



Planning Inspectorate

Application by East Pye Solar Limited for an order granting development consent for the East Pye Solar

Open floor hearing 1 (OFH1)

Date: 15 September 2026

Venue: Dunston Hall, Ipswich Road, Norwich, NR14 8PQ and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams

Action points

No	Party	Action	Deadline
2	Daniel Elmer (South Norfolk District Council)	Submit the two suggested locations for site inspection Response Hornsea Three Converter Station - EN010080 DCO Land East of B1113 (Main Road) and South of A47 (Norwich Bypass), Dunston Norwich Main EDF BESS - 2023/0617 TCPA Land West of A140 (Ipswich Road), Dunston	1

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Let me begin by making one point absolutely clear.

I support the transition to renewable energy and recognise the important role solar generation will play in helping the country achieve its sustainability ambitions. We need to tackle climate change, strengthen energy security and develop sustainable sources of power for future generations.

However, supporting renewable energy does not mean supporting every proposal in every location, regardless of its impacts.

South Norfolk has already made a significant contribution to nationally important energy infrastructure. Within our district, multiple solar and battery storage schemes have been approved or proposed. We are also accommodating major projects including Hornsea Three Offshore Wind Farm, its converter station at Norwich Main, Equinor's offshore wind farm extensions and the proposed Norwich to Tilbury electricity transmission project.

The scale of this infrastructure is substantial and it has already transformed parts of our rural landscape. South Norfolk Council has demonstrated through its planning decisions that it understands and supports the national need for renewable energy, but that support must be balanced against our responsibility to protect landscapes, heritage, ecology, local economies and communities.

Indeed, I would encourage members of the Examining Authority, if time permits, to visit the area around Dunston Hall and Norwich Main, where existing and proposed infrastructure provides a clear illustration of the cumulative pressures already being experienced.

Having reviewed the evidence, I remain strongly opposed to the East Pye Solar Project.

My concern is not renewable energy itself, but the scale, location and cumulative impact of this proposal. When considered alongside existing and consented schemes, I believe East Pye would result in significant and lasting harm that outweighs its benefits.

One of my principal concerns is heritage.

The villages and countryside affected by this proposal contain historic buildings and landscapes whose significance derives not only from the structures themselves but also from their relationship with the surrounding countryside. The introduction of extensive solar arrays, substations, battery storage, fencing and associated infrastructure would fundamentally alter those historic settings.

Listed buildings such as Moulton Farmhouse and Hillside House would lose much of the agricultural landscape that contributes so strongly to their character and significance. Even some mitigation measures raise concerns. While woodland planting may help screen development, it could also introduce features that are inconsistent with the historic character of the landscape.

My second major concern is landscape character.

The Tas Tributary Farmlands and Great Moulton Plateau Farmlands are valued rural landscapes that contribute significantly to the identity of South Norfolk. This proposal would introduce industrial-scale infrastructure into these areas on an unprecedented scale. Solar arrays,

fencing, tracks and associated structures would permanently alter the appearance of the countryside.

I also remain concerned about impacts on ancient trees, hedgerows and other important landscape features, and I do not believe sufficient certainty has been provided regarding their long-term protection. In particular, I object to the proposed close-boarded fencing, which is wholly out of character with the rural environment.

Ecology is another area where important questions remain.

While I welcome the principle of Biodiversity Net Gain, I am not convinced there is sufficient certainty over how biodiversity benefits will be delivered, monitored and maintained throughout the life of the project. Concerns remain regarding protected species, including the nationally important Barbastelle bat population and white-clawed crayfish, alongside broader impacts on habitat networks and irreplaceable ecological assets. Stronger safeguards and robust long-term monitoring arrangements are required.

I am also concerned about the impact on local residents.

Many affected communities are quiet rural settlements with naturally low background noise levels. Yet there remains insufficient reassurance regarding the impacts of battery storage facilities and other operational equipment. Construction impacts are equally significant. Years of piling, drilling, construction traffic and road disruption have the potential to adversely affect residents' quality of life.

There are also wider economic implications. Local businesses, including tourism and hospitality providers, depend on the tranquillity and attractiveness of the rural environment. Prolonged disruption risks damaging their reputation and, in some cases, their viability.

Perhaps most importantly, this proposal cannot be viewed in isolation.

When East Pye is considered alongside Norwich to Tilbury, offshore wind infrastructure and other approved developments, the cumulative effect on landscapes, transport networks, heritage assets, ecology and communities becomes impossible to ignore. Many residents feel rural communities are carrying a disproportionate share of the burden associated with delivering national infrastructure objectives, and I share that concern.

Finally, I remain concerned about the Development Consent Order itself. A project of this scale requires robust and enforceable controls. Communities need confidence that commitments made today will be honoured for decades to come. In my view, stronger safeguards, clearer requirements and greater certainty are still needed.

This is not a debate about whether renewable energy is necessary. It is.

The question is whether this particular scheme, in this particular location, strikes the right balance between national benefit and local impact. I strongly believe it does not.

For these reasons, and on behalf of the communities I represent, I respectfully urge the Examining Authority to conclude that the adverse impacts of the East Pye Solar Project outweigh its benefits.

Thank you.