

Intergenerational Loss of Rural Heritage

ID [REDACTED]

This submission is made on behalf of my granddaughter, [REDACTED]. She has just turned [REDACTED]. I am aware that she will need energy security in the future as we do now but she will also need food security. She represents the next generation of our family to inherit a deep connection to the South Norfolk landscape. [REDACTED], I want her to visit this area and be able to experience Norfolk country life as many generations have done before her.

The proposed East Pye Solar Project threatens to permanently destroy this possibility because it is so vast and it is on farmland. Panels can be placed on rooftops and brown-field sites, food crops cannot. This submission outlines the specific, irreplaceable sensory, ecological, and educational experiences my granddaughter (and all future generations) will lose across the whole site. I do not mean limited to my nearest villages of, Hempnall, Morningthorpe and Saxlingham Nethergate but also anywhere in Norfolk that we currently have the freedom to visit. We are a family who enjoys the outdoors and regularly walks the footpaths in the area to enjoy the open views, history and the ecology. It will all be lost if EPS install this huge industrial site. I don't want to give specific footpath numbers as it may then appear that the other areas are not of equal value. We walk ANY footpaths we feel like.

The countryside experience will be lost. The main value of the rural landscape in this area lies in its immediate accessibility and its historic walking routes. The ability to step directly out of my house and walk the ancient clay-land footpaths and quiet lanes especially linking Hempnall, and Saxlingham Nethergate is a core part of British rural identity. Nature is not something to book up and go to. It is currently all around us. I want [REDACTED] (and all children) to experience living in it.

There is a network of lanes connecting local villages providing a seamless expanse of open countryside. If this project goes ahead, these traditional routes will no longer offer an immersion in nature. Instead, they will become walks through an industrialized corridor bordered by security fencing, CCTV poles, and large expanses of solar panels. The fencing will affect the movement of wild life and also will make it feel unsafe to use. Replacing these open views with industrial infrastructure completely destroys the therapeutic and educational value of this historic landscape.

The disturbance will cause the loss of protected species such as bats and owls.

The fields, mature tree lines, and ancient churchyards of Topcroft, Hempnall, and Saxlingham Nethergate are critical, dark-sky habitats for nocturnal wildlife. The historic architecture and untamed green spaces of these specific villages provide premier roosting and hunting grounds that will be directly disrupted by this development.

Bat Populations: There are Barbastelle bats in the ancient woodland of Spring Green. This whole area is also a known stronghold for species such as the Common Pipistrelle and Daubenton's bat, which rely on dark field margins, traditional garden spaces, and churchyards to hunt insects at twilight. The construction noise, potential security lighting, and massive alteration of the landscape risk driving these protected species away.

One of the most profound country experiences I intend to pass down to my granddaughter is walking these lanes at dusk—watching the bats swoop against the church towers and listening for the ghostly flight of Barn Owls over the arable fields. If these species are displaced by the scale of the East Pye development, she will miss out on a magical foundation and connection to British wildlife that every generation before her has experienced. It will be lost forever.

The ancient hedgerows and field margins of the whole area are bustling micro-habitats and insect life, essential for biodiversity and childhood education.

Insect Populations will suffer. The extensive earthworks, construction dust, and alteration of land use will inevitably degrade the local flora that sustains our insect life, from the Brimstone and Red Admiral butterflies to rare beetles and moths.

Hands-on Learning will be lost. Children learn to love nature by interacting with it closely, by examining the insects in a hedge or foraging for wild blackberries along the lanes. Turning the environment surrounding these villages into a construction zone and subsequent high-security industrial site removes the safety, tranquillity, and biological richness required for these timeless childhood experiences.

The East Pye Solar Project cannot be viewed merely as a temporary or reversible shift in land use. For a child, the decades-long lifespan of this project represents the entirety of her youth and formative years and possibly into her retirement!

To rob the next generation of the ability to experience the local countryside from Topcroft, Hempnall, Saxlingham Nethergate and across the whole site, as areas of wild, natural, and historically continuous space, is an unacceptable price to pay for corporate infrastructure and huge profit margins they will expect.

On behalf of my granddaughter, and all of our future generations, I urge the Examining Authority to protect our local footpaths, our dark skies, and our wildlife, and to refuse development consent for a project that would sever our children's connection to their rural heritage.