



Dear Ms Curtis,

Thank you very much for allowing the public the opportunity to re-consult on the new documentation for planning application DC/21/04711.

However, it is with great disappointment that we find ourselves having to respond to this application for a second time. Not only because the application seems so contrary to planning policy, but because of the poor quality of new information submitted by the Applicant.

With the exception of the significant and interesting Archaeological Report, the other new documents appear to be nothing more than an attempt to beat the LPA into submission with its talk of climate change and the need for renewables; telling planners and councillors not to question anything, just to do as EDF tell them to.¹

We have seen nothing in the new documentation to resolve any of our previously submitted concerns, only the creation of more concerns summarised as follows:

- The proposal for a new site access and larger passing places is staggeringly thoughtless;
- The potential for harm to significant existing infrastructure;
- The heritage assessment is woefully misleading and incomplete;
- Landscape and visual impacts remain a high concern despite the Applicants false claim there is no supplementary documentation relevant to this application;
- Cumulative impact continues to be misleading, with in combination views in existence, and sequential views in an area of national value ignored;
- Alternative options continue to be overlooked by the Applicant, a minimum requirement of an EIA Development;
- Concerns about the Applicants overall intentions for the site, with possible additional linked applications still to come;
- Documentation mentions battery storage now being included, but no details of this assessed in any documentation or reports;
- And most concerning, evidence tells us there is no grid connection.

New Site Access and Larger Passing Places

We have previously queried the suitability of Tye Lane for the amount of construction traffic required for this proposal. Whilst the Applicant has sought to remedy the query with a larger site access and passing places, this simply raises more questions than they answer.

The new site access and passing place drawings appear to be accompanied with little to no explanations.

- How long will it take to construct these roadworks? Will this time be included within the proposed 6 month construction period or will it extend it?

¹ Planning Statement p3.2

- Will the roadworks be done at once, or phased? Tye Lane would clearly need to be closed for the duration of these roadworks.
- How will the diversion of existing traffic via other routes (Flowton and then either Burstall or Somersham) impact those villages? How will construction traffic for the roadworks access the site construction compound if the road is closed?
- The CJ Frost haulage business is just west along Tye Lane from the proposed site access. How will vehicles maintain access to this site during the roadworks? How would the increased traffic from diverting the HGV's impact the villages of Flowton and either Burstall or Somersham? It would be wholly inappropriate for an established business to have restrictions placed on them, even in the short term, due to this proposal.
- Little Sage Hill campsite shares its access point with the proposed site access. How will vehicles maintain access to this popular tourist attraction during the roadworks? It would be wholly inappropriate for an established business to have restrictions placed on them, even in the short term, due to this proposal. How will EDF Renewables ensure safety for these customers during the construction period of both the roadworks and wider site?
- A well-used public right of way footpath (FP8a) also shares the main site access. How will access be maintained during the roadworks? How will safety during the construction period be guaranteed for PROW users?
- All passing places appear outside of the site boundary. How can safety for other road users be assured if it is outside of the site area?
- What guarantees are there that the passing places will always be available for use by construction traffic? Other road users will also have use of them, and some of the passing places are already well known by local delivery drivers for their tachometer and lunch breaks.
- A ditch runs along the northern edge of Tye Lane. On drawing *0922-04-cd01 construction detail* text states that passing bays 1 and 2 will require the ditch to be filled in and a 450mm pipe to be used instead. Drawing *0922-04-cs01a cross sections* clearly shows that the pipe would provide a significantly smaller drainage area than the existing ditch. Passing bay 2 would be radically reduced. Where is the flood risk and drainage report to justify this significantly smaller drainage option in a recognised surface water flood risk 3 area, the highest risk level possible? Where is the assessment to demonstrate that the displaced surface water would not cause or intensify issues elsewhere?
- The current pipe which is meant to drain surface water from this same ditch in Tye Lane to go under Lorraine Way regularly gets clogged and causes deep flooding near the junction, as it is did in November 2022 to impassable levels. Where is the drainage management plan for these new pipes?
- According to the Hydrology and Flood Risk Report in Chapter 3², four swales totalling 913m are to run the length of the southern boundary of the site. There are no maps to show exactly where these will be, and maps show solar arrays going very close to the boundary suggesting little space for them. How do these passing places impact on the proposed swales?
- For all passing places and the larger site access mature hedgerows and mature trees will need to be removed. Where is the arboricultural report to justify this loss? Where is the biodiversity metric to account for this loss? Where is the habitat study to assess this loss for priority species?
- For the passing place adjacent to the site access, this looks instantly upon a blind hill and corner. Where are the visibility splays for this? On 1st December 2022 there was a collision at this point between a car and pick up truck. Three police cars were in attendance and both drivers said they couldn't see the other vehicle until it was too late.
- On the drawing *0922-04-sp01 swept path analysis* there appears to be a missing drawing for number 3. We can see no swept path analysis for the vehicle leaving the site entrance travelling east and then needing to immediately use the passing place. Since the required visibility splay is not possible due the blind hill and corner this situation is a very likely possibility. Equally those travelling west along Tye Lane will not see the vehicles that have drawn onto the road from the entrance or passing

