

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: Mrs Vickey Petrie

Address: Bottom Oast, Little Cheveney, Sheephurst Lane Marden, Kent TN12 9NX

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I remain in objection to the planned Sheepwash Solar Farm despite amendments. The reasons for this remain as follows:

1) Loss of prime agricultural land:

The applicant's point out that the National Food Strategy Review found solar does not present a risk to food security in the UK. But they fail to mention that this review is based on conditions whereby solar is "developed on land classified as 3b or below... land deemed of "moderate to low quality". Taking productive agricultural land such as the 47% graded 2 and 3a in the Sheepwash proposal will not only have a detrimental impact on food security in the UK but land use across the globe, as the shortfall will require the conversion of land use elsewhere. It also goes against Local Guidance and NPPF regulation because it removes BMV land from production. Solar farms should be limited to brownfield land and poorer quality unproductive land only.

2) Inadequate and inaccurate visual impact mitigations

As homeowner of a heritage asset, listed building 'moderately' affected by the glint and glare study and visual impact analyses, I am hugely concerned that the Landscape mitigation plan has been presented with 'ecological woodland planting and pond restoration to an area of land not within red line boundary' which is in fact on mine and my neighbour's land. This is wholly illegal and inaccurate, and the applicant needs to urgently revisit their visual impact mitigations plus biodiversity measures. In addition to which the maximum height of the solar panels is 2.47 metres as shown on drawing 27899/105 A, so the glint and glare study based on the middle of the solar panel (1.8m) '... as it represents the smallest possible variation in height from the bottom and top

of the solar panels' makes no sense and is woefully inadequate. A repeat evaluation should be performed.

In addition, there is proposed perimeter planting and fencing directly on the physical boundary with 7 and 8 Sheephurst Cottages, plus Willow Barn. Residents will look directly onto these installations at a distance of no more than a few metres. This is an unacceptable and significant impact. Equally the impact on ancient woodland at Little Cheveney Farm does not adhere to the suggested 'minimum 30m buffer is proposed between the edge of the woodland and the site' nor represent realistic wildlife corridors to the north and south. There is no buffer, and the arrays are sited as close as 2m to the woodland in some areas.

3) Impact on heritage assets

Solar proposals should not "fundamentally alter the landscape in a contrived way to seek to accommodate the solar panels... Screening development from view does not negate harm to the intrinsic qualities of the landscape or make otherwise harmful development acceptable." (The Planning Inspectorate comments rejecting Great Pagehurst Farm Solar farm Ref 13/1456). There are nine heritage assets in the area of Little Cheveney and along Sheephurst Lane at the epicentre of the proposal. There will be significant and unacceptable harm to the setting and view of these dwellings, particularly as cited above the landscaping mitigations as presented by the applicant are inaccurate and illegal.

4) Cumulative impact assessment

The applicant refers to the cumulative effect of development only with reference to the nearby Bockingfold site of 69.23 hectares (in planning with TWBC) 700m from Sheepwash. It fails to mention 1) Paddock Wood solar farm of 39 hectares just 2.9km from Sheepwash; 2) Widehurst solar farm of 14.3 hectares just 2.25 km from Sheepwash; 3) Mathurst solar farm of 27 hectares (in pre planning with MBC) just 5.6km from Sheepwash nor 4) the largest consented utility scale solar farm is the 250MW Cleve Hill project already in Kent which is a massive 360 hectares. Many sites have already been turned over to solar production in Kent, with others such as Bockingfold seemingly more appropriate than Sheepwash. The cumulative impact cannot be ignored.

5) Poor community engagement and inaccurate statutory consultees

The applicant states it undertook pre-application consultation with the local community, but as one of the homes at the epicentre of the proposal I wish to reiterate that we were never directly leafleted or informed about the planning or consultations. The NPPF states that: "Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot." I reiterate the applicant has not duly nor effectively consulted with the community.

Equally Marden Parish Council are not statutory consultees as erroneously reported throughout the revised proposal. It is Colliers Street Parish Council that are statutory consultees, and note is

made of their objection. This should be corrected in the application.

To conclude the proposal remains significantly detrimental to food security, landscape, ecology, residences and community and as such I object to the installation of a 75 hectare solar farm on the land north of Little Cheveney Farm.