

From: Mark & Sarah [REDACTED]

Sent: 30 August 2022 21:44

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

[REDACTED]

Subject: Letter of Objection - UTT/22/2046/PINS - Berden Hall Farm (Pelham Solar) REFERENCE NUMBER: S62A/22/0006 -

Dear Sir / Madam

We are residence of Berden and have been since 2014 when we moved from Great Dunmow. We chose this location to prepare for our retirement and to help bring up our Grandchildren in a high quality country environment. We moved to Berden as we were appalled by the unsympathetic over-development of that market Town into a sprawling "mess" with significant social issues. The proposed development completely ruins the reason for our relocation.

So, whilst we are fervent supporters of renewable energy we must object to this application in the strongest of terms. We passionately believe that solar is not the answer and wind farms are the way forward, simply on the grounds of protecting the environment and also energy production efficiency. It is very clear that the proposer has failed to investigate and justify this application as the best use of the land or for other renewable energy options. I say this having attended all presentations by Statera who were, it was very clear, simply not interested other than for financial gain and presenting to Berden residents to "tick that box". Our over-riding view following their attendance was shown to be nonchalant. I would add that there has been no meaningful consultation with local residents and indeed the only consultation with residents has been in the form of this "exhibition" held for a single afternoon in March. The MAJORITY of residents who will be affected by the development were not invited to the exhibition. A review of the mailing list used by Statera demonstrates that only 71 properties in Stocking and Berden were contacted (of which 22 were in Stocking Pelham and just 49 were in Berden). Stocking Pelham has approximately 70 properties and Berden has very close to 200. This is completely unjustified and totally unacceptable given the scale and impact this development will have. Statera claim that they have made changes in response to feedback from residents. This is nonsense. The overwhelming feedback was that the development should not go ahead. This has been ignored.

In respect of this application we would specify our objection on the following key grounds:-

1. Statera deliberately down-play impact on the listed buildings beside the solar farm

- Section 16 of the NPPF is concerned with 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. It identifies heritage assets as 'an irreplaceable resource' and notes that they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. Berden is an excellent example of an area that must be conserved at all costs and not subjected to industrial development.
- Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states that where development proposals are likely to affect a designated heritages asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justifications. This guidance has simply not been followed.

- The impact on the heritage significance of the Berden Hall (Grade 2* Listed) will be significant. Tithe maps dating from 1838 show that the land which is included within the solar farm site used to belong to the owner of Berden Hall (Nicholson Calvert) and that it was farmed by Isaac Hodges who lives in Berden Hall. There is clearly a close connection between the buildings and the land.

- The development will be visible from the bell tower in Berden Church (St Nicholas') which is a Grade 1 listed building. English Heritage have already raised concerns about the impact on this (and other) important historical assets in close proximity to the proposed development. We live within 250 yards of St Nicholas Church where our daughter recently got married. **We therefore fully understand the impact this development will have on the micro location and this historic Grade 1 listed building. I question whether a material number of the Member of the UDC planning team and particularly Laurence Ackrill, have truly visited the site and so understand the impact this scheme will have?**

- The Scheduled monument at The Crump, the Grade II Listed The Crump and former barn (now room) adjoining to north-west will also be impacted by the development which will be visible from first floor windows of the Crump which looks West.

2. 40 years is not temporary

- 40 years is not temporary and how any reasonable individual can consider otherwise is beyond belief !!!! In my case 40 years is more than the rest of my life !

- There are several planning appeal decisions where the Secretary of State has rejected this argument. For example, in an appeal against a solar farm at Five Oak Green near Tonbridge (ref 2226557) the SoS said that 25 years was a considerable period of time and the reversibility of the proposal was given no weight. There is another appeal which relates to Huddleston Farm near Horsham (ref: 2218035). In this case the Secretary of State commented that just 30 years was a considerable period of time and he gave no positive weight to the claimed reversibility of the development.

3. The Government does not support large scale solar development of this sort

- In October 2021 (in the run up to COP 26), the Government published its Net Zero Strategy (Build Back Greener). This Strategy does NOT support the construction of industrial scale solar farms. It's focus on renewable energy is almost entirely on off-shore wind energy with a commitment to generate 40GW of energy from offshore wind by 2030. This target was first set in 2020 in the Government's 10 point plan for a Green Industrial revolution which said that this quadrupling in offshore wind capacity would generate enough energy to power every home in the country.

- The focus on wind power explains why there are very few references to solar power in the Net Zero Strategy. Where solar is referenced, the focus is on "unsubsidised rooftop solar", retrofitting solar on houses and small scale community solar projects.

- The East of England (including Uttlesford) has a key role to play in National renewable energy plans because 60% of the current offshore wind projects will come onshore along the East Coast. In fact, National Grid's Electricity 10 year Statement (published in 2020) says that the large amount of generation to be connected in the East of England means that power generation in the East of England will exceed local demand; so the East of England will be a power exporting region. We do not need more renewable energy in Uttlesford!

- The fact that Uttlesford DC declared a climate emergency in 2019 is irrelevant. This is not a planning policy and is not relevant for the purposes of determining planning applications.

4. There is no benefit to the local community

- There is no benefit of this development to the local community. Residents do not wish to be “bought off” by the offer of modest amounts of funding. The loss of the countryside is irreplaceable.
- Local residents will not get cheaper solar energy
- There will be a loss of rural amenities such as footpaths with open views

The Noise associated with the development has not been fully considered and is not acceptable

- Statera claim that the noise generated from the development will be minimal. However, the inverters will be noisy and will add to the noise from the substation and the current battery plant. This will be even worse if the Crabb’s Green battery is built.
- When there are periods of exceptionally hot weather, it is necessary to install temporary cooling equipment to prevent overheating of inverters. This is extremely noisy. Statera make no mention of this equipment.

5. The local roads are not suitable for such large construction vehicles

- 2 years ago I suffered a heart attack and since then I have used this beautiful countryside to exercise. I cycle on 3 or 4 occasions per week (without fail) and enjoy the country lanes and National cycle routes around here. The construction traffic produced by this development make such an activity dangerous at best and impossible to enjoy safely. I note that the construction period will run for 6-months and an average of up to 50 construction workers are forecast to be on site during peak times. This is widely optimistic and in reality the construction period will be much longer and impact the environment materially.
- The supporting text for Uttlesford Policy ENV15 states development will only be permitted in locations where the local road network is capable of handling any additional traffic generated by the proposal.
- Statera state that construction traffic will travel west on the A120 up to Little Hadham, and through Clapgate and Patmore Heath on Albury Road and that vehicles will turn onto Ginns Road and travel through Stocking Pelham before arriving at the site access point just before the entrance to Berden. There could be up to 20 lorries per day arriving and departing during the peak construction period. These road as not suitable for large numbers of lorries. \I am very worried indeed !
- This is EXACTLY THE SAME access route that it proposed for the construction of (i) a new battery storage plant at Green’s Farm (see the application to East Herts DC 3/21/0969/FUL) and (ii) a new battery storage plant at Crabb’s Green (see the application to East Herts DC 3/22/0806/FUL).
- The road between Little Hadham and Berden is a small country road. At some points, it is barely wide enough to accommodate two regular cars. Cars currently need to stop in order to allow tractors to pass. It is completely unsuitable for articulated lorries or large HGVs.

- Access point off the road is simply not suitable for vehicles of this size.
- All vehicles will pass directly in front of the pre-school in Stocking Pelham – I am concerned about the safety of primary school children.

Your sincerely

Mark and Sarah Wickham