²Paragraph 9.40

place until they have reached the brow of the blind hill. We question whether there is sufficient stopping distance for safety here. The incident in the previous point suggests not.

It is clear that these “solutions” by EDF Renewables have not had sufficient thought put into them, and only further serve to demonstrate that Tye Lane is wholly unsuitable for the significant traffic proposed. This proposal is contrary to MSDC Local Plan policy T10, GP1, RT12, Core Strategy 2008 policy CS4, and engage NPPF 2021 paragraphs 111, 112 (c) and (d), 159, 167, and 169.

Harm to Existing Infrastructure

It is with interest that we read the recent response by Cadent regarding the high pressure underground gas pipelines that intersect the site.

They state these *“must not be encroached upon crossed over or anything built or placed/stored on or over the mains.”*

Since fencing intends to cross these pipelines, how exactly does the Applicant propose to secure the site?

Since electricity cables also intend to cross these pipelines, how exactly does the Applicant now propose getting electricity around the site to the on-site substation?

Cadent also include guidance about planting within the vicinity of the pipelines. We queried this in our previous objection because some of this planting is needed for mitigation. The proposed tree belts behind Copenhagen Cottage and alongside Rutters Farmhouse (a grade 2 listed building) and neighbours would impinge on the pipeline. If gaps were left within the tree belts then the mitigation would be extremely limited, if it did anything at all. Thus the adverse impacts on landscape and amenity would not have sufficient mitigation.

The below photo is taken from Whitton Leyer, Bramford. The circled fields would become solar panels and without mitigation due to the underground gas pipelines would be clearly visible and occupy a significant space in the surrounding landscape of this village.



Harm to Heritage Assets

A Heritage Technical Note has been submitted in response to concerns by consultees Place Services. We wish to supply more accurate information on Copenhagen Cottage and other assets in the area.

Copenhagen Cottage is so named because the original beams made to build the cottage were salvaged from ships returning from the Battle of Copenhagen. Made from locally sourced Elm and Oak, these beams are in the same place and shape as originally built, and are still visible today. Along with the original Ingelnook fireplace, old chimney, and mullion window. The cottage and heritage value of the property was not demolished as the Applicant tries to imply at all, it was simply extended.

Copenhagen Cottage was part of the West Bramford Estate and has long standing ties with the Estate & Old Bramford Hall. Bramford Hall was on the opposite Hill and was sadly damaged by fire and pulled down in the 1950's. Records retained by the current owner show residents of the cottage over the years were employed at the Hall and on the surrounding land which all belonged to the Estate. The Housekeeper and Cook at the Hall bought the Cottage out of the Estate in 1962. Copenhagen Cottage is the last remaining of what were 4 cottages on this Back Lane.

