

From: Katrina Shirley [REDACTED] >
Sent: 05 September 2022 17:51
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: S62a/22/0006

Application Ref: S62A/22/0006

Site: Berden Hall Farm, Ginns Road, Berden

I am writing to object to the application by Statera to construct a solar farm on land at Berden Hall Farm. Whilst I understand the importance of moving to renewable and low carbon energy, I do not believe it is necessary to develop this particular site for that purpose.

The reasons for my objection are as follows:

Size, Scale and Location

The proposed solar farm involves a significant level of industrial installation which would effectively infill the land between Berden, Stocking Pelham and Crabb's Green, and would be out of keeping with the local rural environment and the character of these settlements. The sheer size and scale of the development means it would come very close to the villages, with insufficient buffers in place.

Strategic Planning

I am concerned that this is just one of a number of solar farm proposals in the area, which, if approved on an ad hoc basis, would have a damaging cumulative effect on the overall character and visual appearance of the local Essex and Hertfordshire countryside. I would like to see such decisions being based instead on a strategic, planned approach that firstly considers whether there is a need for more solar farms in the district (which already has a significant level of approved provision); and secondly identifies appropriate locations for this type of land use, prioritising the use of previously developed/poorer quality land.

Land Quality

I understand that planning guidance is that, where possible, the use of the best and most versatile agricultural land should be avoided for solar farm development because of its importance to food production and food security. I note that Statera's own assessment is that the majority of the site (72%) is of grade 2 or grade 3a classification, with the remainder being grade 3b. As such, I do not consider it is appropriate to utilise this good quality land without the availability of alternatives being considered.

Visual Amenity

The proposal will have an adverse effect on the visual amenity currently enjoyed by residents who use the public footpaths in the area. The expansive views over the rural landscape will be affected and it will take years for the proposed screening to mitigate the visual impact of the solar panels. Existing views of St Nicholas Church within its rural setting, as seen from the public footpath on the substation access road for example, will also be obscured.

Wildlife

I have seen deer whilst walking along footpaths on the site. By fencing off the area, deer will be unable to traverse the fields as they currently do. This does not appear to have been taken into account in Statera's biodiversity net gain assessment nor their ecological management plan.

Traffic Access

Statera's traffic management plan indicates there will be hundreds of deliveries made to the site, with up to 20 lorries per day arriving and departing during the peak construction period. This can be expected to cause significant disruption on the local country roads. The proposed route through Albury is unsuitable, due to issues with pinch points, bends in the road and safety for cyclist/pedestrians/horse riders. Similar problems would arise driving in the opposite direction through Berden and Manuden (where the presence of the local primary school would also be an issue).

Community Benefit

I attended Statera's consultation event and recall they mentioned a financial contribution to benefit the local community. However, I see no mention of this in their submission and feel that this should be clarified.

Kind regards,

K. Shirley

