and appropriate segregation where needed. Some localized diversions of prows will be necessary during some of the cable installation works, but these will be temporary in nature, and would comprise a diversion of just a few meters for prow users, where it has not been possible to avoid routing development-related traffic along a prow. There are some, there are some limited locations where the prow in question already follows an existing established agricultural track. This includes number one, Bridleway, Balmhurst, and Keyso 37 which also forms part of Personal 26 in Site A. Those two routes go into each other. Number two, Footpath Pertin Hall 29 and Person Hall two, where it crosses the Perth and Hall Brook inside A, number three footpath Little Stoughton four off Green End Insight B, number four Bridleway Hail Weston 112 slash seven in Site D, and number five footpath Hale Western 112 slash eight in Site D. The applicant's preferred approach to minimize the impacts has been to develop a mitigation strategy through the outline public rights of way management plan, which again is rep 3058 so which either keeps these routes open or minimizes the extent of any diversion, whilst ensuring the safety of users. The outline prior management plan, which would be developed into a full prior management plan under requirement 11 of the DCO, sets out a table of mitigation measures that

are specific to each directly affected prong. For example, these measures include things like signage, the use of banksman, temporary shortlived short-lived closures and diversions, and protocols to ensure drivers stop and give way to prong users and to horses. In particular, some parties have suggested that the applicant should consider constructing new sections of access track to run parallel to all the prongs mentioned earlier, i.e. those where vehicles could drive along for a section, however, this would involve the construction of new parallel sections of access track that would need to be in place for each of the construction, operational, and decommissioning phases. Furthermore, constructing new tracks in this way would be a disproportionate use of land and resources, given that there are already existing well-used agricultural access tracks in these low. Locations, and in the case of Ride Away, Balmhurst, and Keyso 37 that particular route has also previously been used as a construction access for the existing mana farm solar farm, which adjoins site A. There would also be a greater, and in our view, unnecessary impact on the environment. If this approach were adopted, the applicant is therefore considered justified in proposing the use of these limited sections of prong for vehicular traffic with management measures to ensure the safety of users set out again in the outline public rights of way management plan, which is rep 3058 the I'd like to provide a quote from NPS En three.

This states between paragraphs two point 10.40 and two point 10.42 that proposed developments may affect the provision of public rights of way networks. Public rights of way may need to be temporarily closed or diverted to enable construction, whether applicants should keep as far as is practicable and safe. All public rights of way that cross the proposed development site open during construction and protect users where a public right of way borders or crosses the site. Applicants are encouraged to design the layout and appearance of the site to ensure continued recreational use of public rights of way, where possible, during construction and, in particular, during the operation of the site. Now, this is, in our view, precisely the approach that the applicant has taken, the applicant is also proposing a number of new permissive routes as part of the scheme, the detail of which is set out in Table Two, Section 5.3 of the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan, which is EP 3056 Now the applicant is aware of the requests by host authorities and other interested parties for additional permissive paths, but is restricted on where these can be provided by the need to gain agreement with landowners for any permissive access, and I'm sure we turn to that under future agenda items later, and so just returning to paragraph two point 10.44 of NPS en dash three. That paragraph recognizes this position and the need to get a land owner agreement. This is particularly relevant on this project, where the applicant is utilizing is not utilizing compulsory acquisition powers over landowners for sites A, B, C, and D, and as such permissive access cannot be imposed. That concludes

our description, I Okay. Thank you very much. We could just ask a quick question, mr. Kendall. Under something you mentioned it about temporary diversions, are we talking about the entire length of the construction period, or we talked about months or weeks.

mr. Kendall, for the applicant, I'll hand over to my colleague, mr. Rose Blade.

So, mr. Rose, by for the applicant, it would not be, we don't think, for any of the public rights of way for the full extent of the construction period. It would be phased as and when work is happening in different areas across the site, the detail of which would be set out in the final public rights of way management plan, which would be submitted to the host authorities for approval, which would include the timings for which any public rights of way would be proposed to be closed, and those temporary diversions alongside in place, along with the details of, for instance, surfacing whips, and the arrangement of that. Thank you.

Thank you. Paragraph 5.13 of the outline rights of way public right of way management plan rep 3058 references public rights of weight usage surveys will be undertaken to inform final public rights of way

management plan. I have three questions related to that. Can you confirm if. Any surveys have been undertaken on the public rights of way before the application was submitted, and for the proposed surveys, what method will be used, be it for instance CCTV footfall sensors, or just human observation, or some other means, and finally, will the survey methodology for the surveys and data be agreed with the county council?

Thank you, sir, mr. Kendall, for the applicant. In answer to the first question about surveys, the answer is no. No surveys have been done to date. Obviously, the team has visited the site on numerous occasions and made qualitative observations about the usage, and we have our own views about that, but no actual surveys have been done in answer to the second question about the method that's yet to be determined, but I imagine it would be CCTV, just so we can get classification of users and get a real good idea of, you know, the number of people on foot and cycle and horse, etc. And in answer to the third question, yes, I see no reason why the methodology cannot be agreed with the authorities prior to them being undertaken.

Okay. Thank you. Number of interested parties have suggested that the proposed development should be designed around the public right of way network. You may have your views that you've already done that from your presentation. I acknowledge that in terms of alternative proposals can't find anything, but you may wish to direct me to something to say. If you had prepared a different scheme designed around the public rights of way network in a particular way, it would affect the generating capacity of the proposed development. However, I'm mindful of paragraph 210 six one of National Policy Statement EM three for renewable energy infrastructure, which states for a solar farm to generate electricity efficiently, panel a spacing should seek to maximize the potential power output of the site, the type spacing and aspect of panel rays will depend on the physical characteristics of the site, such as site elevation. So the question really is, would an alternative layout with respect to respected bridleware network as existing achieve that policy objective in NPS three en three,

so Tom Rose played for the applicant, I suppose in terms of alternatives and alternative layouts and sites, it comes back to the original identification of of the site, and then in particular the work done and the land identification report, which is I'll just get the document reference number APP 059 where we went through the process of reviewing all of the land that was offered as part of the scheme against those early design principles that we had, which included matters relating to landscape and views and did consider rights of way, and how people would appreciate the landscape, and in so doing avoided a number of areas which we felt were more sensitive. It was then to a sense of unavoidable that you know public rights of way were there in the landscape. We did consider those, and then how we would design around those in master planning the scheme by providing suitable setbacks, as mr. Mehan described before, taking different design approaches in different locations across the scheme, where there was particular views, which we found to be more sensitive, and then ensuring that we're proposing screening in around the site from those rights of way in a manner that was in accordance with the local landscape character assessment, so that's broadly the approach taken on alternatives I. Don't have the paragraph from NPSE and three, which you read out in front of me. So, in relation to that point, we can, we could provide a response for the next deadline as to, in our view, how the scheme and an alternative public rights of way design may relate to that paragraph 210 six

one. Okay, yeah, that would be acceptable. Thank you. The Bedford Local Access Forum have suggested a perimeter route linking FP 32 to Pern Hall FP two, and note that in one of your responses that you've pushed back on this state and that it would necessarily necessitate a crossing of Pertin Hall Brook, just interested to know, is this resistance due to the crossing potentially create an additional environmental impact that would give significant effects in AES terms.

