

**S62A UTT/24/1417/PINS – LAND AT WICKHAM HALL ESTATE, FARNHAM ROAD, FARNHAM**

The Principal Planner presented a S62A application for the erection of a Solar Photovoltaic Farm with supporting infrastructure and battery storage, inverters and transformers, fencing and landscape works and connecting cable. This was a revised application addressing the reasons for refusal of previous scheme (Ref UTT/21/3108/FUL) which was refused in 2022. This previous scheme was one part of two planning applications, the other one which was across the boarder in East Herts. The East Herts solar farm was approved in 2023 (East Herts Ref 3/21/2601/FUL). The construction access to both sites would be predominantly within East Herts and there was currently a pending application with East Herts for this. The site is wholly within the Green Belt.

He referred Members to recent comments from UDC Conservation and Heritage, UDC Design and Place Services Ecology as detailed in the Addendum List.

He said that as this was a PINS application, UDC were acting as a consultee and could submit observations to PINS.

In response to questions from Members, officers:

- Showed Members the location of the battery storage on the plans.
- Explained that the applicant had consulted with the Fire Service as part of pre-application discussions in respect of Fire Safety Plans and other requirements.
- Referred to the insufficient landscape visual impact assessment.
- Explained that the solar panels would be located on areas where there is no known archaeological remains

Members discussed:

- Concerns remaining about the impact of the proposal onto the Green Belt and landscape impacts; which doesn't comply with Policy S6.
- Reference to a Solar Farm application in the Hertfordshire Green Belt which had been refused by Secretary of State in April 2024 (Ref APP/n1920/w/22/3295268) which was similar to this proposal.
- That the East Herts solar farm is not Green Belt whereas this site located within UDC is
- Concerns about the hazardous nature of the storage of batteries.
- The lack of a S106 agreement in respect of decommissioning but that this could be a planning condition

The Head of Development Management and Enforcement suggested that ENV15, ENV5 and S6 could certainly be put forward as reasons for objections in respect of the proposal being inappropriate development within the Green Belt and that the applicant has failed to demonstrate very special circumstances. This is supported by reference to the recent decision by the Secretary of State.

Councillor Emanuel proposed that the objections above be picked up and forwarded to PINS. This was seconded by Councillor Pavitt.

RESOLVED that the Committee's objections be forwarded to PINS.