

From: Nicky Palmer [REDACTED]

Sent: 04 September 2022 22:07

To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

Cc: planning@uttlesford.gov.uk

Subject: Berden Hall Solar Farm, s62A Planning Application. S62A 22/0006 and UTT/22/2046/PINS

Dear Sir/ Madam

I live in Berden, to the north of the proposed development which would be nearby. I have walked on footpaths in and around the proposed site for many years. The site is a really important aspect of why Berden is such an attractive location and environment to live in. The site is are widely enjoyed by residents and visitors enjoying the footpaths and views of it from all around.

I am objecting on various grounds:

1. The proposed development uses Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. Most of the proposed site is of very high quality land, including a high proportion of Grade 2 agricultural land. Planning policy, both under Uttlesford's existing plan, and under NPPF national guidance, should lead to refusal of the application.

The applicant acknowledges it has not, as required, explored other more appropriate sites. That means they fail to satisfy the policy requirements and guidance of both ENV 5 of Uttlesford and of the NPPF, only to use prime agricultural land where areas of poorer quality are not available. There are no other sustainability requirements here outweighing that obligation on the applicant and that test. If there were, then no development of solar on prime agricultural land would ever be rejected, which is clearly contrary both to the policy goals and to published past and future Government policy statements.

2. The area is of slightly rolling farmland visible both from the road and from the main footpaths around and through the site, as well as from those north of the Berden/ Stocking Pelham Road. Screening is not capable of hiding the fundamental and dramatic change to the nature of the area from a beautiful rural setting to a vast light industrial setting, swamping the village of Berden and neighbouring residential areas, including Dewes Green and Stocking Pelham.

3. This will not be a minor incidental change to the character of the area, nor is it in substance temporary. 40 years is an incredibly long time and after 40 years of semi-industrial use the area will feel completely different (and there is little chance it will not then be argued it should be extended for solar or be turned into other industrial or development uses). The site is vast, to the west and south west of Berden, and a fundamental part of Berden's rural setting. The high security boards, solar panels and other heavier and larger aspects required for the site mean there is no prospect of it feeling remotely rural or enhancing of the area. It will fundamentally and permanently damage and ruin a beautiful and important rural setting for everyone who lives nearby, visits or passes through.

4. It cannot be right to create a centre of industrial use for solar in such a remote and entirely rural setting. The current electricity grid substation is the only possible rationale for such a location, and that is clearly not a valid justification when weighed against the transformative impact on the loss of agricultural land and permanent loss of positive character of this area.

5. The development will fundamentally eliminate the setting of and some of the best views of Berden Church and the Crump, as well as other listed buildings. The heritage impact is therefore material.

6. Berden cannot be accessed by wide roads. All roads to Berden are narrow in parts, whichever route is taken. Cars regularly stop in places to let another car past, let alone when lorries come to the village and site. This is true whichever access route is taken, whether from Albury , Furneaux and Stocking Pelham or Brent Pelham and Stocking Pelham or through Berden or Little London. It is therefore an entirely rural area, totally unsuited to the development construction work and scale required.

7. The existing Grid substation is very small in comparison, and while ugly, is confined to a small corner of views. It does not justify changing the whole area irreversibly.

8. The developer's screening and mitigation commitments are not credible or effective in avoiding very significant negative effects: in fact the existing developments at the Grid substation including the battery facilities put in by the Applicant's parent, completely fail to meet the requirements imposed on them. Any assurances on screening will be far too limited to protect from the huge loss of amenity and beautiful setting and anyway should be treated as wholly unreliable, given the terrible track record of the developer on caring about these issues on its existing commitments. They make promises they will not keep is they evidence to date.

I very much hope you will refuse permission.

Yours faithfully

Nicola Palmer

