

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 September 2022 15:47
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Cc: Lackrill@uttlesford.gov.uk
Subject: Berden Hall Solar Farm

Dear Sirs,

Application number 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 Amanda Coomber and I live [REDACTED]

The reasons for my objection are as follows:

The size of the development too big!

Uttlesford's Policy ENV15 says that small scale renewable energy development schemes to meet local needs will be supported providing it can be demonstrated that they do not adversely affect i) The character of sensitive landscapes; ii) Nature conservation interests; or iii) Residential and recreational amenity. This is not a small scale scheme, especially when considered alongside the other developments in the adjacent fields being proposed too. The land identified by Statera for the site for Berden Hall solar Farm extends to 177 of good productive farm land. The area covered by solar panels is larger than the area which was contemplated at the time of the application to Uttlesford District Council for a Screening Opinion. The visual impact of such a huge solar farm would completely change the character of the area and would not contribute to the energy needs of local residents.

The effect of the solar farm together with the adjacent industrial battery storage facility is unacceptable.

Paragraph 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework makes it very clear that the adverse impacts of solar farms must be addressed satisfactorily and that the cumulative landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development must be considered. The cumulative impact of the hugely visible and poorly screened battery storage facility (built by Statera) and the proposed solar farm will completely industrialise this rural area. The size of the proposed solar farm is excessive. The location (i.e. next to the battery storage facility) has not been chosen because of its suitability but because it will be cheap for the developer.

Statera have not demonstrated that the use of high quality agricultural land is necessary.

Eddie Hughes MP, a Minister at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government confirmed in June 2021 that the statements made by Eric Pickles in 2015 are still applicable. Therefore, Uttlesford must consider whether the use of agricultural land has been shown to be necessary. Uttlesford's Policy ENV5 also says 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. Where development of agricultural land is required, developers should seek to use areas of poorer quality except where other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise. As the land identified for development is high-quality agricultural land its use must be justified by the most compelling evidence.

In the FAQ document published by Statera on their development website: [REDACTED] the developer says the following:

Question: What other locations did you consider? Answer: None!

19 October 2014, Liz Truss (then a DEFRA Minister) said the following:

“English farmland is some of the best in the world and I want to see it dedicated to growing quality food and crops. I do not want to see its productive potential wasted and its appearance blighted by solar farms. Farming is what our farms are for and it is what keeps our landscape beautiful.

I am committed to food production in this country and it makes my heart sink to see row upon row of solar panels where once there was a field of wheat or grassland for livestock to graze. That is why I am scrapping farming subsidies for solar fields. Solar panels are best placed on the 250,000 hectares of south facing commercial rooftops where they will not compromise the success of our agricultural industry”.

Statera have not considered using roof tops The Building Research Establishment announced in 2016 there were around half a million acres of rooftops facing in the right direction for solar panels. Why haven't these been considered? It is no longer credible to argue that solar panels on industrial roofs can't be used because they are too heavy, solar panels thinner than a pencil have now been invented. These ultra-thin, lightweight panels are made by Singapore-based company Maxeon Solar Technologies, and are predicted to take over the European market very soon.

Uttlesford should be asking why not place solar panels on the rooftops of the huge terminal buildings owned by Stansted airport as well as any new industrial and residential buildings being planned. Clearly Stansted airport don't think that there is a problem with this because they have just applied for planning permission to put solar panels on their own land (see S62A/22/0000004).

The land will not remain in agricultural use.

Paragraph 170 of the Planning Guidance on renewable and Statera energy says where a proposal involves greenfield land it must allow for continued agricultural use. However Statera have not provided any assurance on this point.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Coomber