

Continued Representation to the Secretary of State – East Park Energy Development Consent Order

I wish to maintain my objection to the proposed East Park Energy Development Consent Order and respectfully request that the Secretary of State gives careful consideration to the matters set out below before reaching a final decision. Despite the Examination process, I do not believe that the concerns raised by myself and many other local residents have been adequately addressed or satisfactorily resolved. Whilst the Examining Authority may ultimately reach different conclusions on these matters, I do not consider that the Examination has adequately explained why the concerns raised by local residents should be afforded limited weight in the overall planning balance. I therefore respectfully invite the Secretary of State to reconsider these issues before determining the application.

In particular, I do not believe that the impact of the proposal on public rights of way and the enjoyment of the countryside has been fully recognised. The existing network of footpaths and bridleways provides significant recreational, environmental and wellbeing benefits, allowing residents and visitors to experience the rural landscape in a peaceful and unspoilt setting. The scale and extent of the proposed development would fundamentally alter that experience for many decades, and I do not believe that this harm has been given appropriate weight within the overall planning balance.

I also remain concerned that important questions relating to the proposed Battery Energy Storage System have never been convincingly answered. Throughout the Examination, concerns were raised regarding the potential consequences of battery fires, the possible release of toxic fumes, the adequacy of local water supplies for firefighting, and the effectiveness of emergency response arrangements. Given the potentially serious implications of such an incident for nearby communities and emergency services, I do not consider that these matters have been satisfactorily resolved. Furthermore, I do not believe that the Planning Inspector's site visit fully reflected the transport routes, landscape viewpoints and visual receptors identified by local residents during the Examination. Consequently, I remain concerned that the cumulative visual, landscape and transport impacts experienced by local communities have not been fully appreciated.

I also remain unconvinced that the Applicant has demonstrated that the public benefits of the proposal are sufficient to outweigh its significant and enduring adverse impacts.

I recognise and support the Government's commitment to increasing renewable energy generation and strengthening national energy security. However, support for renewable energy in principle should not remove the requirement for every Development Consent Order application to demonstrate that its individual impacts have been properly assessed, avoided where possible, and justified through a clear planning balance.

In my view, the Applicant has not satisfactorily demonstrated that the anticipated energy generation from the proposed solar array, together with the associated Battery Energy Storage System, represents the most effective and appropriate use of such an extensive area of productive rural land. Whilst solar technology makes an important contribution to the UK's energy mix, it is inherently dependent upon weather conditions and daylight hours, with further energy losses occurring during electricity conversion and battery storage. These factors should be carefully considered when assessing whether the scale of the development and its long-term impacts on the landscape are proportionate to the public benefits claimed.

I also question whether sufficient consideration has been given to alternative means of delivering equivalent renewable energy capacity, including rooftop solar installations, previously developed land, or lower-impact locations, thereby reducing the loss of valued countryside and avoiding unnecessary harm to rural communities and landscapes.

Taken together, the unresolved concerns relating to public rights of way, landscape character, recreational amenity, battery safety, emergency planning, and the adequacy of the site assessment lead me to conclude that the Applicant has not discharged the burden of demonstrating that the adverse impacts of the Proposed Development are outweighed by its benefits.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Secretary of State gives substantial weight to these outstanding concerns when determining the application. In my view, the evidence presented during the Examination does not demonstrate that the planning balance falls in favour of granting development consent. I therefore respectfully request that the application for the East Park Energy Development Consent Order be refused.