

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 Natalie Allen

Address: 5 Little Sheephurst Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NZ

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Living on Sheephurst Lane I am concerned about the increase of traffic during the construction phase. The road is currently very busy and fast being the main route out of Marden to Tunbridge Wells/Tonbridge/Paddock Wood.

I am also aware there are currently weight restrictions on the road so would improvements be made to the road to compensate and also would the council reconsider the speedlimits/installing speed limiting measures?

I also question why the perimeter fencing is 2.4 metres high when the police suggest in their response 2m is sufficient.

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Ms Elizabeth Anderson

Address: Moors Barn, Spenny Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9PR

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Parish

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: We need countryside for crop-growing, wildlife preservation and the well-being of the local population. Solar farm technology will undoubtedly be out of date in a few years and the site will then be considered brown-field and suitable for housing. House-building is not required in the South East; food production is. We regularly walk around this area, and it has been obvious that some of the land has been set aside, presumably because the owner is hoping to sell it, rather than use it productively. The beauty of the English countryside depends on the hard work of farmers, and not their selling off what is truly a national asset. The Second World War, and current events, make it obvious that fertile farmland should be used to improve the UK's food self-sufficiency, and not built over for profit.

I have noticed comments in favour of the solar farm but complaining about the construction traffic, suggesting a re-route to go through Collier St so they personally will not be affected. Really??

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr David Baldwin

Address: Little Wanshurst, Battle Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9DF

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Objections to proposed solar farm

This proposal is vast being as large as the footprint of Marden village.

It would substantially change the visual impact on the landscape with the loss of productive farmland. While electricity production is needed there are other alternatives solar on houses car parks and large industrial buildings, along motorways all without losing more farmland. Food production in these times of threaten shortages is more vital.

It will also have an effect on wildlife with the high fencing and concrete footings, which hardly sounds like a farm. They are seriously misnamed in the hope of getting through the planning procedure without too many objections.

The last large solar farm proposed for Staplehurst and Marden was Pagehurst which was refused by Maidstone Council and both Staplehurst and Marden Parish councils, and thrown out by the planning inspector, the Planning inspector Andrew Hammond concluded: "The harms to the intrinsic and visual qualities of the landscape are substantial, both in significance and scale, and would not be mitigated by the landscape proposals which seek to screen the development from view rather than integrate it into its setting in a satisfactory manner." And I do not see that this application is any different.

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr David Baldwin

Address: Little Wanshurst, Battle Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9DF

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Although there has been a recent change to this proposed solar installation, it has not fundamentally changed the proposal and we still object for the following reasons.

This proposal is vast being as large as the footprint of Marden village.

It would substantially change the visual impact on the landscape with the loss of productive farmland. While electricity production is needed there are other alternatives solar on houses car parks and large industrial buildings, along motorways all without losing more farmland. Food production in these times of threaten shortages is more vital.

It will also have an effect on wildlife with the high fencing and concrete footings, which hardly sounds like a farm. They are seriously misnamed in the hope of getting through the planning procedure without too many objections.

The last large solar farm proposed for Staplehurst and Marden was Pagehurst which was refused by Maidstone Council and both Staplehurst and Marden Parish councils, and thrown out by the planning inspector, the Planning inspector Andrew Hammond concluded: "The harms to the intrinsic and visual qualities of the landscape are substantial, both in significance and scale, and would not be mitigated by the landscape proposals which seek to screen the development from view rather than integrate it into its setting in a satisfactory manner." And I do not see that this application is any different.

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr William Brandreth

Address: Owl Oast, Little Cheveney, Shephurst Lane Marden, Kent TN12 9NX

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Productive BMV agricultural land is a limited and scarce resource. The land at Little Cheveney Farm that has been put forward for the development has been farmed back for generations, used to cultivate hops, top fruit and combinable crops. The most "effective use" of this land is for agricultural production, which can also continue to provide landscape and heritage benefits to the local community.

"The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Maidstone Borough Local Plan Policy DM24 & NPPF CH2.P7.)

The planning application treats a solar farm as a reversible, yet the project lifespan is 37 years, which means taking the land out of production for more than one human generation.

For a multi-decade development it is important to consider present and future pressures on land use. Key trends to consider are the increasing global population and demand for calories. In addition, "climate change creates additional stresses on land, exacerbating risks to...food systems" (2). The IPCC report identifies the Mediterranean, Southern Africa, drylands, and the tropics as all projected to have crop production negatively impacted by climate change. In this context, the UK's productive agricultural sector, aided by its temperate climate and BMV land (including this site), will become more significant both economically and for food security. UK agriculture is always undervalued as it contributes 0.58% to GDP, yet "There are only nine meals

between mankind and anarchy."

"Preference will be given to existing commercial and industrial premises, previously developed land, or agricultural land that is not classified as the best and most versatile." "including making effective use of land...using natural resources prudently...mitigating and adapting to climate change" (NPPF CH2.P8)

47% of the site is grade 2 & 3a BMV land based on submitted documents. BMV land is capable of arable cropping is therefore limited national resource, just 20% of the UK's land is used for arable crops (1).

Siting solar farms on lower grade agricultural land including grassland sites would offer comparatively higher income than more marginal agricultural activities such as livestock grazing and a greater net climate benefit as livestock are the greatest source of agricultural emissions. A kg of wheat has a carbon footprint 1/20th that of a kg of lamb (3). Whilst these issues have been raised in the UK government's latest Food Strategy along with the need for a strategic land use framework, due to the time-lags in policy making we may have to wait years before any concrete policy filters through the planning system.

In addition, I'd note that the landowner has been published in the farming press stating the success of the land for cropping in a regenerative way that sequesters carbon to tackle climate change whilst producing yields of 10 t / hectare, (4) these carbon farming practices are stated as essential to meeting the NFU's net-zero targets (5), enhancing natural capital and offering carbon related revenue streams. We should be supporting these win-win agricultural systems which can only be practised on our best land.

Whilst economic benefits will go to investors and contractors, there will be no value added locally. The solar farm will be very close to several properties impacting their value and the lives of those who live in them. Most significant will be the impact on 7 & 8 Little Sheephurst Cottages & Little Cheveney Farm. More broadly the rural heritage offered by the grasslands, ponds, woodland, oak parkland and hedgerows; would be largely lost in value to locals whose views would now be constrained to security fencing and raised solar panels. There has been no community engagement on the application, this failure to "reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being" is evidenced by the local lack of knowledge of the development and objections posted.

The application states that the site can deliver biodiversity net gain on site based on the Biodiversity Net Gain calculator metrics. The issue here is that arable land has the lowest biodiversity value intrinsically, it produces food. The land can produce 10 t of wheat per hectare (4), whilst the global average is just 3.5 t/ha (FAO). If the grain isn't produced here, it will be imported from lower yielding global producers, that requires more land to produce the equivalent amount of grain and risk greater cropland expansion and biodiversity loss elsewhere.

Kent is known as the "garden of England" due to its agricultural production, fertile land and growing climate. We need to carefully consider its most effective use from both local and global perspectives.

(1)https://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/229130/274017-0

(2)IPCC - Climate Change and Land (2020) SPM_Updated-Jan20.pdf (ipcc.ch)

(3)You want to reduce the carbon footprint of your food? Focus on what you eat, not whether your food is local - Our World in Data - <https://ourworldindata.org/food-choice-vs-eating-local>

(4)<https://www.cpm-magazine.co.uk/2022/03/10/climate-change-champions-food-that-doesnt-cost-the-earth/>

(5)<https://www.nfuonline.com/archive?treeid=137544>

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr William Brandreth

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

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:1) I'd like to draw attention to the updated Proposed Solar Farm Site Layout. When looking at the boundary between the solar park and residential area for Willow Cottage and Willow Barn the placement of the solar panels has been moved, however there is no reference or marking on the Site Layout for boundary plantings. Significant buffer planting would be essential here due to proximity to residential housing.

2) The developers responses to comments on food production and food security are largely irrelevant. How much land the farmer manages or stats on UK grain production ignore that grains are global commodities. If we reduce production in the UK and that shortfall will be made up by agricultural expansion abroad and further incentivise deforestation. The more productive the land we take out of food production the greater the indirect land use change globally we can expect. It is important to have a considered approach to the net impacts on agricultural production, carbon stocks, emissions, and land use.

3) Finally, I'd like to draw attention to concerns over traffic on Sheephurst Lane. Sheephurst Lane is a constricted, with a narrow river crossing and tight bends. It is already essential to drive slowly for safety. With heavy transport vehicles there will be significant safety concerns and likely damage to hard and green infrastructure along the lane.

From: [Kate Brandreth](#)
To: [Planning Comments](#)
Subject: 22/510335/FULL
Date: 30 June 2022 18:35:24

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Application Number 22/510335/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 Kate Brandreth

Willow Cottage, Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge Kent TN12 9NX

Comment Details

Commenter Type Neighbour

Stance Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons

Comment

I strongly object to the proposal of the Solar Farm on the land at Little Cheveney Farm.

It does not make sense to use good viable food producing farmland for Solar Energy there are other more suitable sites. Food security is an increasingly important consideration endorsed by the Government. There has been inadequate consultation with the surrounding community particularly considering the vastness of this proposal.

Mitigation steps are insufficient bearing in mind there are houses a number of which are listed and in close proximity of the site.

This area has ancient woodland and historic parkland with an abundance of wildlife the construction procedure alone will have devastating consequences .

Please don't let this happen

Sent from my iPad

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr Malcolm Bryant

Address: Le Cerisier, Goudhurst Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9JY

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I am objecting to the proposed solar farm for a number of reasons:-

We, as a country, should be energy self sufficient as far as possible and, therefore, available funds should be directed to sources which will provide a consistent and reliable supply of energy. Solar energy has been heavily subsidised and solar panels cost an exorbitant amount to build for relatively little reliable output. When this scheme was first mooted I received a circular from the company involved outlining the scheme and promising to answer any queries which people might have. I raised the question of how much the scheme would cost, how much was the Government subsidy, what was the anticipated energy output and the cost of it and how long was the expected life of the panels themselves given the problems involved in recycling solar panels. I never received a reply. I think I can see why now.