Further down Tye Lane is Tye Grange. This was originally two farm cottages built in 1780 as part of the same estate as Copenhagen Cottage. Tye Grange is another undesignated heritage asset, and also faces adverse impacts on its setting as a result if this proposal were to be built. Very limited screening has been proposed here due to the presence of the underground gas pipeline.

The Technical Note also misleadingly claims that historically the proposal site has no connection to Tye Farmhouse, a grade 2 listed building... *"The application site has no historical functional connection with Tye Farmhouse."* A 1902 Schedule of Property found within the deeds of Copenhagen Cottage shows Tye Farm, with 150 acres of land tenanted by E. Watkins as part of the Bramford Estate. The farmhouse today is still set in its agricultural surroundings from which it made its living. But this proposal and the Greybarn Solar Farm application would demolish that setting. Furthermore, the Applicant continues to ignore the Greybarn Solar Farm in its cumulative impacts. This is absurd since the two applications are only separated by a narrow country lane.

1902 Schedule of Property:

AND RECITING that the hereditaments then subject to the said Settlement of 31st October 1902 were intended to be set out in the Schedule thereto

IT WAS WITNESSED as follows:-

1. The said David Augustus Bevan the said Sydney Rhodes James and the said Sir Percy Lyham Loraine (hereinafter called "the Trustees") as Trustees thereby declared that the freehold hereditaments and premises described in the Schedule thereto and delineated and coloured pink on the plan thereto and all other (if any) the premises capable of being vested by reciting declaration which then by any means were subject to the limitations of the said Indenture of the 31st October 1902 were vested in the said Dame F.M.H. Loraine Broke as to the freehold hereditaments and premises described in the Schedule thereto and all other freehold hereditaments (if any) which were subject as aforesaid in fee simple and as to all leasehold hereditaments and premises (if any) which were subject as aforesaid for the residue of the terms of years for which the same might be holden respectively
2. The said Dame F.M.H. Loraine Broke should stand possessed of the premises upon the trusts and subject to the powers and provisions upon and subject to which under the said Indenture of the 31st October 1902 or otherwise the same ought to be held from time to time
3. The Trustees were the trustees of the said Settlement for the purposes of the Settled Land Act 1925
4. The power of appointing³ a new trustee or new trustees for the said Settlement was vested in the said Dame F.M.H. Loraine Broke

THE SCHEDULE above referred to

No. on plan	Tenant	Description	Acreage A. R. P.
1	In hand	Hall and Park	120. 2. 7
2	ditto.	Plantations	74. 1. 29
3	Various	Cottages Allotments and Orchard	
4	H. Fiske	Thornbush Farm	368. 1. 9
5	ditto.	Runtun Farm	260. 1. 37
6	ditto.	Bullen Hall Farm	173. 0. 7
7	G. Jackson	Sycamore Farm	445. 1. 3
8	E. Fiske	Dairy Farm	269. 0. 23
9	E. Watkins	Tye Farm	150. 3. 14
10	R. S. Steward	Bullen Farm	61. 0. 16
11	W. Clarke	Land	6. 2. 4

The Applicant was also asked to assess Bullen Hall Farmhouse, but has failed to do so. The same Schedule of Property shows this grade 2 listed building plus 173 acres were tenanted by H Fiske also as part of the Bramford Estate. Both the Watkins and Fiske families are still farming in the area today.

Rutters Farmhouse, Copenhagen Cottage, Tye Grange, Tye Farmhouse, Bullenhall Farmhouse, and the agricultural fields of both this proposal and the Statkraft proposal are all part of the historic Bramford Estate. These parts may be legally separated today, but the current agricultural setting allows them to be appreciated together in a manner that is greater than the sum of its parts. These properties (farm houses and farmworkers houses) set in this agricultural land all belonged to the very wealthy and influential families of Acton and later Broke and Loraine. These families have had a significant impact on the shaping

of Branford's rural agricultural economy and its social history past and present. The Acton, Loraine and Broke names are found in road names, in buildings and in Bramford Church. Their tenant farmers – Fiske, Jackson, Watkins, Steward, Clarke - of the varied Estate properties and land gradually became its freeholders, and these still shape in many ways the local farms and rural economy of today in many cases. Changes from the current agricultural setting to an industrial one of solar panels would diminish understanding of the historical landscape and social history, and thus diminish the historic context of these buildings, both listed and undesignated heritage assets.

