



BUSINESS

Tewksbury Battery Project Draws Protests; Andover Braces For Cross-Border Impacts



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TEWKSBURY, MA — More than a dozen Tewksbury residents gathered this week to protest a proposed lithium-ion battery storage facility on Hillman Street, warning that the project could threaten public safety and nearby neighborhoods — and prompting neighboring Andover officials to take notice.

The proposed 125-megawatt Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) would be built on about four acres at 73–75 Hillman Street by Hillman Energy Center LLC, a subsidiary of East Point Energy. The project, currently before the Massachusetts Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB Docket 25-08), would connect to the regional ISO-New England power grid and store enough electricity to power roughly 125,000 homes for four hours, according to the developer.

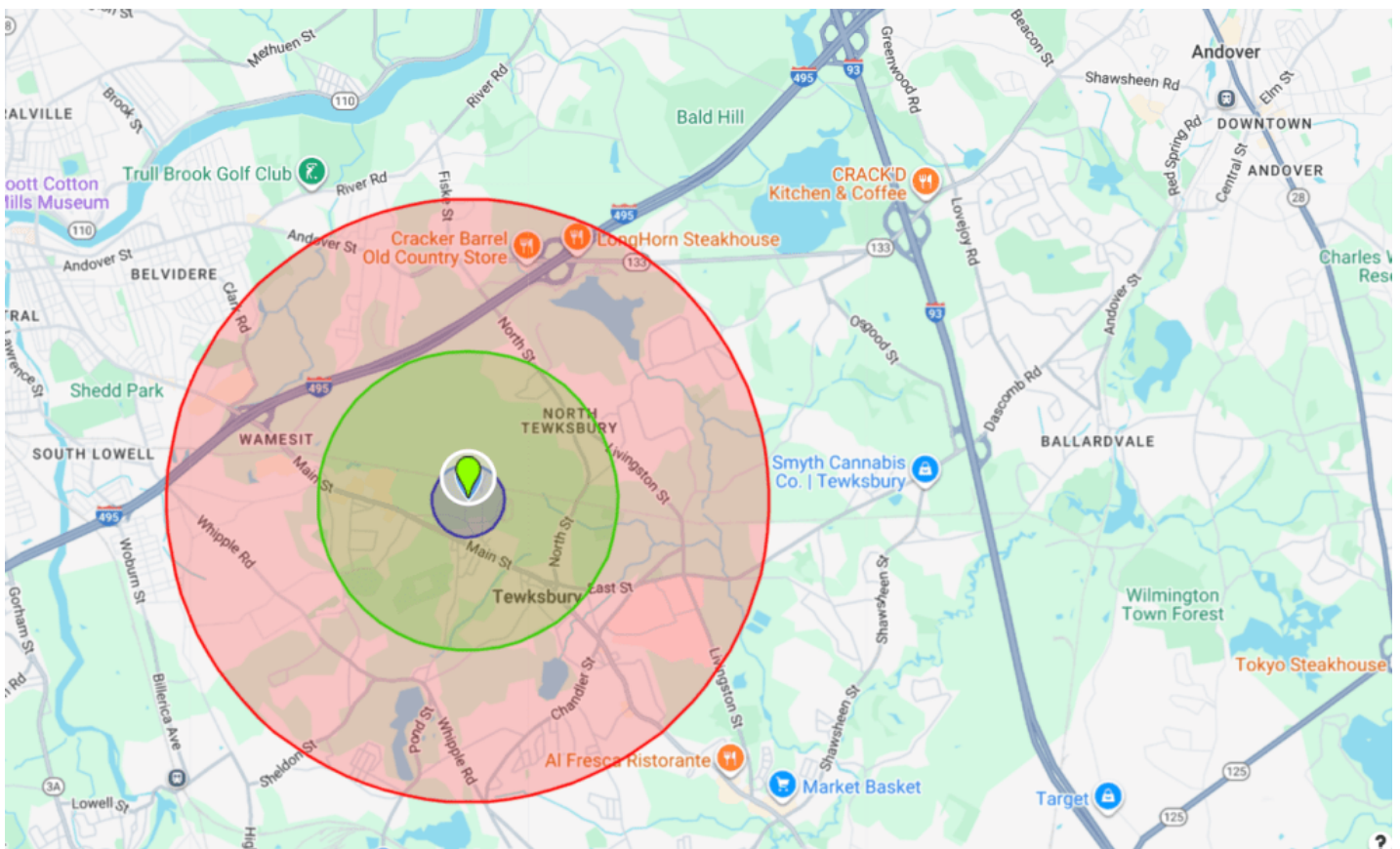
Residents say safety, evacuation risks outweigh benefits

