

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: 08 January 2024 21:06
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Reference number S62A/22/0006 - Land at Berden Hall Farm, Dewes Green Road, Berden

[REDACTED]
Dear Sir or Madam

We write to update our objection with reference to consultation S62A/22/0006, as residents of Stocking Pelham since 2003.

The Applicant's 15 November 2023 submission argues that in recent cases solar "farms" have been given permission to build on Best and Most Versatile land, and this sets a precedent that the Inspector should take note of. The Applicant further argues that the most recent case at Pelham Springs immediately adjacent to the Berden Hall Farm where permission was refused is an aberration and in any event is under judicial review.

As a community and a nation, we must weigh the following factors:

1. The national interest in promoting renewable energy
2. The national interest in growing our own food
3. The local interest in preserving the rural nature of the area

National interest in promoting renewable energy

Renewable energy is produced by multiple means, and the UK has recently received a significant boost by further investment in wind farms. The UK is well ahead of other countries in the use of this technology with the [largest off-shore wind farms in the world](#). Dogger Bank's three phases currently represent the world's largest offshore wind farm. The reason for this success is that as a Northerly island, we get a lot of wind off-shore and the government is investing heavily in the use of the technology.

Solar has a role to play as well. When it is not windy, it is sometimes sunny (during the summer months). However, the government has not expressed any significant encouragement for large solar "farms" and they are not part of the national strategy for similar reasons to on-shore wind: they are a blight on the countryside. The government is targeting much smaller projects, including on the top of buildings, and the use of technologies such as air-source heat pumps to reduce energy consumption.

The Applicant's claim that a large solar development of this type is in the national interest is overstating the case. Solar energy is in the national interest as a supplement to wind and nuclear, but there is nothing inherent in large-scale developments of this type that is in the national interest. As an example, we have 30 solar panels on our roof, generating 10 KW when the sun is shining and high in 3 summer months.

National interest in growing our own food

Unlike energy, land is a resource that cannot be renewed. We need land to grow food, and best and most versatile land is by definition the best place to do that. Growing our own food, like producing our own energy, is in the national interest - though food is of course more critical than

energy. Humans can exist for a long time without energy (wrap up warm in the winter), but not without food.

It is critical that we can grow our own food, but only desirable that we produce solar energy and not desirable to produce solar energy on a large-scale industrial development unless this is the only way to provide renewable energy. If we must use agricultural land for solar power generation let it be poor agricultural land. Developers such as the Applicant should spend their resources finding suitable sites that are less useful for agriculture, rather than spending their capital on expensive lawyers fighting a case in one of the most productive farming areas in the country.

The local interest in preserving the rural nature of the area

The local interest is in retaining agricultural land for agriculture. We do not allow infill housing developments because they disturb the tranquillity of the rural setting and conflict with our heritage sites and monuments. This philosophy was upheld in the Pelham Springs ruling which weighed the clear local interest in preserving the rural setting above the arguable and nebulous national interest. Far from being an “aberration,” the Pelham Springs ruling reflects the government’s movement away from large-scale on-shore renewable energy projects in favour of off-shore projects or small-scale developments on buildings and brownfield sites. The Pelham Springs Inspector rightly ruled that clear local interest should trump arguable and nebulous national interest.

Colin and Riikka Berthoud