Tom Rose Blade for the applicant, the principal reason comes back to this. This one of landowner agreement being required for any of the permissive routes, in terms of that specific route, there would be work required to assess the impacts of putting a crossing over the personnel brook, and it would require flood risk activity permit from the environment agency. I wouldn't have said that putting across again would be likely to result in significant effects, though the principal constraint is that of landowner agreement, which we are still consulting with landowners on. Okay.

Thank you. Could I ask if the local authorities would like to respond to any issues in the presentation or any of the questions that have been asked so far.

Daniel Stedman Jones, on behalf of the host authorities. So, what I was proposing to do is just give the host authorities headline response to the approach and give set out some of the host authorities concerns and then can invite comment from particular contributors at this stage if that's, if that's appropriate, otherwise subject to your views, we can come back to it in 3c on the agenda, so

it might be more appropriate than 3c Yep, coming back on that,

but that's fine, sir. In which case, I will, for the moment, I don't have any comment to make until we get into 3c

okay. Thank you.

Thank you.

Anybody, any other interested parties in the room that would like to make a comment on that particular edge, joined item?

Simon Beverly, Keyso resident, is it possible to deal with A, B, and C in one go, or do you want them individually now?

Thought it might be better cut it up in bite-sized pieces, but if, if you would prefer to link some comments to this presentation in subsequent Larry. If that's fine.

Thank you. Well, just in response to this, this first item, the approach to the design in the relation to the rights of way, I believe it's insufficient for Brockwell to maintain they've retained the rights of way. These have been reduced to a walk or a ride between two security fences, and this is total transformation of the experience of these rights of way. For many years, they've indicated they'll do landscaping, but for many years this will also be a walk between two security fence fields that have been industrialized beyond any possible resemblance of what is today beautiful open countryside. Where is the evidence we were asking for this earlier that they have considered serious alternative designs and not simply duplicated the hideous arrangements that are common on other schemes? It is simply not sufficient for Brockwell to say it'll all be sorted out later, once we have permission. One has to ask, what is the purpose of this examination and inquiry if it is not to receive answers to the basic fundamental questions now. Thank you.

Yeah,

so jump in for the applicant. I mean, mr. Rose Blade set out the point regarding consideration of alternatives. What I would want to say is, you know, I've obviously set out in detail that the approach taken to a very well considered design, you know, around the footpath and across the whole order

limits, you know, this is an area reasonably typical of large scale rural farmland, and where you would typically find footpaths of this nature, reasonably short distance connecting properties and small settlements to roads, etc. And so, you know, as I said, Mr. Roosevelt set out the consideration of alternatives. However, dealing with the site, you know, as it stands, the very considered approach has been taken with setbacks. There will be some time for planting to establish, however, you know the scheme that's been developed would reduce visibility of fencing and the array over time, so overall, whilst it's understood there will be, you know, a short amount of time for planting to establish, it would, it would effectively screen the fencing and the array, generally within the site.

Thank you. So, lady in the seats that would like to.. there's a question.

First of all, I'd like to question the Putnam Brook issue. This is a really, really dangerous place to pass. It's not even two meters wide. Part of the bridge is propped up onto concrete slabs, so it's dangerous even just across it. If anyone was walking across it, there's no way a lorry could get across at the same time, and next to it, there is a Ford that is not wide enough for a lorry to go across. It's not used by farm vehicles now, apart from Land Rovers. So that's one thing I would like to question. The other thing I'd like to question at this point is the fact that you talk about community involvement. I would like to know exactly which members of the community have been involved with this project as regards to the public rights way. I finished. okay.

Thank you. Would the applicant like to come back on those two points?

The Tom Rose blade for the applicant in relation to the crossing of the Pertinol Brook and the existing structure that's there that was considered by the design engineering team at Wallingford Hydro Solutions in ES Volume Two, Appendix Eight Three Water Course Crossing Assessment, that's document reference APP 100 They did review that crossing and came to the conclusion that it would be suitable for the purpose required for construction, and then I think the second point was on community involvement. The community has been engaged in multiple stages as part of the pre-application consultation, and that is what those references are in relation to this included an initial phase of consultation prior or around the time that we submitted the scoping report, and then a subsequent statutory consultation where we published the preliminary environmental information report and included events in person and events with parish councils to discuss the scheme and the impacts of the scheme,

and there will be an opportunity for community involvement further down the line if development consent order was granted.

Yeah, Tom, I Rose made for the applicant. Yes, we're proposing this community liaison group through the outline camp, which would continue into the operational phase of the scheme as well.

Okay. Thank you. Could I just remind everybody in the room to respect everybody whilst the talking, you might not agree with what somebody is saying, but if we could just use the space to respect one another in this hearing. Thank you. So, if there are no sorry,

thank you, Mr. Lord Richard Vincent, if. A couple of comments on what we've heard, and a more general kind of observation. Clearly, there will be a loss of immunity when through this scheme, and clearly during the construction period, in particular, what are currently beloved countryside walks will be turned into effectively an industrial wasteland, while the construction is going on. No one's going to want to walk with hundreds of 1000s of steel pilings being driven into the ground, and that'll have an impact on local residents' physical and mental well-being. I understand the mitigation effects that the

planting is being proposed, although clearly it'll take some time for hedgerows and trees to make any meaningful screening, and I think for a long time you might as well go for a walk through Canary Wharf or the Barbican, as through the public rights of way that will be impacted by this scheme, but my bigger concern relates to it's much about the temporary nature of the construction versus the temporary nature of the scheme. What happens at the end of the process? What's the decommissioning look like? What's the restoration look like? Once again, the applicant is confirmed, not at the beginning of this hearing, they don't know what the decommissioning costs will be. They talk about being able to raise money for decommissioning. They don't know how much that is. How can they possibly assure us that things will be restored back to their original state? Previously, mr. Boswell, the lead councilor, said offered me the comfort that whoever owns the land at the time will probably want to clear it up. That gave me no comfort. The fact that they don't know how much money is going to cost to clear it up gives me no comfort. And how can they extract profits from a scheme without knowing what the full cost of the scheme will be? And that speaks to the public rights of way and what they will be like for future generations. Those rights of way have been there for, in some cases, centuries, and they represent time immemorial practice and usage of local residents, and that's I've got no comfort that'll be restored, and unless they are happy to ring fence a bunch of money and spend time working out how much that money will be, and ring fence that money, put it to one side, and not extract profits until that restoration happened. How can we know that the decommissioning will ever happen meaningfully? Thank you. I'd like to come back to you. This is this is a beloved landscape we all we've all lived and grown up with, and it just needs protecting, and if your pardon, a cheap word, play mr. Saw, please be our shield here.

