

From: Eric Berthoud [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 January 2024 21:36
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: Berden Hall Solar Farm (S62A/22/0006)

Dear Inquiries and Major Casework team,

Regarding Land at Berden Hall Farm Dewes Green Road Berden reference number S62A/22/0006.

I am writing to highlight my strong objection to the proposed works by Statera at Berden Hall Farm Dewes Green Road Berden.

I list my various reasons to object below.

The development would cause harm to cherished sites:

1. The Crump ringwork, a scheduled ancient monument
2. St Nicholas Church Berden, a Grade I listed building
3. Berden Hall, a Grade II* listed building

The proposed development would take 177 acres of farmland out of food production for at least 40 years - 72% of the proposal Site is Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land. This would be a catastrophic waste of BMV.

The proposal is for alien, large-scale, industrial-style development in an area of open countryside where there has been no equivalent development to date.

There would be negative effects on landscape and visual amenities. This is open countryside, and a number of public rights of way (PROWs) would be impacted including several very well-used footpaths.

Consistency in planning decisions is important, and the refusal by the Planning Inspectorate to grant permission for Pelham Spring Solar Farm (PSSF), in close proximity to the Berden Hall Solar Farm site, is therefore a highly material consideration. The Planning Inspector, Mr Callum Parker, argued that PSSF would erode the agricultural landscape and constitute industrial infrastructure that would be present for c. 40 years, which is not temporary. The scheme would fail to preserve the setting of the listed buildings and other heritage assets, including the Crump scheduled ancient monument. Clearly, many of the factors which led to the refusal of Pelham Spring Solar Farm are also relevant to Berden Hall Solar Farm

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has recently changed (December 2023) to give greater importance to Best and Most Versatile land in order to safeguard domestic food production and protect national food security. Berden Hall Solar Farm would take 133 acres of BMV land out of food production for c. 40 years

The revised proposals are contrary to Policy S7 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (LP) which (broadly) states that planning permission will only be given where a development is needed in a particular location, is appropriate and protects and enhances the landscape character. The proposals are also contrary to para 174 (now 180) of the NPPF for similar reasons

The Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan states that the government seeks large scale ground-mount solar deployment across the UK, looking for development mainly on brownfield, industrial and low and medium grade agricultural land. Wherever it references solar energy, the Plan focuses on Rooftop Solar, not Ground-Mounted Solar. There is also increased emphasis in the NPPF on ensuring that renewable energy is located at the point of consumption. Developers can already connect to the grid via the high voltage overhead cable network, so Statera's claim that solar developments need to be in the vicinity of the Pelham Sub Station is therefore erroneous

Recent planning decisions highlight the importance of a proper site selection exercise to identify poorest land. The Applicant, Statera, did not perform such an exercise when selecting the proposal site for a large-scale industrial-style development on land currently used for food production, which is contrary to ENV5 of the LP. They have therefore failed to produce "compelling evidence" to justify the selection of the Site

In November 2023 the government announced changes to permitted development rights to enable more homeowners and businesses to install solar panels on their roofs without going through the planning system, thereby confirming that government policy is to support the deployment of solar on already developed land rather than greenfield sites

I hope you reject this proposed development.

Kind regards,

Eric Berthoud