

From: Mary Nelson [REDACTED] >
Sent: 01 September 2022 08:56
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Berden Hall Farm (Pelham Solar)

Application number on S62A/22/0006 (and UTT/22/2046/PINS)

I am writing to object to the proposal by Statera to construct a solar farm on 177 acres of land at Berden Hall Farm.

My name is Mary Nelson [REDACTED].

The reasons for my objection are as follows:

1 The proposed site is on high quality agricultural land.

a This is against Government Guidance. The Government's Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land updated Feb 2021 refers to the 'Government Paper on A Green Future our 25 year plan', where they state that the Government plans to: "protect the best agricultural land"

In Farming for the future Policy and Progress updated Feb 2020 published by DEFRA there is a section entitled 'The importance of Food Production'. In this they say

'During the Health and Harmony consultation you told us that food production and food security were important, and we agree. In the policy statement published in 2018 we reassured you that our priority was a productive, competitive farming sector – one that will support farmers to provide more **home grown**, healthy produce made to high environmental and animal welfare standards.'

This Objective is hardly likely to be met by giving over good quality agricultural land to industrial usage as it proposed here.

b Statera have not demonstrated that the use of high quality agricultural land is necessary.

The SCDC Report 13.1.14, 10.2.2. "National Policy Framework requires planners to take account of economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality in preference to that of a higher quality"

In the document published by Statera on their development website under FAQ the developer says:

Question: What other locations did you consider? Answer: None.

What justification can they have for using this land when they have not considered other land which is more appropriate in terms of lack of agricultural value?

The greater financial profitability of this particular site is not a justification. Neither is its proximity to the National Grid. There are Solar Installations which are some 11 kilometers from substations.

c Sustainable development. Uttlesford's Policy ENV5 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. Where development of agricultural land is required, developers should seek to use areas of poorer quality except where other **sustainability** considerations suggest otherwise.

The National Planning Framework 2021 says "The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." I would argue that this proposal goes against this both in terms of meeting present needs and from the point of view of the use of the land in the future. There is no evidence that after 25 or 40 years of solar installations the land will be fit to be farmed. This would compromise the ability of future generations to grow food, especially as there is a shortfall in farming land. A study in 2014 by Cambridge University suggested that this shortfall would reach 2 million hectares by 2030. This is another argument in itself for not allowing industrialisation on high grade agricultural land.

Moreover, even the present needs for non-fossil fuels are being met both locally and nationally. The UK Government has announced significant investments into wind power as part of its clean energy programmes. It has for instance, announced a £60m investment in upgrading the country's offshore wind capacity, increasing the target production from 30GW to 40GW by 2030, a change that would see the UK generate enough electricity from offshore wind to power every home in the country. At a local level, the current solar capacity of Uttlesford of 163 MW is sufficient for current and future needs.

d This is against one of the Solar Trade Association's 10 Commitments mission Statement. STA Commitment 1 says Applications for Grade 3 land and above should not be considered.

2 Safeguarding the natural environment.

In the government paper on 'A Green Future our 25 year plan' there is a section on

"Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment". Here they state "We will conserve and enhance the beauty of our natural environment, and make sure it can be enjoyed, used by and cared for by everyone. We will do this by:

- safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our natural scenery and improving its environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.

- making sure that there are high quality, **accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas**, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing”

The proposed solar farm goes directly against this. Walking along footpaths with high fencing next to the proposed solar panel installation is hardly providing high quality, accessible, natural spaces where people can spend time to benefit their health and well-being.

3 Other planning applications for Solar Installations.

There does not seem to be an overall policy about of the numbers of installations within a certain geographical area. Perhaps the developers think that by applying piecemeal they will avoid the central planning powers noticing the total amount of land that could come under this type of industrialisation in this area.