The General Aviation Awareness Council
c/o LAA, Turweston Aerodrome, Biddlesden Road, Brackley, Northampton, NN13 5YD, UK
President: The Lord Rotherwick

Application by East Pye Solar Ltd for an order granting development consent for the East Pye Solar project (EN0110014)

Comments on Response to ExQ1 on behalf of the GAAC

Interested Party Reference Number [redacted]

The Applicant's Responses to the Examining Authority's First Written Questions

The ExA asked the Applicant to:

c) Respond in detail to the matters raised by the General Aviation Awareness Council in its RR [RR-0664] and during issue specific hearing 1, including concerns regarding the safeguarding of Tibbenham and Seething airfields, emergency landing areas, the location of solar arrays, BESS infrastructure and substations, and aviation safety risks associated with engine-failure scenarios.

The Applicant's response was:

'The General Aviation Awareness Council are understood to reiterate the concerns raised by Norfolk Gliding Club.'

The GAAC has not 'reiterated' the NGC's 'concerns'.

In line with the CAA principles, the GAAC recognises that the Operator of Tibenham Aerodrome is the expert on aviation safety issues at and in the vicinity of its Aerodrome. The NGC has provided, and continues to provide, detailed technical information based on its assessment of risks to the safety of users of the airfield and people living and working in the surrounding area. The Aerodrome Operator is responsible for maintaining the safety of users and residents in the area.

The GAAC has set out the planning policy context within which this application has been submitted and against which it should be assessed.

The GAAC has also addressed the potential cumulative risks to aviation safety due to the proximity of this application to the proposed Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Route and to the approved Station Road Solar scheme.

In Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) the GAAC addressed not only the issues arising from the two main large scale infrastructure projects but also set out in detail that the changes that have taken place to this scheme since first made public. In particular the GAAC, based on the NGC technical assessment of the risk of an engine failure on take-off, drew attention to the potential catastrophic outcome should an aircraft land on the proposed BESS, the proposed National Grid Sub-Station and the existing pylon route to the east of Tibenham Aerodrome which is stated as being subject to as yet undefined modifications.

The GAAC understands that the proposed changes to the original scheme were not discussed with NGC prior to this Examination. We have seen no evaluation on the potential implications were an aircraft to crash into either or all of those three components of the scheme. The GAAC also understands that the Applicant has not consulted with the emergency services with respect to their ability to respond to such a scenario.

Furthermore, the Applicant makes no reference to the solar scheme approved at Station Road by the Local Planning Authority which should also have been considered when addressing cumulative impacts.

It is clear that there has been no rigorous assessment of the overriding ALARP principles which must be applied to aviation safety assessment.

The Applicant has not had regard to aviation safety principles and has not considered the proposed scheme in a comprehensive manner.

In ISH1, the Applicant suggested that just because information on elements of aviation safety had not been presented, this did not mean that it had not been examined.

It also promoted the need for 'flexibility' but that is not in line with the rigorous requirements of aviation safety.

The Applicant has sought to identify the likelihood of exposure to Glint and Glare and to some extent up-draughts and the risk of bird strike. What it has **not** done, however, is to consider, holistically, and in a structured manner, the potential risks created by the presence and operation of this proposed development in close proximity to Tibenham airfield (together with other schemes in the area) and the combined potential risks to human safety (both those flying and those working on the ground).

The Applicant has not considered severity or probability. These are the fundamental principles of aviation risk assessment. The CAA CAP 1059 'Safety Management Systems: Guidance for small, non-complex organisations', Appendix B, Figure 2 addresses 'risk severity' classifications which could be catastrophic; Figure 3 addresses 'likelihood' which could be remote but, Figure 4, the 'Risk Tolerability Matrix ' determines this combination to be 'Unacceptable'. 'Unacceptable' requires major mitigation measures to reduce the level of risk to 'As Low as Reasonably Practicable (ALARP)

At the present time, therefore, the ExA does not have any robust information from the Applicant which would allow it to judge the acceptability of this scheme in relation to human safety. That information should have been included within the application documents. The GAAC's view is that these shortcomings fundamentally undermine the credibility of this application.