

**Ref Planning application Land at Berden Hall Farm Dewes Green Road
Berden reference number S62A/22/0006 (Berden Solar Farm).**

Dear Planning Inspectorate – We have lived in Stocking Pelham for 40 years and the proposed Solar Farm is very close to us and will have a massive impact our daily lives (and resulting proposed Battery Storage sites) and strongly object to the amendments on this application for the following reasons :-

- 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

- 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

- The development would cause harm to:
 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

- 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. We walk these Footpaths on a daily basis.

- 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

Regards, Paul & Jenny Lucas (Dated 7/1/2024)

