

Solar Farm on Land North of Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane, Marden, Kent

22/501335/Full

Collier Street Parish Council has considered the above application and has the following comments.

The Parish Council took part in a virtual event during the consultation process and note some of our comments have been incorporated into the planning application.

The Council would like to see the application go to the Planning Committee for discussion.

The size of the site would mean the loss of valuable agricultural land from productive food production. This is against the backdrop of a shortage of grain across the world. Central Government have stated that as a country we need to be more sufficient and be more food secure. The application says 7.5% of the land from the farm would be lost. The concerns are the cumulative effect given all the other building happening in the Weald more and more productive farmland is being taken out of food production. This has to be of major concern to the nation.

There is concern over the traffic design statement as to how the construction traffic will access the site. Several roads in the area are subject to a 7.5 tonnes limit. The roads proposed for traffic delivering are all not suitable for heavy HGV construction traffic. The roads being suggested for traffic are roads designed in the 19th Century for Horse and Cart and not for 40-ton lorries of the 21st century. There are already some 20,000 plus vehicles using Green Lane, Collier Street and 23,000 plus using the B2162 through the village. Official figures are available through the Collier Street Parish Council. Surveys carried out in October 2018.

We would ask careful consideration is given to what the flow of traffic should be during the construction and the hours the vehicles are allowed to access the site if the application is approved.

Traffic movements should be limited to 8 to 5 Monday to Friday with no weekend traffic.

We have concerns over the proposals of another potential large Solar Farm in the area. There are proposals to construct one less than a mile away across the fields. The size proposed is 163 acres. The site is on the B2162. This other site falls within the remit of Tunbridge Wells Council. This application is at the consultation stage. The Bockingfold Solar Farm has a website. www.bockingfold-solar.co.uk

We would ask both councils to work together on this and ensure that if both the proposals are developed is there a need for both as described in such proximity to each other. The impact on the weald countryside would be considerable.

If both were permitted, it would a massive and detrimental impact on those who live in the local rural communities. The accumulative loss of good agricultural used for food production land cannot continue on the scale that is happening in the Southeast.

The construction of both sites would have a major impact on the Weald landscape and have a detrimental effect on the wildlife in the area.

The Flood risk assessment does not seem to be adequate as the site is in mainly in Flood Zone 3 and the implications that during flooding Sheephurst Lane is often shut. The site is also adjacent to the Lesser Teise River which often floods.

There appears to be no comments from the EA or the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board on potential flood risk