

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 19 March 2023 22:29

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

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Objection to Solar Farm on Land East of Pelham substation, Maggots End Manuden - Application number: S62A/2022/0011

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 Emma Clark, and I live at [REDACTED]

The reasons for my objection are as follows:

I am keen walker – I don't want to walk through a solar farm

- Low Carbon defines visual amenity as the “Overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area.”
- There are eight local Public Rights of Ways within and immediately adjacent to the site comprising of one Bridleway and seven Footpaths.
- As a local resident I frequently walk with my dogs along these footpaths as I feel safe.
- I often walk along Brick House End. Because the fields slope upwards, the solar farm will be visible at all times of year.
- Access to open countryside is particularly important these days – it makes a significant contribution to my mental well being.
- I often do a triangular walk along Brick House End, along the footpath PROW 5_52 and back along Park Green. This walk will be ruined by the appearance of solar panels. I do not accept that the impact can be satisfactorily mitigated by planting hedges – there is no existing hedgerow.

- The planting adjacent to the existing battery plant adjacent to the Substation at Stocking Pelham demonstrates that hedges do not provide adequate screening.
- I often do a popular circular walk along Blakings Lane along PROW 39_3, across the field towards Manuden (passing behind Battles Wood) via PROW 39_14 and back toward Brick House End along PROW 39_4 and PROW 5_14. Blakings Lane is an ancient right of way which features on the Chapman and Andre Map of Essex from 1777. This walk will be completely ruined by the presence of large numbers of solar panels.
- I do not want to walk along a corridor this would make me feel very uncomfortable and unsafe.
- The 10m wide corridor proposed will prevent me from seeing the countryside and enjoying the countryside as I currently experience it.

I am concerned about the impact of the development on the rich variety of wildlife on the site

- The site for the development is rich in ecology.
- Page 36 of the Ecological Impact Assessment concludes that it is possible that Greater crested newts are present on the site given that their presence has been detected in five ponds in close proximity to the site.
- A number of red listed bird species noted as being present on the site including skylarks, yellow hammers, yellow wagtails, linnets and song thrushes.
- A study carried out in 2016 estimated that utility-scale solar farms around the US may kill nearly 140,000 birds annually. One leading theory suggests birds mistake the glare from solar panels for the surface of a lake and swoop in for a landing, with deadly results.
- The Ecological Impact Assessment notes that hares are seen on the site but concludes that they are unlikely to be affected! How can this be true when their habitat is being ruined and the site is being surrounded by 2m high perimeter fence.
- I frequently see Roe deer wandering across the site because they shelter in Battles Wood. These beautiful creatures will be lost.

- Add your own comments about animal and bird life that you have seen.

The solar farm is inappropriate development in the countryside

- The development proposed by Low Carbon can only be described as industrial.
- In addition to large numbers of solar PV panels (the exact quantity is not specified) the development will include ; 26 containerised inverters; 40 containerised battery storage units a DNO substation and Customer substation.
- National policy includes an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- I do not understand how a massive solar farm which is an industrial development can possibly enhance the natural environment.
- The site is very close to the numerous listed buildings and scheduled monuments I do not accept that it can possibly enhance the historic environment.
- The development is not compatible with Uttlesford’s policy S7 which says that the countryside will be protected for its own sake

The land will not remain in agricultural use

- Paragraph 170 of the Planning Guidance on renewable and low carbon energy says where a proposal involves greenfield land it must proposal allows for continued agricultural use.
- Low Carbon have not provided any assurance on this point. They simply claim that “notwithstanding, the development would not result in the permanent loss of agricultural land” and that “Agricultural activities could coincide with the solar farm, such as sheep grazing, and following cessation of use, the land will be returned to full agricultural use”.
- This is not sufficient and does not satisfy the requirement.

- I have visited a solar farm/several solar farms and I have never seen a sheep on the site
- This is an arable farming area – where are sheep going to come from and who is going to farm them?
- I understand from a local small holder who has sheep that he would never consider allowing them to graze on a solar farm – how would he know if one of his flock was injured? He would not be able to see it underneath the solar panels
- In their consultation Low Carbon stated that they would improve biodiversity on the site by keeping bees. There is absolutely no mention of bees in the Planning Statement.
- Berden has several bee keepers already (one at Brick House End). We do not need more bees at this location!

The visual impact of this huge development cannot be satisfactorily mitigated

- The land to the East of Brick House End (in front of Battles Wood) slopes upwards towards the wood [more here]
- The land to the West of the development is a huge open field – there are no existing hedgerows [more here]
- The Planning Committee must visit the site to understand the to full impact that this development will have
- The drawings of the panels submitted show that they will be 3.2 metres high
- Low Carbon's claim that "the proposed development could be effectively integrated and assimilated into the surrounding landscape" is ridiculous
- The pictures submitted as part of the planning application were taken when there were still leaves on hedges and trees. These plants are deciduous – they will not provide effective screening in winter.
- The planting around the existing battery plant adjacent to the Substation at Stocking Pelham demonstrates that hedges do not provide adequate screening.

- The RHS says that it will take between 20 and 50 years for hawthorn hedges to achieve their full height – this is more than half of the life of the solar farm
- It is unrealistic to expect hedgerows to thrive where low quality plants are planted and then left. Young plants need to be watered in case of prolonged dry spells and/or heat waves, especially during the 2-3 first years after planting.
- During the second year of planting, between February and March, hard pruning of hedges is required to encourage new growth
- Weeding is needed around the base of new plants for the first couple of years to encourage growth
- Do Low Carbon employ gardeners – doubtful!

Farmland should be used for farming

- Low Carbon suggest that the majority of the land on the site is Grade 2 agricultural land. Over 81% of the site has been classified by Low Carbon as “best and most versatile” agricultural land.
- The Agricultural assessment is unreliable, because it does not reflect the actual site which is the subject of the planning application. For example, the area immediately to the West of Battles Hall has been included in the assessment but this is not part of the site.
- This is productive farm land which should be used for farming.
- We currently import more than 40 per cent of our food, and recent threats by countries to ban exports of vaccinations have highlighted the threat that similar bans could be imposed on food if countries are themselves short of supplies in the future.
- It is predicted that we will need to produce 56 per cent more food by 2050 due to increasing populations. We have not increased food production by 56 per cent in the last 30 years, and if we continue to build on farmland we have no hope of achieving it in the next 30 years either.

Please do not sacrifice our precious countryside and destroy our historic villages!

Yours sincerely

Mrs Emma Clark