

This submission concerns an unresolved action point from the first Open Floor Hearing on 17 March 2026, relating to the impact of construction traffic on the school transport service for children travelling from Great Staughton and surrounding villages to senior school in St Neots. The Examining Authority's own closing action points at that hearing directed that this matter be taken away for consideration, including whether the relevant traffic management provisions should become a firm DCO requirement. No resolution of this point appears in the Transport Assessment or in the hearings examined since. The attached document sets out the position and asks the Examining Authority to confirm whether the action point has been closed out, and if not, to require a substantive response from the Applicant before the close of examination.

EAST PARK ENERGY (EN010141)

Supplementary Written Submission

Construction Traffic and School Travel: An Unresolved Action Point from the First Open Floor Hearing

Submitted by: Mrs M. T. Benford

Interested Party Registration: [REDACTED]

Date: 17th June 2026

1. Purpose of this Submission

1.1 This submission concerns the impact of construction traffic on school travel for children from Great Staughton and the surrounding villages, and in particular on the existing school transport serving senior schools in St Neots. This is not a new point. It was raised in detail by multiple Interested Parties at the first Open Floor Hearing on 17 March 2026 (OFH1), and the Examining Authority's own closing action points at that hearing specifically directed that the question of school times and commuting times be taken away for consideration, including whether it should be reflected as a firm requirement ("will" rather than "could") within the traffic management documentation. This submission sets out what was said on the record, notes that no resolution of the point appears in the Transport Assessment or in the hearings examined since, and asks the Examining Authority to confirm that the matter remains open and to require a substantive response from the Applicant before the close of examination.

2. What Was Said on the Record at OFH1

2.1 At OFH1, one Interested Party drew a direct comparison with the Cleve Hill Solar Park NSIP in Kent, stating that the Development Consent Order regime there had not, in practice, proven sufficiently comprehensive and enforceable for those living with the consequences day to day, and that at Cleve Hill embargoes were required at specific times of the day to allow school children to get to school. The same speaker stated this would be a very serious consideration during rush hour, given the number of schools in this scheme area whose children need to reach school, and noted the existing accident black spot on the B645.

2.2 A second Interested Party, [REDACTED], identified the B645, B660 and B661 by name as narrow roads used daily by school buses serving named secondary schools (Kimbolton School and Longsands Academy) and St Neots, together with several primary schools, and observed that the B645 is already well known as a dangerous road with tight bends, limited visibility, and sections where larger vehicles already struggle to pass. [REDACTED] cited Cleve Hill's "Golden Hours" restrictions — periods during which construction traffic was banned from local roads — as the real-world precedent for the kind of mitigation that should be expected, and noted that even where such a mitigation plan existed at Cleve Hill, residents nonetheless described the construction phase as a sustained and serious disruption.

2.3 Great Staughton Parish Council, represented by [REDACTED], separately raised concern about construction and worker traffic passing through the village past the school and the doctor's surgery, and about the proposed main site access (SA16) on the B645 becoming a point of blockage on the route residents use to reach work, school and shops.

2.4 [REDACTED], on behalf of Stop East Park Energy, put the question to the Applicant directly: whether the Applicant would commit to enforceable, time-based HGV embargoes during school travel periods and peak commuter hours, as routine mitigation in major infrastructure projects where construction traffic interacts with sensitive communities, and if not, what evidence demonstrated that such protections were unnecessary in this location.

2.5 The submitter of this document can add the following point from direct local knowledge of the road network, which does not appear to have been put to the Applicant in these terms at OFH1 and which is submitted for the Examining Authority's consideration. The direct route from Great Staughton to the A1, used for the great majority of local journeys including the school run, runs along the B645 past the proposed main site access and through Hail Weston, and is approximately 4.4 miles, taking approximately 6 minutes. The only alternative route from Great Staughton to the A1 runs in the opposite direction, via West Perry, East Perry and Buckden, skirting the northern and eastern edge of Grafham Water, before joining the A1 considerably further north; this route is approximately 11 miles and takes approximately 19 minutes — more than three times the journey time and well over double the distance of the direct route. This alternative is not a realistic substitute for routine daily journeys. The same point applies, on a larger scale, to journeys travelling further east from this cluster of villages — Hail Weston, Great Staughton, Kimbolton and Tilbrook — towards Chelveston and Higham Ferrers, where the only alternative to the direct B645/Kimbolton Road corridor is a substantial detour north via the A14 through Catworth and Spaldwick. In both cases, a technical alternative exists on the map, but neither is a genuinely practicable substitute for daily local journeys, and the direct B645 corridor through the site access should accordingly be treated as the effective, and in practice the only realistic, route for this village cluster. Any sustained degradation of journey time, reliability or safety on this corridor during the 30-month construction period, and the equivalent decommissioning period, would accordingly be felt not as a localised inconvenience but as a severance effect across the whole of this village cluster, for all journey purposes including the school run, and not solely for the specific bus services identified at OFH1.

