



**Epping Forest
Heritage Trust**

Epping Forest District Council
Planning Department

9th October, 2023

Planning application EPF/1954/23 for 1,000 solar panels on land adjacent to Epping Forest

Epping Forest Heritage Trust is a membership organisation and charity dedicated to preserving and protecting Epping Forest, its flora, fauna, culture and heritage for people to enjoy now, and for generations to come. Our 1,000 plus members largely live in the various communities throughout the Epping Forest area. We have been engaged with and committed to the Forest for over 60 years and are a member of the Epping Forest Consultative Group run by the City of London Corporation.

Epping Forest is a hugely important ancient Forest, much of which is both a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation, with iron age camps, 1,000 year-old trees and rare wood pasture habitat and species. It now faces the gravest threats that it has seen since it was first protected by the 1878 Epping Forest Act. Climate change, increasing levels of pollution and the acceleration of nearby developments have led to a reduction in the biodiversity of the Forest (flora and fauna). Neighbouring development, including plans to build 68,000 housing units in its vicinity, already threaten its resilience to pollution. Anticipated increased visitor numbers and budget cuts mean conservation, habitat improvement and maintenance are curtailed, and biodiversity is reduced.

At the same time the Forest has the potential to help us tackle the crucial issues of our time: it helps us tackle climate change by reducing temperatures and capturing carbon; it provides a vital amenity for people's health and wellbeing as a space to walk, cycle, ride, relax and enjoy.

It is therefore essential that we protect and preserve the Forest not just for our own current enjoyment, but also for generations to come, and for the sake of the planet.

That is why we have the following concerns in relation to Planning application EPF/1954/23 for 1,000 solar panels on land adjacent to Epping Forest.


Planning application EPF/1954/23 is for a solar farm on land in Buckhurst Hill next to the A104, the Epping New Road. The land is currently used as grazing



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and paddocks for a stable that are on the site. It is one of the rare remaining areas where the Forest is directly adjacent to open green land.

Indeed this site is adjacent to a part of the Forest which is a Special Conservation Area (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is located in the Green Belt.

EFHT has the following concerns regarding the proposed solar farm and seek reassurances that the issues below have been fully considered. They are:

1. Given the proposal's closeness to the Forest we worry that this may set a precedent for other, future, industrial developments that affect the visual amenity/character of the Forest landscape and the adjacent Green Belt. We think the Forest is best protected through being surrounded by other green spaces, as has been done where the City of London has purchased Buffer Lands specifically for this purpose.
2. The ecological survey and the Habitat Regulations Assessment seem insufficient for a site next to a Special Area of Conservation. We believe, for example, that the proposed solar farm may have a negative effect on amphibians given its proximity to the river Ching. In general we believe the precious biodiversity of the Forest is best protected by being adjacent to other green space. It should be noted that there is significant evidence that joining up green space is good for biodiversity, as plants and wildlife are then free to disperse across a wider area. This proposal seems to go in the opposite direction.
3. How the solar farm will be connected to the National Grid, where cables will run, and whether there will be battery storage on site? All of these facilities could have a negative impact on the Forest that needs to be properly considered.
4. How the solar farm is to be maintained and how will chemical leaches from the site be prevented? This is in context of the closeness of the site to the river Ching and the Forest. We would also like to know whether glyphosate, or similar chemicals, might be used to keep weeds in check as these too could have a negative impact on the Forest and its precious biodiversity. Also to what extent have possible chemical leaks into the local environment from the panels themselves over the 25-year installation period, been considered, in particular with a watercourse adjacent to the site.

EFHT hopes that the above comments are of use to EFDC and will support them in making their decision.

We believe the above issues are significant and need to be addressed before this proposal proceeds any further.

Yours faithfully

Peter Lewis
Chief Executive