

The Planning Inspectorate, Major Casework Team,  
Room 3J Kite Wing, Temple Quay House,  
2 The Square, Bristol, BS1 6PN

C/C - L. Trevillian at Uttlesford Council

Dear Sir or Madam

**Consultation 62A/22/0006 – Proposed development of a ground mounted solar farm with a generating capacity of up to 49.99MW, together with associated infrastructure and landscaping in Berden, Essex.**

**Uttlesford Reference –UTT/22/2046/PINS**

I would like to make it very clear from the start of this letter that I am far from being against the essential development of renewable energy but I am also firmly of the belief that we should not be covering thousands of acres, nationwide, of good quality farm land with solar panels.

Within a relatively short distance of this site there are a number of suitable brown field and semi-industrial sites which if used efficiently for solar energy gathering would have little effect on our essential food production activities or rural life as a whole.

A meaningful list of suitable candidate sites for solar harvesting should include airport apron land, disused landfill sites, motorway corridors, farm barn roofing and all new built commercial and residential properties. The latter should by now be mandatory. Serious consideration should also be given to the space above open air ground level car parks, such as those at nearby Stansted Airport, and all multi-storey car parks.

The protection of our valuable UK farmland should be an absolute priority now that we are no longer a part of the European Union and endeavouring to be as self sufficient as possible. This is compounded by the very growing problems and cost of moving food around the world at a time of European war and international food shortages created by adverse weather conditions.

I also believe that Statera, the developers of this proposal, have been somewhat economical with the truth behind their submission.

1. In March they held the only public presentation of their proposal in our Berden village hall. They publicised the event by post to less than 30% of households in the two most effected villages – Berden and Stocking Pelham.
2. In some of their post presentation reporting they said that over 50 people visited throughout the day. I know this to be inaccurate as there were over 40 present when I was briefly on site. This propaganda also featured pictures that were inclined to make the reader think that people could not be bothered to attend. Over 50 people alone added their names at that event to the local resistance group's already extensive mailing list.
3. Statera has previously developed a battery storage facility that is adjacent to the proposed solar site. In their application to Uttlesford Council, for this battery facility, they made undertakings regarding audio and visual screening that they have never carried through. Their tree and shrub

screen planting has been abysmal and they haven't irrigated or maintained it in anyway. I understand that one of the Statera staff at their presentation blamed Uttlesford Council for this as he said that his company had not been instructed to maintain the planting.

4. Despite statements, at the presentation, to the contrary they have hardly been in direct touch with our Parish Council. Their first direct contact was to invite the Parish Council to the presentation and since then, just one letter and a couple of very short emails in response to the councils detailed post presentation letter to them.

5. A general inability to answer very straight forward questions by many of the visitors to their presentation and, as reported by several of those people, a certain amount of rudeness.

6. Back in the early spring Statera conducted a sound survey with microphones that were situated well away from the existing sounds already emitted by their battery facility and the long established substation. Surely this must make any 'soundscape' predictions relating to the overall site misleading.

7. They have downgraded the category of the farm land and implied that it is only good for animal feed. I do not believe this to be true and, even if it was, then as an independent nation looking to be as self sufficient as possible should we not also be providing British feed for British livestock?

I could list more items but I think seven is sufficient for me to demonstrate that this very much novice company are willing to paint a picture that is far from being a reflection of reality.

Currently the villages of Berden, Manuden, Furneux Pelham and Stocking Pelham are dealing with the prospect of three 49.99 MW sites within a relatively short walk of each other and a few more, not so far away, in both Essex and Hertfordshire. This is far too much to ask of any group of small rural communities.

The main beneficiaries of these developments are going to be the developers, their commercial successors and a relatively small number of already wealthy land owners. The protection of the environment is just an excuse for these companies and individuals as their main objective is profit.

**British farm land must be protected from these acre hungry developments and not abused.**

I finish where I started by stating, very clearly, that I and many hundreds of local people are against this particular proposal in Berden and the various other related schemes being put forward by other developing companies in this area, and nationwide, on valuable farm land.

Yours Faithfully

John Burton

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18<sup>TH</sup> August 2022