

# Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

## Application Summary

Application Number: 22/501335/FULL

Address: Land North Of Little Cheveney Farm Sheephurst Lane Marden Kent

Proposal: Installation of a renewable energy led generating station comprising of ground-mounted solar arrays, associated electricity generation infrastructure and other ancillary equipment comprising of storage containers, access tracks, fencing, gates and CCTV together with the creation of woodland and biodiversity enhancements.

Case Officer: Marion Geary

## Customer Details

Name: Ms Julia Elgie

Address: Gardeners Cottage, Plain Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9LS

## Comment Details

Commenter Type: Other

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I am writing to object to the proposed Marden Solar Farm on the following grounds:

### Industrialisation of Agricultural Land

- The land is Grade 2, 3a and 3b, ie good quality food producing agricultural land and not 'relatively low grade' as stated by the developer.
- Solar farms should have their place on brownfield sites, disused airfields, poor quality land, new buildings, office blocks and warehouses - not on productive greenfield land.
- The Government recently stated that as a country we need to be more self sufficient and be food secure.
- Swathes of fertile farmland should not be sacrificed to industrial scale energy production when there are other sites that are more appropriate.

### Cumulative effect

- The Marden area has already lost much of its farmland and countryside to housing development and a solar farm (Widehurst Solar Farm). Any further major development is inappropriate.
- The size of the site is too large and rows of glass panels would be a scar on the beautiful low Weald landscape.
- The people of Marden and Collier Street place great value on their enjoyment of the local countryside. Rather than public rights of way with views across open farmland, footpaths at the site would be diverted and become corridors enclosed by high metal security fencing, CCTV

cameras and a wall of hedging if and when established.

- Location of the site is too close to local residents of Marden and Collier Street, in some cases as little as 15 metres.
- Sheephurst Lane is the main route from the Marden area to Tunbridge Wells and beyond and already carries a lot of traffic. With heavy plant deliveries during construction phase, the noise and traffic disruption will be considerable.

#### Wildlife and biodiversity

- Construction of the solar farm would displace existing wildlife.
- Transitory animals have their traditional routes blocked with deer often diverting onto roads.
- The land is degraded with little potential for biodiversity as half of it will be in permanent shadow and rain water run off creates set channels without proper dispersal.

#### Impact on heritage setting

- The land at the site has been farmed successfully since the 16th century, probably earlier, and as such has historical agricultural significance.
- There are numerous listed buildings as well as ancient woodland and historic parkland that surround the site. Their setting must be protected.

#### The future

- The solar farm is promoted as being temporary and could be reversed after 37 years. However, huge infrastructure is required on sites as large as this, including a substation and energy storage compound. Significant capital expenditure and time would be required to remove structures and footings both above and below the ground. Therefore the reality is that there is no guarantee that the land would return to farmland and it is likely that the associated structures and 12,000 m<sup>2</sup> of permanent roads would not be decommissioned.

Yours sincerely

Julia Elgie