

I am objecting very strongly to the East Pye Solar development for many reasons.

Although I appreciate the need for the capability of our country to have reliable methods of producing its own electricity, using this particular huge area of agricultural land is not a sensible or realistic solution.

I am sure that the impacts of this proposal far outweigh the benefits. My concerns are wide and varied.

1. Construction Traffic

From my perspective as a local resident, with particular knowledge of a specific area, I am really worried about the ability of the construction traffic to safely negotiate the narrow country lanes which have been proposed without harm. The possibility of accidents, particularly to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders is very, very real. This, along with damage to other vehicles using the roads (as there are limited passing places on many access roads and even with these, normal sized lorries have difficulty negotiating them), is all very concerning. Vehicles of this size increase the likelihood of large potholes leading to damage to vehicles using these roads and expense to their owners. Pothole repair on rural roads is not a priority for the local council.

There is a strong need to consider whether these vehicles will be able to negotiate the road through Saxlingham Nethergate without removing pavements, historic walls and gardens. The pavement alongside the war memorial has only recently been put in, removing it would be a waste of public money. Most of the properties are old and may well be damaged by the vibrations from the construction traffic. Will East Pye offered to pay for surveys before work commences and for any damage caused by the end of it.

I ask the examining Authority to consider the practical consequences of construction traffic on smaller rural roads including HGV numbers and vehicle types; passing arrangements; road widths and visibility; damage to verges and road surfaces; effects on pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders; noise and disturbance; the cumulative effect of construction traffic from other developments in the area and proper arrangements for compensation for damaged properties and harm caused.

2. Impact on Footpaths and local roads

Some of the local footpaths including the Boudicca Way I use regularly around Saxlingham Nethergate and Hempnall for walking for pleasure and exercise to help keep me healthy will be severely affected during construction. Although they will be open but managed, I do not wish to walk through construction, construction traffic and signage. I thrive on the peace and tranquillity of the countryside, the views, flora and fauna. The screening proposed will take so long to grow – an estimated 15 years - that I may not be alive by then or if I am it is likely that I will be unable to walk as far as I do now along these paths which makes me very sad that the last years of my life and the lives of those younger than me will be blighted by this proposal. As a woman who mostly walks alone I would feel very vulnerable on footpaths that are screened and are more like alleyways in towns than footpaths in the countryside.

I also cycle regularly around the whole of the proposed area again for pleasure and exercise but also access to amenities. I will be worried to do this because of the danger from construction traffic. It will also take away the pleasure of the views, peace and tranquillity with construction going on along many of my regular routes to access facilities. I believe this should not be considered as a series of individual minor visual effects but as a major change to the countryside as a whole.

3. On more general aspects of the proposal I am deeply concerned about the long term effect of the loss of the quantity and quality of the agricultural land. Most of the 1,200 hectares of the proposed development is currently agricultural land and the proposal will permanently remove very good quality land for infrastructure. I would like the examining authority to establish whether the use of this higher quality land has been kept to the minimum and whether alternative locations could have avoided or reduced this loss.

4. A lot of land will be taken out of food production. Although for this particular development the amount of land may seem small when compared to the amount of agricultural land nationally, there is a cumulative loss when all developments are taken into consideration which could become significant. It would make more sense to use previously developed brownfield, industrial sites and low quality agricultural land. I would like the Examining Authority to consider the actual agricultural productivity of the land rather than simply comparing its area with the total area of agricultural land nationally.

5. The applicant proposes biodiversity improvements, but existing countryside and habitats need to be preserved. I would like the examining body to ensure that harm is first avoided and minimised rather than relying on compensation or biodiversity enhancement afterwards and to ensure there is independent monitoring of this to ensure it happens.

6. I am troubled by the impact of this project on the NHS. There has already been an impact on the mental health of the local population. Many people are extremely distressed as to the impact of this project on them personally and if this goes forward this will only increase. I have recently been widowed and would like to downsize to a property near my daughter but the likelihood of being able to sell my property for a price that will enable me to do this will be greatly diminished for many years which is affecting my mental health already affected with the aftermath of my husband's death. Doctors appointments are hard to come by and follow on treatment has long waiting lists. Going forward, if this goes ahead, local people may well walk and cycle less, I know I will, which will impact on my physical health.

I think that the need for renewable energy needs the selection of appropriate sites, the protection of agricultural land, the minimisation of environmental harm and the proper assessment of reasonable alternatives.

The benefits of this proposal have not yet been shown to outweigh its significant impacts as identified above and I would ask the Examining Authority to subject the proposed location, the extent of the land involved, the alternatives considered and the adequacy of the proposed mitigation to very close scrutiny before deciding whether development consent should be granted

The applicants own soil assessment shows that between 28.9 and 37.9 hectares of BMV land would be lost. They class this as a moderate adverse effect. This is subjective. There are proposed restoration measures but are these absolutely certain or are they assumed. The environmental statement states that there will be a permanent loss of 6.1 hectares of Grade 2 very good quality agricultural land. The BESS site is also to be situated on grade 2 good quality land and the applicant says avoidance of BMV land was not possible in that surveyed area. Why was that area selected. How many other locations were considered to avoid or reduce the use of Grade 2 land. The cable route corridor which is part of the proposed infrastructure should not be deferred until after consent has not been completely surveyed so there could be more BMV land taken up.