

I am submitting these final comments because, as the examination draws towards its conclusion, I want to reiterate just how strongly I object to the Rosefield Solar Farm proposal and the scale of the impact it would have on this area and the people who live here.

I fully understand the need to address climate change and increase renewable energy generation. My objection is not to renewable energy itself. It is to the scale, location and cumulative consequences of this particular development, and to the assumption that the environmental benefits of renewable energy automatically outweigh the environmental, agricultural and human costs of placing an industrial-scale energy development across such an enormous area of productive countryside.

The human and mental-health impact

Throughout this process I have tried to explain the personal impact that this proposal has already had on me. That impact is very real.

I have worked since I was 15 and supported myself independently since I was 17. I was not born into wealth or given the life I have now. I worked for it. One of the things all those years of work eventually allowed me to achieve was a home and a life in this beautiful part of Buckinghamshire.

The countryside here is not simply a view from my window. It is part of my everyday life and an enormous part of my wellbeing. I walk my dog across these fields. I tend to my horse and ride along these country roads. I look towards the Quanton Hills, walk to the bluebell woods and watch the bloodstock horses in the surrounding fields. I appreciate the wildlife, the changing seasons, the peace, the darkness and the rural character of the Claydons.

These may sound like small things, but collectively they are what make somewhere a home.

The prospect of this landscape becoming dominated by an industrial-scale solar development, associated infrastructure and battery storage has caused me considerable anxiety and sleepless nights. Even participating in this process has been stressful because every consultation and every submission forces me to contemplate what we stand to lose.

There sometimes seems to be an assumption that because a development is labelled "green", the people objecting to it must simply be resistant to change. That is not the case. There is a genuine human cost when people see the environment in which they have built their lives being fundamentally altered.

Loss of productive agricultural land

I remain deeply concerned about the sheer quantity of agricultural land that would be taken out of meaningful food production for the lifetime of this development.

Food security and energy security are both important national issues. They should not be treated as though one must automatically be sacrificed to achieve the other.

The suggestion that the land could simply return to agriculture after approximately 40 years does little to address my concern. Forty years is not temporary in any meaningful human sense. It represents a substantial proportion of a person's lifetime and potentially an entire generation of agricultural production.

At a time when climate change, international instability and changing global supply chains are demonstrating the importance of domestic food production, I find it difficult to understand the logic of covering productive countryside with hundreds of hectares of energy infrastructure where genuine alternatives should first be exhausted.

There are enormous areas of commercial and industrial roofing, car parks, warehouses, brownfield sites and already developed land across the country. I remain unconvinced that enough priority has been given nationally to generating solar electricity from the built environment before sacrificing productive countryside on this scale.

Wildlife and Bechstein's bats

I am particularly concerned about the ecological consequences of such an enormous development.

This is not an ecologically insignificant landscape. The applicant's own assessment recognises the importance of the site for bats, including the rare Bechstein's bat, and assesses the bat assemblage present within the site as being of national importance.

That should give everyone involved in this decision considerable pause for thought.

I understand that the development proposes habitat creation, buffers and biodiversity mitigation. However, creating or enhancing habitat elsewhere is not necessarily equivalent to leaving an established, functioning ecosystem undisturbed.

Wildlife does not exist as individual units on a spreadsheet. Bats, birds, mammals, insects, hedgerows, mature trees, woodland edges and agricultural fields form an interconnected landscape. Species use that landscape for feeding, breeding, shelter and movement.

I am therefore extremely concerned by the acknowledged uncertainty surrounding the effects of solar farms on Bechstein's bats. I note particularly that questions have been raised during the examination regarding potential significant effects on Bechstein's bats and the removal of trees capable of supporting maternity roosts.

Where a nationally important bat assemblage is concerned, uncertainty should surely lead to greater caution, not an assumption that mitigation will necessarily compensate for what is lost.

