

From: Chris Thickitt [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 August 2022 14:14
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Cc: Lackrill@uttlesford.gov.uk
Subject: Berden Hall Solar Farm, Application number on S62A/22/0006 (and UTT/22/2046/PINS)

Application number on S62A/22/0006 (and UTT/22/2046/PINS)

I am writing to object to the proposal by Statera to construct a solar farm on 177 acres of land at Berden Hall Farm.

My name is Christopher Thickitt
[REDACTED]

The reason for my objection is as follows:

The proposed location of the project is unsuitable. The land identified by Statera as the site for Berden Hall Solar Farm covers 177 acres of highly productive grade 2/3a agricultural land. Solar panels should be located on poor quality agricultural land or on domestic and commercial buildings. Uttlesford Council Policy ENV5 states that development of the best and most versatile agricultural land will only be permitted where opportunities have been assessed for accommodating development on previously developed sites or within existing development limits. Statera have failed to assess whether the proposed development could be accommodated elsewhere within the District and therefore are in breach of this policy.

Furthermore, I am very concerned about the visual impact of the development which is located very close to the residential areas of the village of Berden. I believe that the screening specified in the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be inadequate and that there will be a Major impact on visual amenity, as explained below.

The Landscape Visual Impact Assessment submitted in the planning application states in the introduction under *'Effects on visual amenity'* that *'Several Public Rights of way pass through or immediately adjacent to the Site and the proposed solar farm will result in a Major adverse effect on the visual amenity of users until mitigation in the form of hedge planting has become effective'*. It also states in section 5.10 and 5.11 that *'it is likely to take up to 8 - 10 years before the hedges have established a dense 2.5 – 3 m high structure. The woodland planting will provide a screening function within a similar time frame but it will take over fifteen years before it forms an adequate screen to those crossing the high ground to the north.'*

These statements show that it will take a very long time to establish screening. Therefore, there will be a Major adverse impact on visual amenity over a period of many years. In addition, because the planting will be deciduous, the screening will be poor throughout the late autumn and early spring months resulting in an adverse impact over the entire forty-year lifetime of the project. For these reasons I believe that the conclusion of the LVIA report that *'Once mitigation is effective the effect to the majority of receptors will be either Negligible or Minor with only those using the footpaths which pass through the proposed solar farm experiencing Moderate adverse effects, largely due to winter views and the loss of the open character along the routes'* is incorrect. The effects are likely to be at least Major for most receptors for many years. It will remain Major for those using the public footpaths throughout the life of the solar farm. Even with the mitigation measures in place the open views from and around the proposed solar farm will be lost to the users of the footpaths for the next forty years.

In addition, the difficulty of establishing suitable screening should be considered. This is illustrated by the existing battery facility constructed by Statera over four years ago. The planting has not been established satisfactorily and as a result the facility is easily visible from the surrounding land, and it remains unsightly. Given this record it is likely that the proposed screening of the solar farm will remain ineffective for many years and that the mitigations cited in the LVIA will not be achieved.

I would urge those assessing the planning application to visit the proposed site and surrounding area so that they can fully understand the impact that this will have on the visual amenity for the area.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Thickitt