

I wish to state my wholehearted opposition to the East Pye Solar (EPS) scheme and below highlights some of my concerns with the EPS proposal.

1. Net Zero

Net Zero should not be a foreign investors gold rush nor a governments tick box exercise in order to reach targets as soon as possible. Is this the best use of >£1 billion to supply the country's energy needs? Is this scheme honestly net zero? The regions targets have already been met. EPS would unnecessarily take up capacity on the transmission grid and hence result in curtailment costs. So far this year, curtailment costs to switch off wind turbines alone have exceeded £1.5 billion, £404 million just for September¹. Cabling constraint costs have reached £2.2 billion. These bills are rising year on year costing the taxpayer for over supply and inadequacies in the transmission network. EPS will feed into the old and struggling, existing transmission grid.

Renewable energy should be generated where it is needed to eliminate cabling constraints and as a clean flexible supply to eliminate curtailment costs. Given it's proposed 60 year life, mega solar projects like EPS need to be very carefully considered as it will outlive most of the people in the villages it affects.

2. Use of Best Most Versatile Land & Environmental Suitability vs Willingness of Landowner

Best most versatile (BMV) land should be avoided for industrial scale solar. Food security is an imperative in this politically unstable world. Why is EPS located on BMV land and in such an unspoilt, and hence environmentally sensitive, area? It is no secret that after the failure of two wind turbine applications, the same landowners were likely receptive to solar proposals and this willingness may well have been secured prior to site suitability analysis or environmentally preferable sites identified.

3. Dispersed Layout of Scheme

This layout creates maximum disruption to the local community, countryside and wildlife. Every road and footpath out of Hempnall will have either panels or a substation adjacent to it or in line of sight. There will be no escape. The lengthy cabling connecting the dispersed solar fields cause further destruction. Wildlife that migrate daily from bedding sites for foraging purposes will be hugely disoriented by the scattered nature of the solar fields and the miles of security fencing. It is distressing to even think about.

Was this scattered distribution due to landowners choosing which fields they least like to farm as opposed to, again, the environmental suitability?

Several times a week I walk straight from my house round the local footpaths. My favourite route is an approx 3 mile circular route from Pymars Lane to the outskirts of Saxlingham Nethergate and back through Redwings and along Fairstead Lane. In this relatively short distance, I will walk beside 7 fields of solar! There are no

footpaths I can take from my house without being bombarded by swathes of solar. Hempnall sits within an ancient river valley which exacerbates the visual effect of the solar by virtue of the sloping surrounding countryside. The proposed layout all but completely surrounds Hempnall.

These small escapes to get some fresh air, clear one's head and get some exercise are so important but will be totally eliminated as the desire to walk around an array of solar will have zero appeal and will give a feeling of being hemmed in, and vulnerable when walking in a narrow margin between a fence and a hedge. The walk will therefore either be abandoned or I will get in my car and drive somewhere else. Not exactly good for my health or, alternatively, the environment.

4. Health & Wellbeing

There are many inconveniences to living in a rural area. Lack of amenities, public transport, cultural and entertainment venues, and having to use the car to get anywhere, to name but a few. This is an elected sacrifice compensated by having the proximity of the countryside, wildlife & nature on one's doorstep as well as dark skies and peace & quiet. This scheme gives residents the worst of all worlds which will, without doubt, have a severe impact on the health & wellbeing of the whole local community. I do not stand alone in this perception. In the attempt to hide the industrial scale solar, in 15 years, the planting around the proposed fields should be high enough to block out the eyesore and with it, the landscape. The wide, open panoramas of the rural landscape that is so characteristic of the area and defines its beauty, would be no more. Stuck 'between the devil and the deep blue sea' spring to mind.

There is already a disproportionate number of houses on the market in Hempnall, the industrialisation of our precious countryside is already having a noticeable effect as residents do not wish to live here anymore; except houses are not selling. This proposal is creating hardship on every perceivable level.

5. Panel Cleaning

Water for panel washing will need to be transported in. Little detail has been given to this fact in terms of frequency, haulage routes, chemicals used, how much water would be required, run off, mitigation against contamination of waterways and local disturbance. Dirty panels can reduce efficiency by up to 25%. The scattered distribution of the solar fields mean that just about every field of solar will be surrounded by dust from normal farming practices.

Typical cleaning regimes for ground mounted arrays appears to be 1-2 times per year². The distribution of EPS suggests this will be the minimum. This equates to repeated destruction & disruption of the countryside, grass verges, haulage routes remaining open and disturbance to the local community. I do not believe this has been fully taken into account.

6. Chalk Streams & Protected Species

Land parcel 7b extends to within 15m of Hempnall Beck which feeds into the River Tas. This River has a critical, high-priority conservation focus as a rare chalk stream. These rivers are globally rare habitats - there are 210 in the whole world, Norfolk has twenty- five of them. The Tas and its catchment area is undergoing active restoration (2025-2026) by the Environment Agency and is protected locally through conservation efforts and development restrictions. The whitetailed crawfish, present in these chalk streams, is a protected species yet no detail has been given as to how they will be protected either during construction phases or during maintenance and cleaning of the panels etc.

The same goes for the maternal colonies of barbastelle bats present in ancient woodlands adjacent to EPS fields. Loss of food sources along with noise, lighting and disturbance will put these colonies at risk and inadequate detail has been given as to how these protected species will indeed be protected.

7. Soil Compaction & Flooding

South Norfolk is designated a semi-arid region due to its low rainfall, loamy soils and chalk substrate. Recent research by Lancaster University showed that in temperate environments soil compaction was 15% greater under solar panels, organic carbon was 9% lower, particulate organic matter was 29% lower³. These figures will be conservative for South Norfolk. This reduction in soil fertility was concluded to result from reductions in solar radiation and lower plant productivity and growth under the panels. These effects will impact land restoration. It will also increase the risk of flooding due to enhanced run off in storm conditions. Mitigation of these effects can be offset by specialist planting, increased distancing between arrays etc and should be considered.

8. Noise

This area is tranquil with very low background noise. Mechanical clunking and a persistent low frequency hum from inverters, sub-stations, battery storage etc will therefore be audible over long distances. The industrial noise, so uncharacteristic of the area, will affect the enjoyment of people's homes and gardens, and when out on a walk.

9. Mitigation Areas

Some areas marked for mitigation appear to also double as cable routes. The widespread degree of destruction and habitat loss does not begin to be compensated by the pitifully few areas designated for mitigation. Once installed, mitigation must be preserved so wildlife has a chance to survive.

10. Cable Routes

It is of concern that the proposed and extensive cable routes could, with time, become solar fields, thus creating a scheme significantly larger than that currently proposed. Cable routes must remain cable routes and not become available for further development.

East Pye Solar is not required to fulfil national renewable energy objectives. Regional targets have already been met. EPS would unnecessarily take up capacity on the transmission grid and hence result in curtailment costs adding to everyone's energy bills.

The extreme and wide-ranging harms posed by this scheme, to the landscape, community, wildlife, farmland, and nationally significant heritage, are not justified by any demonstrable critical need for it. This proposal represents an unjustifiable assault on rural Norfolk that fails to balance national policy with local environmental protection, community health & wellbeing.

References

1. [h](#) [REDACTED]
2. [REDACTED]
3. Plant and soil responses to ground-mounted solar panels in temperate agricultural systems

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
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