As regards the proposed site, it appears to be only marginally less in size to Marden itself even allowing for the recent housing developments! As far as I can tell, the site is on the way to Tunbridge Wells and Paddock Wood and therefore the additional traffic and inevitable road closures during the construction phase will put a huge amount of additional pressure on our country roads, especially during school runs and commuting times and I would guess a considerable decrease in air quality due to the inevitable stop/start caused by the additional construction traffic. Our local roads are just not built for the inevitable heavy construction traffic.

We are told that it is likely that the site is temporary and that it will be reversed after 37 years. What a waste of money for so little, if any, benefit. What will replace the presumed gap in our

energy needs when the site closes? How will the solar panels be recycled?

The proposed site is mainly situated on farmland. Again we are told that we must be as self sufficient in food production as possible and yet it is proposed to build the solar farm on good quality food producing farmland. Why?

I cannot see any reason why this proposed development should go ahead.

Malcolm Bryant

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Ms Rachel Chacon

Address: 1 Cedar Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NU

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:

I have only just heard about this application and wish to comment.

Agricultural land is agricultural land and you cannot build on it. This should not be allowed to happen simply because the regulations have not yet been put in place to make the consultation process fair and honest and above board.

The Statkraft feedback document is woefully inadequate, you have clearly not succeeded in consulting the community - made obvious by the number of replies you have received. What's more, this was done through covid when people were very seriously preoccupied and unable to meet to discuss anything with anyone. There are still many people who do not rely on digital communication to know what is going on in their community. A development like this, almost the size of Marden itself, needs serious and determined consultation with the community.

Yes to Solar Energy, NO to slipping it under the community radar and sidestepping inadequate planning regulations. Building is building and in 37 years when this 'farm' reaches the end of it's life and you realise this has been a mistake, you state that it 'can be' returned to agricultural land. But as we all know, it will then be open to more building.

We need solar energy, but please do not allow greedy people to benefit from the cheapest available option just because our government has failed to address this in a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

Kerry Saunders

From: Rachel Chacon [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 June 2022 09:46
To: Planning Comments
Subject: Fw: 22/501335/FULL

Categories: Kerry

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Marden Solar Farm

I have only just heard about this application and wish to comment.

Agricultural land is agricultural land and you cannot build on it. This should not be allowed to happen simply because the regulations have not yet been put in place to make the consultation process fair and honest and above board.

Your feedback document is woefully inadequate, you have clearly not succeeded in consulting the community - made obvious by the number of replies you have received. What's more, this was done through covid when people were very seriously preoccupied and unable to meet to discuss anything with anyone. There are still many people who do not rely on digital communication to know what is going on in their community.

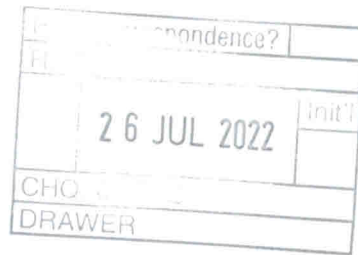
Yes to Solar Energy, NO to slipping it under the community radar and sidestepping inadequate planning regulations. Building is building and in 37 years when this 'farm' reaches the end of its life and you realise this has been a mistake, you state that it 'can be' returned to agricultural land. But as we all know, it will then be open to more building.

We need solar energy, but please do not allow greedy people to benefit from the cheapest available option.

Regards
Rachel Chacon
1 Cedar Cottages
Sheephurst Lane
Marden
Kent TN12 9NU

1 Samson Street,
Llantwit Major,
Wales.
CF61 2SH

The Planning Department (protection)
Maidstone Borough Council,
56-62 King Street,
Maidstone,
Kent.
ME14 1BW



Dear Sirs,

As regular visitors to Kent for many years; my husband and I enjoy walking the footpaths and visiting the many historic and beautiful areas of our childhoods.

This past week, we again visited one of our favorite walks (footpath KM318) around the Staplehurst area once home to Hop Gardens.

As the years have passed, we have watched this area gradually lose its character and history as the Hop Gardens have been removed. Now we hear that there is a proposal to demolish the remaining Tar Pit Chimneys along this footpath in order to construct a Solar Farm?

These Tar Pits are an important part of our culture and history; and very few of these Tar Pits remain intact in Kent.

We feel that the destruction of yet another important historic site should be stopped, and a Building Preservation Notice should be placed upon this structure immediately.

Thank you for your attention,

Yours,



Su and Ed Davey

GPS Coordinates
51.138733 0.526714



SEE DOCUMENT 4-012

- Solar Farm Boundary
- Hop Pole Tar Fireplace
- Public Footpath KM318

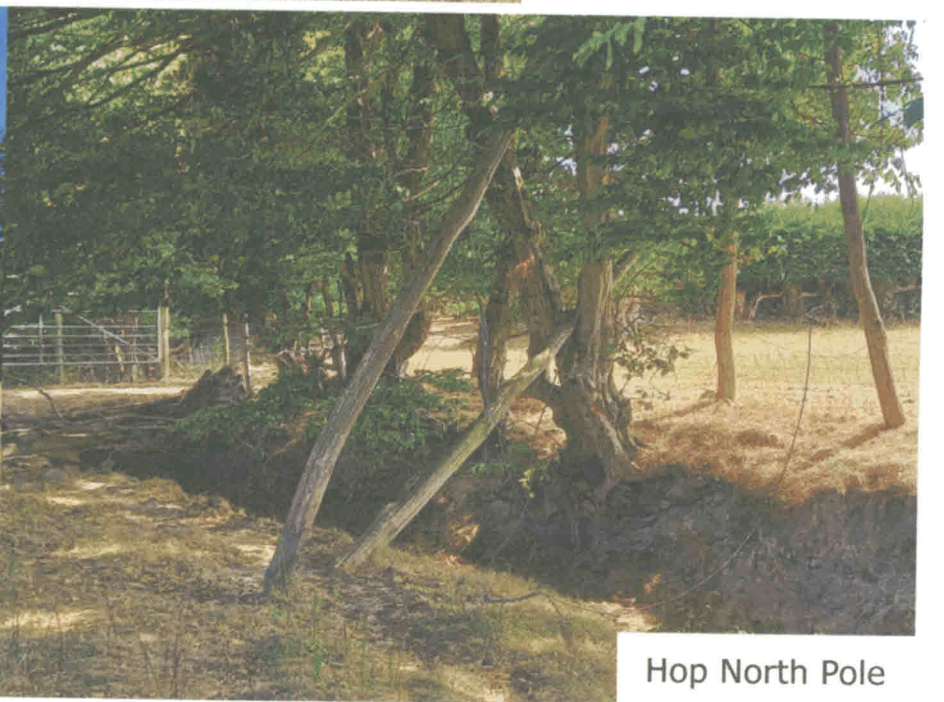




Hop Pole Tar Fireplace



Hop Poles



Hop North Pole

Kerry Saunders

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 01 July 2022 12:53
To: Planning Support
Subject: 22/501335/Full Solar Farm on Land North of Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane, Marden, Kent
Attachments: Local Area Solar Farms Map.pdf

Categories: Kerry

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For the attention of

Marion Geary Case officer for Planning application 22/501335/Full Solar Farm on Land North of Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane, Marden, Kent

Please find attached copy of Map picture referred to in my objection comment of 30 June 2022 showing, outlined in red, the vast extent of local existing and proposed Solar Farm and electrical infrastructure sites surrounding Claygate.

Please add this document and email to the Documents listed for this Planning Application on the Planning Portal.

Thank you

John Dobing

The Bakery, Claygate, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9PD



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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr John Dobing

Address: The Bakery, Claygate, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9PD

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Solar Farm on Land North of Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane, Marden, Kent 22/501335/Full

Regarding the above application I comment that I fully support all the comments raised by Collier Street Parish as published on 30 June 2022 in the Documents listed for this application.

In particular, I would ask that the Council take into account the full detrimental and cumulative effect of other local existing and proposed solar and electrical infrastructure sites. Including those outlined in red and shown on the picture below of the area surrounding the small hamlet of Claygate. (picture emailed separately).

Namely

1. The existing Solar Farm in Pearson Green
2. The proposed Solar Farm In Bockingfold
3. The proposed Electrical switch station with planning permission 20/500778/FULL in Claygate
4. The proposed Solar Farm In Sheephurst Lane subject to this application

The rural agricultural nature and amenity of the area would be drastically compromised if all the above were developed.

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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 m² of permanent roads would not be decommissioned.

Yours sincerely

Julia Elgie

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr John Elphick

Address: Sunnydale, Plain Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9EH

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Councillor

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Whilst we support the general principle of solar power we are against the use of good food producing land. In these uncertain times food production is becoming more and more important and land should be used for food production and NOT solar power. All commercial buildings and new houses should have solar panels fitted. If fitted on new buildings it would be cheaper and would cause less disruption of the countryside.

Sheephurst Lane is not the place for solar panels.

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs Sue Eltringham

Address: 5 Haffenden Close, Marden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9TD

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Parish

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:22/501335/FULL

I am writing to object to the land on this site being used for a large scale solar farm.

I see from the map that the size of the farm is not much smaller than the footprint of the whole village. I do not oppose the idea of solar farms in principle and am very keen that they are expanded as a way of energy production.

There is a large 'brownfield' site very close to Yalding railway station, that I understand can not be used for housing due to previous contamination of land? Could this be used as an alternative, or similar brownfield land.

My main objection is why would you construct a solar farm on land that is good enough to grow crops on (Grade 2 , 3 a & 3b) ? I understand that as a country we need to be more self sufficient in food production, so it does not make any logical sense to be building a solar farm on land that can be used for food production. Especially with the conflict in Ukraine & the disruption to grain exports, the planning seems very short sighted.

I too am a local walker and am concerned that the solar farm would be running across a public footpath, that are there for the people to enjoy walking in the countryside. We need to be encouraging the local population to be talking physical activity and not to be making it harder, but removing public rights of way. Or making it less enjoyable , with footpaths routed through or near

solar farms. The country is in the grips of an obesity epidemic , and any public footpaths are there for walkers to use and enjoy, we should be promoting walking locally and this site would impact on local people being able to enjoy local countryside having a detrimental effect on their well being.

I would strongly back a solar farm if it can be constructed on a brownfield site , but not in the location as per this application.

Thank you

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs Sue Eltringham

Address: 5 Haffenden Close, Marden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9TD

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Application No 22/501335/FULL

Land North of Little Cheveney Farm - Sheephurst Lane, Marden

Adverse ecological and heritage impact: It is reportedly critical that solar farm installations should not be near valued landscape or historic buildings (vi, vii). Equally, the 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) (viii). In the area of Little Cheveney at the centre of the proposal, there are at least four listed properties of historical significance that would directly overlook the proposed solar farm. Their views will be blighted by the 2.4m perimeter fence, 5m CCTV cameras and solar arrays.