Would the applicant like to address those issues now, or conscious some of it may overlap in the next agenda item, and you may wish to address it as part of that,

Julian Boswell for the applicant. I think we're coming on to 3b in terms of the landscape dimension to the use of the public rights way in relation to the decommissioning point. We've already taken a position on that very clearly. It came up before we've responded, and I think it's.. I don't think it assists the topic of this hearing to go into that. In other words, we don't have anything to add to what we've already said, or mr. Vincent is doing is repeating a point that he's already made that we have responded

to. Okay, so is there anybody online who would like to raise a point on this agenda item, and in that case I will move on to item 3b the impact on landscape setting from the public right of way network. So I'd like to look over some of the issues on how the proposed development will be viewed from a myriad of public rights of way that intersect and traverse the site. So, again, could I ask the applicant briefly rehearse its case on this issue, and as I mentioned earlier, if you could respond to in part submission of Sean Woodward for today's hearing, please,

Tom Rose, back for the applicant. Before we go into 3b we'll just quickly review the submission by Sean Woodward, mr. Woodward, which we've only seen during the course of this hearing that has been, it's been uploaded. It seems that his concerns seem to generally be about what happens with the planting decommissioning, and how the fencing would interact with the planting alongside public rights of way, such that how will the fencing be removed, and will the planting be removed, and coming back to this point, as to whether the scheme is then a temporary scheme or not, I guess something which has been addressed previously in written submissions, in terms of the fencing and the planting. There'll be an ongoing management of the planting throughout the operational life scheme, including the hedgerows and the fence lines, such that whilst there should be, there could be some intertwining of vegetation and fence lines that wouldn't be expected to be of a position that it would be so overgrown that the fence line couldn't be removed at decommissioning. It was the case that from the inside of the fence line would be monitoring those fence lines to check condition as well of the fencing, and so if it was that overgrown, we wouldn't, we wouldn't allow it to get into that state, or the applicant wouldn't,

and in terms of the planting, the proposal is that the planting will be retained at decommissioning, the fence lines would be removed, the other infrastructure that would be would be removed, and the plants would be retained and given back to to the landowners. So there was a further point of mr. Woodward's in relation to the future management of land, and whether the retention of such hedgerows, wooden blocks, and so on would make it such that we wouldn't be able to farm the land in future. Now, the locations of planting have been discussed and agreed with landowners as part of the scheme development, and a consideration of that was what land are they getting back in the future. Land owners are looking to protect their land and what they can use it for in the future, such that it isn't in a condition that they can't farm it, so that has been a factor through the design development, and we'll obviously provide a written response to mr. Woodward's submission once we've had a chance to read it all in full after this hearing. Thank you,

Chase. Thank you. Appreciate my short notice. Just wanted to table it, given the second.

Thank you, sir, mr. Meehan, for the applicant. I'll respond on 3b as requested. The applicant has already set out some context to the public right of way network around the site to repeat, the majority of routes comprise local rural footpaths and bridle ways connecting villages, farms, roads, and dispersed dispersed properties. They are generally shorter distance local routes rather than nationally important scenic or long distance recreational trails. Whilst there are longer distance recreational routes within the wider study area, these do not pass directly through the site itself, and users would experience intermittent or filtered views of the scheme due to distance, topography, woodland cover, and the existing hedge structure. The LVIA Chapter Five identifies that visual effects experienced by users of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail and the Three Shires Way would be no greater than minor adverse, and those effects would be experienced from reasonably short distances of that route intermittently and obliquely. Typically, it is also relevant to the consideration of views from public rights of way that the site is not located within a designated landscape and cannot be defined as a valued landscape in national planning policy framework terms, whilst the applicant acknowledges that landscape does need to be designated to be valued, sorry, does not need to be designated to be valued, and the views from local routes are valued by their users. The routes affected by this scheme do not traverse designated or otherwise nationally recognized, recognized landscapes where views would typically be afforded at a higher value or high level of value in LVIA terms. Turning to the assessment itself, the applicant has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of visual effects within ES Chapter Five, reference APP 041 and the supporting dependencies. The evidence base includes 83 representative viewpoints, of which 65 are located on public rights of way within and around. Around the site with 17 of those viewpoints supported by photorealistic visualizations. The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with GLVIA three. Sorry, apologies. Guidelines for Landscaping Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition, and considers receptor sensitivity comprising susceptibility and value, plus the magnitude of effect, comprising the scale of visual change, the extent, which includes the extent of the route impacted, the duration of the effect, and whether it would be reversible. It is therefore based on a balanced professional assessment of likely visual effects. Turning to the identification of significant effects. The applicant has acknowledged in the LVIA that some users of public rights of way would experience significant visual effects, particularly where routes pass through or are immediately adjacent to the site during construction, the opening year of operation, or year naught, and to a lesser extent following the establishment of mitigation planting, which is assessed at year 10, but ultimately planting will establish from the from the point it's planted. In particular, significant effects would be concentrated on routes within the northern and southern parts of Site A, routes passing directly through site B, a small number of elevated routes near Perton Hall, from where the extent of sites A and B could be appreciated from a single position, a small number of elevated routes near Little Staunton, from where Site B would be visible across a wider extent of the view, and routes within Site D. These effects are principally associated with users traveling through open farmland in close proximity to the order limits, rather than receptors within settlements. Following the establishment of

mitigation planting, many effects would reduce to a level that is not significant. The residual significant effects identified at year 10 are largely or would be largely confined to rights of way located directly within or adjacent to sites A and B, together with a small number of elevated routes near Pertonal and Little Staunton, where views of the scheme would remain available, or where there will be a greater degree of enclosure within the footpath network, with users typically experiencing views along hetero-aligned routes rather than direct views of infrastructure. The applicant is, however, keen to place those findings in context. Significant visual effects on other sensitive receptors would be limited, with effects on residential receptors confined to a small number of individual properties and property clusters located close to the scheme, particularly during construction, and no significant visual effects are identified within the villages themselves. Views from the local road network are also, or would also be limited.

