

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

29<sup>th</sup> August 2022

The Planning Inspectorate  
Major Casework Team  
Room 3J Kite Wing  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

**AND**

Planning Department  
Uttlesford District Council  
Council Offices  
London Road  
Saffron Walden  
Essex  
CB11 4ER

Dear Planning Inspectorate and Uttlesford Planning Committee

**OBJECTION TO BERDEN HALL SOLAR FARM**  
**Section 62A Planning Application: S62A/22/0006 and UTT/22/2046/PINS (Uttlesford)**

I am writing to object to the application to construct a solar 'farm' on land adjacent to Ginns Road, Berden for a number of reasons:

- **The land is high quality agricultural land**, historically and currently in use for the production of arable crops, largely wheat; we cannot afford to lose agricultural capacity, particularly in the current global situation where we need to reduce our dependency on imports. Its use is also counter to the National Planning Policy Framework which makes it clear that large scale solar 'farms' should be constructed on 'brownfield,' previously developed and non-agricultural sites. There is a requirement that applications for construction on agricultural land demonstrate why its use is necessary and include compelling evidence to justify such a use. This should include which other sites have been considered, including options outside the local authority, and Statera's application does not do this. Uttlesford's Policy ENV5 is critical in this regard.

- **Effective industrialisation of the current agricultural land and surrounding rural communities** where the 177 acre (roughly equivalent to 90 football pitches) solar ‘farm’ comprises:
  - over 100,000 solar panels each mounted on a high table so they are 3m in height overall
  - 10 inverter units that are each the size of a shipping container
  - a substation with high galvanised steel palisade fencing
  - 2.5m high deer fencing including CCTV units with infrared capability for use at night time

This will change the landscape significantly from its current natural open fields and public footpaths to one more akin to an industrial site.

- **Adverse impact on local wildlife** where we regularly see deer grazing and roaming through the fields and hedgerows, in their natural environment, and enjoy a variety of birds which are particularly threatened by solar panels, confusing them for water, along with other wildlife. In February 2022, Uttlesford District Council turned down an application from Low Carbon for a solar ‘farm’ very near to this proposed site and its decision referenced protection of vulnerable wildlife in the area including great crested newts, bats and hazel dormice which would also apply to this location.
- **Adverse impact on enjoyment of the rural environment which is important for mental health and well-being** and where, along with many local residents and visitors to the area, I benefit from having the countryside on my doorstep. I chose to live here specifically because of the open spaces and the agricultural landscape with a variety of footpaths and routes to take directly from my house. The proposed site for the solar ‘farm’ will impact many of the regular routes taken, with current views across wide open fields becoming restricted and footpaths becoming narrow corridors between solar panels and other associated buildings. Paragraph 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that the cumulative landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development must be considered – it is wholly negative.
- **Increased risk of both flooding and fire (from the sub-station and any new battery which is the subject of a separate planning application)** Large areas of solar panels will change the way that rainwater falls and soaks into the ground, air currents will change and large areas of the fields will be permanently shaded. Surface water drainage will be impacted and flooding risk increase. Should there be a battery fire – where there seem to be increasing numbers seen elsewhere – the rural location makes access for fire engines and emergency services difficult and there are issues with adequate water supply and pressure to fight a fire effectively.
- **Adverse impact on designated listed buildings, particularly St. Nicholas Church, Berden Hall and The Crump** as detailed in Essex County Council – Built Heritage’s letter of 11<sup>th</sup> August 2022 which states that ‘the site has remained historically open agrarian land which positively contributes to the rural character and setting of the heritage assets.’ ‘The proposed development is considered to result in a more industrial character contrary to the prevailing rural character of the site.’ The letter suggests that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal but I can see no public

benefits in the proposal – it benefits the landowner and Statera financially but Uttlesford already has sufficient ground mounted solar to power 132% of its households so does not need more. The listed buildings should continue to enjoy their established and intended rural character without suffering harm from this solar ‘farm.’

- **Adverse impact on local roads and residents during any construction** where Hertfordshire County Council Highways Department’s 19<sup>th</sup> August 2022 email clearly explains the unsuitability of the proposed routes and suggests an alternative, ‘better’ Essex route via Stansted Mountfitchet and Berden. However, this is equally unsuitable as it includes exactly the same sort of narrow and winding country lanes – there are many places where two vehicles cannot pass at the same time and where heavy lorries would cause traffic chaos and delays, as well as damage the road surface which is not the best in any event with many potholes.

In summary, I am opposed to the Berden Hall Solar Farm proposal and trust that Uttlesford will recommend to the Planning Inspectorate that it is declined, as was the previous application from Low Carbon. Uttlesford’s first consultation on its Local Plan under Theme 3: Climate Change confirmed that green infrastructure projects should be encouraged on sites that are unproductive and of low value with regards to landscape and views. The Berden Hall site clearly does not meet those criteria. It also stated that solar plants should be restricted to brownfield sites of limited agricultural value whereas the proposed site is classified as Best and Most Versatile and is therefore of high value for arable use and should continue to be used for farming.

Thank you for considering my objection.

Kind regards