I can not understand how the development will have a "net gain" on biodiversity? The site encloses on three sides an ancient woodland home to countless native species including owls, adders and migrating nightingales. Nearby pondlife is home to great crested newts, water voles and wildfowl. There are migrating birds such as swallows and swifts plus a great number of bats. Wildlife will experience significant displacement, further compounded by the removal of interconnecting wildlife corridors. The land is also already classified as at severe risk of flooding & this proposal is likely to have further impact on this

Loss of Prime Agricultural Land

The Government Food Strategy makes it clear we have to "deliver a sustainable, nature positive, affordable food system..." on domestic land (i). We need to be food secure and self-sufficient. Our agricultural land is now more precious than ever given the current geopolitical climate and war in

Ukraine. It is good quality productive land grade 2 and 3a (best and most versatile) and the remaining half is grade 3b (moderate good). It is not "not relatively low grade" as claimed by Statkraft. It has been farmed since the 16th century and has huge historical agricultural significance. Solar farms "should be limited to brownfield land and poorer quality unproductive land" (ii), of which Kent has plenty of alternatives.

With the above points to consider we strongly oppose these plans.

Kerry Saunders

From: Sue Eltringham [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 July 2022 15:44
To: Planning Comments
Subject: RE: Planning Application Comment - 501335

Categories: Kerry

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

5 Haffenden Close
Marden
TN12 9TD

Sue Eltringham

From: [Planning Comments](#)
Sent: 06 July 2022 09:30
To: [Sue Eltringham](#)
Subject: RE: Planning Application Comment - 501335

Thank-you for your correspondence regarding the above.

Can you please provide your address so we can formally log your comment and gain a fuller understanding of the relationship of your property (and all other respondents') to the application site.

Please note your comment will not be recorded without this information.

Many thanks

Sam Hall
Information Management Officer
MidKent Planning Support
Maidstone House, King Street,
Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6JQ

w : <http://pa.midkent.gov.uk>

MKPS – Working in Partnership with: Maidstone and Swale
Please note: All planning related correspondence for MBC and SBC should be sent to:
Mid Kent Planning Support, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone ME15 6JQ
email: planningsupport@midkent.gov.uk

Access planning services online at: www.maidstone.gov.uk; www.swale.gov.uk; or submit an application via www.planningportal.gov.uk

We have been working very hard to adapt to the changes that we have all been faced with following the Coronavirus outbreak. Mid Kent Planning Support is currently seeking to find solutions to issues that we are all currently facing whilst working to the Government's requirements, this also means we are continuing to work from home and not travelling to the office. These changes may result in slower response times to requests, although we are working tirelessly to minimise this, and information may not be accessible to us at this time.

During these difficult times we ask you all to consider sending information to us via other means; however if your only option is to submit information to us via the post this will be picked up, but may take slightly longer than normal.

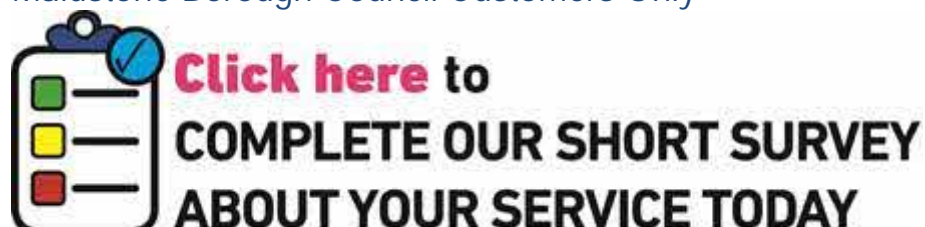
Other options you may consider could be:

Any further information you may need to return to us to validate your application submission could be sent via email, if this is the case please send this to :
PSValidation@midkent.gov.uk
Contact your local Councillor to email us on your behalf
Contact your local Parish office to ask if they are able to email us on your behalf
Ask a family member or friend
Please do not send cheques if this is possible –please use our online payment options on the Council's Website.

Please also be advised that we are unable to accept samples of materials to accompany discharge of conditions submission. Please provide photos at this time as well as details of samples.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during these unprecedented times.

Maidstone Borough Council Customers Only



From: Sue Eltringham [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 June 2022 12:39
To: Planning Comments <PlanningComments@MidKent.gov.uk>
Subject: Planning Application Comment - 501335

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

22/501335/FULL

I am writing to object to the land on this site being used for a large scale solar farm.

I see from the map that the size of the farm is not much smaller than the footprint of the whole village. I do not oppose the idea of solar farms in principle and am very keen they are expanded.

There is a large 'brownfield' site very close to Yalding railway station, that I understand can not be used for housing due to previous contamination of land, but could this be used as an alternative, or similar land.

My main objection is why would you construct a solar farm on land that is good enough to grow crops on (Grade 2, 3a & 3b)? I understand that as a country we need to be more self sufficient in food production, so it does not make any logical sense to be building a solar farm on land that can be used for food production. Especially with the conflict in Ukraine & the disruption to grain exports, the planning seems very short sighted.

I too am a local walker and am concerned that the solar farm would be running across a public footpath, that are there for the people to enjoy walking in the countryside. We need to be encouraging the local population to be taking physical activity and not to be making it harder, but removing public rights of way. The country is in the grips of an obesity epidemic, and any public footpaths are there for walkers to use and enjoy, we should be promoting walking locally and this site would impact on local people being able to enjoy local countryside having a detrimental effect on their well being.

I would strongly back a solar farm if it can be constructed on a brownfield site, but not in the location as per this application.

Thank you

Sue Eltringham

FARMS FOR FARMING

Rob Jarman
 Head of Planning and Development
 Maidstone Borough Council
 Maidstone House,
 King Street,
 Maidstone
 ME15 6JQ

Dear Mr Jarman

REF: Marden Solar Farm planning reference 22/501335

Farms for Farming are a self interest voluntary group committed to preserving the country's valuable agricultural land for food production.

I am writing to formally lodge an objection to the proposed solar farm at Marden. The proposal from Starkraft will take 184 acres of valuable agricultural land out of food production for at least 37 years. This puts more pressure on expensive food imports thus increasing the carbon footprint of our food supply chain.

I note the application states that the option will be there to graze sheep on the land. This is nothing more than empty words, a tactic used by solar farm developers to justify the development. You can count on the fingers of one hand the number of solar farms that regularly have sheep grazing.

Farms for Farming are committed to renewable energy but solar panels belong on roofs not valuable agricultural land. Has Starkraft shown that any effort has been made to put solar on roofs on nearby industrial units and homes?

I note the planning application claims the solar farm will produce enough to power 12,500 homes. So why not put the solar farm panels on the roof of those 12,500 homes? The solar farm will produce electricity that will increasingly more expensive thereby pushing more and more of those 12,500 homes into fuel (electricity) poverty. Instead insist Starkraft put the solar farm panels on the roof of the 12,500 homes thereby making them energy (electricity) self-sufficient and protecting the residents from fuel poverty.

My I thank you for taking the time to read and consider this objection and trust you will act accordingly.

Yours Sincerely


 Richard Hammond

Farms for Farming

P.R.	Correspondence?	
REF:		
	17 OCT 2022	init
CHQ. DET. £		
DRAWER		

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 Clinton Hemmant

Address: Bulimba, Stanley Road, Marden, Kent TN12 9EL

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Dear Maidstone Borough Council Planning Officers,

I oppose this development for two reasons:

1) The intentional destruction of the Countryside:

Visual appearance:

Solar panels are as reflective as mirrored windows - when houses are considered for planning permission fenestration glare, number of windows, and where they are positioned are considered in detail - is this different for a huge industrial site with thousands of such reflective surfaces?

Loss of trees or other important landscape features:

Why are existing brownfield sites eg failed and underused industrial complexes not considered for industrial use - why is new countryside being considered? Industrial sites such as this are better suited to being closer to bigger cities like Maidstone - both operationally and for consumption of the power being generated in this case. The pylons and overhead wires will need upgrading for power transmission - being far from other similar industrial sites it will mean impacting the countryside for miles around the site also.

There is the potential for further loss of countryside to projects which have no long term future - resulting in the countryside being turned into brownfield industrial sites. Once sites such as these are built on they are lost to industrialisation forever - it may not be possible to use the site for

anything when the solar farm is gone in 50 years time - future generations will be left with a permanently altered and scared landscape.

Rights of way would be tunneled - altering the enjoyment of the views and use of the path

Wildlife would be adversely affected by the glare and loss of habitat - a full impact assessment needs to be done using data from other comparable large scale solar sites.

The application Proposal is misleading: it starts by describing an industrial complex, but then states "... together with the creation of woodland and biodiversity enhancements" - this is blatantly disingenuous - the proposal is clearly not to create wildlife enhancements. Creating an industrial complex of this size will never enhance biodiversity - this will site will undoubtedly have a devastating effect on biodiversity - there are no enhancements the developer could offer to make up for that.

2) The risk of situating this kind of heavy industry in the Countryside:

Flooding: turning 75 hectares of farmland into a concreted (even partially) industrial site will undoubtedly alter the water table for miles around - creating and changing flood risks in Marden and for surrounding houses and farms. A comprehensive and impartial government agency risk assesment needs to be undertaken to fully understand the impact of such a large amount of concreting in open countryside.

Chemical Pollution:

The use of chemicals to maintain the solar panels eg weedkillers to control weed growth, and cleaning chemicals for the panels will contaminate the site and surrounding waterways. The heavy metals and chemical in the batteries used in the electricity generation infrastructure to store the electricity generated are one accident away from a disasterous environmental and financial pollution incident.

Traffic the proposal would generate and effects on highway safety:

The roads around Marden are village roads - they are not suitable for heavy industry. The extra traffic that building and then maintaining a site of this size will alter the rural nature of the surrounding roads and make them far more dangerous. Many roads are not wide enough or in a sufficient state of repair and are therefore not suitable for the extra requirements of large vehicles.

In Conclusion:

Solar power is undoubtedly a good idea in principle, but please consider the environment where this heavy industry is located.

I therefore object to this planning application, and recommend it be refused.