3. The Applicant's Response, and the Examining Authority's Action Point

3.1 The Applicant's response, given by [REDACTED], did not commit to any enforceable restriction. The Applicant stated only that working hours are 08:00 to 18:00, that this falls outside the network's general AM/PM peak hours, and that school hours had not specifically been discussed with the local authorities, before undertaking to “take away” the point.

3.2 In closing the hearing, the Examining Authority's own action points explicitly included the instruction to take away the issue of school times and commuting times, to consider whether this should be reflected in the DCO, and — in the Examining Authority's own words — to consider changing “could” to “will” in the traffic management schemes once it becomes a firm commitment. This is, in substance, an instruction from the Examining Authority himself that the point required resolution and that the relevant drafting needed to move from discretionary to mandatory language.

4. The Position Now

4.1 The Transport Assessment (Document Ref. EN010141/DR/6.2), submitted after OFH1, records construction hours of 08:00–18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00–13:00 on Saturday (TA paragraph 4.2.4), and forecasts a peak of 60 two-way HGV movements per weekday in Month 2 of construction and up to 854 two-way construction staff movements per weekday in Month 12 (TA paragraphs 5.3.9 and 5.4.6). It records the existing school bus services running along the affected B645 and B660 corridors (TA paragraphs 3.6.2–3.6.3) and the B645's narrowing to approximately 6 metres at Hail Weston with no street lighting (TA paragraphs 3.4.2–3.4.3). However, the Transport Assessment contains no reference to school travel times, no assessment of the overlap between construction traffic and the school run, and no enforceable restriction of the kind requested by [REDACTED] at OFH1. The general working hours given are simply restated as falling outside the network's defined AM/PM peak — the same position given orally at OFH1 — without further development.

4.2 Nothing in the subsequent examination record reviewed — including the Compulsory Acquisition Hearing of 10 June 2026 and the Issue Specific Hearings of 9 June 2026 —

indicates that this matter has been revisited, that the Applicant has provided the written response the Examining Authority's action point anticipated, or that the discretionary language identified by the Examining Authority has been converted into an enforceable requirement. The point raised at OFH1 therefore appears to remain open.

5. Request to the Examining Authority

5.1 The Examining Authority is respectfully asked to confirm whether the action point recorded at the close of OFH1 — concerning school times, commuting times, and the conversion of “could” to “will” within the traffic management schemes — has been formally closed out, and if so, by reference to which document and at which deadline the Applicant's substantive response was provided.

5.2 If no such response has been provided, the Examining Authority is asked to require the Applicant to state, before the close of examination: whether it will commit to enforceable, time-based restrictions on construction and decommissioning traffic during school travel periods on the B645, B660 and B661, of the kind sought by [REDACTED] at OFH1; and, if it declines to do so, what evidence supports the conclusion that such restrictions are unnecessary, having particular regard to the school bus services identified at OFH1, the forecast peak HGV and staff vehicle movements set out in the Transport Assessment, the narrow, unlit character of the affected roads, and the absence of any genuinely practicable alternative to the direct eastbound route described at paragraph 2.5 above for the villages affected.

5.3 Given that this matter was raised at the earliest substantive hearing in the examination and was the subject of an explicit action point from the Examining Authority himself, and given the apparent absence of any alternative route by which the affected villages could avoid the impact, it is submitted that a generalised reference to working hours falling outside network peak periods is not, without further evidence, a sufficient response to the specific point raised.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This submission does not introduce a new concern. It asks the Examining Authority to follow through on an instruction he gave to himself and to the Applicant at the first hearing of this examination, and to ensure that the daily journey to school for children in Great Staughton and the surrounding villages receives the substantive, evidenced answer that was promised, rather than being allowed to lapse for want of a written response.