According to the response of Place Services on 19th November 2021 *"If the buildings do have sufficient interest to be considered non-designated heritage assets, it is anticipated that the proposed solar farm will result in harm to their settings."*

The scheme would conflict with the heritage protection aims of MSDC Local Plan policy HB1.

Landscape and Visual Impact

This site itself, by evaluation of the Council, is discouraged from not just solar development, but from development. The Planning Statement at 5.7 states that a number of supplementary planning documents have no relevance to the site. This is simply not true. The Settlement Sensitivity Assessment 2018 by MSDC relates directly to this site (BR1 in the document), and states that *"It is valued as a rural landscape setting to the village which reinforces the location of the settlement within the Gipping Valley"* and goes on to summarise that *"This area is sensitive to development where it would appear visually prominent on the valley slopes... Development should not rise onto higher undulations or upper valley slopes which would be uncharacteristic."*

The proposed development would be in direct conflict with this assessment. These open undulating fields that characterise the countryside and are on high ground immediately west of Bramford would be subsumed, and does not lend itself to introduction of the proposed large scale industrial installation that would rise well above the existing hedges and dominate the topography. Elements such as equipment storage containers and transformer stations would be highly visible. Metal deer fencing would be apparent as a new and discordant feature. Whilst it is proposed that new hedging would be planted in some places (the entire northern boundary and some areas where high pressure gas pipelines cross the site are excluded) that would not succeed in hiding the extent of the solar farm, especially seen from higher ground as demonstrated further above from Whitton Leyer in Bramford. The CCTV cameras would project above hedging on poles and would be seriously inharmonious and intrusive in this undulating rural environment.

But this impact is not just for Bramford. For example, seen from the road and houses of the nearby village of Little Blakenham to the north (Viewpoint 8 in the application documents), almost the whole mile-long northern edge of the proposed site, with its panels, containers and fencing, would be prominently visible, unscreened, on the hilltops and upper valley slopes opposite, forming the southern horizon at a distance of just over a kilometre in length. Furthermore, with the panels facing south, this would accentuate the appearance of the rear of the panels which would present as a starkly industrial mass of metal along the horizon. What could be more insensitive to the landscape or be more likely to have an adverse visual impact?

Along the northern boundary of the proposed site, which as noted above would have unscreened views of the rear of the panels and fencing, there is Public Right of Way FP8. With the recent loss of recreational amenity at the Bramford poppy field to development DC/19/05669, these fields comprise the closest area of attractive open countryside easily accessible from the village. This adds to its value for residents. Local occupiers and users of public footpaths are regarded as being of 'high sensitivity' when considering the impact on visual amenity. Even if hedges were proposed for the northern boundary they would at the same time significantly change the character of the open landscape and diminish the experience of the area for local occupiers and recreational users.

As such, the scheme would seriously conflict with the landscape and visual amenity protection aims of MSDC Local Plan 1998 policies CL2, CL3, CL17, and E10. The development would also conflict with the guidance in NPPF paragraphs 174 (a) and (b) and 158.

Cumulative Impact

The Applicant continues to consider cumulative impact from an intervisibility perspective only. And even doing this they have come to an incorrect conclusion. As demonstrated in our response to cross-boundary application DC/22/00683 & DC/22/01243, there are indeed views where both this proposal and the Greybarn Solar Farm by Statkraft would be seen at the same time.

The below photo shows Viewpoint 2 of the Statkraft proposal looking north – Field 3 of the Greybarn Solar Farm is perceptible through the vegetation, as is EDF Renewables site (the yellow oil seed rape field).



However, the most prominent combined view is along Tye Lane, which is also National Cycle Route 48.

