

East Pye Solar – Development Consent Order Application EN0110014

Interested Party Registration: [REDACTED]

To the Examining Authority

I write as a registered Interested Party to reaffirm, in the strongest terms, my continuing objection to the East Pye Solar development.

Having followed the development of this proposal, the consultation process and now the matters being examined, I remain deeply concerned that the sheer scale and cumulative consequences of East Pye Solar are fundamentally inappropriate for the rural communities and countryside of South Norfolk.

The evidence and concerns presented during the examination have not reassured me. On the contrary, they reinforce many of the issues that local residents have been raising throughout this process.

Scale and industrialisation of the countryside

East Pye is not a modest renewable-energy development. It represents an enormous intervention in a predominantly rural landscape.

My objection is not to renewable energy itself. I recognise the need for the United Kingdom to increase renewable generation and reduce carbon emissions. However, achieving national energy objectives should not mean that almost any scale of development becomes acceptable simply because it carries the label of renewable energy.

There must be proportionality between national need and the environmental, agricultural and social price being demanded of individual communities.

The cumulative transformation of this part of Norfolk through solar panels, associated electrical infrastructure, substations, battery installations, fencing, access roads and other development risks changing the character of the countryside for generations.

Agricultural land and food security

I remain extremely concerned about the removal of a substantial area of agricultural land from normal food production. Food security is itself a matter of national importance. Productive countryside should not be regarded merely as vacant land available for energy infrastructure.

The proposed operational life of approximately 60 years means that, for practical purposes, a generation or more would experience this land primarily as an energy installation rather than as the agricultural countryside that exists today.

Promises that land may eventually be returned to agricultural use do not eliminate the consequences occurring during those decades.

Local communities must carry the consequences

One of my strongest objections remains the imbalance between national policy objectives and the burden imposed upon the people who actually live alongside this development.

Residents will experience the construction traffic, disruption, visual effects, changes to the landscape and the presence of extensive infrastructure long after construction has finished.

These are not theoretical impacts appearing in planning documents. They affect people's homes, villages, roads, countryside and everyday quality of life.

Local communities should not simply be expected to accept disproportionate impacts because a development has been designated nationally significant.

Construction and traffic

I remain particularly concerned about the effect of construction traffic on rural roads and villages that were never designed for sustained movements associated with infrastructure development of this magnitude.

The examination should scrutinise not merely whether traffic can technically be accommodated, but what the reality will be for residents, pedestrians, cyclists, agricultural users and other road users during an extended construction programme.

Mitigation measures cannot completely remove the disruption caused when development of this scale is introduced into a network of small rural roads.

Battery energy storage and safety

I also continue to have serious concerns regarding Battery Energy Storage Systems and associated infrastructure.

The Examining Authority should require the highest possible standard of evidence concerning fire prevention, emergency response, environmental contamination, water requirements, access for emergency services and the consequences of a serious battery incident.

Local residents deserve more than assurances that risks are considered manageable. They deserve clear evidence that emergency planning is robust and that Norfolk's emergency services have the resources, access and information necessary to respond to a significant incident.

Landscape, wildlife and rural character

The countryside affected by East Pye is not an empty space awaiting development. It is a living landscape containing agricultural activity, wildlife habitats, hedgerows, trees, villages and communities.

Individual mitigation measures such as planting and screening cannot necessarily compensate for the cumulative transformation produced by a development of this geographical scale.

A hedge may conceal part of a solar array from a particular viewpoint. It cannot undo the wider change in land use and landscape character.

Consultation and public confidence

Throughout this process local people have devoted enormous amounts of their own time to studying proposals, attending meetings, researching technical information and making representations.

Those contributions deserve genuine consideration.

Consultation must mean more than recording objections and subsequently explaining why a development is proceeding substantially as proposed.

Where large numbers of residents, parish councils and community organisations raise consistent and evidence-based concerns, the examination should consider whether those concerns have resulted in meaningful changes proportionate to their seriousness.

Alternatives and proportionality

I ask the Examining Authority to scrutinise carefully whether sufficient consideration has been given to alternatives that could reduce the amount of countryside required.

That should include the greater utilisation of commercial and industrial rooftops, previously developed land, car parks and other suitable locations, together with a serious assessment of whether the scale and configuration of East Pye are genuinely necessary.

The question should not simply be whether East Pye can generate renewable electricity. Clearly it can.

The more important planning question is whether achieving that generation in this particular way, at this extraordinary scale and with these consequences for South Norfolk, represents an acceptable and proportionate balance.

Conclusion

After following this proposal through its various stages, my opposition has not diminished.

I remain profoundly dissatisfied that communities such as ours are being asked to accept such an extensive transformation of their countryside and agricultural landscape.

Renewable energy is important, but so are food production, biodiversity, landscape, community wellbeing, road safety and the ability of rural communities to have a meaningful voice in decisions that will affect them for decades.

National infrastructure should not be pursued by treating local environmental and community consequences as secondary considerations.

I therefore respectfully request that the Examining Authority gives full weight to these concerns, together with the evidence presented by local residents, parish councils, local authorities and other Interested Parties during the examination.

I ask the Examining Authority to subject the claimed need, scale, site selection, cumulative impacts, mitigation measures and proposed safeguards of East Pye Solar to the most rigorous scrutiny before making its recommendation to the Secretary of State.

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