Several homeowners living within a few hundred feet of the site told Boston 25 News they fear what could happen if a fire or malfunction occurred.

“What if something goes wrong? We’re right in the line of fire,” Mike Bennasi, who lives less than 600 feet from the proposed site, told *Boston 25 News*. His wife, Sandy Bennasi, added, “This is so dangerous. This cannot happen.”

Nearby residents of Emerald Court, a 55-and-older community housing more than 300 people, say evacuation would be nearly impossible. Allen Capone, chair of the community’s board of trustees, told *Boston 25 News* that many residents rely on wheelchairs and walkers. “How are you going to evacuate Emerald Court?” he asked. “There’s only one way in and out.”

Large battery fires are rare but have prompted significant evacuations elsewhere. In California, incidents at energy storage sites in Moss Landing and Parkfield earlier this year led authorities to order evacuations within one to two miles of the facilities, depending on wind and smoke conditions. Other lithium-ion fires, such as in Escondido, Calif., and Chandler, Ariz., triggered smaller evacuations—typically within a few city blocks or a quarter-mile radius.



Illustrative map showing 0.25-, 1-, and 2-mile distance rings around the proposed lithium-ion Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) site on Hillman Street in Tewksbury. The shaded circles represent potential evacuation or impact zones often discussed in public-safety planning for large battery facilities. Actual evacuation areas in any incident would depend on conditions such as wind, smoke, and local topography.

In a statement, Maggie Howe, Director of Project Development for East Point Energy, said the facility will meet strict safety standards.

“Battery Energy Storage Systems must adhere to rigorous safety and environmental regulations,” Howe said. “We have met and will continue to meet with local officials, first responders, and other community members to ensure this facility is safe and delivers meaningful benefits to the community.”

A petition opposing the project has gathered more than 2,200 signatures, and a public hearing before the EFSB was held October 9 at Tewksbury Memorial High School. Written comments will be accepted until October 24.

Andover could feel indirect effects

Although the Hillman Street property is entirely within Tewksbury’s industrial zone, its proximity to Andover — and shared infrastructure — means the proposal has potential regional implications.

- **Emergency response:** In the event of a large-scale battery fire, mutual-aid protocols could bring Andover Fire & Rescue to assist. Lithium-ion battery fires can produce toxic gases and burn for extended periods, requiring specialized suppression techniques.
- **Environmental overlap:** The Tewksbury site lies within a Zone II wellhead protection area, an aquifer zone that feeds regional groundwater supplies. A containment failure or chemical runoff could affect water resources that extend beneath both towns.
- **Regulatory precedent:** Andover itself has experience permitting a smaller BESS project at 1320 South Street, approved in 2023. That developer has since proposed modifications to reduce the project’s footprint and update its battery technology. Local officials say the Tewksbury review could influence future standards for setbacks, fire safety, and noise mitigation in Andover.

Decision rests with state board

Under Massachusetts law, the Energy Facilities Siting Board can approve or deny the Hillman Energy Center petition and may exempt the developer from local zoning requirements. Tewksbury officials have voted to intervene in the case, but have no veto power.

For Andover residents and officials, the coming months will be critical to track how the state rules on safety, environmental controls, and community protections.

Public comments can be submitted through the EFSB docket (No. 25-08) until October 24.

Bottom line: While the proposed lithium-ion battery installation sits just across the town line, its outcome could shape how both Tewksbury and Andover prepare for the next generation of energy infrastructure — and the community debate that comes with it.