Overall, the assessment, the LVIA concludes that, relative to the footprint of the scheme, significant landscape and visual effects would be limited in number and extent. No residual significant effects on landscape character have been identified at year 10, and the remaining significant visual effects are principally associated with users of public rights of way located within or immediately adjacent to the ord limits, together with a small number of routes on slightly elevated ground within approximately one kilometer of the scheme. The application, sorry, apologies, the applicant therefore considers that the LVIA presents a robust and balanced assessment of likely effects on users of the public rights of way network, acknowledging where significant residual effects would occur and applying professional judgment in accordance with the guidelines for landscape and visual impact assessment. Third edition. Thank you.

Yes, thank you for that. So, if I could now ask a few questions emanating from that, firstly I know at that paragraph 210 43 of the 2024 NPS for renewable energy structure and three states applicants I encourage where possible to minimize the visual impacts of the department for those using existing public rights of way, considering the impacts this may have on any other visual amenities in the surrounding landscape. I think you've touched on some of that in your previous presentation. I also note that you have stated, in response to the local impact reports, that why early planting will be pursued with feasible. It is not possible to commit to widespread advanced planning across the site. The proposed approach, nevertheless, ensures that mitigation will establish progressively and deliver the assessment. Reduction in effects by year 10, as you've just referenced. So, my questions here are, is it possible to commit to widespread advance planning, and is it possible to plant more mature specimens in order to accelerate the reduction of effects in effect, so the target is reached earlier than near term.

Thank you, sir. John Mayan, for the applicant, as you say, we have already responded on this point, but just to summarize, there are notable constraints within a 30 month construction period, with regards to planting the I think we have quoted the number of plants required for a scheme like this, which are vast, and the sourcing of stock, you know, obviously the applicant wouldn't, wouldn't begin to process that until consent was achieved, and so the sourcing of stock, and then the planting within the dormant season, which is typically November through to February, would put a constraint on when that could be carried out. However, the applicant would seek to be commencing that as soon as reasonably possible, it's just over a 30 month construction period, you would only have maybe two, maximum three of those planting periods, which were possible, and obviously, as I stated, the applicant would have to source a significant amount of plants to be able to achieve the planting, so whilst the LVIA has been, and the visual assessment has been carried out on a worst-case assessment, so an assumption almost that planting will all appear suddenly year nor in rabbit guards, and it would be implemented. What would happen in effect is during that whole construction period, the applicant would be seeking to phase that planting, because you know practically that would be needed, because across such a large site, so there is, there is, I think, in essence, the commitment is the 13 month construction period, which is two

and a half years, is a reasonably short period, and so, as I stated, the constraints that would be placed on that that planting process would would limit the ability to commit more than than I've already set

out, effectively. Thank you. Having regard to paragraph 210 158 of National Policy Statement DN three. What has been proposed to reduce the prospect of Clinton Glare on the users of public rights of way? Has that been factored into the landscaping?

Yes. So, Tom Rose Bay, on behalf of the applicant, so we paired a glint and glare assessment, which is Appendix five six of the environmental statement. It's submitted in five separate parts due to the file sizes, get the reference for you. I've got that here is a PP 074 through to seven eight, so that provided an assessment on number of different environmental receptors, aviation receptors, road users, sequestering users of bridal ways, and identified the necessary mitigation, and concluded that there are no unacceptable effects from Gunton Glare. That mitigation is then secured through the outline landscape and ecological management plan.

Thank you for that. Accepting local authority want to reserve their response until item three. See, anybody in the room that would like to make a comment on this agenda item? Councilor,

thank you. Councilor Sharon Sarah, representing Y Boston Ward. I'd like to make a number of observations regarding the impact of the proposed development on public rights of way and rider ways. Firstly, I welcome the fact that the examining authority is giving specific consideration to public rights of way, because for many residents these routes are not simply recreational assets. Form an important part of daily life, wellbeing, and access to the countryside. Whilst the applicant has proposed mitigation measures, significant concerns remain regarding the practical impact of the scheme on users of the public rights of way network, both during construction and throughout the operational life of the development. In particular, I would ask the applicant to explain in greater detail how it intends to maintain its safe and attractive routes for walkers, cyclists, and equestrians where construction activities, heavy good vehicles, and plant machinery are operating in close proximity. One matter that has been specifically raised with me relates to the Broadway running from Manor Farm Pertin Hall, which is proposed to be used as a construction access route. I have been approached by a resident who has expressed serious concerns regarding the safety implications of this proposal. The concern is that the current proposal would require equestrian users to share space with construction traffic and machinery, creating an environment that may be unsafe for horse riders. Horses are prey animals and can react unpredictably when exposed to large vehicles, unfamiliar plant, and sudden movements. This creates a particular risk for riders and other users of the route of particular concern is that this route is used by a disabled young rider and is understood to be the only safe road route currently available to him. This is just one example of how this is going to affect the local residents and users. I would therefore ask the applicant to explain what specific safety assessments have been undertaken regarding equestrian users, whether alternative construction access arrangements have been fully explored, whether discussions have taken place with the adjoining landowner regarding alternative routes, and why any safer alternative outside the current red line boundary has not been pursued. If any such option exists, in addition to the safety concerns, I would also like to raise concerns regarding the impact of the development on the character and enjoyment of the public rights of way network. Many of these routes currently provide users with access to an open rural landscape and long distance views across the countryside. They are used not only for movement, but also for recreation, wellbeing, and enjoyment of the natural environment. The introduction of extensive solar infrastructure, parameters, fencing, security measures, CCTV equipment, substations, and associated infrastructure will inevitably change the experience of users traveling through these areas. Whilst mitigation planting has been proposed, there remains concerns that users of the network will experience a significant change from an open agricultural landscape to one that is substantially more industrial in character. I

would therefore ask the applicant to explain how it intends to preserve the quality, attractiveness, and recreational value of these routes, and whether further mitigation or route enhancements can be provided where impacts are unavoidable. More generally, I remain concerned that the cumulative effect of construction activity, fencing, security, infrastructure, and the overall industrialization of the landscape will fundamentally alter the experience of users of the public rights of way network. The issue is not simply whether a route remains physically open, but whether it remains safe, accessible, and usable for all users, including equestrians, older residents, children, and those with disabilities and pets. I would therefore encourage the examining authority to seek assurances that all public rights of way affected by the development will be maintained to a high standard throughout construction operation and decommissioning, and that opportunities for enhancement are secured wherever possible. I'm seeking a commitment that the applicant fully evaluates safer alternatives, particularly where vulnerable users are affected, and that no existing public rights of way is made materially less safe as a result of the development. Thank you. The

applicant like to respond to that, acknowledging that you've addressed some of those issues in previous submissions to the examination, and also a reference to the British Horse Society guidelines.

