

Riverside Energy Park Examination – EN010093 Volume 08 Document Reference 8.02.14

Response to “applicant’s response to Written Representation” document presented at Deadline 3.

On Behalf of

Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve.

Submitted by Deadline 4 – 19th July 2019.

We, the Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve (FoCNR) wish to comment on the “applicant’s” response to our written representation – page 146 Section 4 Non-Statutory Organisations

4.1 Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve.

Design – solar panels – bio-solar green roof. (pages 147-149)

4.1.7 – Stepped Roof design – whilst we understand the argument made by the applicant – it is, however, a matter of opinion and personal preference. We disagree with them. We argued for a curved roof. At the time of consultation the applicant made a very strong case for stepped/flat roof to accommodate the maximum number of solar panels thus maximising renewable energy generation. The applicant now seems to be suggesting the flat roof design was for aesthetic purposes and a visual enhancement to the landscape? The applicant also suggests the flat roof design will be less intrusive to the nature reserve – we disagree with both assertions.

4.1.8 – we can only contest that a person sitting at a desk with no appreciation of the natural environment could make a case for any design of such a large building “has the potential to create a new focal point ………” Why do we need a new focal point – why not open skies?

4.1.10 – 4.1.11 – we completely refute the assertions made under these paragraphs. The applicant seems to be taking the easy (and probably cheapest) option of offsetting almost all bio-diversity, other than that on the existing flood embankment, to the Environment Bank. (see also our penultimate paragraph below).

Given the assurances given for maximum solar panels on a flat roof (see 4.1.7 above) we can only assume the applicant just doesn’t want to be bothered with green roofs or bio-solar roofs. It would be easy for them to claim high maintenance, safety or additional cost of structural uplift, but that is unacceptable given the proven benefits of bio-solar roofs especially in the type of environment this application is for. All roofs have to be accessed therefore it will be implicit that safety for access will be covered and this will be no different whether green/bio- solar or not. Also the cost to offset biodiversity will surely cancel out some of the costs of the uplift.

We strongly argue that the applicant needs to prove why a bio-solar roof is not feasible in DETAIL - they are just being vague in their response.

The applicant acknowledges in **Paragraph 2.6.26** of the **Design Principles (7.4, APP-105)** which states that *“The existing flood embankment will be the focus of onsite biodiversity gain, with any remaining opportunities within the final on site design being explored where possible. Any further necessary biodiversity net gain will be secured through offsetting through a mechanism secured through the final Biodiversity and Landscape Mitigation Strategy.”* We do not accept that bio-solar roofs cannot contribute towards this net gain.

We would ask the Examiner request an independent review of the design in relation to bio-solar green roofs. www.livingroofs.org and www.greeninfrastructureconsultancy.com are best placed

to undertake this with their experience of London buildings/skylines. This also fits with GLA and London Borough of Bexley (LBB) policies. LBB also being the approving authority for detailed design and Biodiversity Landscape Mitigation strategy should insist on this.

Construction/Operational noise (pages 148-149)

4.1.12-18 – Sadly for the wildlife the applicant is only looking at the impacts of this single project – we hope the Examiner will see the cumulative impact of yet another busy/overbearing structure and that statements such as 4.1.13 “...this indicates these species are resilient to noise and visual disturbance.....” are glib and show a lack of understanding of the needs of wildlife – it is almost as bad as saying “well they can go somewhere else”.

4.1.16 – (and other paragraphs) the applicant often refers to the resilience of birds nesting with habitats around the margins of the REP site and concludes that disturbance (during construction, traffic etc.) will not affect the long-term distribution and abundance of the assemblage of breeding birds within the study area..... The effects are therefore classified as “Not Significant”.

