

From:
To:
Cc:

Subject: [External] Objection to Pelham Spring Solar Farm - application numbers UTT/21/3356/FUL and 3/21/2781/FUL (East Herts)
Date: 15 December 2021 14:19:18

I am writing to object to the application to construct a solar farm comprising ground mounted solar arrays together with (among other things) battery storage, inverter cabins, a substation, fencing and CCTV cameras on land near Pelham Substation Maggots End Road Manuden CM23 1BJ

My name is Ian Priest, and I live at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The reasons for my objection are as follows:

1. Pelham Spring have made no attempt to set out the case for why their proposed development should be sited in the middle of open countryside which is currently in use as prime agricultural land and which concurrently offers high amenity value to walkers and to the general public to appreciate the natural beauty of the terrain. As it stands the application runs counter to Government policy as set out by the then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government Robert Jenrick as recently as August 2021; his replacement in that post does not automatically void the policy as set out by him. What steps have UDC taken to establish whether or not there are suitable brownfield sites available? Have the Developers demonstrated that poorer quality land has been chosen in preference to high quality land, and if not, what is the compelling evidence in favour of choosing this site?
2. The National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities 'to protect and enhance valued landscapes ...and recognise the character and beauty of the countryside. Where development of agricultural land is shown to be necessary planning authorities should seek to use poorer quality land in preference to higher quality land.' In this case there is no evidence that Uttlesford District Council have taken any such considerations into account; nor is there any evidence that UDC has attempted to identify brownfield sites that are not of high environmental or ecological value. Because of UDC's failure to date to complete its development plan for the District, an opportunity exists for a developer – in this case an industrial power provider – to come in with a proposal which pays no regard to the environmental or amenity value of this site, and UDC have no power to resist it on policy grounds, there being no policy in place.
3. The proposed site is presumably attractive to the Developer because of its proximity to the Furneaux Pelham sub-station, yet evidence from similar developments elsewhere shows that proximity to the point of connection to the Grid need not be a factor in the siting of a solar farm. The building of this farm will be very destructive of the environment and consequently disruptive of wildlife, as well as to the amenity of neighbouring properties.
4. The completed solar farm, with its battery storage units, high fencing, surveillance equipment and associated installations will turn what is currently an area of natural beauty containing much wildlife into an intrusive industrial area. The infrastructure of the locality (roads, water, drainage etc) is wholly inadequate to sustain such a development, and the life of the surrounding communities will be severely disrupted during the building period, and beyond owing to the ongoing maintenance needs of the site, intrusive surveillance lighting and so on. This is especially true of nearby Manuden, which will

become the main way through for access for all the heavy vehicles needed during building and after-maintenance. The main street through the village is already limited in places to one way by residents' parking needs, and there is a choke point at the northern end of the village where a Grade 2 listed cottage projects out into the road. The village already sustains high traffic volumes and these will be further stretched as the heavy traffic increases. The building work may well coincide with the construction of 20 houses by Pelham Structures Ltd on a site north of the village and almost bordering onto the proposed solar farm site; if so the heavy traffic in the village will become intolerable.

5. No case has been made for taking 180 acres of prime agricultural land out of production at a time when the country is already 60% dependent on imports of food. The proposed substitution of sheep and bees are hardly a substitute.
6. Finally, it is clear from a number of ministerial statements over recent years that government policy, whilst favourable to renewable energy development, does not take an uncritical view of development at any cost. The movement towards renewable generation "should not take place at the expense of environmental issues or of the values of local communities." Ministers have repeatedly said that "there is no excuse for putting solar farms in the wrong places;" "where land is designated as a relatively high grade it should not be preferred for the siting of such developments." (Nick Boles to the House of Commons in 2014); "Protecting the global environment is not an excuse to trash the local environment" (Eric Pickles, Secretary of State in 2015); "The need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities, and the views of local communities should be listened to; where relevant planning considerations are raised by local residents these must be taken into consideration by the local council" (Eddie Hughes MP, Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government to Kemi Badenoch in June 2021)

Given the clarity of these policy statements by successive government ministers it is to be hoped that UDC will take account of policy at the national level and reconsider the proposals put forward by Pelham Solar before it is too late.

Yours faithfully,

T I Priest

