



Eye Town Council
Gislingham parish Council
Mellis Parish Council
Yaxley Parish Council
Occold Parish Council
Thrandeston Parish Council
Stuston Parish Council
Wortham and Burgate Parish Council
Brome and Oakley Parish Council

Enquiries to: Phil Watson Strategic Energy
Projects Manager

Date: 10/03/2025

BY EMAIL

Dear Parish and Town Councillors,

Eco Power Suffolk – Non-statutory consultation - 10 March to 22 April 2025

I am writing to you regarding the initial Public Consultation by Eco Power Suffolk Ltd.

What is being proposed?

According to the project promoter, they are proposing a solar farm with Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and a connection to the existing National Grid electricity substation at Leys Lane, Yaxley, Suffolk. The proposed development is expected to have a generation capacity of around 250 MW and include 11 gigawatt hours of energy storage.

The proposed development site is approximately 600 hectares (ha) in size, predominantly across five solar array areas, situated near the Yaxley substation (on separate land parcels to the southwest of Stuston, northeast of Eye, north of Gislingham, north of Occold, and southwest of Thrandeston), together with cable route corridors (connecting the solar array areas to the Yaxley substation). The proposed development is located within the Mid Suffolk District Council area. More information can be found at:

<https://ecopowersuffolk.com/>

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN0110019>

The Role of the County Council

Suffolk County Council is not the decision maker for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP), consented under the Planning Act 2008. Energy projects such as this proposal are decided by the Secretary of State at the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, currently the Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP. The County Council, as well as the District Councils, are only Statutory Consultees in

the process. Therefore, while we have an important role in the process, the ultimate decision on whether to consent or refuse the application is one for government.

The role of Parish Councils and information to support them

I wanted to highlight the information that is now available to support Parish and Town Councils, and to highlight some key issues and actions that it would be appropriate for you to consider at this point in the process.

It is important to recognise the status of town and parish councils in the consenting of NSIPs. **Relevant parish and town councils are statutory consultees** in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure planning process, as set out in the list of prescribed consultees in Schedule 1 of the *Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009*.

Guidance on the NSIP process, specifically tailored for Town and Parish Councils, has been prepared by Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC).

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/major-infrastructure-projects-including-nsips/nationally-significant-infrastructure-project-nsip-information/nsip-information-for-town-and-parish-councils>

<https://www.salc.org.uk/national-strategic-infrastructure-projects-nsips>

The need for early and ongoing engagement with the project promoter

Notwithstanding any overall objection you, or we, may have to the principle of the project and our opposition to it, it is important that we engage with the process to attempt to mitigate and minimise the impacts, should the Secretary of State grant consent. Therefore, I recommend that parish and town councils engage with the project promoter whenever possible, seeking to shape, change, and improve the project whenever the opportunity arises. It is important to recognise that this does not in any way undermine any opposition you have to the project. Such comments are made without prejudice to any objections that you may have to the scheme, either in principle, or on matters of detail, or to any campaign you may wish to mount against the project.

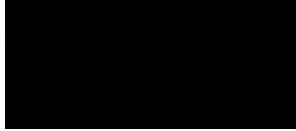
In the case of EcoPower's proposal, I am particularly concerned by the nigh on unprecedented pace with which they intend moving, through consultation, to submission of the Development Consent Order (DCO), which is akin to the formal planning application, in little over 12 months. In light of this, the opportunity to shape and influence the project is much more limited than we have experienced with other similar projects. Therefore, it is important that we begin compiling evidence, and make requests for changes, as soon as possible.

To this end, I would be happy to meet with you either virtually or in person, to ensure that your concerns fed into how the County Council's response is shaped, as well as forming part of your own submissions. In order to have standing in the process, it is

essential that you also make individual submissions as town and parish councils.
The SALC guidance above sets this out in more detail.

If you consider it helpful, I look forward to meeting with you in the near future. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to email nsips@suffolk.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully,



Richard Rout

Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform, and Nationally
Significant Infrastructure Projects