



Manuden Parish Council objection to the Pelham Springs Solar Farm proposal

S62A/2022/0011 Land East of Pelham substation, Maggots End
Manuden

John Archer Chairman Manuden Parish Council
For and on behalf of Manuden Parish Council

S62A/2022/0011 | Construction and operation of a solar farm comprising ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) arrays and battery storage together with associated development, including inverter cabins, DNO substation, customer switchgear, access, fencing, CCTV cameras and landscaping | Land Near Pelham Substation Maggots End Road Manuden

Manuden Village held a village survey to which **80% of the respondents were against** the proposal for many reasons – but the main one being the misuse of agricultural land for this purpose. There is a risk that Britain could become energy rich but food poor if thousands of acres of agricultural land prime or not, are put over to this type of industrialisation – for that is what it is.

A pertinent quote from Eddie Hughes MP, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (in a letter dated 2nd June 2021 to Kemi Badenoch, our local MP): *“Where a proposal involves Greenfield land, local councils are expected to consider whether the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary. Where high-quality agricultural land is involved, this would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence. We have been clear that **the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities**, and that the views of local communities should be listened to....”*

Please be reminded of that *“the National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities to protect and enhance valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity and recognise the character and beauty of the countryside and the benefits of the best and most versatile farmland in their policies and decisions a number of proposals for solar farms in the countryside have been rejected as causing visual harm, harm to amenity or harm to openness.”* [Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government]

There seems no doubt that this proposal, if it goes ahead, will be failing this policy in most areas.

“Meeting our energy goals should not be used to justify the wrong development in the wrong location and this includes the use of high-quality land. Protecting the global environment is not an excuse to trash the local environment” [Eric Pickles, Secretary of State, Communities and Local Government]

The government strategy for “renewables” does not include industrial solar farming but more offshore wind farms and, perhaps more contentiously, nuclear power – but with these they calculate that there will be sufficient energy produced to satisfy the United Kingdom’s requirement. This to be “topped up” by some community led **small scale** solar projects. Note the “small scale”! There is really no requirement for this solar farm and so going back to what Eddie Hughes MP wrote to Kemi Badenoch in June ’21 (see above) **there really is no compelling evidence to justify approval.**

There is a huge shadow over the provenance of the solar panels themselves. Their production, mostly in China, is under a cloud – but even without this it does seem very counter intuitive to be importing panels from the other

side of the world. They can be hardly zero carbon to produce as cheaply as they are. It seems that it is acceptable for us to become “zero carbon” at the expense of some other part of the planet - this is hardly “zero carbon”!

It appears that the efficiency of solar power generation is very poor compared to wind farming with reportedly a single offshore wind turbine able to generate more or less the equivalent to a 240 acre solar factory. This is a very poor return for the massive acreage required in this proposal. The issue of the heat the panels generate and put back into the atmosphere and thereby contributing to global warming should not be ignored. They can get untouchably hot. Some of this heat goes into the production of electricity but a lot doesn't. Of course this heat does not involve burning fossil fuels but it is heat nonetheless.

The actuality of these industrial solar farms seems far away from the very pretty propaganda leaflets that the developers produce with sheep and cattle grazing, lots of wild flowers and beehives, we see can all see them in the countryside – very barren places, surrounded by mesh fencing and security. Please visit the reality rather than accept the myths of the pretty leaflets.

As previously stated this proposal does not fit into the government strategy and it is too large to fit into Uttlesford's own policy ENV15 which states that small scale renewable development schemes would be supported to meet local needs would be supported if it could be demonstrated that they do not affect

- 1) the character of sensitive landscapes
- 2) Nature conservation interests
- 3) Residential and recreational amenity.

Demonstrably this fails all 3 as well as involving a huge agricultural land take.

We have no objections to environmentally friendly renewable energy sources but we do not believe that huge solar farms are the way forward. The government claim that in 10 years sufficient energy will be generated offshore to power all UK homes therefore making such solar farms redundant.

Although the proposal seems quite far from the centre of Manuden it will have a hugely detrimental effect on the nearby residents of Maggots End, Battles and Brick End. Many of the residents of Manuden are very keen walkers and “users” of the countryside, the walks around Battles Wood, Brick End, Peyton Hall are very well trodden and so this recreational amenity will be completely spoilt by such a development.

It has more recently been announced that contrary to initial proposals the preferred route for construction traffic is through Manuden. This is very worrying! Traffic through Manuden is already an issue and this is normal day to day traffic not hundreds of HGVs. Manuden Primary School is on The Street and at certain times of day it is very difficult to drive past the school, HGVs will find it almost impossible. It is also very worrying for those of us who live in the 15th or 16th Century houses along The Street – for obvious reasons. Some have been here 500 years – it would be nice to think that they might be here in another 500 – it seems unlikely though.

One last quote from a government representative:

“not at any cost...

not in any place...

not if it rides roughshod over the views of local communities.

As we take solar to the next level, we must be thoughtful, sensitive to public opinion, and mindful of the wider environmental and visual impacts. “

[Greg Barker, Minister for Energy and Climate Change]

**John Archer , Chairman
Manuden Parish Council**