The same principle applies more broadly to the environmental effects of the development. Biodiversity net gain calculations cannot capture everything that makes an established rural ecosystem valuable.

Battery energy storage and safety

I also remain concerned about the scale of the proposed battery energy storage element.

I appreciate that modern battery storage systems incorporate extensive safety measures and that the applicant has produced a Battery Safety Management Plan and consulted the fire and rescue service. I am not suggesting that a battery fire is inevitable.

However, "unlikely" and "impossible" are not the same thing.

Large-scale lithium-ion battery installations present particular challenges if thermal runaway and fire occur, including the management of heat, smoke, potentially contaminated firewater and the possibility of propagation between battery units. Given the proposed scale of energy storage, residents are entitled to expect the very highest level of scrutiny regarding fire prevention, emergency access, water availability, containment of contaminated runoff, evacuation considerations and the consequences of a credible worst-case incident.

These concerns should not be dismissed simply because battery storage is necessary for the energy transition. The fact that a technology has benefits does not remove the obligation to consider its risks carefully, particularly when placing it

within a rural community.

Cumulative environmental and infrastructure burden

Perhaps one of my greatest frustrations is that Rosefield cannot realistically be considered in isolation from everything this area has already experienced.

We have endured years of disruption from HS2 and East West Rail: road closures, diversions, construction compounds, heavy goods vehicles, noise, damaged roads and the loss of the tranquillity that previously characterised this countryside. For several years I stopped riding my horse on the local roads because I did not consider it safe amongst the volume of construction traffic. Only recently have I felt able to start enjoying those roads again.

Our roads bear the scars of the construction traffic they have already carried. I have personally suffered repeated tyre and wheel damage from severe potholes.

To contemplate another major construction project bringing further heavy vehicle movements and disruption just as life is beginning to return to something approaching normal is incredibly disheartening.

And when construction is eventually finished, the countryside will not simply return. We will be left living alongside an enormous energy-generation and storage development for decades.

Renewable energy must still be environmentally responsible

My fundamental concern is that in the urgency to achieve net zero, we risk losing sight of what environmental protection actually means.

It cannot simply mean reducing carbon emissions at any cost.

It must also mean protecting biodiversity, safeguarding rare species, maintaining healthy soils, preserving productive agricultural land, protecting rural landscapes and considering the wellbeing of the communities asked to live with these developments.

There is an uncomfortable contradiction in destroying or industrialising valued countryside in order to protect the environment.

I care deeply about the environment. I recycle, I do not litter and I frequently pick up litter left by others. I value the wildlife, trees, hedgerows and countryside around me. I want future generations to inherit a cleaner planet, but I also want them to inherit countryside worth protecting.

There has to be a better balance.

Final plea

For the developer this is a project. For those making the final decision it will inevitably be one of many nationally significant infrastructure applications that pass across their desks.

For me, however, it is my home.

Once the reports, hearings, consultations and examinations have finished, those of us who live here will remain. We will live with the consequences of this decision every day for decades.

I ask those making that decision not to see these fields merely as hectares on a plan, megawatts of generating capacity or figures within a biodiversity calculation. Please recognise them as a living landscape: productive farmland, wildlife habitat, views, footpaths, lanes, villages and people's homes.

I have worked virtually my entire adult life to build the modest life I have here. My happiness does not come from extravagant things. It comes from walking my dog through the fields, riding my horse along quiet country lanes, seeing wildlife around me and coming home to somewhere peaceful.

The possibility of losing so much of that has already affected me profoundly.

Renewable energy is important. Climate change is important. But food security, biodiversity, landscape, wildlife, community and human wellbeing matter too.

The challenge should be to achieve the former without unnecessarily sacrificing the latter.

For all these reasons, I respectfully ask the Examining Authority to give full weight to the cumulative environmental, agricultural, ecological, safety and human impacts of Rosefield Solar Farm, and ultimately to recommend that development on this scale and in this location should not proceed.