Thank you, sir. Thank you, Councilor Sierra. I think a lot of these questions that Councilor, as the Councilor has raised, will probably. Actually be covered in our presentation and responses to the next agenda item 3c We are going to outline how we intend to mitigate the interaction between vehicles and public rights of way users and horses, in particular, in the next item.

Thank you, sir John, being for the applicant, and similarly, obviously gone through the landscape and visual effects, and particularly visual effects already within within 3b so to avoid repetition, you know, we the applicant does recognize local value, you know, in the routes has developed a comprehensive design, which would integrate the scheme into the landscape over time. Does the applicant does acknowledge change to views in various instances, however, you know the, as I say, once established planting as proposed is a reasonable response in this, this instance, and is is a sympathetic response, which, which considers local character, whilst we acknowledge there will be some change overall, we, you know, this is, as I say, this is a comprehensive design landscape design, which will integrate the scheme into the landscape.

Yes. Thank you, Councilor. Just like to come back quickly.

Thank you, Councilor Syrah. For why Boston Ward, thank you. I appreciate. I mentioned a lot of things, but I didn't get any answers to any of the questions I had raised, and one particular question that I feel is vital to answer is whether any safer alternative routes were considered outside the current red line boundary, and why, if they weren't pursued, what reasons were given. I don't believe that information is in any of the reports I've read, either, in regards to public rights of way, unless I've missed a paragraph or two, which

the applicant will be able to respond and signpost you to the relevant material, either from previous submissions or from today's, as part of the post hearing submissions, so that your questions will be answered,

and Candy, I think, well, Bob Laugh and British Horse Society. I'm quite happy to defer discussion of the safety issues regarding Bridleway 37 in particular until the next section of the agenda, but I would like to pick up on views on that bridle way I'd like to take as an example viewpoint 12, which is in APP 130 It's described as being on footpath 34 but it is actually at the junction of that footpath with bridleway 37 and when you look at the photos, you can quite clearly see the track that is the bridleway on it. This

is a really valued view. When you ride along that ridge, you've got this massive sense of openness in three, basically 360 degrees, virtually, and particularly the views to the north, towards Swines Head, are valued by all the local riders I know, and walkers, as well as I'm sure the Ramblers will attest. Those are going to be replaced initially with views of panels and ultimately with trees I have to say I'm not sure they'll grow quite as quickly as photos anticipate, but even in the winter the panels will be visible through those trees in rep three zero 33 the there's a summary of effects of on the LVIA, and it's table 18, page, sorry, table 18.2 pages moderate, and 18 to 10, which can't possibly be right. So, I apologize for that. The magnitude of the effect in year 10 is described as medium, and the residual effect as moderate adverse, not significant. I just don't understand how that can be the case when the whole of the far-reaching views to one side are obliterated. My view is that the impact is very high, major adverse, and significant, and I have to say that this is just one example where the judgment. In the LBIA regarding the impact on rights of way are questionable, and I feel are in the favor of the applicant. For most of the public rights of way, the mitigation offered amounts to planting hedges alongside the route to mask the site of the vision of the panels, and the effectiveness of this is debatable, recent local experience has not been good, but even if it is accepted, it is a very, as others have said, there's a significant change in the experience of traveling through open countryside to being effectively walking through hedged in corridors, walking or riding through hedging corridors, which is significant and unwelcome. I think that's all I've got to say on views at the moment. Thank you. Join

me in for the applicants. Obviously, the various points raised there, which I'll try and take some of them. Obviously, in general, I would, you know, the landscape visual impact assessment is extremely thorough. You know, as I said, there's 83 viewpoints, which is a comprehensive set of visual information, which support the judgments made. One point on the speed of planting, we have responded on this already, and the reasonable rates that have been set out within the LVIA for a location like this, so they're entirely reasonable, that the growth rate, particularly when we're talking about hedgerow, which would effectively be established before the year 10 point, but ultimately the assessment has taken that worst case, and the point was made regarding winter. I would, would sort of confirm that effectively, that the assessment is a worst case. We have considered winter views. The majority of the photography and the photon charges were provided based on winter views. With regards to viewpoint 12. I would ask that, that you, so that you do refer to that viewpoint in question. So, if I pull up the reference,

yeah, yeah, it was

Thank you very much. Yeah, so app 130 so that's part two of 14, and that does demonstrate that views to this at the east and southeast would be would be retained, and the openness of that view, there is an acknowledgement of the panels being available, being evident to the, to the west of that, that position. However, the openness is clearly retained in that view, and so I would, I would refer you to that, sir. And I think that I mean, hopefully that covers the points raised

from that one spot to the sorry Anne Kennedy, BHS, Bob Luff again. I have printed out all five on one sheet of paper. I'm very happy to pass it through or to submit it in writing later to make it easier for you to make the comparison, sir.

Okay. Yes, please. Just in terms of the questionable assessment of impact, do you want to say anything about the methodology used?

I mean, the methodologies and is explicit, so Appendix 5.1 sets out the approach taken. I think, in this instance, you know, it's been recognized that a moderate adverse effect, the residual effect of year 10, have been recognized. That's that's largely due to the proximity of the panels in that position, but the

lack of a significant effect is predominantly due to the retention of the key open views within that landscape, whilst you know part of the site further to these would be evident that would be recessed below the horizon there, and I think that the viewpoints that the photographs there illustrate the point, you know the significant effects tend to sort of be focused on locations at which there may be more enclosure or a key view is restricted. In this instance, I think it's reasonable to, you know, on if that, if those images are reviewed, I think it's evident that the long range views would be retained.

Okay. Thank you. So, anybody else like to raise the issue?

