

From: Katherine Armstrong [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 September 2022 19:58
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Application 62A/22/0006 - Berden Hall Solar Farm

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

OBJECTION to Berden Hall Solar Farm
Section62A Planning Application: S62A/22/0006 and UTT/22/2046/PINS (Uttlesford)

I write further to my earlier emails objecting to the above development.

My reason for writing once again is twofold. Firstly, new information has come to light which I believe should have been made transparent at the start of this process, to me and to other residents here in the villages of Berden, Stocking Pelham, Furneux Pelham and further afield. Until the past few days I was not aware that:

- The representatives from Statera who visited Berden in March 2022 were offhand, disrespectful and in at least one case threatening to residents – this has only recently come to light for me
- Statera on that occasion told the owner of Berden Hall that they would not be using the name of her home for the solar farm – yet they have done this
- There are significant safety concerns with the proposed battery storage unit at Crabb's Green and I and others were not informed of these by the applicant or Uttlesford/EastHerts District Councils. I only learned of them from the action group Protect the Pelhams and from Berden Parish Council
- There are ongoing noise pollution problems from the existing battery storage unit at Stocking Pelham substation. These have impacted adversely on my sleep on many occasions this summer. Just this weekend I was made aware that a complaint has been made to Environmental Health at both East Herts and Uttlesford District Councils and that their officers are monitoring noise levels. I had not appreciated until now that noise will be even more intrusive if the Crabb's Green development goes ahead

- The applicant has misrepresented the quality of the arable land in question; whatever its gradings on paper, it is high grade BMV land with excellent yields
- Significant headlands were left uncultivated in February 2022 in the fields in question. Local people mistakenly thought this was set-aside. Now I learn from Berden Parish Council's letter of objection that the landowner wished to leave headlands unusually wide in order to demonstrate their suitability for 'nature reserves' and growing, e.g., wildflowers. I consider this a cynical strategy which suggests lack of transparency and due process – it weights the odds of approval in favour of the applicant rather than the common good, i.e., best most productive use of farmland in a time of increased national concerns over food security
- The applicant has misrepresented the archaeological importance of the land
- The applicant has significantly underestimated the harms to the countryside and to heritage assets.

Secondly, as someone living very close to the proposal site, and also like many others passionate about the future of ours and neighbouring villages, I have spoken to as many residents in Berden as possible in recent days and weeks about the proposed development. Several themes have emerged from these conversations:

- People are angry at the proposed loss of prime arable land used currently to grow vital crops such as wheat
- People are confused as to the exact location of the site and its scale. It seems that the scale is so huge that it has blindsided many. Even a local farmer today was astonished when I showed them plans from the developers' application
- Many residents are unaware that Statera is not a UK-based company
- Many residents are unaware that Statera is an investment company rather than a specialist in solar energy
- Those who attended the meeting in March 2022 have used the following words to describe the representatives from Statera: 'schoolboys,' 'kids,' 'ridiculous,' 'knew nothing,' 'laughable,' 'unimpressive'
- Several people have shared their concerns with me that the solar technology in question may be obsolete within a short period of time and that the land will then be classified as a brownfield site ripe for re-development
- Especially after wildfires near Berden this summer people are genuinely frightened by the possibility of fire/explosions at the battery storage unit(s)
- A local landowner told me of a herd of fallow deer that have lived here for centuries and who circle part of the proposal site every day. CPREssex warns in their objection of the fatalities and injuries to deer from solar farms and so-called deer-proof fencing.
- Several people are tearful and bewildered at the impact on wildlife: deer, bats, skylarks and badgers
- Most people are distressed at the loss of their favourite Public Rights of Way and several much-loved countryside views which will now be ruined by a giant eyesore.

I have been privileged to listen to the views, fears and concerns of many residents in the past fortnight. Conscious that the deadline for objections was very tight, and that many were away on holiday when the application was submitted, I have tried to speak to people right across Berden, including those who live in the social housing on Ginns Road and those

who live in Grade II listed houses in the centre of the village as well as on or near St Nicholas Field and elsewhere, including outlying parts of the parish. I wish to have it recorded that I have only spoken to one resident who wholeheartedly favours the solar farm, and he was under the mistaken impression it would be an agrivoltaic installation including sheep, beehives, etc. Everyone else ranges from weary resignation at the prospect, all the way through a range of negative emotions to anger and despair.

I recently emailed to apply to speak at any hearing regarding the application. Please may I reiterate my request to speak; with the volume of letters of objections being submitted to PINS I would be grateful to know if my application has been received.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Katherine Armstrong