

I would like to comment on:

1/ The proposed AIL route from Poringland to Saxlingham Nethergate.

2/ Church Hill, Saxlingham Nethergate

3/ Footpaths

4/ Design Details – Combined Effects

1/ AIL Route

In October 2025 we were made aware by Targeted Consultation that East Pye's plans had changed and that it was now proposed that AIL vehicles carrying a transformer, and others carrying cable drums would be travelling from the 'Railway' roundabout in Poringland, down to Stoke Holy Cross, turning left and proceeding to and through Saxlingham Nethergate towards land parcels on site 7.

This route seems to have been selected when it became clear that it was not viable to take wide vehicles through the narrow centre of Hempnall as was initially proposed.

It is impossible to stress enough the unsuitability of the replacement route, which again feels as if it has been selected from a desktop study only, and I would **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that Inspectors find time to travel along the full length of it, particularly from Stoke Holy Cross southwards as this is the only way to experience the winding and up and down nature of the route and the closeness of roadside ditches and trees and hedgerows, some on very steeply banked sides. Less obvious, but marked by occasional railing or kerbing, are a number of drainage culverts crossing under the road.

We are told that the largest of the AIL vehicles will be 4.86m wide, 40-45m long and 4.8- 5.2m high with a minimum 30m swept path radius. The only way they would be able to navigate this route would be by the extensive and irreversible removal of native hedgerows, verges and possibly trees, disturbing habitats, risking damage to delicate interlinked field drainage systems and blocking a well-used road while this devastating work was being carried out.

In addition, the route goes through several stretches of on-road parking, including Stoke Road in Poringland, Poringland Road in Upper Stoke and Long Lane in Stoke Holy Cross as well as along The Street in Saxlingham Nethergate.

There are also a number of 'pinch points', not least on Norwich Road in Stoke Holy Cross just before reaching the church at the top of the hill, which narrows to the extent that it is often necessary when heading to Norwich to drive onto the pavement to avoid large vehicles coming the other way. Any necessary widening will require the removal of hedging and trees owned by adjacent home owners. It is not obvious that the owners (or the Parish Council) have been consulted on this.

Once in Saxlingham Nethergate the road forms a bridge over a stream close to the junctions with Cargate Lane and Shotesham Lane. It is not clear whether or not this has been surveyed for its ability to bear AIL vehicles.

2/ Church Hill, Saxlingham Nethergate

East Pye Solar have identified a 'pinch point' at the centre of Saxlingham Nethergate and are relying on the Wynn swept path map which seeks to demonstrate that an AIL vehicle carrying a transformer can safely navigate the bend where The Street and Church Hill meet and then safely proceed up the narrowing Church Hill without causing any disturbance or damage to the village War Memorial and its curtilage or the listed and historic buildings that line the route.

The stated width of an AIL vehicle loaded with a transformer is 4.86m. According to the Wynn swept path map the narrowest point in the road measures 4.11m, with a wall and hedge on one side and the gable end of a home right on the pavement on the other. It is not understood how these figures square up with overhang/oversail assessments. Norfolk County Council's Highways Dept have recently been out to do their own assessment and measurements and these will form part of their 6 October submission.

The Applicant's suggested solution to the problem at the bend is the encroaching onto the War Memorial path along with the already narrow curtilages in front of a 16th/17th century barn and a 17th home both of which have negligible foundations. An original wall, belonging to The Old Rectory and retaining up to 8ft of land and large trees is also proposed to be put at risk. There is also a risk that the narrow pavement leading to the primary school and all facilities south of it (playing field, social club, allotments etc) will be compromised. There is no other safe way to walk up the hill and none of this is acceptable.

In addition, there is real concern that the services running under the road will be damaged by the weight of the vehicle which is over three times the UK limit for payloads and understood to exert downward pressure of 4.06/m². At the time of writing (early October) there are three mains water leaks in the village (two on Norwich Road and one on Church Hill) waiting to be attended to.

Finally, from a safety point of view, vehicular exit from my home on Church Hill is via a shared courtyard which links the two buildings with narrow curtilages mentioned above. It is already very difficult to see far enough out to exit the courtyard safely (see attached two pictures taken from my car) and we have all had close encounters with fast moving and/or quiet vehicles coming down the hill (see attached picture). This will only get worse if the end of the courtyard exit is foreshortened to facilitate AIL movements.

3/ Footpaths

Saxlingham Nethergate and Green are well known for their many miles of public footpaths, including the popular Boudica Way. They are enjoyed by visitors, including walking groups, who can be seen making use of the church and playing field car parks, and locals (and visiting friends and family) who are fortunate enough to be able to walk along miles of beautiful paths and fields from their front door.

I have a dog and we have covered every inch of the varied footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways here, many of them hundreds of times, without ever needing to get into a car. On wet or hot days there are sheltered, or shaded and dappled, linear woodland walks, on snowy days there are fields to romp over and on sunny days there are paths with rolling countryside views that take your breath away. Along the way there are ramblers, joggers, riders and other dog walkers, and greetings, news and gossip exchanged; the paths are an important part of community life. This walking is done for the joy of it but is undoubtedly good for my health and that of everyone else similarly out and about. I am heartbroken by the thought of what we may lose.

Some walking is for more practical reasons – neighbouring Hempnall has a shop with post office, car repair garages, a doctor's surgery and a café open daily, none of which we have here, and the footpath route there is particularly lovely, with a long linear woodland walk and a cut through a working farm, with lambs in springtime. The 'medium term' closure of

SN-FP12, in particular, will mean this whole route would no longer be viable for the duration of the closure which is a significant blow. The suggested diversion via Saxlingham Green (with open but managed footpaths around the proposed substation and panels) will take longer and only serve as an unwanted reminder of the destruction of the lovely countryside there.

The attached map, based on East Pye's APP-085, shows the circular walks and the linear walk to Hempnall all regularly taken by me, many of which will be affected or curtailed by construction work or ruined by fencing, noise or industrial views during the operation stage.

4/ Deferred Design/Combined Effects

In very general terms I was concerned, during the 'Scope of the Proposed Development' part of the Issue Specific Hearing, to realise that in many of the aspects of the scheme final design decisions have yet to be made.

For example, it seems that it has yet to be decided which land parcels will contain 3.5m fixed solar panels and which will contain 4.5m tracking panels.

Given the difference in height, size, construction technique, orientation, flatness, movement and noise (and perhaps other factors) it seems to me that whichever is chosen will have different impacts in terms of water run-off, glint and glare (aircraft), bat disturbance (lake effect), construction noise (piling or not), construction time, construction traffic type (concrete or not), ongoing cleaning and maintenance, operational noise and so on, none of which can be considered and examined until the exact design in each individual parcel (which will have different gradients, and soil types) is known.

This comment goes across all the individual components of the proposed infrastructure and until the fundamental detail of each element is disclosed it will limit anyone's ability to understand and consider the crucial combined effects (noise, visuals etc) of each area of the scheme.