Regards

Mr Clinton Hemmant

Kerry Saunders

From: Richard & Jo Hetherington <ricardo168@aol.com>
Sent: 01 July 2022 16:05
To: Planning Support
Subject: 22/501335/FULL

Categories: Kerry

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.
Dear Sir,

I wish to make a comment about the above planning application. I have been trying to use the portal for the past few days but it does not seem to be working. I have tried resetting my old password and re registering but the email link is never sent. Please could you ensure that these comments are included in the planning review?

I am opposed to the above application as I feel that it is on far too large a scale for a rural village. The current world economic situation has shown how important it is that we have the ability to grow our own food. This development would destroy acres of prime farming land which we need in this country more than ever. It also means that less food can be grown locally - I think that one of the best ways of helping to reverse climate change is to produce and buy food locally. This application, if approved, prevents that from happening.

I am not opposed to green renewable energy at all, but not on such a scale on prime arable land. Solar farm schemes need to be on a smaller scale and built on brownfield land or on existing roof spaces.

Marden already has a Neighbourhood Plan which stipulates that nature conservation is a prime objective. This scheme is certainly not in keeping with that requirement.

Regards
Richard Hetherington
Forge House
Goudhurst Road
Marden
Kent
TN12 9NG

Sent from my iPhone

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: Miss Deborah Hill

Address: Little Longend Cottage, Burtons Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9PN

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: The Garden of England...

once aptly named by King Henry VIII.

The views and objections of the owner of a Listed Building adjacent to the proposed solar farm site, who has been instructed by the Maidstone Borough Council to re-window and re-door the entire listed property as the existing windows and doors are 'offending' to the locale and the listed nature as expected by Historic England as 'having special architectural and historic interest to the area'.

Flooding:

The local area has been flooded on many occasions throughout its existence and certainly 3 times over the last 10 years, worst being Christmas Eve 2013. Supposedly a 'once in a hundred year event'. The pain is still felt within the local community.

Rain drops fall randomly, and are dispersed and soaked up by the ground. However rain falling on a solar panel would form a trench in the ground at the point of contact. Rain falling on a row of solar panels would form trenches, and these will interconnect to form a gutter. Multiple rows of solar panels will form multiple rain gutters and in a heavy downpour these will all connect and form an inevitable flow of water. The sponge effect of the land will be removed, and flooding inevitable. The local area is called Claygate for a reason, the earth under the topsoil is clay, water will flow.

Efficacy of solar panels to harness the Sun's energy in this part of the world:

Although the figures given by the energy companies sound fantastic, they are optimal figures. That is to say if the sun shone each and every day for a year these figures would be achievable. We all know the sun doesn't shine on Kent every day of the year.

Noise:

Solar farms do produce noise, not from the sun's rays hitting the panels, but from the way electricity has to be converted from DC (direct current) to AC (alternating current). In order for the electricity to be delivered to the grid, there will be inverters which are basically switches that will be switching 50 times per second (50 hertz). This does produce tonal sound waves initially at 100 hertz, then harmonics of 200 hertz 300 hertz etc.

There will be transformers, unfortunately not in disguise, whose job it is to step-up the voltage to accommodate the transmission to the grid. We all have heard a transformer at one point in our life, electrical humming noise produced by the core, coil and cooling fans. Again 100 hertz and its harmonics. This we can hear as pure-tone noise. Delivering a subconscious tinnitus to the local neighbours and folks who want to walk the 'public' right of way.

Noise is a major problem to both humans and wildlife. Living in this beautiful unspoilt part of the Kent country side is a privilege. Waking every morning to the sound of birdsong, may be taken for granted by some, however the constant background hum from the solar farm will affect all wildlife in the vicinity. Vibrations from the inverters and transformers will affect ground hugging creatures, noise in the air will affect birds and disorient bats.

There are at least 2 ancient woods in the vicinity which harbour a diverse range of wildlife. Owls and bats that hunt at night, deer that romp in the day, crawling creatures that are their prey. The open fields are their living grounds, and have been for millennia.

Constructing a solar farm on these ancient grounds will be detrimental to the local inhabitants, be them human or not.

I for one am against the construction of the solar farm and the destruction of the natural habitat.

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 Sally Hoad

Address: 1 Blue House Cottages, Battle Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9AN

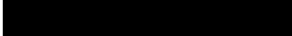
Comment Details

Commenter Type: Parish

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Marden is a farming community with many listed properties and countryside views. It has been over developed in the last 5 years already losing many fields and open spaces. Not only would 75 hectares completely ruin the landscape and ruin the culture and heritage of the area it would cause serious harm to the community and public view and heritage

From: 
To: [Planning Comments](#)
Subject: Planning Application Comment sheephurst lane solar panels 22/501335/FULL
Date: 28 June 2022 07:55:08

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I wish to log my objection to the 75 hectare solar panel in Sheephurst Lane Marden

This is valuable agricultural land and should be used to grow food, which is going to be much needed. It is a beautiful part of our countryside and alone its heritage as such should be preserved. The environmental impact of this development will irreparably destroy this. This land is to be preserved and cared for, for future generations not for the commercial greed of a few.

I object most strongly.

Gillian Wallis Hosken (mrs)

Appletrees

Swan lane

Goudhurst. kent. TN17 1JL

Sent from my iPad=

From: Richard HUGHES [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 June 2022 21:42
To: Planning Comments
Subject: 22/501335/FULL

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: Michael

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

The Garden of England...
once aptly named by King Henry VIII.

The views and objections of the owner of a Listed Building adjacent to the proposed solar farm site, who has been instructed by the Maidstone Borough Council to re-window and re-door the entire listed property as the existing windows and doors are 'offending' to the locale and the listed nature as expected by Historic England as 'having special architectural and historic interest to the area'.

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initially at 100hertz, then harmonics of 200 hertz 300 hertz etc.

There will be transformers, unfortunately not in disguise, whose job it is to step-up the voltage to accommodate the transmission to the grid. We all have heard a transformer at one point in our life, electrical humming noise produced by the core, coil and cooling fans. Again 100 hertz and its harmonics. This we can hear as pure-tone noise. Delivering a subconscious tinnitus to the local neighbours and folks who want to walk the 'public' right of way.

Noise is a major problem to both humans and wildlife. Living in this beautiful unspoilt part of the Kent country side is a privilege. Waking every morning to the sound of birdsong, may be taken for granted by some, however the constant background hum from the solar farm will effect all wildlife in the vicinity. Vibrations from the inverters and transformers will effect ground hogging creatures, noise in the air will effect birds and disorient bats.

There are at least 2 ancient woods in the vicinity which harbour a diverse range of wildlife. Owls and bats that hunt at night, deer that romp in the day, crawling creatures that are their pray. The open fields are their living grounds, and have been for Millenia.

Constructing a solar farm on these ancient grounds will be detrimental to the local inhabitants, be them human or not.

I for one am against the construction of the solar farm and the destruction of the natural habitat.

Richard Hughes
Little Longend Cottage
Burtons Lane
Claygate
Kent
TN129PN

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: Miss Lynne Jones

Address: Top Oast, Little Cheveney Farm Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NX

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Thank you for your planning notification letter to enable me to comment.

First of all, I would like to point out that the site address is not just Land which is just North of Little Cheveney Farm; the land being considered spans not only North, but North West and North East and takes up the entirety of the land that is farmed on Little Cheveney Farm. If you are using the farmhouse and residential buildings on the farm as a reference point then you will see that these buildings will be surrounded 75 percent by industrialised land should this development be permitted.

As per your letter, I will comment as per the matters that you take in to account as follows:

1. Visual Appearance:

- Viewpoints

Regarding the Photography, Verified Views and Methodology document produced to support this planning application; the study area only includes viewpoints from publicly assessable land and states that these locations were chosen as a result of detailed consideration of sensitive viewpoints. However, it does not take into consideration the way in which residential homes and private land will be affected by the visual impact of the proposed site and is misleading. The residents who reside on Little Cheveney Farm have highly sensitive viewpoints but have been excluded from the study and I would comment as follows:

One side of my attached Oast house faces North and the Solar Farm panels will face South and therefore looking at the proposed site from my garden bench, the solar panels will be clearly seen all year, including from the lower and upper floor windows of my house on the North side and even more when the vegetation dies in the autumn and winter. This report therefore lacks any credibility and the map being used to show the viewpoints in the study is outdated and does not show

accurately the residential dwellings on Little Cheveney Farm.

- Glint and Glare

As a consequence of being able to see the solar panels we as well as other residents of Little Cheveney Farm and houses that face onto the site will be subject to glint and glare as highlighted by the Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare study which states that reflections from the proposed development will potentially affect 45 out of the 49 houses and that two properties highlighted in their study on page 68 as numbers 43 and 44 Little Cheveney Farm, will experience glare over 3 months of the year (but less than 1 hour per day). However, the study argues that most of this impact is expected to be moderate and that available imagery has shown that some screening in the form of existing vegetation MIGHT reduce the views of the reflective areas for all affected properties and that planting of vegetation will mitigate the two vulnerable properties. Vegetation in and around little Cheveney farm is deciduous, so are the willow, poplar, alder and hedgerow which they plan to plant to mitigate any views. Therefore, any screening existing or new won't be around for 365 days of the year and it will take up to 10 years for any new vegetation to take effect.

Furthermore, this study is based on solar panels that are 1.84 metres high; the panels being installed will be 2.7 metres high therefore the glint and glare will be far worse than predicted. How can this study be used as supporting documentation for this planning application?

View of Solar Farm

As already mentioned, I will be impacted by the solar farm as will other residents of Little Cheveney farm, and those that reside along Sheephurst Lane where houses and gardens face onto the site which is unacceptably too close. How does a massive solar farm covering 75 hectares with 2.4m high security fencing and 5-meter-high security camera polls contribute to the countryside and setting in which I and others live and for those that regularly use the footpaths? Furthermore, the structures that will house the BESS and the HV Compound will be huge and will be seen by residents regardless of any screening; again, something which the viewpoint study has not considered. It will be like living next to a prison compound and when people use the footpaths, they will be monitored by the cameras that keep the site and storage facilities secure. This is a complete invasion of privacy; people don't mind security cameras in an urban setting such as on houses and buildings but this is not suburbia this is countryside.

