

Dear Examining Authority,
Rosefield Solar Farm, EN010158: Formal objection

I am writing to object to the proposed Rosefield Solar Farm, reference EN010158.

I live in Oving and my property has direct, open views across the Vale of Aylesbury. The outlook from my garden is not incidental or distant. It is one of the defining characteristics of the property and of the rural setting of the village. The proposed development would introduce a large scale industrial energy scheme into that view, materially altering the character of the landscape and the experience of living in, and enjoying, this part of Buckinghamshire.

I recognise the national need for renewable energy and do not object to solar energy in principle. However, this application must still be judged on its specific location, scale, cumulative effects and consequences for local people, landscape, roads, public rights of way and the environment. In this case, the harm is substantial and, in my view, is not outweighed by the claimed benefits of the scheme.

Visual harm and loss of rural outlook

The primary impact on my property is visual. From my garden, the view extends across the Vale of Aylesbury and contributes directly to the rural character, openness and amenity of this location. The proposed development would replace part of that open rural outlook with solar infrastructure, security fencing, access tracks, associated equipment and, potentially, battery energy storage infrastructure.

This is not a minor change to a private view. It is a material change to the setting of Oving and to the wider landscape experienced by residents, walkers and visitors. The local landscape is valued because of its openness, long views and rural character. A development of this scale would inevitably urbanise and industrialise that setting, particularly when seen from elevated or open viewpoints around Oving.

Screening and planting may reduce some effects over time, but it cannot remove the fundamental change in character. New planting also takes many years to establish and may itself change the open character of the landscape. The assessment should therefore consider the real lived experience from affected properties and public vantage points, not only technical viewpoints or computer generated assessments.

I request that the Examining Authority undertakes a visit to my property in Oving to understand the direct visual impact from my garden and the wider effect on the setting of the village.

Cumulative impact on Oving and the surrounding area

The proposal cannot be considered in isolation. This part of Buckinghamshire is already experiencing significant cumulative pressure from infrastructure, energy and development projects. Residents are not facing one discrete change; they are facing a succession of major developments that, taken together, are changing the character of the area.

Relevant cumulative impacts include, but are not limited to:

HS2 construction activity and associated traffic, noise, disruption and landscape change

Grendon Prison related development and construction effects

new domestic dwellings and local housing growth

the National Grid substation and associated grid infrastructure

nearby battery energy storage proposals, including Statera and Statkraft BESS schemes

the wider concentration of energy infrastructure around East Claydon and the Vale of Aylesbury

The consequence is a progressive loss of rural character, tranquillity and openness. Each project may be presented as manageable when assessed individually. That is not how the impact is experienced by local communities. The proper planning question is whether the area has reached, or is approaching, a point where the cumulative burden is excessive.

In my view, it has.

The Examining Authority should give significant weight to cumulative visual, traffic, environmental and amenity effects, particularly for villages such as Oving that are already affected by other major construction and infrastructure activity.

Construction traffic, road safety and local road damage

I am also concerned about the construction traffic associated with the proposed development. The local road network is already under strain from existing works and development activity. Additional HGV movements, construction vehicles, abnormal loads, temporary diversions and increased contractor traffic would add further pressure.

The likely impacts include:

delays for local residents and businesses

damage to rural roads, verges and drainage

increased risk to pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and vulnerable road users

conflict with school, commuter and agricultural traffic

further disruption on roads already affected by HS2 and other works

reduced quality of life during the construction period

Many of the roads in this area are not designed for sustained heavy construction traffic. Passing places, bends, narrow lanes and damaged verges already create safety concerns. If the development were to proceed, there would need to be robust, enforceable construction traffic controls, route restrictions, road condition surveys, repair obligations, monitoring and clear accountability for damage. However, even with controls, the residual disruption would remain significant.

Battery energy storage and fire risk

I have particular concerns about the inclusion of battery energy storage as part of, or associated with, the scheme. Battery energy storage systems can present credible fire, thermal runaway, toxic plume, water run-off and emergency response risks. These risks may be low probability, but they are potentially high consequence and should be treated accordingly.

The Examining Authority should require clear evidence that the risks have been properly assessed, independently reviewed and are capable of being managed in this specific rural location. This should include:

separation distances from homes, roads, footpaths, substations and other infrastructure

fire prevention, detection and suppression arrangements

emergency water supply and containment of contaminated run-off

arrangements for toxic smoke or plume modelling

access for emergency services

liaison with Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

clarity on who would be accountable during construction, operation and decommissioning evidence that cumulative BESS risk in the wider area has been assessed, not just the risk from this scheme in isolation. It is not sufficient to state that BESS technology is widely used or can be managed through later operational plans. The safety case should be visible, site-specific and capable of scrutiny before consent is granted.

Public rights of way, recreation and local amenity

The area around the planned Rosefield Solar Farm is used by walkers, residents and others who value access to open countryside. The proposed development has the potential to harm the experience of public footpaths and rights of way through visual enclosure, construction disturbance, noise, traffic, fencing and loss of rural character.

Public rights of way are not simply lines on a plan. Their value lies in the quality of the route, the openness of the landscape, views across the countryside and the sense of tranquillity. A route that remains technically open may still be materially harmed if it becomes dominated by fencing, panels, construction traffic or energy infrastructure.

The Examining Authority should consider the effect on local footpaths both during construction and throughout the operational life of the scheme. Particular weight should be given to the cumulative effect of this development alongside other nearby infrastructure, energy and construction projects.

Harm to the local environment

The proposed development would result in change to agricultural land, local habitats, landscape character and the setting of nearby villages. I am concerned that the environmental harm has not been adequately balanced against the real effect on the local community and landscape.

The local environment is already under pressure from development, construction activity and infrastructure expansion. Further industrialisation of the countryside risks incremental but lasting harm to biodiversity, tranquillity, visual openness and the rural setting of Buckinghamshire. Any proposed mitigation must be judged on whether it genuinely reduces harm, not simply whether it is capable of being described as enhancement.

I also ask the Examining Authority to consider whether mitigation, biodiversity net gain commitments and landscape planting are sufficiently secured, enforceable and long term. Promised future benefits should not be given the same weight as immediate and certain harm unless they are properly evidenced and secured.

Planning balance

The benefits of renewable energy are acknowledged. However, they do not automatically override local harm. The planning balance must consider whether this is the right development in the right place, having regard to scale, cumulative impact, visual harm, road impacts, public rights of way, safety risk and local environmental effects.

In this case, I consider the adverse impacts to be significant. The visual harm to Oving, the cumulative burden from other major projects, the construction traffic impacts, the risks associated with battery energy storage, the effect on footpaths and the harm to the local environment are not outweighed by the claimed benefits of the solar farm.

For these reasons, I object to the application and ask that development consent is refused. If the Examining Authority is minded to recommend approval, I ask that far stronger controls, mitigation, monitoring and enforceable obligations are required, particularly in relation to visual impact, construction traffic, BESS safety, public rights of way and long term landscape management.

I also formally request that the Examining Authority visits my property in Oving to understand the direct visual impact from my garden and the wider effect on the setting of the village.

Yours faithfully,

Nichola Harrison