

****EAST PYE SOLAR DCO – EN0110014****

****WRITTEN REPRESENTATION****

****From: Homeowners and residents of [REDACTED]****

We are submitting this Written Representation as the owners and occupiers of a family home at [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

Our principal concerns relate to the scale and proximity of the proposed East Pye development to Great Moulton; the proposed National Grid and other electricity infrastructure around Sub-Site 1B; the resulting effects upon residential amenity and family life; and the potential long-term consequences for the desirability, saleability and value of homes in the village.

We ask the Examining Authority to give particular consideration to the people and families who already live in Great Moulton and will experience the consequences of this development over many years.

1. Impact upon Great Moulton

Our home is on [REDACTED] in Great Moulton. Major elements of the proposed development are located close to the village.

Our concern is not simply the presence of solar panels. The wider development includes substantial electricity infrastructure, including substations, battery storage, cabling and associated works, with the new National Grid substation proposed within Sub-Site 1B near Great Moulton.

We understand that the Applicant's own landscape and visual assessment has identified significant visual effects affecting the southern edge of Great Moulton and that additional planting, including a belt of trees north of Sub-Site 1B, is proposed as mitigation.

This acknowledgement is important.

Existing residents should not be expected simply to accept significant effects on the basis that vegetation may eventually provide greater screening. New planting takes time to establish and mature, while residents experience the effects from the outset.

We ask the Examining Authority to consider the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation both immediately following construction and throughout the early and middle years of operation, rather than assessing it principally on the basis of mature planting at some future date.

2. This is our family home and a substantial financial investment

[REDACTED].
Since purchasing it, we have invested considerable additional money in improving the property. Improvements include replacement windows, improvements to the heating, a new driveway and domestic solar panels, amongst other works. We have also obtained planning permission from South Norfolk Council under application ****2024/3339**** for a first-floor side and rear extension and front porch extension.

We obtained that permission because we intended to continue investing in and improving our family home.

We have not yet implemented that permission. The uncertainty created by the East Pye proposal is now a genuine consideration when deciding whether it is sensible for our family to invest substantial further sums in the property.

This illustrates a consequence of the proposed development which is difficult to capture simply through landscape assessments.

For us, this property is not a speculative investment. It is our home and one of our family's largest financial assets. We have worked to improve it and hope eventually to leave that asset to our children.

3. The consequences for our family if we felt we had to move

Our concerns are not simply about compensation or the monetary value of our property.

This is our children's home and our family is established here. If the effects of East Pye ultimately made us feel that remaining in Great Moulton was no longer right for our family, moving would have significant practical and financial consequences.

Depending upon where we could afford to move, our children could potentially have to change schools and become separated from established friends and their existing routines and community.

There is also a significant financial problem.

If the value or saleability of our existing home were adversely affected at the same time as comparable homes in alternative locations remained substantially more expensive, our family could face a double disadvantage: receiving less for the home we already own while having to spend considerably more to obtain a comparable family home elsewhere. We have invested in our present property because our intention was to make it our long-term family home, not because we expected to have to relocate.

It therefore concerns us that the choices available to affected families can sometimes appear to be reduced to either accepting the impacts of a major infrastructure development or selling and moving away.

Neither option is without consequences.

We ask the Examining Authority to consider the effects of the Scheme upon existing communities in this wider context. Residential amenity is ultimately about the lives of the people who live in these homes, rather than simply property boundaries and viewpoints on a map.

4. Concerns regarding the local residential property market

We are increasingly concerned about the effect that the East Pye proposal and associated infrastructure may have upon the desirability, saleability and ultimately the value of residential property in Great Moulton.

We are aware of properties locally experiencing difficulty selling. We are also personally aware of a friend who recently had to reduce the asking price of their property by approximately ****£50,000**** in order to achieve a sale.

We recognise that an individual transaction does not establish that East Pye caused that reduction, and we are not presenting it as proof that our own home has suffered a particular financial loss.

However, the situation is sufficiently concerning that we have arranged independent estate-agent market appraisals of our own property. These appointments take place shortly after the deadline for this Written Representation.

We intend to establish an independent current market appraisal and ask local property professionals about their actual experience of buyer demand and saleability within Great Moulton.

We respectfully ask the Examining Authority to consider whether the Applicant has itself investigated this issue. In particular, has the Applicant sought evidence from local estate agents, chartered surveyors, residential valuers or other appropriately qualified property professionals concerning buyer behaviour and residential saleability in the communities closest to the proposed infrastructure?

If no such assessment has been undertaken, we ask the Applicant to explain why it considers this unnecessary.

5. Residential amenity is about more than whether infrastructure can eventually be screened

We are concerned that the effects upon existing residents cannot adequately be considered simply by determining whether infrastructure will eventually become less visible behind landscaping.

The experience of living close to a development of this scale potentially encompasses numerous matters, including:

- * changes to the rural landscape and setting of the village;
- * proximity to substantial electricity infrastructure;
- * construction activity and traffic;
- * noise;
- * lighting;
- * visual effects;
- * the cumulative effect of the different elements of the Scheme; and
- * the perception of prospective purchasers considering whether they wish to live in the village.

These factors concern both the enjoyment of people's homes and the attractiveness of Great Moulton as somewhere in which people choose to live and raise their families.

Where the Applicant's own assessments identify significant effects upon residents around Great Moulton, those effects should be afforded appropriate weight.

6. The National Grid infrastructure and Sub-Site 1B

We are particularly concerned about the infrastructure proposed around Sub-Site 1B and the new National Grid substation.

