

FARNHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Chair: Mr Ian Delvallé

Clerk: Mr Peter Jarman

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The Planning Inspectorate

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UTT/24/1417/PINS
S62A/2024/0045

*Consultation on **S62A/2024/0045** - Erection of a Solar Photovoltaic Farm with supporting infrastructure and battery storage, inverters and transformers, fencing, landscaping works and connecting cable, Wickham Hall Farm Estate, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire, Uttlesford, CM23 1JG.*

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank-you for your notification of the above planning application. I am writing on behalf of the Farnham Parish Council, raising our concerns of the planned building on land in the Parish of Farnham which is in the Green Belt area.

This has previously been refused planning permission by Uttlesford DC. Residents in Farnham have not been fully notified of this application in a way that will draw attention to this construction in their neighbourhood. One leaflet has been circulated several months ago but the leaflet did not mention 'Farnham' at all in its content. Instead, it kept referring to Bishops Stortford and in my conversations with residents it was clear that they thought this was still part of the application made previously for the adjacent land which was in Hertfordshire. They obviously did not realise it was a new application and situated in Farnham.

The leaflet appeared to rely on information from the Hertfordshire application with maps etc changed to show the situation of the new application. However, these maps were not helpful in enabling residents to identify where the land concerned was situated. An aerial view of the

area with just two roads shown and no information regarding the specific part of Farnham that was the centre of the application.

Furthermore, the leaflet referred to a public viewing opportunity that took place in the form of a Market Stall in Bishops Stortford at a time when elderly residents would not be able to access the stall and residents were engaged at their workplace.

Surveys and interviews that have taken place have, in our opinion, been biased by asking closed questions which determine a positive answer. For example, 'do you support Solar Farms'. No context or focus on where this specific farm will be situated.

There was certainly no consultation with the Farnham Parish Council unlike other local applications for Solar Farms and Battery Storage. So, a very underwhelming 'consultation' and no real attempt to engage members of the public who have a very local concern.

There are many walking routes in the planned area, many maintained with the help of the Parish Council and volunteers. This is acknowledged by Endurance Energy but there has been no attempt to consult in how this will figure in the future plans. There is a suggestion that paths will be moved, large colourful signs erected to direct walkers etc which sounds more like converting a very quiet and restful area of woodland into a mini-Disneyland type tourist attraction. This is real interference of a local quiet area which is well used by residents. Why has the Parish Council not been consulted. Has Endurance Energy even considered the good quality network of footpaths and bridle ways and the thinking behind them or are they just seen a trail of inconvenience?

There are further points that the council wishes to make regarding this application.

1. The capacity of the Bishops Stortford substation to receive the electricity additional to the approved East Herts solar farm has not been confirmed by the applicant.
2. The applicant has not demonstrated that this is the best site to generate electricity and its carbon savings within proximity of the substation in context of minimising environmental harm. Therefore, 'very special circumstances' to contribute to national clean energy targets are unproven.
3. The proposal's incursion into the green belt and the countryside would visually harm the unspoilt environment of this locality and the wider protection to the north of Bishops Stortford, diminishing parishioner's recreational amenity.
4. The proposal would lead to the loss at least for 43 years of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land. Topsoil is frequently removed from the site prior to construction commencing. Will this be replaced at the end of the use of the land by Endurance Energy?
5. There has been minimal consultation of residents regarding the subject proposal and none on the optimum sequential selection of solar farm sites.

In conclusion, the council would like to have greater confidence in the quality of this application in that it is specific to the Uttlesford site and not just regarded as the same application for the Wickham Hall larger site. It does not appear to be the case at present.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Jarman
Clerk/RFO Farnham Parish Council