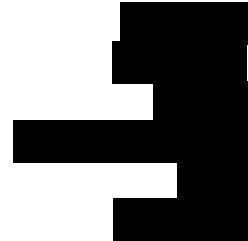


**From:** Mortlock, Andrew [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 14 August 2022 12:09

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

**Subject:** Your Ref.: s62A/22/006 Development of a ground mounted solar farm with a generation capacity of up to 49.99MW, together with associated infrastructure and landscaping – Land at Berden Hall Farm Dewes Green Road, Berden



Your Ref.: s62A/22/006

Development of a ground mounted solar farm with a generation capacity of up to 49.99MW, together with associated infrastructure and landscaping – Land at Berden Hall Farm Dewes Green Road, Berden

Dear Sir/Madam,

I live in Berden and I am writing to object to the abovementioned proposed development. There are many reasons to object to this ill-conceived development but I will focus on four:

**1. The loss of productive agricultural land**

The land identified by Statera as the site for Berden Hall Solar farm extends to 177 acres of productive farmland. It would be extremely shortsighted, even reckless, to sequester such a large area of high quality farmland from food production at a time when as a country we have never been more conscious of our dependence on fragile global food supply chains. Statera have not demonstrated that the use of high quality farmland is necessary, contrary to Uttlesford District Council's Policy ENV5 which 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. In the FAQ document published by Statera they admit they considered no other sites before making their proposal.

As Liz Truss, then a DEFRA minister, put it in 2014, *'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 ... 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.'*

**2. Large land-based solar farms are unable to tackle the UK's energy needs**

Numerous studies (published on-line by various research groups such as [REDACTED]) highlight that electricity consumption in the UK peaks in the winter months and also in the evenings. This is not surprising given the need for electricity for domestic lighting and

heating. It does however highlight that the UK needs a strategic energy policy which is able to provide for peak demand (estimated to be 50-100% above the summer demand) and solar is uniquely unsuited to this given its reliance on sunlight. By contrast wind power is a much more useful source of renewal energy whilst I personally believe nuclear power generation is critical too. Despoiling farm land for a source of power which fails to meet the challenges of core power generation and merely provides off-shore investors with a chance to sell electricity to the grid at times when demand is low makes no sense as part of an integrated energy policy for the UK

### **3. The solar farm is inappropriate industrial-scale development in the countryside**

In addition to large numbers of unsightly solar panels, the development will include containerised inverters and a substation. It is incompatible with Uttlesford's Policy S7, which says that the countryside will be protected for its own sake. The fields in question are visible on old maps dating back many centuries. An industrial-scale development will alter this landscape permanently and catastrophically – in 40 years' time, when the solar panels are no longer functioning, what is left will be a brownfield site vulnerable to further opportunistic and insensitive development. A large-scale solar installation is a completely inappropriate use of a beautiful and historic area of countryside. Furthermore the environmental damage is not limited to Berden but has global consequences in terms of the effects on the mining of both nickel and the lanthanide elements which are required for solar power cells. The demand for nickel and the pressures this is placing on countries such as Malaysia (reference recent Tesla press announcements) is a looming environmental disaster.

### **4. There is no benefit to the local community**

The village and surrounding areas will not benefit from this development in any meaningful way. Any so-called amenity woodland or new hedges planted as screening will take 20-50 years to mature – more than half the life of the solar panels. Without watering, pruning and weeding young trees will not thrive or even survive. Statera make no promises to manage these young trees after they are planted. Nor will residents get cheaper energy as a result of the proposed development. They will simply lose many of their valued footpaths and the character of their environment will change forever. Put simply, off-shore investors will be able to invest and get a return on their capital whilst the local residents will only lose. It remains hard to see any natural justice in that situation being allowed.

### **5. The loss of a public amenity**

In common with many local residents, I walk along the footpaths bordering these fields several times a week and enjoy the ability to be in the countryside. A walk two days ago afforded the opportunity to see deer, fox, badger and hares whilst yellowhammers, skylarks and red kites are present in good numbers too. If the fields in question are developed and enclosed by 2-metre high galvanised steel fencing, a cherished amenity will be lost in the village. If the development goes ahead, Footpath 25 will run between solar panels and fencing to the west and east, and Footpath 26 will run along fencing and solar panels on all its western side and some of its eastern side. These footpaths are in very regular use

and they are never without people running, walking, dog-walking or horse-riding, demonstrating that we can never predict their importance for future generations.

Again, put simply, I have not spoken to a single person in the village in the last year who supports these plans. For these and many other reasons I reiterate my total opposition to the proposed above development.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Mortlock