2. Effect on listed buildings

The photography conveniently does not take into account the views towards or from 6 Grade II listed residential buildings that reside on Little Cheveney Farm, four of which are Oast houses. These listed buildings like any historic structure are focal points in the countryside; and contribute to the historic landscape which is seen by those walking the public footpaths as well as being enjoyed by the residents themselves. These building were farm buildings and their setting residing on farm land is also of major importance as it also contributes to this setting. A massive solar farm will impact this view in a detrimental way and will be seen as a blight on this historical landscape.

3. Noise and disturbance resulting from use

- Battery Storage (BESS) & HV Compound

Statkraft propose the installation of a Battery Energy Storage Site (BESS) and HV compound as part of the Solar Farm development. The HV compound and BESS will be sited extremely close to

residential dwellings on the North West side of Little Cheveney Farm, noted as 8 Little Sheephurst Cottages, Sheephurst Lane and the BESS near Willow Cottage which resides on Little Cheveney farm. The study identifies these two buildings as 'noise sensitive receptors'. I fail to understand how number 7 Little Sheephurst cottage which is next door to number 8 on Sheephurst Lane was not included as noise sensitive receptor? Furthermore, there are cottages diagonally opposite Little Sheephurst cottages who quite possibly when their windows are also open in the warmer months could also experience noise pollution from this transformer its cooling fans, especially in the stillness of night from their second story windows, especially when open. Also, the BESS due to be sited on the North East side of Little Cheveney farm is much closer to the Willow Barn, than it is to Willow cottage and presently has planning permission for change of use into a residential dwelling; this property should also now be considered a noise sensitive receptor.

The conclusion of the Noise Impact Assessment was 'the impact will be negligible and 'unlikely to be audible or disturb sleep' therefore the impact of the noise for the people that reside at these noise sensitive dwellings is uncertain. Furthermore, this assessment was only performed from Friday 20th to Monday 23rd August 2021 at 15-minute intervals, and was only a snapshot study and does not take into account any variables that can change over time in a real situation. For example, failing fans that become noisy, a change in wind direction altering the direction of sound and thereby impacting residents or velocity of sound increasing on a rainy day. This could also mean residents of Little Cheveney farm will hear the cooling fans from the BESS on the North East side.

I therefore, have to question. Why do both the BESS and the HV compound have to be sited so near to residential dwellings when they are not only noisy but are hazardous and present a fire risk, when there is, 75 hectares of farmland? This is totally unfair to residents in close proximity. This is a very quiet rural area, sound travels far and is it not absorbed in the same way as it would be in built up areas such as towns and cities. Noise adversely affects peoples' lives and studies have demonstrated direct links between noise and health.

Additionally, both compounds are too close to water, the pond on the North West Side and the Lesser Teise on the North East side which flood. Surely this is cause for concern should anything leak from the batteries into the water or water table with disastrous consequences; this is also a concern for the panels themselves as there is a possibility of toxic chemicals leakage. Also there does not seem to have been a Noise Impact Assessment on how the noise will affect the bats, owls and other wildlife that reside in this dark area and the deer who are also highly sensitive to noise.

Security fencing will encase the ancient woodland on the North West side of the farm by 75 percent and will alter the natural paths used by the wildlife including deer that I have seen in the woods and in the fields many times; forcing them onto roads in order to find alternative routes. The newly constructed footpath will also run alongside the ancient wood which is essentially a quite rural area for the animals and is not frequented by the public. The new footpath will create a thoroughfare of noise and human activity creating a loss of wildlife in this natural historic habitat. Displacement of existing wildlife that presently enjoy the land will also happen during and once construction of the site is completed.

4. Traffic the proposal would generate and effects on highway safety

I will not be happy to have to put up with 6 months or more of not only construction work noise being a resident of Little Cheveney Farm, but also the increase in traffic and noise along Sheephurst Lane whilst the site under construction and after construction for maintenance of the site. This will have an impact on highway safety. I may not live directly on the road but the increase in traffic is unacceptable for the residents that do and for those that use this dangerous road.

The noise of construction and increase in human activity will also cause stress and harm to the wildlife that reside and run through Little Cheveney Farm and the surrounding area; who will be forced onto the roads during and after construction looking for alternative pathways as their natural historical routes disappear, which will increase road kill and possibly cause car accidents.

Sheephurst Lane is a small country lane and lacks passing places. It is also a fast road, despite the speed restrictions, and it is a road that has no footpaths that people need to walk in order to gain access to the public footpaths.

5. Flooding

Little Cheveney farm and the surrounding area resides on a flood plain and floods as do some areas in Marden, such as Plain Road and Sheephurst lane which can become impassable. What will be the impact of having a huge 75-hectare solar installation on farmland? The installation of this industrial site with its structures will displace the water as it will no longer be able to penetrate the clay soil and soak away, causing pooling and channels which will increase flooding. Farming the land on Little Cheveney does contribute to mitigating this process as the water is able to penetrate soil due to land being ploughed and the water being soaked up by the crops. I firmly believe that flooding will become a serious issue should this solar farm be installed.

Another consideration is the new estate in Marden (East of the Farm) which also resides on a flood plain, where mitigation was put in place based on the surrounding environmental conditions at the time. A solar farm covering 75 hectares approximately 4 fields away would not have been part of this consideration. I also understand from speaking to residents along the Maidstone Road that after the water table was raised to mitigate flooding at Yalding their septic systems now flood at times of high rainfall. Little Cheveney farm also has seven ponds, a few of which are linked, that support fish and other pond life as well as the ducks and herons and other wild fowl. What will happen to the ponds and wildlife when the increased water run-off from the solar farm floods this area?

6. Local Planning Policy

This development proposal contravenes Maidstone Borough Council's Local Planning Policy DM24.

7. Other considerations & Food production

I have lived on the entrance of the farm for over 14 years and used to ride my horse around the farm for many years and I continue to use the public footpaths. I enjoy the change of seasons the fields being ploughed and the crops being grown and harvested every year by the huge combines. I feel sad that this land which is good quality agricultural land which I understand to be Grade 2, 3a and 3b could be potentially used to site a massive solar farm which by comparison with offshore wind is very inefficient.

I am well aware of the need to produce alternative energy but solar panels should be placed on

brownfield sites, warehouses, office blocks, business parks and new houses. Our agricultural land is a finite resource and we know our government is in conflict in trying to meet the needs of not only increasing our domestic food production but to also encourage the growth of green energy production. At a time of crises, due to the climate change, the war in Ukraine, we need to be able to become more food efficient; how will this happen if we continue to lose farming land to the increasing number of Solar farms being built on agricultural land?

Little Cheveney Farm is already contributing to the needs of our domestic food production, which is not causing any disruption to people's lives, harming the environment or creating loss of habitat for wildlife; completely the reverse. So why build a Solar farm on this good productive agricultural land?

I therefore strongly object to this planning application.

Regards

Lynne Jones

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: Miss Lynne Jones

Address: Top Oast, Little Cheveney Farm Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NX

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:

FAO Maidstone Borough Council

Case Officer: Marion Geary

To Maidstone Planning

Planning Application Reference: 22/501335/FULL

Site Address: Land North of Little Cheveney Farm Sheephurst Lane Marden Kent

I refer to my previous objection to this planning application of 30th June and would comment to some of Statkraft's responses to Public Comments and Objections as follows:

1. Agricultural Land - Loss of good quality agriculture land

Statkraft argue that "there are no opportunities within MBC for solar farm developments on brownfield land where there is a grid connection"

Just because there are no opportunities within MBC for solar farm developments on brownfield sites where there is no grid connection is not justification to build on good arable farming land.

Solar farms do not need to be near a grid connection, an example of this is the Great Wilbraham solar development which is connected to a sub-station 11km from the actual site. The fact that the Local authority boundaries are used to limit the search for alternative sites is wrong.

Statkraft document also states "Brownfield land is land which has previously been developed and not currently in use that is potentially contaminated". This is incorrect the NPPF definition of Brownfield Land is "previously developed land".

2. The development is proposed for 37 years and Statkraft argue that 37 years is temporary - 37 years is longer than what is stated as temporary in MBC's Planning Policy advice note: Large

Scale (>50kW) solar PV arrays, under the Planning Application Considerations section which says "Be for a temporary period only, and a maximum period of 25 years from the commissioning of the facility should be applied". 37 years therefore contravenes the maximum period of 25 years.

3. Flooding of local ponds

It is stated that "Flooding of local ponds is not a likely consequence of the proposed development". Not likely is hardly reassuring when there are 6 ponds on Little Cheveney Farm.

4. Ecology - Threat to wildlife / Prevent free movement of wildlife due to fencing.

Mitigation for most wildlife is mentioned and 'justified' with Statkraft arguing that "animals will be free to roam outside the fenced area of the development and that there will be small gaps for small mammals to pass through the site". This still prevents how they transverse the land today and is a poor compromise but this also contravenes the MBC document (Planning and policy advice note: Large scale (50>kW) Solar PV arrays) which states that 'appropriate measures should be in place to facilitate continued access by larger mammals, such as badgers and foxes' to pass through the site. There also has been no mention of the deer that live on and roam the land with no mitigation measures put in place for them. Deer are large animals and can cause road accidents, leaving them to divert onto roads due to a change in their habitat is unacceptable.

5. Roads and Traffic - Safety

The document responds by saying 'The level of traffic during the temporary construction phase is not considered to result in a material impact on the safety or operation of the local highway network'

Construction traffic and HGVs for this site will go through Marden passing the local primary school and then East along Sheephurst Lane. I feel this is unacceptable for the following reasons:

Construction traffic and HGVs going through a built-up area is already dangerous for pedestrians and road users but particularly dangerous when parents are taking and collecting their children from school. At these times parents' cars are parked either side of the main road outside the school reducing the road to one lane with cars on the road trying to pass each other whilst parents and children are crossing the road.

Sheephurst Lane, despite the speed restrictions can be a fast dangerous road that lacks passing places, has blind bends and has no footpaths for pedestrians however, people have to walk the road to gain access to the footpaths and because of lack of transport. It is also heavily used by cyclists. Lorries are banned from using the road apart from access and do not frequent the lane on a regular basis but this frequency will increase because of the construction traffic making the road more dangerous.

How then does Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTP) ensure the safety of pedestrians and road users in Marden and Sheephurst lane whilst construction traffic is using this route?

Pedestrians and road users do not seem to have been a consideration of this plan.