Viewpoint 10 of the Statkraft proposal below shows clear views of the EDF Renewables site, but also a view of field 3 of the Statkraft proposal visible for all users of Tye Lane.

Statkraft field 3

EDF Renewables



There are 9 design principles of National Cycle Routes³, one of which includes being attractive routes to use such as this one. The designation of a **National Cycle Route** along this road, which would be sandwiched between both solar farm proposals, indicates that the **preservation of this landscape is of national value**.

In addition to this, the Applicant has failed to assess the sequential cumulative impacts of this proposal, the Greybarn Solar Farm proposal, and the Bramford Green Solar Farm proposal, all of which will be seen sequentially along this National Cycle Route. This is a minimum requirement of an EIA Development.

The cumulative impact of this proposal, along with Bramford Solar Farm and Greybarn Solar Farm in any combination would seriously conflict with the landscape and visual amenity protection aims of MSDC Local Plan 1998 policies CL2, CL3, CL17, and E10. The development would also conflict with the guidance in NPPF paragraphs 174 (a) and (b) and 158.

Alternative Solutions

In our previous objection we queried the lack of alternatives explored within the application, a basic requirement of an EIA Development.

The Applicant states that alternatives were explored within Chapter 2 of the ES, but again we cannot see where any alternatives are mentioned, let alone discussed in terms of the different environmental impacts.

³ <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/infrastructure/national-cycle-network-design-principles/>

Where the Applicant has responded to the Independent Peer Review of the ES they consider the option of doing nothing in a mere 21 words: *"The need for renewable energy is set out, the consequences of no action are the consequences of not addressing climate change."*

We have not yet seen anyone questioning the threats of climate change, only the tunnel-visioned approach to increasing renewables at the expense of all else, in particular our food security. The need for renewable energy such as solar is indeed established. But it must be noted this need is for the solar panel technology. Development is discouraged on BMV land⁴ such as this site for a very valid reason, and our current Prime Minister has made it very clear that our best and most versatile farmland should not be hosting solar panels^{5 6} with efforts in Government being undertaken to redefine BMV land to include 3b land. The majority of this proposal is already on BMV land, and this redefinition would make this proposal on 100% BMV land. Renewables are not the be all and end all of solving the climate crisis.

In the current circumstances, the benefits of doing nothing mean that the fields would continue to produce arable crops, contributing to UK domestic food supply and food security. Current food inflation (around 16%) has been attributed to a lack of food supply. Food security is also at great risk of climate change. Climate change is the biggest risk to BMV land, in that it reduces its potential yield. Policy, both local and national, indicates that solar panels should be resisted even on non-BMV land for good reason. Retaining these fields in arable production means not reducing our domestic food security in the face of the climate crisis. This is a worthy action to take.

Keeping these fields in their current agricultural state also brings longer term sustainable employment and income to the local contract farmer who manages the land, and the wider supply chain that enables him to do so. Under solar panels there would be one-off construction employment and supply contracts, and the local contract farm business would lose employment and income, since the rent goes to the landowner who lives out of the area.

It is still a mystery why the most north easterly corner of the fields is excluded from the site, when it is currently farmed as part of the whole field. This severance of the field would conflict with MSDC Local Plan 1998 policy CL12, and potentially take out even more land from agricultural use.

Doing nothing will also ensure the continuation of the local tourist business at Little Sage Hill, which brings thousands of people into the area each year. All of whom spend money in our local economy, providing income and employment for local tourist attractions, local services, shops, pubs, and restaurants, and in addition to employment on the site itself. We've yet to see a solar PV site become a popular tourist attraction.

During the pre-planning process EDF Renewables attended several parish council meetings with a presentation of the development. At one stage there was mention of an EV charging station, which seems to have been discarded so far as the present application is concerned, although EDF Renewables has described plans for its nearby Pivot Power BESS to be part of a national network of such stations. Instead of a large scale solar farm on BMV land, perhaps EDF could have considered renting out nearby warehouse rooftops for solar panels instead. They could have then sold the electricity to businesses and even workers at a price somewhere between the price they would earn selling to the grid and what the workers would have paid to charge elsewhere.

