

Tabled Update for Item 2.1 - 25/503466/FULL Land North of Solar Farm, Eastchurch.

Since the committee report was published for this item, correspondence has been received from KCC Public Right of Way regarding the Order to record the claimed footpath shown as a dashed line on the plan below.

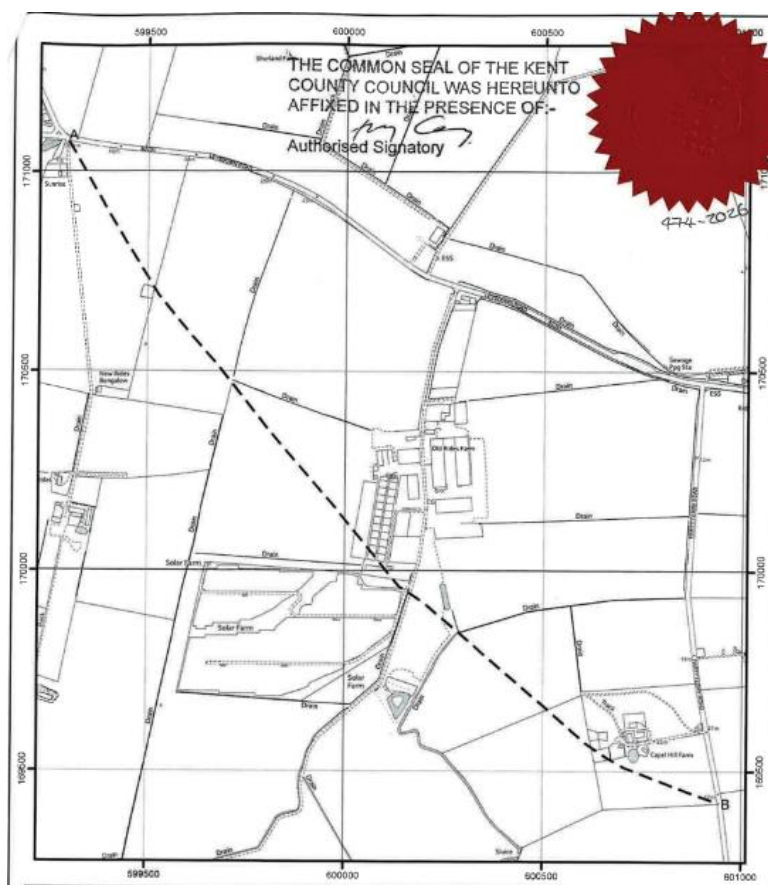
One comment of support, as well as one comment of objection have also been received and are set out below.

Amendments to condition 3 are also proposed in **red** at the end of this update.

KCC Public Right of Way

KCC have confirmed that the Order to record the claimed footpath as shown in the dashed line below has now been 'made'. Representations about or objections to the Order can be made to KCC until the 3rd July 2026. If no such representations or objections are duly made to the Order (or to any part of it), or if any so made are withdrawn, then KCC will be able to confirm the Order. If any objection or representations are received, the Order will need to be submitted to the Secretary of State for a decision.

If confirmed, the Definitive Map and Statement for the area will be modified by adding a public footpath numbered ZS56, with a width of 1.5 metres, which commences at its connection with Leysdown Road at NGR TQ 9929 7107 (Point A on the Order plan) and runs in a south easterly direction for 2382 metres to its connection with Harty Ferry Road at NGR TR 0094 6942 (Point B).



Officer comment – Paragraph 7.9.30 of the committee report discusses the implications of this in the context of the proposals.

Support letter comments as follows:

I live a mile away from the site and can see it from the upstairs windows of my house, along with the existing wind turbines, barns and associated agricultural infrastructure.

While sight of a large area of containers wouldn't be as pleasant as the current view of fields, overall the scheme is a positive in my view.

It makes sense to put it where the applicants suggest - close to turbines and an existing solar farm, but also adjacent to the main road for access. As we increase our share of renewable energy we need places to store it for times when the wind doesn't blow, the sun doesn't shine - or even in cases where there's too much being generated, meaning we won't have to turn off turbines to avoid overloading the grid. A side effect is increasing the resilience of Sheppey's power network.