6. Construction Phase - other concerns

I also understand from the CTP that construction of the Solar Energy Farm is expected to take approximately 24 weeks. And that construction at the site will be carried out Monday to Friday 08:00 to 18:00, and Saturdays 08:00 to 13:30 and that no construction or deliveries will take place on Sundays or Bank Holidays. Why should residents have to put up with construction work over a weekend whilst having to put up with it from Monday to Friday for 24 weeks or more? Why are residents and road users only considered for 1.5 days out of 7 days including Bank Holidays? Construction work and lorries travelling along Sheephurst lane will be particularly disruptive dangerous and noisy to those that live on Sheephurst Lane and for those that in close proximity to the construction site. This area is rural and quiet as a consequence noise is magnified due to the lack of buildings that absorb sound. Also, on a weekend's there are more pedestrians, cyclists and people walking their dogs using the road. The increase in construction traffic will also increase pollution which is harmful to the public and the environment.

7. Too large - it is argued by Statkraft that because "solar farms no longer subsidised by the UK Government, they have to be financially viable and that the key factor that influence the size of a solar site is the availability and cost of the grid connection".

The withdrawal of government subsidies came into effect in 2015 instigated by the then Environment Secretary Elizabeth Truss, to ensure agricultural land is dedicated to growing crops and food. Subsidies for solar farms were therefore cut to help safeguard farmland.

Maidstone Borough Council have already raised an objection on heritage grounds on the 10th August which is positive but;

"The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) requires the presence of best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the agricultural land classification) to be taken into account alongside other sustainability considerations. The framework expresses a preference for development to be directed to land outside of this classification (3b, 4 and 5)".

In light of the above why is Maidstone Borough Council even considering this application to be sited on good agricultural land which has been continually farmed for years? Our food security should not be jeopardized by sacrificing productive farmland which is already meeting a government national target.

We all know that solar farms are a hugely inefficient source of energy. How can the installation of this solar farm actually outweigh the harm it will cause to the community and the environment? If Maidstone Borough Council allow this solar farm to be part of the Grade II listed historical landscape, how then can we take their planning guidelines seriously, especially in light of the refusal of Pagehurst Solar farm which was refused by the Planning inspector Andrew Hammond on the grounds that:

"The harms to the intrinsic and visual qualities of the landscape are substantial, both in significance and scale, and would not be mitigated by the landscape proposals which seek to screen the development from view rather than integrate it into its setting in a satisfactory manner"

The solar farm only really benefits the farmer and Statkraft and gives very little back to the local community. The sheer size will be a blight on the agricultural landscape seen not only by those living close by but also by those who frequent the footpaths if this proposal is allowed to progress. The disruption to wildlife and environment will be immense. Statkraft cannot completely mitigate the glint and glare from the solar panels for those residents that live in close proximity; and for those residents Little Cheveney Farm their lack of inclusion in the viewpoints study by Statkraft is unfair and questionable.

There is also a lack of concern regarding pedestrian and other road user safety during the construction phase, which has not even been considered by Statkraft and Kent County Highways and Transportation. Notwithstanding the fact that local residents will have to experience the impact of noise not only created by the increase in construction traffic but also by the construction work itself (5.5 days a week) which has also not even been considered by Statkraft or Maidstone Borough Council from a planning perspective.

I feel that the benefits of this proposal do not outweigh the potential harms it will cause and I therefore once again object to this planning application.

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 Jon Lawrence

Address: Laurel Wood House, Claygate, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9PD

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Much like everybody else here, I am writing to object to the proposals.

There appears to be a tremendous weight of objection to this proposal of another solar farm in Marden. Many will be forced to endure its slow, hazardous, and destructive building process, only to lose a large proportion of Marden's immediate countryside for the foreseeable future. The negatives here far outweigh the positives. Renewable energy is clearly important, but so is the well-being, safety, and happiness of the people and wildlife that live in the area that this promises to threaten.

The reasons why this proposal shouldn't be considered have already been explained thoroughly in all the other objections, but bare repeating in brief.

- Wildlife and Biodiversity - primarily the displacement of wildlife.
- Industrialisation of Agricultural Land - This land is rich for producing food, something the developer has decided to contradict in their proposals.
- The slow dismantling of Marden to the endless 'repurposing', and the need to retain the countryside it has left
- Marden has the Widehurst Solar Farm. The area should not be considered for another such sizeable development
- The complete lack of infrastructure to build such a solar farm on a road that will not cope with increased traffic and large, cumbersome vehicles.

There has to be areas far better suited for the purpose of building a solar farm than the proposed site. Marden has endured a lot of development of recent years that has rid it of so much of its countryside. Please let that be the end of it.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

Application Number: 22/501335/FULL

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr Jonathan Lyne

Address: Lambkyns, School House Lane, Horsmonden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 8BJ

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Whilst I am all in favour of renewable sources of electricity, I genuinely feel that to build a huge solar farm approx. the size of Marden right next door to Marden where already swathes of countryside and farming land have been obliterated is the wrong thing to do.

We should be putting these solar farms on brownfield sites not farming land where we could be planting wheat...

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr JAMES MACEY

Address: 1 Edwin Villas, Goudhurst Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9JX

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:Hi. Although I don't disagree with the concept of solar farms - this proposal is crazy. Not only is it vast - it also follows hot on the heels of the Village of Marden losing much of it's surrounding countryside to housing development. And we also already have a solar farm off Plain Road. This has a huge effect on the villages culture, it hugely effects local Wildlife and biodiversity. The site up for proposal has so much important farming heritage and would be lost. Footpaths have already been lost to housing development over the past 8 years - more will disappear. I cannot think of a reason this solar farm development should be approved on this site.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs joanna manser

Address: The Old Engineer, Claygate Road, Yalding Maidstone, Kent ME18 6BD

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Other

Stance: Customer made comments in support of the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I live in the parish of Collier Street. I believe we should fully embrace renewable energy and I am pleased to see this application for a solar farm and fully support it. I feel we should have more solar and wind farms. It would be lovely if a meadow could be planted on the land as well, this would have a positive impact on biodiversity in the area.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs Lara Mantle

Address: Cherrytree Cottage, Roughlands Goudhurst Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NH

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I would like to place my concern with the proposed solar farm 22/501335/FULL, the reasons for my objection is the impact of flooding on my property. The solar panels will restrict the flow of water from Sheephurst Lane and my property was damaged in the last floods. This is a serious concern and may effect my house insurance prices.

I am also concerned about the restrictions of footpaths used daily for dog walking.

I am sure there are other sites that can be used not in a flood plain effected area.

Lara Mantle

[REDACTED]
To: [Planning Comments](#)
Subject: Re: 22/501335/full
Date: 30 June 2022 17:08:22

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Burton hse, Burtons Lane, Marden

Sent from my iPad

> On 30 Jun 2022, at 16:06, Planning Comments <PlanningComments@midkent.gov.uk> wrote:

>

> Thank-you for your correspondence regarding the above.

>

> Can you please provide your address so we can formally log your comment and gain a fuller understanding of the relationship of your property (and all other respondents') to the application site.

>

> Please note your comment will not be recorded without this information.

>

> Many thanks

>

> Sam Hall

> Information Management Officer

> MidKent Planning Support

> Maidstone House, King Street,

> Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6JQ

>

> w: <http://pa.midkent.gov.uk>

>

> MKPS - Working in Partnership with: Maidstone and Swale

> Please note: All planning related correspondence for MBC and SBC should be sent to:

> Mid Kent Planning Support, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone ME15 6JQ

> email: planningsupport@midkent.gov.uk

>

> Access planning services online at: www.maidstone.gov.uk; www.swale.gov.uk; or submit an application via www.planningportal.gov.uk

>

> We have been working very hard to adapt to the changes that we have all been faced with following the Coronavirus outbreak. Mid Kent Planning Support is currently seeking to find solutions to issues that we are all currently facing whilst working to the Government's requirements, this also means we are continuing to work from home and not travelling to the office. These changes may result in slower response times to requests, although we are working tirelessly to minimise this, and information may not be accessible to us at this time.

>

> During these difficult times we ask you all to consider sending information to us via other means; however if your only option is to submit information to us via the post this will be picked up, but may take slightly longer than normal.

>

> Other options you may consider could be:

>

> . Any further information you may need to return to us to validate your application submission could be sent via email, if this is the case please send this to : PSValidation@midkent.gov.uk

> . Contact your local Councillor to email us on your behalf

> . Contact your local Parish office to ask if they are able to email us on your behalf

> . Ask a family member or friend

> . Please do not send cheques if this is possible - please use our online payment options on the Council's Website.

>

> Please also be advised that we are unable to accept samples of materials to accompany discharge of conditions

submission. Please provide photos at this time as well as details of samples.

>

> Thank you for your patience and understanding during these unprecedented times.

>

> Maidstone Borough Council Customers Only

>

>

>

>

>

> -----Original Message-----

> [REDACTED]

> Sent: 28 June 2022 20:52

> To: Planning Comments <PlanningComments@MidKent.gov.uk>

> Subject: 22/501335/full

>

> CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

> I am writing to object to the Marden solar farm.

> It is currently used as a good agriculture food producing land and is not low grade.

> Britain wants us to become more self sufficient with home grown produce so this will not help. Solar farms should only be built on unused poor quality land and a good distance from residents.

> It is on too huge a scale and would be unsightly with rows of glass panels and large security fencing ruining our landscape. Heavy traffic will cause noise and traffic disruption issues along country lanes that are already in poor condition.

> Flooding is a huge issue in this area, with extra run off from a solar farm this would increase the risk to residents properties. Rerouted footpaths would also become impassable.

> Marden has already lost too many green fields to housing without adding to it.

> Farmland should be farmed and not used for developing.

> Regards

> Mrs S Maplesden

>

>

> Sent from my iPad

>

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 Harry Marshall

Address: Roughlands Farm, Goudhurst Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NH

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Other

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: The proposed site is next to the Lesser Teise. This area floods during periods of heavy rain, particularly during the winter months. The solar panel frames, boundary/security fencing and buildings will impede the flow of any flood water which will need to flow under the railway viaduct. This will increase the risk of flooding to those properties within the flood plain. The scheme should not be given approval unless measures are put in place to eliminate any risk of flooding created to residential properties.

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 Harry Marshall

Address: Roughlands Farm, Goudhurst Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NH

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Further to my earlier initial response I would like to add the following substantial comments.