This distinguishes the proposal from the impression that residents will simply be living beside fields containing solar panels.

The presence of major electricity infrastructure close to an existing rural community raises a different set of concerns for residents.

We understand that elements of the National Grid infrastructure are intended to have a very long-term or permanent presence.

We therefore ask the Examining Authority to scrutinise carefully whether the location of this infrastructure near Great Moulton represents the least harmful reasonable option and whether sufficient separation and mitigation have been provided between major infrastructure and existing homes.

7. Property protection and compensation

Our concerns are ****not solely about compensation****. Our preference is to be able to continue enjoying and investing in our family home without suffering an unacceptable impact from the Scheme.

Nevertheless, there is an important question about the position of homeowners whose properties are not required for compulsory acquisition but who may nevertheless be able, in future, to demonstrate a substantial adverse effect associated with the development.

We therefore ask the Applicant to answer the following questions during the Examination:

****Has the Applicant assessed the potential effect of the Scheme upon residential property saleability and values in Great Moulton and other immediately affected communities?****

****Has the Applicant obtained advice or evidence from independent residential property professionals regarding this issue?****

****Will the Applicant establish a Property Protection Scheme, voluntary purchase scheme or other mechanism for homeowners who can provide objective evidence of a substantial adverse effect upon the saleability or value of their home attributable to the Scheme?****

****If not, why not?****

****What assistance would be available to a homeowner who subsequently produces independent valuation and/or attempted-sale evidence demonstrating a substantial adverse effect associated with the development?****

We believe these questions deserve clear answers before consent is granted.

8. A Community Benefit Fund is not the same as protecting an individual household

We understand that community benefits have been discussed in connection with East Pye.

We do not consider a general Community Benefit Fund to answer the issues raised in this representation.

Funding a village organisation, community facility or local project is fundamentally different from addressing the consequences experienced by an individual family.

If an existing homeowner can provide credible independent evidence that their property has suffered a substantial adverse effect as a consequence of nationally significant infrastructure being placed close to their community, we believe there should be a transparent mechanism for that evidence to be considered.

Likewise, community funding does not address the disruption experienced by a family that ultimately feels compelled to relocate because of the changed environment around its home.

Community funding should not be presented as a substitute for individual property protection or appropriate mitigation.

9. Long-term consequences

The Examining Authority should consider this development from the perspective of the families who will continue living here.

For us, the issue extends far beyond the construction period.

Our children are growing up here. Our home may remain in our family for decades and we hope eventually to leave it to our children.

Decisions being made now could therefore have consequences for our family for many years.

We ask that these long-term consequences for existing communities be given substantial weight when assessing whether the proposed location, scale and mitigation of the development are acceptable.

10. What we ask the Examining Authority to consider

We respectfully ask the Examining Authority to:

1. give appropriate weight to the acknowledged effects upon residents of Great Moulton, particularly those at the southern side of the village;
2. scrutinise the location and impacts of Sub-Site 1B and the proposed National Grid infrastructure in relation to existing residential properties;
3. assess the effectiveness of proposed landscaping during the years before it reaches maturity, rather than relying principally upon its eventual appearance;
4. examine the cumulative effects of the solar development, substations, battery storage, grid infrastructure, construction activity and associated development upon residential amenity and family life;
5. consider the practical consequences for established families who may feel compelled to relocate, including disruption to children's education and the difficulty of obtaining a comparable family home elsewhere;
6. require the Applicant to explain what investigation it has undertaken into residential saleability and property-market effects in the closest affected communities;
7. examine whether a formal Property Protection Scheme, voluntary purchase arrangement or other appropriate mechanism should be secured for homeowners who can subsequently demonstrate substantial adverse effects;
8. ensure that any such property protection is considered separately from general community-benefit funding;
9. consider whether greater separation, screening or other mitigation is necessary between major infrastructure and Great Moulton; and
10. ensure that the long-term interests of the existing residential community are given appropriate weight when determining whether the impacts of the Scheme are acceptable.

Conclusion

We support the need to move towards renewable and lower-carbon energy generation. Our concerns should therefore not be interpreted as opposition to renewable energy in principle.

Our objection concerns the ****scale, location and impacts of this particular development and whether adequate protection is being provided for the existing communities closest to it****.

For our family, this is not an abstract planning exercise and it is not simply a question of financial compensation.

We purchased our home for [REDACTED] and have subsequently invested substantial additional sums improving it. We obtained planning permission to improve it further. Our children are growing up here. It is our family home and an asset we hope one day to leave to them.

The uncertainty surrounding East Pye is already influencing our decisions about whether to continue investing in our property.

If we remained, we could potentially spend many years living with the consequences of infrastructure that was not present when we chose and invested in our home.

If we instead felt compelled to move, we could face a different set of consequences: potentially selling into a weakened local market, finding the additional money required to purchase a comparable home elsewhere, disrupting our established family life and potentially having to move our children from their existing schools and community.

Neither outcome should simply be dismissed as an inevitable consequence of delivering nationally significant infrastructure.

We do not presently claim that East Pye has caused a specific monetary reduction in the value of our home because we believe such a claim should be supported by proper evidence. We are obtaining independent market appraisals for that reason.

What we ask is that the interests of the families already living closest to this development are properly considered ****before****, rather than after, irreversible decisions are made.

We respectfully ask the Examining Authority to consider these matters, and the wider effects upon Great Moulton, very carefully before making its recommendation.