

I totally disagree with the East Pye Solar Farm application. Below are some of my reasons.

1. The area is already oversubscribed with solar and battery storage developments with regional transmission solar capacity targets already being met - there is no benefit to the local community. The Applicant's own Statement of Need accepts that prioritised schemes already meet the relevant Clean Power 2030 regional solar capacity ranges for 2031-5 therefore East Pye Solar is not specifically needed in this location or region to meet stipulated targets.
2. Construction Traffic/AIL routing will cause a great deal of damage to Saxlingham Nethergate conservation village features and the footings of a number of the village properties due to the weight of the AILs. Heritage and landscape Site 7 is so large that the settings of multiple Grade II* & Grade II Listed Building and conservation areas are impacted. This area is of national importance for its quantity and quality of pre-1750 rural architecture – over 300 Listed Buildings are in the zone of influence. This scheme would industrialise a rare rural historic landscape of high sensitivity - definitely the wrong place for a scheme of this scale.
3. The weight of AILs are also likely to damage some of the underground pipes that take water from higher up the village. The sewer that runs under the road is asbestos which is likely to crack causing asbestos & sewage to leak into the ground.
4. AILs are proposed to be routed along our road (Church Hill) – this road is nowhere near wide enough and we already experience daily problems with the road being unable to accommodate two-way traffic. The local school is in Church Hill and the children access the school via a footpath that runs alongside the road. Heavy goods lorries will also create not only congestion in this conservation village but will also risk the safety of car drivers and school children. I don't believe that anyone has visited Saxlingham Nethergate and undertaken a thorough assessment of the village as a potential AIL/HGV route and I believe that any assessment is likely to have been a desktop exercise. Anyone visiting would immediately see that AILs are far wider than the road in places.
5. Despite proposals for road widening and haul roads, no botanical survey has been carried out. A level 6 botanist familiar with the botanical record has written to East Pye Solar stating that full season botany surveys must be carried out before the project progresses further.
6. Ecology - barbastelle bats This is a nationally important bat landscape, with barbastelle activity recorded across the entire scheme area. Multiple maternity colony core sustenance zones overlap the entire site and cable corridor. Barbastelles depend on connected dark landscapes and functional commuting and foraging habitat that cannot simply be recreated elsewhere.
7. Ecology – White Clawed Crayfish Site 7 is directly hydrologically connected to the Tas and it is proposed to drill under the Tas to link sites 5 and 7. Norfolk Rivers Trust has survey results recording a breeding colony of White Clawed Crayfish in the Tas. East Pye Solar's aquatic surveys were carried out when streams and ditches were dry, which is unacceptable given that this is a Chalk Stream Catchment known to be a habitat of White Clawed Crayfish.
8. Water environment Site 7 sits in a highly sensitive chalk-stream (Tas) and chalk-aquifer catchment, with a high degree of hydrological connectivity directly to the Tas, private sewerage and vulnerable water receptors surrounding the scheme. Impacts on private sewerage and hydrological connectivity have not been assessed at all. This project poses a significant risk to public health and ecology and insufficient modelling has been done to ascertain true impacts.
9. Our ancient public footpaths & walkways will become fenced in becoming more like a prison exercise yard rather than the rural countryside as they are today. The proposed huge/industrial type screening will adversely affect both the unique countryside character and the wide variety of wildlife that we are privileged to have in our area.
10. Wildlife Mitigation - with regard to the areas included in East Pye's proposal we all know that we can never re-create the spectacular countryside, habitat and wildlife we currently have therefore the impact on wildlife should be mitigated as far as possible by thoroughly assessing and documenting mitigation actions within the planning, implementation, maintenance and decommissioning plans. I have severe worries regarding the lack of wildlife mitigation activities taking place. Ross Joliffe at the Issue Specific Hearing 1 – Part 4 (video timing 46.38-49.45), outlined his concerns which totally echo mine in that when a project such as this is started you have to have a strategy that acknowledges the fact that having high fences (2.4 metre deer fencing, 3 metre industrial-type fencing) cordoning off equipment blocks, solar arrays, site compounds (lifetime being c2 years) the planned mitigation seems to be that when everything is working hedgerows will be put in, etc. This lack of planning/mitigation at the outset is definitely going to adversely affect the abundance of wildlife in the area covered by the East Pye Solar Plan. The Norfolk Wildlife Trust recommended a document in their relevant representation, but this seems to have been dismissed as the Applicant stated that guidance has been carried out by the relevant statutory nature conservation body, Natural England, which reports that there is no conclusion of likely significant affect. In my view the Norfolk Wildlife Trust should be listened to because of their in-depth/broad local wildlife knowledge. I would urge the Planning Inspectorate to assess Norfolk Wildlife Trust's submitted documentation.
11. Night lighting was also raised separately as an issue at the hearings, highlighting that the area does not currently have any night lights and the impact of lighting for some wildlife would be severe. The Applicant's view was that no adverse lighting would be installed. However, they failed to give details of the lighting that was proposed to understand their view of adverse lighting.
12. Safety - I have outlined many of my issues in previous documents submitted in the past but an additional aspect of safety relating to East Pye's plans was evidenced when the Tibenham Airfield was discussed which outlined that East Pye were proposing to have solar panels installed on the emergency run off area at the airfield!
13. The Macquarie Group, the owners of East Pye previously owned Thames Water where their track record shows that they preferred to break the law & pay fines rather than fix the environmental damage they were causing. They have proved that they cannot be trusted to abide by commitments & legislation.
14. Decommissioning – I am very concerned that should the removal of the proposed solar infrastructure be necessary over time the land will not be restored adequately.

In conclusion, the applicant has not shown that this harmful scheme is necessary, fairly consulted on, or environmentally acceptable in this location.