Post-hearing submission based on oral representation by Mr Christopher Lacey, local interested party at the public Examination by the Planning Inspectorate of an Application by BSSL CAMBSBED 1 Limited for an order granting development consent for the East Park Energy project ("EPE")

COMPULSORY ACQUISITION HEARING No 1 ON WEDNESDAY 10TH JUNE 2026 AGENDA ITEM 3D AOB

1. The application for a Development Consent Order and for compulsory acquisition powers for this particular scheme is flawed by the lack of a compelling case in the public interest as required under section 122 subsection 3 of the Planning Act 2008.

2. This mega scale ground mounted PV solar EPE scheme proposal is to be spaced out over 4 separate non-contiguous sites spread over a 6-mile span of the North Bedfordshire Wolds and Southwest Cambridgeshire. The sites are proposed to be linked by underground cabling and conducting media. The location of some parts of the proposed scheme are impacted by challenging topography sitting in rolling countryside with a difficult aspect for optimising PV solar performance. This scheme is therefore particularly inefficient and, with the likelihood that it would generate more emissions than it would save over its lifetime, it does nothing to take forward the current UK government's Net Zero mission and objectives and as such is not in the public interest.

3. The proposed scheme is highly likely to produce more CO_2e than it saves over its lifetime. Firstly, there would be massive CO_2e generated in its sourcing and manufacture of solar panels in China using coal fired energy and with other components produced in Eastern Europe with protracted logistics transporting construction materials enormous distances to site. Secondly, in constructing the solar complex and BESS with movements in employees' and contractors' vehicles generating CO_2e. Thirdly, in operating and maintaining the complex over the 40-year proposed life. This would include carrying out a solar panel replacement at or around year 20, even if phased over a rolling five-year programme, this would represent a major series of works each year generating substantial additional Co2e. Finally, in the currently unfunded decommissioning of the site at the end of its 40-year life with a substantial portion of the solar panels and infrastructure incapable of being recycled and likely going to landfill.

4. The applicant's calculation of GHG emissions and savings is highly subjective and vague. The applicant claims that the scheme would save around 1.8 million tonnes of CO_2e over its 40-year life as set out in their EN010141-000068

Statement of Reasons (4.1 Environmental Statement APP019) Section 4.3.8 on page 15. This calculation is impacted materially by the relationship between the total installed capacity and the actual output, which is dictated by the capacity factor, with UK being one of the worst countries for Solar PV potential (A study by the World Bank in 2020 ranked the UK 229th out of 230 nations in terms of solar PV potential). The applicant's claimed CO_2e saving is based on an annual electricity output of 433.2 GWh, relying on a very ambitious capacity factor of 12.4%. If one bases EPE's calculations instead on actual evidence and one calculates the capacity factor based on the DESNZ actual observed national capacity factor figures for the UK in 2024 then it would fall to 9.4 % and with all other EPE assumptions remaining unchanged the lifetime CO_2e savings as calculated by EPE would drop to around 1.2 million tonnes of CO_2e.

5. The applicant is not clear about its choice of panels, the selection of which can influence performance. The Design Parameters and Principles Statement states: *"The solar PV panels will be either monofacial or bifacial".* It should be noted that bifacial panels deliver only marginal uplifts in performance and capacity factor, and research makes it clear that their use is not optimised on the ground surface planned for the EPE sites.

6. The applicant states in their updated Deadline 2 Environmental Statement Volume 2 Technical Appendices 15.1 GHG Emissions document (REP2-022) that they believe that expended CO_2e would be 681,329 tonnes CO_2e. It should be noted that the applicant has increased their estimated figure after correcting errors raised by an Interested Party (REP1-087) in their GHG Emissions Assessment, demonstrating the lack of reliability in the applicant's calculations. EPE's calculations are based on highly subjective assumptions.

   I would specifically draw the Examining Authority's attention to the applicant's response to this error in their calculations. The applicant responds: *"Table 16 within ES Vol 1 Chapter 15 Climate Change [APP-051] has been reviewed, and an error in the calculation of GHG emissions associated with the travel of workers has been identified."*

   The Interested Party submitted the suggestion that there was an error in a particular aspect of the calculations but contextualised it with the following comment: *"More broadly, the GHG Assessment relies on a series of simplifying assumptions which are not supported by sufficient evidence or sensitivity testing."* It is clear, therefore, that the Interested Party is implying that the error they have pointed out (now accepted by the applicant) is likely to be one of many.

The applicant also acknowledges*: "The Applicant understands that there are limitations with ES Vol 2 Appendix 15-1 [APP-116]".*

On this evidence of existing errors, now accepted and amended by the applicant, and the applicant's acknowledgments relating to *"limitations"*, I would contend that the applicant's claim that *"The assessment has been prepared by competent experts in accordance with industry recognised best practice"* does not necessarily mean that their assessment should be accepted as either complete or fully accurate.

