STOP
EAST PARK
ENERGY
SOIL OVER SOLAR

www.stopeastparkenergy.com

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Counting the costs to our rural community: why we are standing up to East Park Energy

Open letter to Brockwell Storage and Solar

To the Directors

The Stop East Park Energy group represents hundreds of concerned residents across the huge area of Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire countryside targeted by your solar power plant proposal. Our community supports the switch to renewables – but, put simply, this is the right energy in the wrong place. We set out here some of the many serious issues people living in our small rural villages have shared.

- Your scheme is literally overwhelming. It's bigger than Gatwick Airport and seven times the size of the UK's largest operational solar site. It spans over six miles end to end, covers 1,900 acres, and includes 700,000 photovoltaic panels and more than 40 miles of security fencing. Vast tracts of farmland would vanish under glass

- An over-scaled solar site targeting good agricultural land does not belong here – or on any farmland. There are better places, from warehouse roofs through car parks to transport corridors. Residents have even suggested specific alternative local brownfield sites and industrial and commercial building rooftops. A quick calculation shows that if just two national supermarket chains added solar panels to their roofspace, East Park would be redundant

- Your power plant would take out very high quality, fertile farmland – it's 74 per cent Best and Most Versatile land, grade 2 and grade 3a. It's been successfully farmed for generations and only a matter of weeks ago produced a plentiful harvest of crops including wheat, barley and oats. The nearly 2,000 acres of agricultural land is capable of growing enough wheat to make around 3.6 million loaves a year

- It is difficult for us to understand why you have designed your scheme so close to people's homes and running right up to and around villages. It dominates and conjoins a string of small communities spanning the county border. Instead of living within a rural setting characterised by centuries-old seasonal farming cycles, we would be hemmed in by hundreds of thousands of up to 3 metre high photovoltaic panels, security fencing, lighting, intrusive CCTV, inverters, 3 metre high transformer units, and industrial scale battery energy storage systems

- Your so-called 'temporary' scheme would take three long years to build, and we would have no choice but to endure disruption, dust and endless noise. The pile-driving alone would shatter what you describe as the current "tranquillity" here. There would inevitably be more traffic on our narrow roads, past our schools and in our villages from hundreds of contract workers. We know that your construction access plans would be meaningless in practice. We have seen it before – long lorry queues bottlenecking muddy B and C roads, endless work carried out beyond the stipulated timeframes, and HGV drivers using unauthorised routes to reach busy sites

- We host plenty of renewable energy right now. We already have solar schemes in place and in the local planning pipeline that would generate 165MW of power. Wind power provides more. Your plan would create a six mile solar corridor – along with the existing and new sites it would amount to 2,800 acres of solar

- As well as all these points about the excessive scale of your scheme and farming land-take, residents have raised countless other concerns. You have been challenged on issues as diverse as lithium-ion battery energy storage risks, flooding, illogical landscape interventions, the impact on local wildlife, the shortcomings and provenance of your chosen tech, and the potential rise in crime in our area as thieves target valuable equipment

- Your statutory consultation was just a tickbox exercise. You and your representatives did not even try to claim that the consultation process counted. You took no notes of what we said. The fact that you hired a security guard for your sessions tells us everything we need to know about how much faith you have in your own plan and its suitability for this location. Your responses included 'Yes of course the scheme will get the go ahead' and 'What difference does it make if we have to import more food?' When asked if you'd be happy to live next to an enormous power scheme, the answer was a hesitant 'I think so'

- Your scheme would bring only a handful of new low skill operational jobs to the area. It would leave local farmworkers redundant. It threatens the livelihoods of thriving small businesses

- This is not about the rush to reach Net Zero. There is no real cradle to grave carbon calculation of the whole scheme. You are not interested in generating electricity in better ways, deploying the limited land available and renewable energy sources more intelligently. This is purely about profit. Your power scheme would generate multimillions of pounds for your institutional capital-backed business. It would make a group of local farmers richer to the tune of several millions every year. But the communities forced to host it would be labelled 'black mirror villages' by the media, suffer the stress of battling a long, complex and expensive planning process that is stacked against us, followed by a punishing three-year construction programme that would devastate our countryside and devalue our homes. Your lucrative scheme is quite literally at our expense

Hundreds of locals are horrified by your plan to industrialise their environment. We are not NIMBYs – this over-scaled scheme does not need to go in anybody's backyard. We are ordinary people, young and old, from all walks of life, who have chosen to live in a piece of countryside that your scheme would radically change for more than four decades – or for good.

Your scheme is misjudged and flawed. The East Park plan consistently – and calculatingly – misrepresents and elides significant issues. The numerous and broad-ranging comments and challenges you have received from us demonstrate all this beyond doubt. As a community, we are confident that your scheme will fail to meet the criteria set out in the Planning Inspectorate's exacting and scrupulous DCO process.

Stop East Park Energy
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East Park Energy: an 'inappropriate site chosen for purely commercial reasons'

"The East Park Energy proposal for this massively scaled solar power facility across countryside in North Bedfordshire and into Cambridgeshire is a bad idea. It is far too large and would have a lasting detrimental effect on the prime farmland targeted for development. It seems more about financial speculation than anything else."
Richard Fuller, MP for North East Bedfordshire

"This scheme would see vast swathes of our local countryside, good quality farmland, sacrificed for at least two generations. The aim of reducing carbon emissions is laudable, but the East Park Energy proposal is completely misguided. The scale is excessive, and the negatives for local residents far outweigh any potential positives. I oppose the scheme and urge Brockwell to reconsider its plans."
Ben Obese-Jecty, MP for Huntingdon

"Many applications, particularly for massive solar sites like East Park Energy, are for inappropriate sites chosen for purely commercial reasons. As well as the impact on landscape quality, wildlife and biodiversity, we are concerned over the negative impact on our valuable agricultural land."
Alan James, Chairman, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, CPRE, the countryside charity

"CPRE Bedfordshire supports the Stop East Park Energy campaign. We believe solar energy has a role to play in our collective action against climate change, but not at the expense of the environment."
Lois Wright, Director, Bedfordshire, CPRE, the countryside charity