When I first became aware of this proposal in 2021 I was concerned about the risk of flooding. I believe that part of the site is within Flood Zone 3 as per the Middle Medway Flood Resilience Scheme assessment. This requires the applicant to demonstrate that the scheme if built does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

I have noted that the Upper Medway Drainage Authority and the Environment Agency have not provided comments on the scheme. Those agencies both have a responsibility and interest in this scheme and must be consulted.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr Harry Marshall

Address: Roughlands Farm, Goudhurst Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NH

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: The amendment to the application has not altered the fact that the risk of flooding will be increased by the proposal. The Lesser Teise is a small and fast flowing river. At times of flooding any blockage/obstruction which slows the flow has an adverse impact and as a result the flood water proceeds to spread across the plain, particularly towards Marden. This in turn stops the numerous drainage ditches from fulfilling their role.

If approval, in principle, is given for this scheme more consideration must be given to ensure that fencing and other ancillary obstructions do not impede the flow of the flood water. This should include an annual programme of inspections both by the Environment Agency and Upper Medway Drainage to ensure that the risk of flooding is being managed.

In respect of those concerns raised about the management of the building project, if it proceeds, these must also be addressed. Sheephurst Lane is a well used road. Part of this road, particularly the Goudhurst Road end include at least one blind bend as well as a single file bridge. There are already restrictions in place on the weight of vehicles that can use the road, albeit this is often ignored. I would anticipate that if continuous heavy traffic is allowed to use the road the bridge will experience structural damage. Any approval must include very clear instructions to ensure that the lives of residents, particularly those that live in Sheephurst Lane, are not blighted during the period of this work.

Finally it goes without saying that the unique rural feel of the rural environment of Marden parish will be permanently diminished if this scheme is approved

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr John Martin

Address: 8 Little Sheephurst Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NZ

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I wish to register my objection to this application on the following grounds: -

Impact on My Property and Surrounding Properties

Solar farms dramatically alter views of the countryside:-

- Impact on my view

The supporting study concedes that these panels will be visible from upper windows of surrounding property and seems to imply this is a minimal impact. This is not the case. I have an upper floor window from a study where I work that will look directly on the panels if it is extended to the field next to my property.

- Light pollution

There will be increased light pollution with the reflections from the panels.

- Noise pollution

These panels are not silent and there will be a hum from them and the power station in addition when hot need to be cooled with noisy fans. If sited in the field next to my property this will disrupt the quiet - especially in the evening.

- Pollution

there is the possibility of toxic chemicals leaking out from the panel and lithium-ion storage is a fire risk. Cleaning chemicals for the panels will also be a source of potential pollution.

- Electromagnetic Radiation (EMF)

Little is known of the health issues related to proximity to the solar panels and the storage equipment. Moving it and the power station away will mitigate this risk.

- Negative impact on the value of my property

If placed so close to my property the solar farm is likely to have a negative impact on its value.

Environmental Impact

Overall solar farms are not environmentally friendly and inefficient compared with other alternatives such as of shore wind turbines - A 140-acre solar park is said to be capable of supplying electricity to about 9,000 homes. One wind turbine in the North Sea has the capacity to power 16,000 homes.

Loss of Farmland

We should not be losing productive farmland - studies suggest that solar farms should be limited to brownfield sites and poorer quality unproductive land - which this is not.

Flooding

The work will affect the water table which will increase the flood risk. Half of the land will be in shadow, and water run off creates channels that will disrupt normal dispersal - which will also increase the flood risk.

Wildlife

The farm will be intrusive with secured boundaries and intrusive CCTV - this will affect the natural movement of wildlife. Also, the panels can prove fatal to bats & birds as they mistake the glass for water.

Traffic

Sheephurst Lane is a busy road particularly during the day and is narrow in places - the constriction period will increase this traffic - and there will be increased ongoing traffic.

Whilst we need to find alternative energy sources this should not be prioritised above the need for agricultural land to support the growing of crops locally - which will reduce the need to import food which in turn will have a positive environmental impact.

For the above reasons I believe the application should be rejected. If it is accepted that it can go ahead it should be with the amendment of removing the panels and power station that is in the field adjacent to my property - which was accepted when I responded to the initial consultation - and the line of new trees extended across the field to shield the farm from view.

This should be read in conjunction with my initial objection to this project and specifically responds to the comments made in respect of my property in the document entitled *“Detailed Response On Key Issues Landscape Transport And Site Security”* dated the 31st of August 2022

Before commenting specifically on this document, I should like to point out that I did respond to the initial consultation which initially omitted show my property 8 Little Sheephurst Cottages as well as No. 7 on the map that they had posted on their website. In that I did make the point that the solar farm was far too close to my property and should add very least be removed from the field adjacent to mine

In his e-mail of the 26th of August 2021 Garth Hawkins of Statkraft stated **“I can see no reason not to take on board your comment and amend the plan so that the setback from yours and other properties on Sheephurst Lane is increased”**

This statement has been completely ignored and the plans still show the solar farm adjacent to mine and other properties. This is completely unacceptable and out of keeping with the area and its heritage.

Landscape Assessment and BESS and HV Compound

The distances stated in the report from my property boundaries are not correct – the solar panels are adjacent to my property and fill the field and the HV unit is 85 metres away not 115 metres as stated.

The report says that the HV unit has not been included as it will not be visible. This is also incorrect as at 7.5 metres high it will be taller than a domestic house and will be clearly visible and audible from my property. “Buffer” planting will not hide this unit and indeed would take some years to grow.

The reason given for no photomontage from the entrance driveway of my property is that of trespass. This could easily have been overcome by asking my permission and clearly this has not been done. This can only lead to the conclusion that the photomontage, if taken, would not support their assertion.

Visibility

The report states that the solar panels and HV unit visibility is *“negligible- low and medium from upstairs windows”*.

This is most definitely not the case from the third floor upstairs window in my property - where there is a study where I work every day which directly overlooks the field in which the solar panels and HV unit will be situated.

As I sit and work at my desk daily visibility will be high as I will directly be looking at the field and therefore the solar panels.

Construction Period

In addition to the detrimental impact upon the quality of life and property values of those properties that surround this project there will be increased disruption and negative impacts during the construction period.

There will be hundreds of workers engaged in the construction with several thousand trips by vehicles which will create noise and dust pollution destroying the quiet calm of the area.

Conclusion

This project will have a detrimental impact upon the environment, the heritage of the area and the quality of life of those living adjacent to it both during the construction period and beyond.

It is for these- and the reasons stated in other objections that I believe planning permission for this project should be refused.

John Martin

8 Little Sheephurst Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden, Kent TN12 9NZ.

26th September 2022

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 Steve Mcarragher

Address: Woodstock, Albion Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9ED

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Other

Stance: Customer made comments neither objecting to or supporting the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I am commenting on behalf of Marden Walking Group who are concerned about the PROWs affected by this proposal.

Marden Walking group have no objection to the proposed development, provided that the existing and rerouted Rights of Way indicated on the Footpath and boundary Layout plan are preserved with an adequate width and with low fencing to allow existing views to be maintained. The same applies to the proposed additional Permissive Paths, which will be beneficial and allow more circular walking routes. We were unable to find information about this in the documentation, though we have not searched exhaustively.

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

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs Sarah Moncreiffe

Address: Brook Farmhouse, Green Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9RA

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: We live at Brook Farm, and our house and land is immediately the other side of the railway line from this proposed solar farm.

1. This plan will have a huge impact on flooding. The Lesser Teise is prone to flooding and needs the land to soak up any excess water. The huge infrastructure required for a site as large as this would mean that there is nowhere for the excess water to go and would affect not just Brook farm but neighbouring villages such as Collier Street, Haviker Street, Yalding etc.
2. Construction of this solar farm would mean that the land, which is Grade 2, 3a and 3b (ie. good quality food producing agricultural land), could no longer be used (at least in the medium term, and probably in the long term) to produce food. This is particularly important now (see Government statements regarding food security)
3. This construction would have a severe impact on indigenous wildlife, (in our case, the Greater Crested Newt as Kent Wildlife have created several ponds in the Brook Farm Community to save them from extinction)

In view of the above, please treat this as an objection.

Sarah Moncreiffe

Brook Farmhouse

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

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Address: Brook Farmhouse, Green Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9RA

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Sarah Moncreiffe

Brook Farmhouse

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

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Dr John Orrin

Address: Forge Farmhouse, Goudhurst Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NP

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I do not agree with the development of such a large industrial type project to be placed in the beautiful Weald of Kent countryside. Surely this type of project is more suited to an area near to industrial development ?

Michael Cussons

From: Tricia King <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 29 June 2022 14:25
To: Planning Comments
Subject: Planning Application Comment

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Categories: Michael

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Ref: Marden Solar Farm Planning Application Ref was/501335/FULL

I wish to object to the above Planning Application on the following grounds:

1. Marden has already lost much of its agricultural land to housing development and already has one solar farm blighting the landscape. It certainly does not need another HUGE development scarring the beautiful Weald landscape even further.
2. Marden has already had 600 homes built on agricultural land, and cannot sustain more traffic, noise and disruption thrust upon it.
3. The Government is requesting that more land should be available for growing food. Why should a site that has been farmed since the 16th century be destroyed in such a way, displacing wildlife and deer, which will then often run onto roads.
4. As this proposed solar farm is cited as being temporary it is ridiculous to suggest that the infrastructure on a site as large as this, which includes a substation and energy storage could be reversed after 37 years. This is only a backdrop into constructing even more houses and turning our lovely villages into Towns and all that entails.
4. Solar farms should be built on brownfield sites, old airfields, redundant office blocks and warehouses. Not on productive greenfield land.
5. This was also not mentioned within the Local Plan.

Please do NOT agree to this ridiculous Application. Think Again.

Thank you.

Patricia King
Rioja
West End
Marden TN12 9JA

Sent from my iPad=

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 Duncan 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 object to the proposed solar farm installation.

The harms to the intrinsic and visual qualities of the landscape are substantial, both in significance and scale. It would not be mitigated by the remedial landscape proposals which seek to screen the development from view rather than integrate it into its setting in a satisfactory manner. The development represents a significant threat to the landscape with its prison-like fenced boundaries forming an unnatural hard boarder. The beauty of the Kent countryside will be lost for 30+ years, and probably forever, since there is no clear plan for what may replace the solar farm if/when it is decommissioned.