Christopher Lacey, individual and user of the local footpaths on a regular basis, so. As part of the draft DCA, the outline public right of way management plan documents prepared, Brockwell have pulled that, and the team have pulled that together. It covers managing the public rights of way and talks about the approach to it. I don't think it adequately covers the damage done to the amenity of those public rights away that run through the six mile tract of attractive rural countryside. There's not one of those paths that I've this either runs through adjacent to or overlooks the site on B C and D that I've not gone over over a monthly period, and those on sites A, B, and C. I walk on a weekly basis, looking at the mentions in Table One of the draft, the outline public right away plan. They talk about no direct impact on the public right of way, rubbish. The impact on the right of way is massive and irreversible. It's effectively this will be an industrial complex, and as a keen walker, historian, and bird watcher, there's not one of these public right of ways that you know, I think, won't be, won't be damaged in some way by this application, you know. Just remind everyone, the massive industrial nature, it would cover 19,000 acres over the foresight, 700,000 panels, 3.15 meter, 10 foot high panels, and part of the best is going to be over 45 feet high. This will be visible from pretty much everywhere around, and I seen all the viewpoints, but I don't think they adequately reflect the experience of most of the people are going to be using those footpaths, quite simply, this is going to be a blot on the landscape, to use the title of a book by a local author. You know, the list of buildings we have significant list of buildings, which I believe have relevance in, in both a local, regional, and a national context. Just to give a little bit of color to that, Little Stoughton, the causeway between Little Stoughton Church and Creating Bree, I think is absolutely key. The views will be absolutely smashed by this solar farm that's pretty much everywhere you look, and the context of those, those lovely 13th century sites, there's a double grooving breeze, a double moated manor house, and people would have walked from that for since the 13th century, so you know, literally back and forth, beating in that church, the views will never be the same again. They'll not be enjoyed in the way that they were. Also, you know, personally above Burnt Hall, looking down over Burn Hall Church, and I have made some representations on this. You know, the Knights Templar were located in the area and worshiped in St Peter's Church, Burton Hall. They would have actually traveled down and walked along the footpath and the public rights of way that he used, and that, as far as I can see, is regionally important. The other point is the Roman town and the two fabulous buildings or sites at Rushy Farm, I think, are of national importance because of their relationship between themselves and Erman Street, one of the main north-south routes that the Romans used for getting around Britain. So, I think that's a nationally important route, and I think that the links to that are nationally important, and I think being able to look at that from the rights away, particularly the footpath running off and going towards Greyston, above Gray Storton, and Littles over Little Storton, is going to really be damaged badly, so I've seen, you know, the classification of what they see as the harm here. My view is that the harm is substantial and permanent. I don't see this being reversed a you know, I note the points about 40 years and the decommissioning, but I think the damage to those views, they will be irreparably changed, and I think this should be taken as an opportunity by the inspector and the. Team to put a scheme that I don't see is in the public interest to consign it to the dustbin of the Secretary of State. Thank you.

Yeah, can I respond on those points?

Yeah, Tom Rose played for the applicant in terms of the first point about the outline public rights of way management plan, and references in that to there being no direct impact on certain rights of way. That document is to do with the management of the rights of way. So, where it's referring to direct impact, it's around in relation to a specific footpath. Are there plans for vehicles to cross that footpath? Are there plans for a cabling to go across that footpath? It's not saying there's no, no impact on users of those rights of way. I suppose those experiential points about the rights of way fall into more of the indirect impact type point, and have been assessed through the environmental statement, so where views have been assessed, which, which mr. Lacey covered from from the ridge line to the east of Little Stoughton, that's assessed through the landscape and visual impact assessment judgments on the sensitivity of particular routes and the receptors using those routes, sort of made in line with the guidelines for landscape and visual impact assessment, third edition, which my colleague mr. Mihan outlined previously, and in relation to heritage and matters raised on on the Roman town and other heritage assets, they're matters of setting off those assets and have been assessed through chapter six of the environmental statement, so just take mr. Lacey's point, but it's a sort of conflation, a few different issues there, which have been adequately and appropriately assessed within the environmental statement, and the public rights of way management plan is a document to manage the rights of way rather than an assessment of the impacts of the scheme,

just let this applicant continue.

Thank you. And just, just to add to that, on a couple of points that mr. Lacey made. Sorry, jump me in for the applicants. Just a couple of points mr. Lacey made. I mean, the this is a comprehensive set of viewpoints that were provided, as comprehensive as I've seen in my career, and in fact, looking at the little Staunton area, there are eight viewpoints on that route referred to, which have sort of intermittent views to the north, some of which have already been referred to, and acknowledge that there would potentially be some residual significant effects looking to the north, because of the visibility of sites C and D, albeit, you know, is noted that that would be recessed below the skyline, and views would be typically that would, sorry, would be maintained towards the opposite side of that shallow valley, so, and again, just in terms of the photon ontology provided, the methodology in Appendix 5.2 is absolutely explicit on the approach taken there, and the visualizations are all highly accurate with regards value, there is, there were, in landscape terms, there were no indicators of anything other than local value to these views, as I've already set out,

mr. Lacey. Briefly,

yes, and I think that the, there are some of these assets, particularly the double moated manor house above Little Stoughton and the church are of at least regional significance, and as I said before, I think the Roman town and the link with the Ermin Street is absolutely crucial. I know some of that falls under archeology and damage to potential roads, but I think that is of national importance in my opinion, because that's a national route, Urban Street, and the links to it are a national route. So, whilst I heard some of your points, I don't. I reserve the right to disagree with them totally. I think the assessment of harm and damage is wrong, quite frankly.

Yes. Thank you.

Thank you, Sandra Kelsey. Miss, can you hear me all right? Yes. Yeah, I'm representing Ramblers today. I'm the treasurer and publicity officer for North Beds Ramblers, as well as the publicity officer for the Bedfordshire Area Ramblers, and I'm here to represent the Ramblers, Britain's Walking Charity. Speaking on behalf of the Ramblers, I'd like to reiterate that the points raised in my original objection