The income from the facility would provide economic benefits to the farm, and it's well publicised how little profit is made from farming: it will hopefully ensure the remainder of the farm (which covers many hundreds if not thousands of acres) is able to continue - rather than being sold off piecemeal for housing, as we've seen in the western end of Sheppey.

There is a risk of danger should there be a fire, however unlikely that may be, however with a fire station in Eastchurch, few properties in the immediate area and a management plan in place hopefully impacts would be limited. Despite the media alarm over batteries, they're generally safe - most of us carry one with us everywhere we go in the form of a phone! And, of course, there are existing battery storage facilities locally (Cowstead, Grovehurst) which have operated without issue for several years now.

I support the idea of planting trees as screening (as there are precious few in the area at present), and would hope fast-growing native species are used. This will soften the impact from the nearby road, and though it won't block the view from where I am it's far enough away to not be overbearing - there aren't many houses close by to the site.

Overall I support the scheme, feeling that the downsides are outweighed by the positives. I would hope Swale sees fit to pass the scheme.

Objection letter comments as follows:

I wish to formally object to the proposed battery energy storage development due to the significant environmental, visual, ecological and cumulative impacts this scheme would have on the local area, particularly given its proximity to protected landscapes and environmentally sensitive land.

The scale of this proposed development is wholly inappropriate for a rural setting and raises serious concerns regarding the long-term industrialisation of the countryside. A development of this magnitude would permanently alter the character of the area, replacing open land and natural habitat with large-scale industrial infrastructure including containerised battery units, substations, security fencing, lighting, CCTV, access roads and associated equipment. Of particular concern is the impact on nearby Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and surrounding wildlife habitats. These protected areas exist because of their national ecological importance.

Construction activity, increased traffic, noise, vibration, lighting and the long-term operational presence of an industrial battery facility all risk disturbing sensitive species, fragmenting habitats and damaging biodiversity. Once ecological harm occurs, restoration is often impossible or takes decades to recover. There are also legitimate safety concerns associated

with lithium battery storage facilities, including the risk of thermal runaway fires, toxic smoke release and contamination of soil and watercourses. Even if the statistical risk is considered low, the consequences of such an incident near protected countryside or residential communities could be severe.

I also question the justification and scale of this proposal in relation to the electricity generation capacity within the local area. The extent of the battery farm appears disproportionately large compared with the current level of renewable generation nearby. This raises concerns that the development may form part of a wider future expansion strategy, including the later addition of a large solar farm or further energy infrastructure, resulting in cumulative industrialisation by stages rather than through one transparent application process. Residents should be able to understand the full long-term intentions for the site. It would be unacceptable for approval to be granted for a battery storage facility only for further associated infrastructure to follow incrementally at a later date. I therefore request that the planning authority carefully considers the likelihood of future expansion and cumulative development impacts when assessing this application.

The proposal would also negatively affect: Rural landscape character and visual amenity; Local property outlook and enjoyment of the countryside; Tranquillity of the area through operational noise and lighting; Highway safety during construction and maintenance traffic; Public confidence in the protection of environmentally sensitive land; There are more suitable alternatives for industrial-scale battery storage on brownfield or previously developed industrial land where environmental harm would be substantially reduced. For these reasons, strongly urge Mid Kent Planning to refuse this application.

Amendment to recommended condition 3:

Detailed Battery Safety Management Plan

No development shall take place until a Detailed Battery Safety Management Plan (DBSMP) based on the principles within the Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (April 2025) that has been submitted with the application has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. It shall include details of safety measures and risk mitigation across the construction, operational, and decommissioning phases of the development. **The details of risk mitigation shall include measures for the containment of surface water and rainfall runoff in the event of a fire and subsequent disposal of this contained water off-site.** The development shall be carried out and maintained for the duration of the permission in accordance with the approved DBSMP.

Reason: In the interests of fire safety **and preventing pollution**. These details are required prior to the commencement of development in order to secure appropriate fire safety measures at operational stage, **as well as to safeguard groundwater quality**.