EDF appear to have considered no alternatives, and their proposal here lacks even the slightest imagination. Alternatives might be more costly, but the environmental impact would be less and EDF's costs are not a planning consideration.

⁴ MSDC Local Plan policy CL11, NPPF 174b

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/oct/10/ministers-hope-to-ban-solar-projects-from-most-english-farms>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/17/de-facto-ban-on-solar-farms-in-england-to-continue-therese-coffey-signals>

Battery Storage?

Up until now we were under the impression that the application was for a solar PV development. However, in the Planning Statement at paragraph 10.4 it states that *"The proposed development comprises a solar farm, **battery energy storage system** and substation compound with a generation capacity of up to 49.9MW, which is capable of being connected directly into the local electricity distribution network."*

We have found no information about this battery energy storage system within the application. With no information about this part of the development the Council is not in a position to fully determine the environmental impacts. If the Applicant does not supply this information the Council must refuse planning permission.

No Grid Connection

EDF Renewables state that this proposal will be connecting into the local distribution grid at the Bramford substation. The Distribution Network Operator in this area is UK Power Networks, and they are required to maintain a publicly available connection register.⁷ According to the Register there are no connection agreements with EDF Renewables, or a subsidiary company of them.

We have contacted UK Power Networks to query this, who have categorically confirmed that they **DO NOT** have a connection agreement for this application.

For thoroughness we have also looked at the National Grid TEC Register. This is similar to the previous register, but for developments that connect into the transmission grid. Again there is **NO** connection agreement with EDF Renewables for a solar PV development.

We contacted National Grid who have confirmed this.

National Grid do have an agreement with one of EDF Renewables subsidiary companies, Pivot Power LLP (listed as Pivoted Power LLP on the register), but this is for a battery energy storage system already approved under application DC/19/03008. It is not for a solar PV development, and there is no indication anywhere that the two developments intend to be linked.

This lack of a connection is significant. First it means that EDF Renewables have misled the Council regarding their connection intentions within this application. But it also means the trivial renewable energy benefits to the public and Net Zero from the solar panels are actually zero, because it has no way of getting into the electricity grid.

Summary

A statement from Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government (16th August 2021) states:

"The National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities to protect and enhance valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity and recognise the character and beauty of the countryside and the benefits of the best and most versatile farmland in their policies and decisions.

A number of proposals for solar farms in the countryside have been rejected as causing visual harm, harm to amenity or harm to openness.... Local authorities should protect all that we value in landscapes and natural capital, as indicated above."

⁷ https://ukpowernetworks.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/embedded-capacity-register/information/?disjunctive.licence_area&refine.grid_supply_point=BRAMFORD+GRID+132kV&refine.energy_version_technology_1=Photovoltaic&refine.connection_status=Accepted+to+Connect

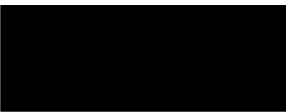
And recently appeal APP/M1005/W/22/3299953 on 5th December 2022 for a very similar scheme was dismissed, with the closing remarks stating that:

"The need for renewable or low carbon energy does not automatically override environmental protections. I have taken into account all the other matters raised including the proximity of a suitable grid connection, but in the overall balance, the harm caused to landscape character and visual amenity is decisive. The adverse impacts cannot be addressed satisfactorily on a site of this size and character, and the suggested planting mitigation measures would be seriously out of keeping and would largely worsen, rather than mitigate for the landscape and visual impact... I consider that 40 years is a very significant period in people's lives during which the development would seriously detract from landscape character and visual amenity."

Policy indicates time and time again that renewable energy developments should not automatically override environmental protections or the concerns of local residents. This application appears to be: technically infeasible due to the conflicts between this proposal and exiting infrastructure in the area; lacking public benefits since there is **no connection agreement** to export the electricity; contrary to local and national planning policy; and, not supported by local residents.

We again ask that the Council **REFUSE** this application.

Yours sincerely,



Samantha Main

Chair