

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: With respect to updated plans and recent developer responses to previous comments:

1. Fenced in Tunnel Effect: The response states "There will not be a tunnel effect because the distance between the solar farm fence and the site boundary is over 50 meters". This is only the case for some of the footpath to the Southeast of the development. This statement is not true for the much longer and more adversely affected footpath to the North of the site. There is no planting buffer whatsoever for much of this long stretch of footpath. Per the latest plans there is only a very small gap between the site security fencing and the railway line fencing, with the footpath in between.

2. Repositioning of existing footpath: The small patch of land to the Northeastern most part of the site regularly floods. The existing footpath takes a diagonal line that avoids this area. The proposed repositioning of the footpath would put the path straight through the flooding area, this would make the path impassible at certain times of the year. This footpath should not be repositioned.

3. Landscape Mitigation and Enhancement Plan: No response has been given to the comments on the original proposed plan - namely that it includes "ecological woodland planting and pond restoration" on an area of land that the landowner does not own. This included the planting of over 2,800 trees. What steps will be taken to replace this planting, is there a new plan, can the developers be trusted to implement their plan (especially given it already appears to be unfeasible in its current construct).

4. More Appropriate Sites in Kent: The developer continues maintain that there are no more appropriate sites in Kent. There are clearly other sites, arguably a lot more appropriate. Comparisons to a site only 900m away from this one, Bockingfold, which is now in planning, prove that other more appropriate sites exist.

5. Impact on Listed Buildings including historic farmstead: In terms of their setting, the developers conclude that "there would be no harm to the significance of these designated heritage assets. This is because their setting would not be altered due to the low level of intervisibility between the heritage assets and the proposed development". Its hard to understand this conclusion given that, for example, the historic parkland of Little Cheveney Farm would be directly bordered to the North, East and West by the installation, with no buffer or mitigation. The setting of the buildings in question would clearly be altered.

6. Community Impact and Engagement: The Statkraft pre-application consultation was wholly inadequate. The developer still refers to a leaflet drop to 588 residences within 2km radius of the site. No leaflets were received by the properties closest to the site, no letters or phone calls, no communication. Of the 23 respondents to the developer's survey, 9 confirmed they had only heard about the proposal through "word of mouth", and all but 1 disagreed with the development.