

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: Mr Tim Springhall

Address: Little Cheveney Farmhouse, Sheephurst Lane, Tonbridge TN12 9NX

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Having carried out only a limited amount of research into solar farms the following criteria repeatedly appear to be critical factors when considering the suitability of a location:

Solar Farms:

1. should be built on poorer quality land.
2. should be a good distance from, and not in the direct sight of residential properties.
3. should not be near valued landscape or historic buildings.

Considering each point:

1. Per the developers own survey half the land is grade 2 and 3a (best and most versatile) and the remaining half is grade 3b (moderate good), none is grade 4 or 5. This is good quality productive land. It makes no sense covering productive land with solar panels - they have their rightful place on poorer quality land, roofs of houses, industrial and office buildings, landfill sites etc. Productive land should be used to help the country in its continued efforts to be food secure, currently a key national objective especially given the current geopolitical environment.

2. This installation would be directly overlooked by the homes that surround the proposed site. This would dramatically blight the views and the general aspects of these properties. In addition, some of the affected properties and gardens which lie on the border of the development would look directly at 2.4m high security fencing and 5m high security camera polls. The mitigation steps are completely insufficient.

3. In the group of houses at Little Cheveney alone, there are at least 4 listed buildings that would

be in close proximity to this development. The deeds of Little Cheveney dating back to 1653 show that the land has been productive farmland for at least 450 years. In addition, according to documents dated 1853, the area of deciduous woodland to the north of the property has been farmed as a managed woodland for at least the last 150 years. This woodland has historical value. Under the proposed planning application this woodland would be tightly enclosed on three sides by the proposed scheme, radically effecting its landscape and the historical landscape around it.

For these three reasons alone, this proposal would appear to be completely inappropriate.

Other considerations:

The size and scale of the development is staggering - falling just beneath that requiring Secretary of State approval. It's very hard to see how Sheephurst Lane in its current form, being single lane in parts, with two very tight "humpback" bridges could safely accommodate all the extra traffic delivering heavyweight plant. Per the planning proposal some 80-100 workers will be at the site daily over a period of six months with articulated lorries of up to 18m long making over one thousand six hundred deliveries (so three thousand two hundred trips along almost the entire length of the road). The road is already overly busy for such a small road and in very poor condition in places.

The proposed site has footpaths running through it and along its northern edge. The northern footpath currently has views over open farmland to woodland in the background. This would be replaced with a long, small unkept corridor running between the railway line and 2.4m high security fencing with 5m high CCTV camera poles. The footpaths are regularly used by the wider community and have been especially valuable in recent years.

Flooding is a real issue around this land. Almost all the land is flood risk 3. A small area at the northeast boundary near the river regularly floods and will make the proposed rerouted footpath impassable at times. To my knowledge Sheephurst Lane itself has flooded three times in the last ten years, to the extent that it became impassable to traffic. With the accelerated water run-off from a solar farm compared with that of greenfield land, this would add to the water flowing into the Lesser Teise and increase flood risk to other residents in the area.

As a resident directly impacted by the proposal, I believe it's also worth mentioning that we were not notified in pre-planning and certainly not included in any consultations. No fliers were put in our letterbox.

In fact, such was the lack of notification that in a survey organised by the developers and contained within their "statement of community involvement" there were only 23 respondents. Of the 23, 22 registered as local residents, of which 9 confirmed they had only heard about the proposal through "word of mouth" (and only 11 by leaflet). Notably, even with this embarrassingly small population, when asked "do you agree with the development of a solar farm at Little Cheveney Farm" only one respondent answered 'yes'. This shows a total lack of "Community

Involvement" and lack of support.