

My objections are as follows: Overwhelming scale

East Park Energy is on an excessive and literally overwhelming scale. Covering 1,900 acres of countryside, it's 25 times bigger than the local Manor Farm solar site, and 34 times the size of the Grafham Water solar array.

Loss of high quality farmland

The scheme would take hundreds of acres of high quality agricultural land out of use for decades or for good – leaving fewer fields dedicated to British food production. Current national planning policy protects agricultural land classified as high quality.

Poor solar performance

The UK is ranked one of the worst in the world for solar power potential. Solar power comes last in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's set of renewable energy technologies, rated by productivity.

Against current policy

The plan defies current planning guidance. Government policy states that large scale solar power facilities should be located on previously developed and non-agricultural land

Better places for solar

There is plenty of capacity on brownfield land, domestic and commercial rooftops and car parks for solar panels. CPRE, the countryside charity, estimates a technical potential of 117GW of solar power on 650km² of non-domestic and domestic rooftops and car parks in England alone

Battery bank safety risks...

East Park's battery energy storage system, planned to be constructed in a compound between Hail Weston and Great Staughton, consists of around 100 shipping container-sized units, each one packed with racks of lithium-ion battery cells. These battery banks have well documented fire and explosion risks – there have been serious emergency incidents in the UK and internationally

Visual impact on landscape character

Imposing a power plant of this huge scale would have a detrimental visual impact on the open, attractive landscape. Picture close to 700,000 solar panels mounted 3 metres high across 1,900 acres of rolling countryside. Add security fencing, lighting, CCTV, inverters, 3.5 metre high transformer units, and all the infrastructure associated with industrial battery energy storage systems. Natural screening – so-called 'green infrastructure' – is not likely to be effective.

Environmental burden

No case has been made to show that the environmental benefits of this scheme outweigh its huge burden on the environment. The project will rack up enormous environmental impacts including millions of tonnes of concrete, all the metal, glass and other components for nearly 700,000

40 years is not 'temporary'

The so-called 'temporary' East Park installation would take up to three years to build. The developer has applied for a 40-year power production term. The owner of the Manor Farm solar site in our area has already extended the lifetime of its facility, not even 10 years into its agreed 25-year term

Increased flood risks

Changing the use of cultivated farmland can change rain drainage patterns. The 'gutter' effect of solar panels and soil compaction can mean that solar sites on this excessive scale interrupt overland flow routes, reduce the rainfall absorbed into the ground and increase the rate and volume of surface water runoff.

Noise during construction...

Installing solar power infrastructure is a major, full-on construction operation. As well as all the usual noise to be expected from the traffic, people and plant in and around a series of busy construction sites spanning hundreds of acres, the repetitive sound of pile-driving would dominate local countryside – and the sound travels. It's estimated that around 250,000 posts would have to be pile-driven to support nearly 700,000 photovoltaic panels

...and noise in operation

After the hundreds of workers have finally left our rural community, construction noise would be replaced by different challenges for local residents. Battery energy storage systems incorporate noisy fan-cooling systems and the solar power inverters needed to convert DC electricity generated by solar panels into AC electricity create an insistent low hum or whine that can impact residents from hundreds of metres away

Disruption and danger through a multi-year build

This so-called 'temporary' installation would take up to three years to build, with the sites operating long hours Mondays to Fridays and half days on Saturdays. All the local communities would feel the impacts from the huge volume of construction traffic on our narrow B and C roads – thousands of HGV movements and thousands of site worker journeys as hundreds of site operatives go to and from the construction compounds and site zones – plus the noise, dust and mud across four sprawling super sites.