have not been answered by the applicant, Northbears Ramblers, one of four Bedfordshire Ramblers groups, host seven to eight group walks for approximately 30 people each month throughout Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Northamptonshire. All four Bedfordshire groups, plus a number of other walking groups located in the area and neighboring counties regularly walk in the area we're discussing today. This unique area is known as the North Bedfordshire Wold, that has not been mentioned today. They are described as the Wolds to us in this area, though much of the surrounding county is quite flat, this specific area features gentle rolling hills and a rural landscape offering sweeping views. This largely unspoiled pocket of the countryside spans remote traditional villages and is popular for its scenic walking routes, such as the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail. The joys of walking in such beautiful, uninterrupted views cannot be measured or quantified. Neither can a value be placed on the asset this area offers to large numbers of the population as a free and accessible resource. Why is walking important? Walking for pleasure can be a solo or a group pastime. We may walk to improve our fitness, but people walk for many other reasons. Walking for pleasure is about the experience, the views, the connection with nature to enjoy peace and quiet. It is well accepted that walking provides huge benefits to everyone's physical health and mental well-being. Group walking also offers the means to make new friendships and has added benefits. We have a personal insight into the positive effects of group walking. One of our members, forced to give up work through mental ill health, was encouraged to join a walking group by his therapist. He joined us, walked with us regularly. His mental and physical health have improved immeasurably, and for that he pays tribute to his walking family. How will our walking be affected by this development? Walking in rural areas, by necessity, makes use of extensive networks of footpath, bridleways, and byways. Walking on narrow rural roads without pavements is extremely dangerous. As such, our group specifically avoids road walking where at all possible. There is an estimated four kilometers of bridle ways and 11 kilometers of footpaths directly affected by the proposed development. These figures are specific to the development located within Bedfordshire. There are, of course, many other public rights of way affected in neighboring Cambridgeshire. Many more kilometers will be indirectly affected by the destruction of their views during the construction, and after the completion, we may well have footpaths and bridle ways left, but the damage will be enormous. The scale of the development will permanently damage the area. Who wants to walk through fields of glass panels along lines of security fencing, especially as the panels will be higher than many of our walkers? Who wants to stand at the top of the ridge and view an acre upon acre of glass? For less experienced walkers, navigation has been easy using the copious standout yellow top way markers and our distinctive landmarks, particularly the church spires, which have been mentioned today. You always know where you are in the wolds by the churches, but no more if this development takes place. Instead, we will simply be funneled down metal screened footpaths with limited views, whilst it is acknowledged that there will be planting of trees to screen the development. These will take years to mature, block the views, and in the case, such as Bridleway 37 halve the entire view. Let us consider the area covered by Site B. It is possible to plot a five mile circular route without ever. Leaving the development, why would anyone want to plan a walk in an industrial wasteland? No one, I would suggest. And this is what will be left: corridors of high fencing through fields of glass, hardly the stuff of dreams, given the stress and strains of this world, the reliance on screens and technology, the value of free exercise, fresh air, and nature, especially birdsong, should not be underestimated nor squandered in this manner.

The roads around the sites under construction are very narrow, and any additional heavy construction traffic will adversely affect the small rural communities and those wanting to visit the area for walks. I am aware that no accompanied visit has been made to see the area by the examiner. Given the beauty and the rural nature of this area, I trust an unaccompanied visit has been made to see it first hand and appreciate the devastation that is being proposed. How can a rational judgment be made without experiencing the area personally? If it were proposed to build a solar farm of this scale in the Cotswolds, there will be I suspect a national outcry. I would like the examiner to ask, why then is it acceptable to build in the North Bedfordshire wolds? Thank you.

Okay. Thank you. Yeah, briefly, to those points.

Thank you, sir. Yeah, John, mean for the applicant. So, just to respond on a few of those points, particularly with regards value in Lvia terms and landscape value. The word may be a term that is used locally, but there is nothing in policy, or there is no designation that that term is attached to, and obviously there's a difference between designations and character. The applicant has provided a thorough landscape character assessment, which is taking into account the, you know, the Kim Valley and the landscape within the site, and that has been considered when developing the design, so we just want to be explicit that this isn't a designated landscape, either a statutory or non-statutory designation, that they don't exist in this location. With regards to the points made, could I'm at risk of repeating other points made, but just to say that the applicant has provided a comprehensive landscape and visual impact assessment and landscape design, which has taken into account the local footpath network.

Okay. Thank you. An unified comment.

Sorry,

I had an additional thing that I wanted to say. It wasn't a response to this. Yes, Mrs. Tracy Stokes, long-term resident of Great Stoughton. I also am a user of the public rights of way, particularly in the area I live in, and I wholeheartedly concur with some of the previous views, which have just been made. The parish of Great Stoughton has a neighborhood plan. It involved, it was a significant project involving extensive consultation with residents and took into account their concerns. Great Stoughton is the second largest parish in Huntingdonshire. The plan has been approved by Huntingdon Shire District Council as and is in force as part of the statutory development area. It has legal weight. The relevant area includes and protects public rights of ways and views from public rights of ways, and the area is distinctive for a number of reasons, which are set out in the plan, and indeed it refers throughout to the North Bedfordshire world and the Kim Valley Way. It quotes, for example, the rural nature and wide vistas of the countryside should not be polluted by industrial development and associated traffic developments. Careful management of woodlands, edge areas, and hedgerows with historically significant head hedgerows are to be carefully conserved. It talks about vistas, views, and vistas and says that it must avoid significant adverse impacts on the locally distinctive and locally valued views, vistas, and landmarks, all of which are defined in the plan, and it must respect, retain, and enhance the character and distinctiveness of Great Stoughton's rural landscape. It lists the experience of walking, riding, etc. And I agree that these would be irretrievably altered and would create a significantly different amenity from that which is currently enjoyed and is enforceable under the neighborhood plan. I invite our local authority, Huntingdonshire, to ensure that that plan is enforced, and indeed, with regard to this development, and after all, as an individual, if I was seeking to make a planning application within this statutory development area, I would have to comply with everything that's been set out in that neighborhood plan, and we have set out areas in that plan where development would be acceptable. Thank you.

Thank you. Would the applicant like to briefly respond, please?

Yes, Tom Rosebud, for the applicant, we're aware of the Maid Great Stoughton Neighborhood Plan, it has been considered in the policies of that document, we considered through the environmental statement and are referenced through the planning statement and in the policy compliance document. We're aware of the there's a views and vistas supporting evidence document to that plan, which was reviewed as part of selection identification of viewpoints in the LVIA, so it is a document that has been

considered. I suppose the important distinction here is that the scheme is being determined in accordance with the national policy statements. The Great Stores neighborhood plan is no doubt an important and relevant consideration that's for your judgment, but it's determined in accordance with the national policy statements.

Okay. Thank you.

Just on that point, Daniel Studmund Jones, for the host authorities, and in particular for Huntingdon Shared District Council, of course, the council, the Post Authority, Huntingdonshire, did have regard to the neighborhood plan in the preparation of the local impact report, so it has fed into the process, if I can put it that way, through that route.

Thanks for coming back on that.

Thank you.

Not that just remind people, repeat issues made previously conscious. I'd like to give as many people as possible the opportunity to speak.

Very, very brief question. Given our experience with ash tie back, etc. would the applicant commit to making sure that all the planting of hedgerows and trees are sourced from British stocks to avoid any disease importation? I

A surge on meeting for the applicant, so we can confirm that the process will be post consent, that the specific mix of species would be agreed with the host authorities, and I mean, no, no, I mean, I can say on ash, ash wouldn't be proposed at the moment, given the situation, but ultimately the specific mix would be whilst they're indicative species provided within the application, the specific mix would be agreed with the host authorities and would be bound by the outlying landscape and ecological management plan.

That wasn't my question. Species mix, I hear you on. Just will they be British source to avoid importing foreign diseases?