I also note that the results of the scoping opinion exercise, in Environmental Statement Volume 1 – Main Report Chapter 15: Climate Change (APP-051), show that consultees raised a number of concerns over the applicant's proposed climate change assessment.

7. Alternative calculations of GHG emissions show considerably higher figures for tCO2e expended by EPE over its lifetime. I have noted alternative figures set out in Stop East Park Energy's ("SEPE's") deadline 3 submission (REP3-108). These are set out in Table 1 on page 29 of the submission with the detailed basis of calculation set out in Appendix A on pages 54-59, along with authoritative sources of data. SEPE have not calculated all emissions for the scheme but have estimated emissions for a selected range of components and activities associated with the Scheme: BESS cells, panels and panel framework. SEPE's estimate for this partial calculation of Scheme emissions is 1,524,206 tonnes of CO_2e, which is considerably higher than EPE's 681,329 tonnes CO_2e calculations. In addition to this SEPE partial figure only represents three specific components of the scheme, I further note that the applicant's current figure for GHG emissions has not yet been increased to account for the requirement to tanker in water to the development. It is also not clear from the applicant's GHG emissions assessment whether its calculations allow for the additional CO_2e emissions required for connection into the National Grid network at Eaton Socon.
8. So even before factoring in additional emissions to SEPE's partial GHG emissions estimates, the proposed EPE scheme could produce more CO_2e than it would save over its 40-year lifetime.
9. I would draw the Examining Authority's attention to the fact that similar findings have emerged at other solar NSIPs examinations. At the Sunnica scheme, a community group commissioned Cranfield University to review the applicant's calculations. Cranfield University concluded: *"1) Sunnica may have overestimated their energy output at 23.5 TWh, unless they are intending an installed capacity of at least 625 MWp. 2) Sunnica's methodology for calculating*

GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions throughout the lifecycle stages of the Scheme is not transparent and has led to an underestimation of the lifetime emissions of the scheme."

More recently at the Great North Road solar NSIP examination, members of the local community group reviewed the applicant's calculations and found mathematical and factual errors, incorrect data, misleading statements, missing materials and unsustainable assumptions. In response to the community group's findings, the applicant reviewed its GHG assessment over a series of deadlines and accepted nearly all the flaws pointed out by the community group and corrected its calculations.

It should be noted that this community group did not commission a professional report. Instead, individual members of the group conducted the review that resulted in the applicant amending its assessment during the examination. The community group's analysis suggested that the Great North Road scheme would produce between 1.8 million and 2.6 million tonnes more CO2e than it would save over its lifetime. The examination closed with the applicant's projected output disputed, at a capacity factor of more than 15 %, significantly in excess of DESNZ annual capacity factors.

10. With this material doubt around whether the EPE scheme would move forward the current UK government's Net Zero objectives, **a compelling case for public benefit cannot be supported**. Therefore, EPE should not be given development consent or compulsory purchase powers as this would be contrary to the requirements of subsection 3 of Section 122 of the Planning Act 2008.

11. This is a critical issue for the examination, and I would ask the Examining Authority to seek a totally independent, objective and external expert Lifetime Carbon Assessment for the EPE scheme, such as to be able to satisfy the Examining Authority and the Secretary of State in respect of the case for public benefit, or lack of it.

12. Even if there were shown to be a marginal CO_2e saving resulting from EPE that would need to be weighed in assessing the planning balance against the multiple harms and potential risks on the scales against the project:
    - The loss of BMV farmland as the scheme has around three quarters of its 1900-acre area made up of high-quality food producing land, which along with the cumulative national areas of productive farmland now being targeted for solar development, presents a risk to UK food security.

- Damage to ecology and biodiversity especially to ground nesting birds and foraging birds, animals and insects particularly over the 3-year construction period.
- Damage to the settings and views over and to the significance of heritage assets and underground archaeology of local, regional and national importance.
- Damage to amenity with the countryside of the rolling North Bedfordshire Wolds and Southwest Cambridgeshire with PROWs only providing a narrow corridor through a vast sea of 3.15m high industrial panels and even higher electrical and BESS infrastructure.
- Massive traffic disruption due to construction traffic including delivery HGV's and worker vehicles using narrow country lanes to access the 4 sites over the projected near 3-year construction phase and 6-mile extent of the site.
- Increased rainwater runoff resulting in heightened flood risk in the vicinity of the EPE project.
- Noise, dust and long-term glint and glare.
- Increased fire and contamination risk created by the BESS element.