

Objection to East Pye Solar and Land Parcel 4

The East Pye Solar scheme should be rejected because the applicant has not demonstrated a need for this particular 500MW transmission-connected solar scheme in this particular location. National policy supports renewable energy in principle, but it does not require every utility scale solar project to be consented regardless of location, environmental constraints, heritage harm, agricultural land loss or cumulative impacts.

The applicant's own material indicates that prioritised schemes already meet the relevant regional solar capacity ranges. General arguments concerning "optionality" and "attrition" do not establish a compelling need for East Pye Solar where substantial local harm would result. The proposed BESS also has only Gate 1 status rather than a secured future connection and therefore cannot be treated as demonstrating a secured or fully aligned future connection.

Where regional capacity requirements are already met by prioritised projects, greater weight should be given to whether this particular scheme is necessary, proportionate and environmentally acceptable. It is not.

1. Land Parcel 4 is unsuitable

Land Parcel 4 is one of the most constrained parts of the proposal. It is affected by:

- conflict with the adopted Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan;
- harm to the setting of Long Stratton Conservation Area and designated heritage assets;
- its location within a barbastelle bat Core Sustainance Zone;
- cumulative effects with major Long Stratton growth;
- loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land;
- highways, glint and glare concerns associated with the A140; and
- significant water, drainage and ecological sensitivities. These impacts arise from the location itself and cannot simply be resolved through landscaping or micro-siting.

Land Parcel 4 sits on the northern gateway to Long Stratton, straddling the A140 and forming an important transition between the settlement and surrounding countryside. The proposal would replace open agricultural land with industrial-scale solar arrays, fencing, tracks, cabling, CCTV, lighting, electrical equipment, compounds and a 132kV substation.

The associated cable route is also significant.

Approximately 8km of cabling lies predominantly within Long Stratton parish, creating substantial construction, environmental and community impacts. The length and configuration of this infrastructure also illustrates the highly dispersed nature of the proposed scheme.

2. Conflict with the Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan

The Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory development plan and seeks to protect the historic character and setting of Long Stratton, maintain the distinction between the settlement and countryside, safeguard rural approaches and key views, and manage growth through planned development.

Land Parcel 4 directly conflicts with these objectives. It occupies an important open countryside buffer on the settlement edge and would industrialise the very area that provides the transition between Long Stratton and its rural surroundings.

The applicant has not demonstrated a compelling parcel specific justification for overriding this adopted local policy. General national support for renewable energy cannot substitute for proper consideration of this development-plan conflict.

3. Heritage harm

Land Parcel 4 lies within the setting of the Long Stratton Conservation Area and is closely associated with numerous designated heritage assets, including Grade I St Michael's Church, Grade II* The Old Rectory and Grade II listed buildings.

The open agricultural landscape, historic Roman road, long views and relationship between Long Stratton, Stratton St Michael, churches, farmsteads and surrounding farmland contribute to the significance of these assets.

Solar infrastructure on both sides of the A140 would introduce an industrial character into views currently contributing to that significance. The proposal, combined with new housing and infrastructure, risks creating continuous development between Long Stratton and Tasburgh.

Screen planting cannot fully resolve this harm. It may itself reduce openness and obscure the historic agricultural setting. Great weight should therefore be given to the conservation of the designated heritage assets, and the applicant has not demonstrated a clear and convincing justification for the resulting harm.

4. Barbastelle bats and protected species

Land Parcel 4 lies within a Core Sustenance Zone for barbastelle bats and forms part of a wider landscape in which barbastelle activity has been recorded.

The proposal would introduce extensive arrays, fencing, lighting, CCTV, inverter infrastructure and prolonged construction disturbance, with the potential to fragment functionally connected habitat.

The applicant has not adequately demonstrated that disturbance to protected species or damage to breeding or resting places can be excluded, nor that any necessary European Protected Species licence could safely be obtained while maintaining favourable conservation status.