Tom Rose made for the applicant. I don't know if we've made that commitment yet. The expectation currently in the discussions will be having that they would be British sourced, but in fairness, I don't think that's that's one we've looked at. So we'll take that away and provide a response to you.

Okay. Thank you. Gentlemen in the blue shirt.

Thank you. My name is Jerry Stompson. I represent CPRE Bedfordshire, and may I say from the outset that we fully agree with the passionate remarks made by my colleague here on right from Northwest Ramblers Association, CPRE Bedfordshire is a strong advocate for the generation of electricity through a variety of both small and large solar PV systems. However, we wish to ensure that wherever possible solar PV generating systems are located in the most appropriate locations, ensuring that environmental damage is kept to a minimum. For this reason, we will support large-scale solar PV schemes when they are situated on brownfield land or on the poorest quality agricultural land with. The agricultural land classifications of 3b four and five. This site is entirely on grade two agricultural land, provided that not on areas of outstanding natural beauty and not in national parks don't have unduly adverse impact on the surrounding landscape. We also support and encourage large scale solar installations on the roofs of industrial and commercial buildings, for example, offices, factories, retail complexes, and

warehouses, and we have supported large scale solar farms in various parts of Bedfordshire, which comply with this policy in this case, CPRE Bedfordshire has strongly objected to the spot energy application for a range of reasons detailed in our response to the October 24 consultation with regard to the impact on landscape public rights of way in rural communities. This is a massive scheme covering a vast area of quiet countryside and small rural villages. The proposed mega solar farm will transform the area, its historic and largely agricultural character, into an industrial complex across a six mile corridor covering around 1900 acres. The mega solar farm will contain a massive 700,000 panels and will be the size of 1000 football pitches. Local action groups have calculated that will cover an area larger than Gatwick Airport, the industrialization of a quiet rural community. The impact on local communities across the area will be immense. Small villages like Little Stoughton, Keyso, and Perth Nor will be almost completely encircled by 1000s of solar panels completely transforming the sense of place in this rural area, currently open countryside public footpaths and rights of way through the proposed mega solar farm will become hedge-lined alleyways through huge fields of solar panels, obstructing views of the rural landscape. The suggestion by the developer that the mega solar farm could be constructed in a way that protects landscape character through careful siting and screening completely lacks credibility. Comment that this development is all about producing low-cost electricity to benefit ordinary consumers is a fantasy. In fact, it's all about producing low-cost energy for some of the most profitable companies on the planet, the likes of Google and their AI aspirations. We urge you, sir, to reject this environmentally unsustainable application. Thank you for your time.

Okay. Thank you for that. That, like, applicant like to come back over you. Happy to defer response. I

search on me for the applicant again. I'm at risk of repeating what I've already set out, so I'll defer to the presentation we set out at the start of 3b and in response to the points made.

Okay. Thank you. Anyone else got two more people? Gentlemen at the table first, then lady behind.

Thank you. I'm Simon Beverley again, Kesa resident Brockle. We were asked to explain the overall approach to the landscape and the impact on view by users of the network. Disappointing to have heard in one of their initial presentations that this was not national, only local. We're all local here, and that's why we're here, the use of the word world is relevant and can be checked with the local council when they make their preparation presentations. The effect on using of the landscape users of the rights of way outside the solar areas will be of significant change, and it's not dissimilar to looking onto an empty, endless empty car park. It is, however, within the proposed solar array areas the real question has to be asked, and at the risk of repeating some of the points, put simply, what views can possibly be expected by say a 1.8 Eight meter tall user of any footpath when they're sandwiched between two rays over three meters high. Whether these are landscaped in 10 years time or not, there will be no landscape views from these enclosed rights of way. I would urge the examining authority to visit any local solar site currently being developed, such as Cobb Holden Farm at Eaton Soakin, and to walk the right way, crossing it to appreciate what a walk through experience would really be. Once again, I noticed that Brock will just repeat it, given the impression that it will all be sorted later, once we have permission. Once again, therefore, what is the purpose of this inquiry and the examination if it is not to receive full answers to such basic fundamental questions? Thank you.

Yes, thank you. And laid it behind

Elaine Wheeler from Patton Hall. I'd just like to contradict the way everybody's talking about this as being an area used by local residents alone. I'd like to draw Brockwell's annual attention to the fact that the area is also used by a great area of local schools within Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, not only for field trips but also for their important Duke of Edinburgh awards. If this goes ahead, which I hope it

won't. They will no longer be able to use this, and they certainly won't be able to use the area while construction of any sort is going on. So that's the first thing I'd like to say, and the other thing is to draw attention to the fact that the landscape we've been talking about is the insular landscape from within the red line boundary. The red line boundary is surrounded by even more footpaths and bridal ways. From all of these, or most of these, you will look down across a sea of glass, so instead of having like a 240 degree view of a rural landscape rolling rural landscape, you'll just have a sea of glass, and from a lot of these points you see you can turn and see three or four spires of churches, they're all going to be set now in glass if you get your way and get this planning application approved. Thank you. I just wanted to draw your attention.

Okay. Thank you. The applicant would like to come on. Respond on that.

Thank you, sir. Yeah, John, me, for the applicant again. I don't want to repeat other responses. Just on the to be clear, that there is a three kilometer study area that's been adopted in the LVIA, which, so all routes within that area were considered using ZTV mapping and site surveys, so all routes beyond the odd limits were considered within the three kilometer study area.

Yes. Thank you. If I could ask, if there's anyone on teams that would like to make a comment. Okay, now proposing to adjourn for a short break will commence.

Thank you, mr.

Lacy. Could it wait until the next agenda item doesn't overlap.

Well, literally, will take a second. I just got, okay, to stop me sort of rattling on about history in infinite depth. I would recommend a fabulous book, Great Stort and Its People by Anthony Withers, which the examiner may want to have a flick through, because the points I've been making some of the history points, are very, very well detailed in there.

Okay. Thank you,

sir. Apologies, Daniel Stedman Jones, for the host authorities entirely endorse your proposal for a short break, but just before we leave TB, the hosted authorities have prepared remarks specific to landscape, and so probably it would make sense for them to make a book, perhaps after the break, because it will take a reasonable amount of time. Yeah,

given we've been going for two hours, we'll break now. We'll reconvene at 10 minutes past 12, and we can jump straight into that. Thank you, sir.

Thank you.

I'll move on to the next agenda item. When we reconvene, if you're watching this on the live stream, then please be aware that it will now stop to view the restarted meeting. You will need to re. Fresh your browser when we start. Okay, and now adjourn, do.