



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

This statement records and provides further detail to my oral representation delivered during the Open Floor Hearing (OFH) on 17th March.

As the Member of Parliament for North Bedfordshire, I strongly oppose the East Park Energy scheme. My opposition is based on what I believe are practical failures of this specific scheme, rather than on general principle.

Best and Most Versatile land

National Policy Statement EN-3 requires applicants to use brownfield or previously developed land, but where agricultural land is deemed “necessary”, to use lower-grade land and avoid BMV land.[\[1\]](#)

This proposal would place 74% of the site on BMV agricultural land. This is nearly four times higher than the 20% median seen in comparable NSIP-scale solar schemes, making it an exceptional outlier.[\[2\]](#)

The Government has set no numerical limit on a percentage of BMV land, as confirmed by the Minister in a parliamentary debate I held in January.[\[3\]](#) This lack of clarity and consistency on the weight given to the use of BMV land, makes it unclear on what basis the use of BMV land by each application is assessed. What is too much, too little? We do not know.

Farmland in Bedfordshire has long supported food production, including during periods of national pressure like the second world war, due to its proximity to London. National food security remains an important consideration, particularly given global uncertainty. The value of maintaining productive agricultural land in this location should be given detailed consideration.

The applicant describes a 40-year loss of BMV land as “temporary,”^[4] but this is, in effect, a generational loss of food-producing soil. The applicant has failed to provide a sufficiently detailed, site-specific decommissioning plan or a legally binding financial mechanism to guarantee the future restoration of the soil. Without this, the loss must be regarded as permanent.

I ask that the permanent loss of a high proportion of high-quality agricultural land is given significant weight against the proposal.

Cumulative Impacts

In the OFH I set out my concerns about the adequacy of the Cumulative Effects Assessment in the application in regard to other national infrastructure projects planned in Bedfordshire.

East West Rail

The applicant stated in the Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2) that East West Rail is in phase three and “is not committed yet”.

The Bedford to Cambridge section of East West Rail is a government backed project for which it confirmed funding in early 2025.

East West Rail have advised they will hold an 8-week public consultation on their confirmed route 1c from 14 April.

Whether it makes sense or not, East West Rail is clearly going ahead and the application should not be approved until a full assessment of the impact of East West Rail is made, including any impact during the construction phase.

Tempsford

In ISH2, the applicant stated that Tempsford New Town is “not a firm proposal” and only one of twelve potential sites, adding that it would be assessed only “at such a time the scheme becomes a firm commitment”.

However, the Government has already identified Tempsford as one of three “particularly promising” locations capable of making “significant contributions to unlocking economic growth”, [5] and the Housing Secretary has confirmed plans to “start building homes in at least three new town locations before the next general election”. [6] The Chancellor confirmed her funding for an accelerated delivery of a new station at Tempsford in her 2024 budget. Government’s do not build new stations for villages of 400 people.

All of this demonstrates that a new town at Tempsford is a priority government project, not a speculative concept.

The applicant also suggested the new settlement depends on the rail link and that construction “will not start until 2030 if it is funded by the government”. Yet the next general election must take place before 15 August 2029, well before that date.

Furthermore, an eight-week public consultation on Tempsford New Town opened on 23rd March, and the indicative boundaries in the consultation documents encompass the area where the scheme proposes its grid connection at Eaton Socon. [7]

Given this level of government commitment and the ongoing consultation, it is not reasonable for the applicant to postpone assessing cumulative effects until a “firm commitment”.

The cumulative impact must be addressed now, and I respectfully urge the Inspector to request that the applicant provide a full cumulative assessment at this stage.

Combined Environment and Landscape change

Cumulative impacts relate not only to construction activities but also to the combined effects of long-term land use, including changes to the environment and landscape experienced by local communities.

While the applicant refers to tree planting, they have not assessed these landscape or environmental changes in combination with other confirmed projects such as East West Rail and Tempsford New Town.

Given the Government's commitment to bringing forward both East West Rail and Tempsford, it is important that these interactions are properly considered.

The national government is asking the people of North Bedfordshire to accommodate significant change with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects at Universal Studios, Black Cat Roundabout, East West Rail and Tempsford New Town. Blithely adding another Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project without a thorough evaluation of the cumulative impacts of all of them is high handed and disrespectful.

I urge the Inspector to require the applicant to provide a detailed assessment of these cumulative effects.

Further, I would urge the Inspector to recommend to the Minister that prior to any decision on this particular proposal, the government conducts its own assessment of cumulative impacts of NSIPs on North Bedfordshire.

[1] EN-3 2.10.21

[2] This 20% figure represents the median BMV land coverage across all solar schemes approved via Development Consent Order (DCO) since July 2024.

[3]

<https://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2026-01-27e.873.0&s=%22not+going+to+put+a+figure+on+it%22#g873.2>

[4] Article 30, Draft Development Consent Order, Doc ref EN010141,

<https://eastparkenergy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/dco/Volume%203%20-%20Draft%20Development%20Consent%20Order/3.1%20Draft%20Development%20Consent%20Order%20P01.pdf>

[5]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-towns-taskforce-report-to-government/initial-government-response-september-2025>

[6]

<https://labour.org.uk/housing-communities-and-local-government-secretary-steve-reed-at-labour-party-conference-2025/>

[7] Figure G-1 Tempsford, p 259, Environmental Report Annex B,

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69c108717e02b81c0d1c75f1/Annex_B_-_New_Towns_Programme_Strategic_Environmental_Assessment.pdf