

Hello my name is Christopher Smith. My wife and I own a home in Friston which we planned to move into when we retired.

We are deeply committed to this area – my mother was born on a farm on Aldringham Common, and I have been coming here all my life for holidays. We have continued the family tradition and brought our own children and now our grandchildren here. My three sisters and their families do the same and I know this story of family continuity is very common in this area.

We are sure you must have been impressed by the sheer number of powerful, thoughtful and heartfelt interventions from so many individuals and community groups and we would like to pay tribute to every single one.

Many important points have been raised as well as detailed and articulate descriptions of why this is a special Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These AONBs are not designated lightly – the SCH area has recently been awarded a southern boundary variation on the river Stour which has been no mean feat after many years.

So after listening to most of these hearings, we would like to add our views as follows:

1. It appears to us that the applicant regards this process as an inconvenient box ticking exercise. They argue that the project is much too far advanced to make any meaningful changes. We refer for example to the suggestion for it to be a pathfinder project. This is an amazing lost opportunity for the applicant to lead the way in a truly green industrial revolution.

Our question then is what are these hearings designed to achieve if not to make meaningful improvements?

2. It is clear that deals and promises have long been going on behind the scenes. We were very interested to hear the so-called Energy Coast Delivery Board chaired by Therese Coffey finally mentioned recently (by the applicant no less). We have tried unsuccessfully to find out more about this committee and what its role has been.

Given that one of the great criticisms of this and all the other energy proposals in the area is the apparent lack of strategy and coordinated approach we ask what is the role of this committee? Is there indeed a grand plan to sacrifice this area to the energy giants after all?

3. National Grid appears to have no accountability whatsoever. Many people have raised this point and you indeed acknowledge it. In response National Grid argues that none of their connection offers are made as separate applications, indeed that the DCO encourages a joint application with the developer. So who does oversee their role in these national infrastructure projects?

Our question is where is the accountability for National Grid and can we see some evidence for it?

4. This leads on to the next point. It is very clear I hope, especially after your site visits, that this quiet, unspoilt, beautiful, rural area is not an ideal place to build industrial scale infrastructure. We cannot see any meaningful evidence that an appropriate brownfield site has been given any serious consideration. It appears to us that a very lazy approach has been taken, simply going for the easiest option. I think there is even a requirement to show that alternative sites have been properly scoped so where is it?

Perhaps we missed this somewhere. If so, can you please point us to it.

5. There appear to be two extremely important new government strategies – the BEIS review and the Energy White Paper, and these have been dealt with brilliantly by other participants. So given the official recognition now that our environment and natural world and the associated local communities need active protection, it is not appropriate for the applicant to try to wriggle out of their responsibility on technical or procedural grounds (or even client and shareholder financial considerations). They must take on board the spirit of what is trying to be achieved.

The point being that there is an environmental cost (financial) that needs to be factored in - it is no longer enough to argue for the cheapest and easiest option. Applicants should be prepared to pay, within reason, for the most sustainable and environmentally appropriate option for the long term and future generations. Given the applicant is marketing themselves with green credentials it is surprising and disappointing to see such a failure in this regard.

The days of regarding the planet as a free resource to use up have long passed. Environmental protection is now clearly at the top of the agenda.

6. Finally, we view with incredulity the applicant's approach to questions of cumulative impacts. Anyone who believes that there is not a bigger plan for Friston is being more than naïve. It seems that these (and other) projects are being carefully timed to avoid having to address in any depth the requirement to consider cumulative impacts. To plan the so-called 'feasibility studies' for Nautilus and Eurolink later this year after the current hearings is more than cynical.

Please do not approve the onshore infrastructure, please demand that the applicant rethinks the grid connection and please make sure that this application does not open the floodgates for the total destruction and sacrifice of this area of outstanding beauty in the name of green energy!

Thank you very much.