

I live in Long Stratton and regularly use the surrounding countryside, including local Public Rights of Way around Long Stratton in particular Public Footpath 3 and 4 (FP3 and FP4).

This representation concerns how the application should be examined. I do not repeat my full Relevant Representation. I ask the Examining Authority to ensure that the following issue is sufficiently tested during the Examination.

The issue I ask the ExA to examine is whether the Environmental Statement and proposed mitigation adequately assess the cumulative effects of the proposed solar scheme on the local landscape's character, tranquillity, and public rights of way through the countryside around Long Stratton, including the impact on views, openness and the setting of local landmarks such as St Michael Church.

To also gather other residents' experiences of travelling through the countryside which would be affected. My own observations of the area are that during my walks in this area I encounter great amounts of people using the countryside including other walkers, cyclists, runners and horse riders. My direct local knowledge is that the countryside surrounding Long Stratton is highly valued for its open views, peaceful rural character and extensive network of public footpaths. I regularly use Public Rights of Way FP3 and FP4, which provide opportunities to walk through open agricultural landscapes and experience long-distance views across the countryside. These routes are valued not only for recreation and wellbeing, but because they allow people to appreciate the changing seasons, agricultural landscapes and local landmarks, including St Michael's Church on Church Lane.

The well-known Boudicca Way walking route running between Norwich and Diss would be impacted by construction activity including possible diversions or closures where works may cross rights of way and vast sections passing through the areas where solar panels are present would blight the views and change the character of the landscape. The new screening hedges and tree belts would block the open views. The area is characterised by our open fields, historic villages and a sense of tranquillity that many residents such as myself value and actively choose to live near. I am concerned that the scale of the proposed development, extending across a wide geographic area and affecting multiple communities, which would fundamentally alter the experience of these routes and the surrounding countryside.

The application appears to rely on mitigation measures including setbacks, landscape planting, hedgerow enhancement and tree planting to reduce visual effects and impacts on users of Public Rights of Way. The Applicant's assessment also concludes that the effectiveness of mitigation will increase as planting becomes established over time.

What is not yet clear or sufficiently tested is whether the proposed assessment and mitigation adequately reflect the lived experience of residents who walk, cycle, ride and travel through the area daily. In particular:

- Whether the assessment properly reflects the cumulative effect of encountering multiple areas of solar infrastructure across a large part of the local landscape.
- Whether the proposed mitigation would simply replace open countryside views with screening vegetation, thereby altering the character of the landscape even if infrastructure becomes less visible.
- The extent to which users of FP3, FP4 and other local routes would experience a loss of openness, tranquillity and rural character.
- The likely effect on the setting and appreciation of St Michaels
- Church as a historic local landmark experienced within its rural surroundings.
- The effectiveness of screening during the early years of operation whilst the trees and hedges mature, and during winter months when vegetation would be reduced as a screen with lack of foliage.

This matters to the ExA's recommendation because the issue is not solely whether solar panels can be screened from view, but whether a development of this scale would fundamentally change the character of the countryside around Long Stratton and neighbouring villages.

Many residents like myself value this area because of its openness, dark skies, peacefulness, abundant nature and historic rural character. Public Rights of Way such as FP3 and FP4 are used to enjoy these qualities and to experience views across agricultural land towards local landmarks, such as St Michaels Church. The examination should therefore consider not only the visibility of individual elements of the Scheme, but also the cumulative impact on the experience of moving through what is currently an open and tranquil rural landscape.

I therefore request that the ExA:

1. Please add or expand landscape character, tranquillity, public rights of way and cumulative landscape effects within the IAPI/issue tracking so that the specific effects on Long Stratton, Public Rights of Way FP3 and FP4, and the setting of St Michael's Church are specifically examined rather than included within a broader landscape heading.
2. Please ask the Applicant to provide a clear assessment of:
 - o the effects of the Scheme on users of Long Stratton FP3 and FP4;
 - o how openness, tranquillity and recreational experience would change;
 - o what would the effect of mitigation planting at Year 1, Year 10 and Year 15 be;
 - o what would the impact on views to and from St Michaels Church, and its wider rural setting be.
3. Please provide a deadline at which Interested Parties can comment on the Applicant's response to the above questions.
4. Please include Long Stratton FP3, Long Stratton FP4 and viewpoints associated with St Michael's Church within any accompanied site inspection, because the openness of the landscape, the relationship between the footpaths and surrounding countryside, and the contribution of the church as a local landmark can only be properly appreciated on site.
5. Please require the Applicant to identify the specific Development Consent Order (DCO) Requirement, certified plan or other provision that guarantees the proposed landscape mitigation and its long-term maintenance, rather than relying solely on future management commitments.
6. Please require the Applicant to provide visual and landscape information showing the expected effectiveness of screening and mitigation during winter and summer conditions, and at different stages of the scheme's lifetime.
7. If important questions remain unresolved after the first round of written responses, please hold a hearing to discuss landscape, countryside and public rights of way impacts in more detail.
8. If significant new information is submitted later in the Examination, please ensure that Interested Parties have a fair opportunity to comment on it before any conclusions are reached.

I would be content for this point to be considered with other representations raising the same theme, but the local

evidence and request above are my own.