This seems to be the assertion of a desk top analysis based upon a minimal number of site visits over one breeding season and completely misses the point of long term nature conservation goals specifically relating to rare habitats and in some cases – species (i.e. Lapwing, Skylark, Cetti’s warbler, Gadwall) in a London, and very specifically Bexley, context. To have a long term chance of survival there needs to be a greater density of breeding species on or near the site for there to be a recovery. In the case of Lapwing there are 3 pairs, skylark 2 pairs, Gadwall possibly 2 pairs and Cetti’s warbler c7pairs. The success of these species is recent and entirely due to the management of the habitats by Thames Water – to lose any of these species on what the applicant seems to suggest a temporary basis would almost certainly mean losing them altogether with only a possible chance of them returning over a number of years. We, the FoCNR, **do not** consider this “**Not Significant**” given the amount of time and resources that have been expended to create the correct conditions for these (and other) breeding and wintering bird species

FoCNR do not agree with the statement in 5.3.50 that suggests ‘following mitigation, the conservation objectives (and therefore viability) of Crossness LNR would not be undermined and potential effects from the Proposed Development would therefore be Not Significant.’

This completely misses the point that Thames Water and volunteers from FoCNR are continuing in the bio-diversity objective of TW to increase bio-diversity not just hold it back from ever increasing developments.

Species general (page 155)

4.1.48/49 – see above – once again, perhaps understandably, from the applicant’s narrow point of view only sees the impact of one building and fails to comprehend the cumulative impact of yet another building providing resting places for predators of nearby nesting birds.

Town and Visual Impact Assessment (pages 156-158)

4.1.58-64 – as noted above (4.1.8) – only desk top studies seemingly undertaken by those with no regard for an open sky view could come up with the statements within this section. From some distance away the view might not be significant (neither is Canary Wharf when viewed from Greenwich Park but once in Canary Wharf it becomes overbearing) – what we are contesting is that for many, the nature reserve (once a more open space than it is today) is being enclosed at very close proximity which gives the feeling of being hemmed in – this has not been understood at all by those referencing academic/architectural design papers. Although the applicant does accept “*REP will be an additional development, close to the Crossness LNR, larger in scale,*

mass, and height, giving more enclosure and restriction of views...” This will therefore clearly impact upon the openness of the MOL/LNR and is therefore contrary to the London Plan MOL policy and subsequently the NPS Green Belt policy.

Compensation/mitigation (pages 159-160)

4.1.77-4.1.81 – very little, if any detail within this about practical measures to be taken other than statements relating to off-setting, 10% gain and Environment Bank.

There are many small measures that could be offered – provision of a bird hide adjacent to the REP looking into the west paddock, provision of nest boxes etc., habitat improvements; wetland creation; wildflower meadow creation; enhancement of existing water courses, vegetation management of ditches supporting water voles and aquatic invertebrate fauna.. As previously discussed, on the REP (and indeed Data Centre) sites, the provision of living roofs to include biosolar green roofs. With the proposed flat roofs of the stepped-form being accessible for photovoltaic maintenance, there seems little reason why a green roof cannot be incorporated alongside the infrastructure to offset some of the biodiversity impacts. Not only could this provide nesting habitat for the red-list bird species that will be lost on the Data Centre site, but it could contribute towards the large and regionally important invertebrate fauna that has been identified on the Data Centre site and will be lost in its entirety.

These are just some of the ideas the FoCNR have but where are the bold/visionary measures that could be undertaken.

Involve London Borough of Bexley– talk to Peabody Estates about the future use of Thamesmead Golf Centre – an ideal site/habitat for bio-diversity gain – restoration of open mosaic/brownfield grassland and wetland habitats. Talk to Stoneham Estates about improving Crayford Marshes – all within LBB and similar habitats to those being impacted.

4.1.81 The Applicant acknowledges that *“LBB is the approving authority for both the detailed design of the Proposed Development and the Biodiversity and Landscape Mitigation Strategy and will therefore be involved in approving the compensation proposals that come forward by the Applicant on the advice of the Environment Bank...”*

We ask the Examiner to request an independent review with London Borough of Bexley Strategic Planning Officers to assess some real bio-diversity gain within the Borough before the Environment Bank compensates outside the Borough which is a real concern of ours. In our view, delivering mitigation outside the Borough would contravene Bexley’s own preferred strategic policy approach to the protection an enhancement of biodiversity (SP12 Biodiversity and geological assets – of the Core Strategy). See also our response to 4.1. 8 above

In summary, we, the Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve, remain widely opposed to the development, are very disappointed at the Applicant’s approach, consistently hiding behind the often vague fudge of planning language without any detail or understanding when responding to questions of impacts on wildlife, habitats and people’s enjoyment of them.

Ralph Todd

On behalf of Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve

July 18th 2019