This is a significant legal and ecological constraint that should not simply be deferred to post-consent mitigation. **5. Loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land**

Land Parcel 4 comprises approximately 101 hectares of agricultural land, including Grade 2 Best and Most Versatile land. The fields are used for productive crops including cereals, oilseed rape and miscanthus.

National policy expects poorer-quality agricultural land to be preferred where significant development of agricultural land is necessary. The applicant has not demonstrated why high-quality agricultural land at the edge of Long Stratton is required, particularly where the need for this particular project has not been convincingly established.

The long operational period, construction traffic, piling, cabling, access tracks and compounds create risks of soil compaction, degradation and altered drainage. Claims of reversibility should

carry limited weight unless supported by enforceable restoration requirements and appropriate financial security.

6. Water environment and River Tas catchment

Site 4 lies within a sensitive chalk-stream and chalk-aquifer environment with hydrological connectivity, private water supplies, private sewerage and vulnerable receptors.

The Long Stratton area has experienced significant flooding incidents, yet the potential effects of construction, drainage alteration and changes to hydrological pathways have not been adequately demonstrated.

There is also evidence from the Norfolk Rivers Trust, provided to East Pye Solar during pre-application discussions, of a breeding white-clawed crayfish colony within approximately 2km of Site 4A. This conflicts with the applicant's position that there are no relevant records after 2016. Furthermore, aquatic surveys were undertaken when some streams and ditches were dry, potentially limiting their ability to identify aquatic species and ecological conditions.

Construction could result in ground disturbance, altered runoff, sediment mobilisation, cable works and pollutant pathways into the River Tas catchment. These matters raise questions concerning ecological protection, legal compliance and the adequacy of the Environmental Statement.

7. Highways, glint and glare

Land Parcel 4 straddles the A140, a major strategic route and the northern approach to Long Stratton.

The application relies in places on outdated or inconsistent mapping that does not properly reflect the Long Stratton Bypass, updated highway arrangements and associated ecological landscaping.

The proposal creates potential conflicts with traffic movements, planned highway changes, public rights of way and local access. Glint and glare from large tracking arrays also requires careful consideration because of the proximity to the A140.

These are matters of public safety and settlement planning, rather than simply private residential amenity.

8. Cumulative effects of Long Stratton growth

Land Parcel 4 must be considered alongside the major planned growth of Long Stratton, including the bypass, housing development, new infrastructure, changes in traffic flows, lighting, drainage and pressure on the settlement edge.

The combined effects of large-scale housing, transport infrastructure and industrial-scale solar development could materially alter the character, setting and identity of Long Stratton.

The cumulative effects on landscape, heritage assets, residential amenity, ecology, drainage and highway safety must therefore be properly assessed. Land Parcel 4 represents a tipping point: further industrialisation of this settlement edge would undermine the planned relationship between Long Stratton and its surrounding countryside.

Conclusion

East Pye Solar should be rejected because the applicant has not demonstrated that this particular 500MW scheme is necessary in this location, particularly where its own material indicates that prioritised schemes already meet the relevant regional solar capacity ranges.

Generalised claims of national need, optionality and attrition cannot justify a scheme producing substantial and potentially irreversible harm in a legally and environmentally constrained landscape.

Land Parcel 4 is particularly unacceptable. It conflicts with the adopted Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan; harms the setting of the Conservation Area and designated heritage assets; affects a nationally important bat landscape; risks impacts on a sensitive chalk-stream and aquifer catchment; removes Grade 2 Best and Most Versatile agricultural land; creates highway and glint/glare concerns; and has not been adequately assessed in combination with Long Stratton's planned growth.

We respectfully request that the Examining Authority gives substantial weight to these site-specific objections, rejects the applicant's case for the scheme, and recommends refusal.

If the scheme is not refused in full, **Land Parcel 4 should be removed from the Order Limits.**

AI disclaimer: This submission has been prepared from manual research undertaken by a human research team. It has been summarised and compiled using a bespoke GPT within a closed project folder. The submission has been argued, assembled, edited and checked manually by humans.