

Evidence to OFH Sizewell C Project on 19 May 2021 by Michael Horton of Savills on behalf of Mr L.J. and Mrs E. Dowley

By way of an introduction, I am Michael Horton, a director of Savills Property Consultancy and am giving evidence on behalf of the Dowley family of [REDACTED], Eastbridge which lies immediately adjacent to the main development site. I have 35 years of professional experience of advising clients on rural land use and compulsory acquisition matters.

Our clients have owned their property and run a fully integrated farming business since the 1960s. Given their proximity to the main development site and EDF's various proposals, they are going to be substantially and detrimentally effected.

Their concerns partly arise from their past experiences with EDF in relation to their historic proposals to acquire the land in 2012; they will provide more detail of this in their own individual evidence.

These historic concerns have been compounded by the lack of substantive engagement by EDF and their agents until 30 April this year. Our first site meeting took place on this date despite previous invitations and although we understand the limitations of Covid restrictions, it doesn't seem to have stopped survey work happening along the Sizewell Link Road on EDF's behalf earlier in the Spring.

Their concerns relate to both the individual and aggregate effects of the various proposals on their existing business. I will now describe briefly the main elements of the business which although integrated has several distinct parts.

Arable Farming

With light land and the current availability of irrigation, high value crops are grown. The proposals will reduce their cropped area by over 22 acres, effecting the systems' viability. Irrigation is key to both income and the land's capital value and we have concerns over the development's overall effect on the availability of freshwater for this operation from Eastbridge Marshes in the future.

Cattle

This enterprise is based on a 220 herd pedigree and prizewinning Simmental cattle. These cattle are grazed on the Eastbridge marshes in summer and our clients have significant concerns over the finely balanced freshwater levels. If they alter it will have a substantial effect on the productivity of the herd and the value of the grassland.

Shoot/Conservation

This enterprise is an integral feature of the business dovetailing with the various land uses. The disruption caused by loss of land and the operation of the borrow pits in particular will bring into question the viability of the enterprise.

Campsite at Eastbridge

Our clients run the campsite in Eastbridge which has a valuable contribution to local tourism and the disruption caused by the construction and its various detrimental effects, we fear, will put visitors off staying with a loss of revenue both to our clients' business and the local community.

Borrow Pits

From my professional experience elsewhere, the borrow pit proposal is in effect a very large -scale mineral extraction and landfill proposal. Its operation will have a substantial effect on the surrounding environment including our clients' property. In my opinion, were this proposal being promoted at its scale as a commercial gravel extraction application, I would expect them to be required to have prepared a full Environmental Impact Assessment. To the best of my knowledge, this has not been prepared – why?

We have the following comments:

1. The only information we have received on the proposal is a copy of the Borrow Pit Operations Note from the Stage 3 construction.
2. In that document there is no reference to the monitoring of ground water levels both during and after the operation.
3. There are no plans for pollution control during the operation of works.
4. There are no noise mitigation measures including what are the proposed hours of work.
5. There is no reference to the impact on any flora and fauna on the site and adjoining land.
6. There is no substantive detail on restoration, other than the limited information, available.

We consider the level of information which is available to this project to be wholly inadequate and we would ask that this is addressed urgently.

Roundabout

The roundabout effecting our clients' property on the B1122 is one of the largest individual highway structures of the scheme and according to EDF agents will be 50 metres wide. It will also be fully illuminated. Its scale and width are a direct function of the number of access legs off it. At the moment, the proposal is to have 5 legs:

The B1122 from the North

The B1122 from the South

Link to Eastbridge village picking up the existing T junction.

Permanent access to the proposed power station

Temporary access to the development site.

Why can't EDF accommodate their temporary access off their proposed permanent access thus saving the need for a separate leg for the temporary access?

We consider that the extent of the proposal is excessive and in terms of the proposed compulsory acquisition of the relevant land is unreasonable and inequitable. We would thus wish that the roundabout size be reduced accordingly.

The degree of illumination is likely to have a substantial effect - creating light pollution on the adjoining land and we believe It will have a detrimental effect on our clients' property and its value.

Sizewell Link Road

Our clients are affected by the proposed SLR, more specifically, the potential removal of a strip of a protective shelter belt at the edge of the parkland immediately surrounding our clients' listed property.

We ask that the proposals are revised to avoid the removal of any of these trees which form the shelter belt.