Agricultural land of this quality (2, 3a and 3b) and productivity should not be converted to industrial production of electricity. This is better situated on brownfield sites and atop the numerous industrial units nearby in Marden (Pattenden Lane) and Paddock Wood (Tranfesa Road), and which have my full support.

Food security for the UK is an increasingly important consideration and one that the government fully endorses (Government Food Strategy June 2022 - www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-food-strategy#food-security-and-sustainable-production).

Failure to refuse this site will encourage further mass coverage of agricultural land with photovoltaic panels subsidised by the taxpayer. The efficiency of solar panels is between 11 - 15%

in contrast with off-shore wind being greater than 50%. We need to ask ourselves, do we really want our Low Weald countryside covered in such panels?

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr Duncan 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: My comments of 26 June stand and I remain opposed to the proposed development. I would add these points below:

Decommissioning: If the applicant - Statkraft - is responsible for decommissioning the site upon completion, what assurance can they give to perform this requirement bearing in mind their business may no longer exist in 37 years? The solution can be lodging the predicted decommissioning costs, taking inflation into account, in escrow with the local authority as guardian of this. This should be a condition of planning to protect all our futures.

Food security: the proposed intensification of other land held by the land owner is not a solution to this land being taken out of productive use. It also contradicts the recommendations of the RSPB.

Impact on Heritage Asset: The heritage concerns of the Local Authority are not suitably addressed and cannot be by the introduction of a solar farm on this site. The changes will manifest the equivalent of an alien invasion in close proximity to heritage assets.

Traffic Plan: Whilst considered a short term impact, this aspect has real world implications for residents, visitors (both to properties and the countryside itself), the local bus service and rural traffic passing through. The proposed tally count of 18 metre lorries and one 30 metre lorry is going to create a material disturbance to any normal egress and it's hard to see how access for fire engine, police or ambulance vehicles will be able to attend in an emergency with the proposed concentration of traffic on Sheephurst Lane.

Alternative sites: There is an alternative solar farm application just across the borough border about 900 metres away - Bockingfold - which is now in planning. I suggest this is looked at closely as I feel it's a more suitable site.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

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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 object to the planned Sheepwash Solar Farm for the following reasons:

1) Loss of prime agricultural land:

The Government Food Strategy makes it clear we have to "deliver a sustainable, nature positive, affordable food system..." on domestic land (i). We need to be food secure and self-sufficient. Our agricultural land is now more precious than ever given the current geopolitical climate and cannot be lost to proposals which are highly likely never to see the land returned to food production. It is good quality productive land grade 2 and 3a (best and most versatile) and the remaining half is grade 3b (moderate good). It is not "not relatively low grade" as claimed by Statkraft. It has been farmed since the 16th century and has huge historical agricultural significance. Solar farms "should be limited to brownfield land and poorer quality unproductive land" (ii), of which Kent has plenty of alternatives.

2) Limited, ineffective pre-planning consultation:

The consultation process that Quatro have undertaken on behalf of Statkraft is shockingly limited given the size and scale of this proposal. I note that although press releases were written to three local media outlets, they were never published and it would be good to understand why. As a resident on Sheephurst Lane, neither were we one the 588 homes to receive a leaflet in the consultation area during the pre-planning stage. It seems this is the case for the majority of all our neighbours bordering the proposal. There has been an absolute paucity of information by Statkraft in direct contradiction of the Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 (iii), which 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." Of the 23 responses that were received, only 11 were the result of the leafleting by Quatro. A return of 1.9%. This does not demonstrate effective and proactive engagement with the community, if anything it is just progression of this proposal by stealth.

3) Over development:

"...it is considered essential to conserve and enhance the natural environment and the landscape of the parish. Careful treatment of the village periphery is required to maintain and improve the appearance of the edge of Marden village, by avoiding suburbanisation and sprawl, and minimising the visual impact on the surrounding fields and wider landscape" (Marden Neighbourhood Plan, 2017) (iv) . Marden has experienced considerable development in the last 5 years and this proposal is in direct contradiction of the Plan. It stipulates that "nature conservation was deemed the most urgent issue" by residents and that only "the installation of small-scale renewable energy schemes" should be considered. The proposed 75 hectares of the Sheepwash solar farm generating an approximate output of 49.9 megawatt, has clearly been designed to fall just short of the 50 megawatt threshold requiring Secretary of State for Energy approval (v). This cannot possibly be considered small-scale, neither can it be considered in keeping with the avoidance of suburbanisation sprawl and minimisation of visual impact.

4) Adverse ecological and heritage impact:

It is reportedly critical that solar farm installations should not be near valued landscape or historic buildings (vi, vii). Equally, the 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) (viii). In the area of Little Cheveney at the centre of the proposal, there are at least four listed properties of historical significance that would directly overlook the proposed solar farm. Their views will be blighted by the 2.4m perimeter fence, 5m CCTV cameras and solar arrays. To read that the development will have a "net gain" on biodiversity is also preposterous. The site encloses on three sides an ancient woodland home to countless native species including owls, adders and migrating nightingales. Nearby pondlife is home to great crested newts, water voles and wildfowl. There are migrating birds such as swallows and swifts plus a great number of bats. Wildlife will experience significant displacement, further compounded by the removal of interconnecting wildlife corridors. The land is also already classified as at severe risk of flooding, and the proposal will have a huge knock-on effect with surface water run-off into the nearby River Teise, with nearby housing likely to see an even bigger increase in flooding.

To conclude the net benefit of this proposal does not outweigh the significant net loss, and as such I object to the proposal to the installation of a 75 hectare solar farm on the land north of Little Cheveney Farm.

References:

- (i) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-food-strategy>
- (ii) <https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2021/10/The-Problem-with-Solar-Farms.pdf>
- (iii) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf
- (iv) https://maidstone.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/281750/190528-Marden-Neighbourhood-Plan-with-Maps.pdf
- (v) <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/providing-regulation-and-licensing-of-energy-industries-and-infrastructure/supporting-pages/planning-and-consents-for-national-energy-infrastructure>
- (vi) <https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2021/10/The-Problem-with-Solar-Farms.pdf>
- (vii) <https://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1690297/solar-farm-ruled-landscape-heritage-grounds>
- (viii) https://pa.midkent.gov.uk/online-applications/files/D5A0EE5AF545F4923783093415D5E7/pdf/13_1456--3965987.pdf

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.

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 Susan Pressley

Address: Old Chapel Studio, Plain Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9LS

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: We object to this planning application for a number of reasons.

- We were not notified of the proposal to build an electricity generation factory as big as the footprint of Marden on valuable agricultural land, despite living nearby and on the suggested route for all construction traffic. The community of Marden and Collier Street has not been consulted as claimed.

- Agricultural land of this quality (2, 3a and 3b) should be retained for farming - it is not low grade as claimed and has been farmed to provide food for generations. Farmland is known to mitigate climate change and this farm is on a flood plain that absorbs excess water and prevents the re-routing of floodwater into residential areas.

- The Government has identified the importance of food security and the UK's increasingly apparent vulnerability in a global market where much of our food is imported. The invasion of Ukraine, where a large proportion of the world's grain is produced, has highlighted the need for the UK to be more self-sufficient and the Government is planning to incentivise farmers to produce more crops. If this landowner does not wish to farm it, perhaps it should be sold to someone who does.

- This proposal not only intends to destroy productive farmland, it represents a serious threat to wildlife in the displacement of countless species of all kinds, including deer that will be forced onto the roads or onto the railway.

- Agricultural land should not be used for this type of industrialisation - brownfield sites are far more suitable. Building hard infrastructure with new roads on this vast site is totally unsuitable for the open countryside. Solar panels should be placed on the roofs of new houses and industrial units (for the benefit of the owners) and on brownfield sites where farmland is not being taken out of service.

- Local authorities are expected to protect and enhance valued landscapes and biodiversity sites, and recognise the character, beauty and heritage of the rural environment. This environmentally damaging development would be a terrible blot on the landscape and blight neighbouring properties.

- The proposed Construction Traffic Management Plan shows the route for huge construction vehicles via Plain Road and Sheephurst Lane. These are both narrow winding country lanes where often there is not enough width of road for two cars to easily pass. There are very few passing places and residents regularly experience damage to their boundaries due to large vehicles attempting to pass each other without due care and consideration. Both lanes have single track bridges and are on bus routes. This route is completely unsuitable. The traffic surveys took place in July and August during school summer holidays and no doubt this was deliberate in order to show fewer vehicle movements than would be normal throughout the rest of the year. This is very disingenuous.

- Solar energy is known to be far less efficient than off-shore wind power, so why ruin our countryside and destroy biodiversity with a proposal that goes against the principles of conservation and negatively impacts our rural community in so many significant ways? We are very much against this proposal.

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 Terry Reeves

Address: 6 Little Sheephurst Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NZ

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: My objection is fairly simple, this is green field land not brown field, government policy is for great Britain to become more self sufficient with home grown produce, how does this help?. The south east is littered with derelict ex developed land / brown field sites why are these not being prioritized for solar panel farms. Surely wildlife, both rare and commonplace should be a consideration and by the mere fact that this land is being considered at all tells me it has not been. Another eye sore in our green and pleasant land for nothing other than greed

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

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

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs Louise Ribbens

Address: 4 Little Sheephurst Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NZ

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: My objections of the above planning of the new solar farm in Marden are as follows:

- 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;
- 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 solar farm is promoted as being temporary and could be reversed after 37 years but not a guarantee. 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 12,000m² of permanent roads would not be decommissioned.
- 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.
- 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.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

Application Number: 22/501335/FULL

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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 ROY ROBERTSON

Address: 2 Moat Farm Cottages, Collier Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9RR

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I object to the proposal to build a solar farm on this site. The proposed location is totally unsuitable for a solar farm on the grounds of category of land, accessibility for construction and maintenance vehicles, fit with the surrounding area, risk of flooding and impact on wildlife.

This location is prime agricultural land and should be kept exclusively for that purpose. This is particularly pertinent given current food shortages and the importance of the UK being able to grow as much of its own food as possible. It would be idiotic to lose this considerable area of productive agricultural land at this time. A brownfield site should be considered as a suitable alternative for siting a solar farm.

The impact of construction vehicles and heavy plant - during the construction phase, and afterwards for maintenance - would be catastrophic on the local community. Sheephurst Lane is a narrow and very winding rural road, which would be damaged severely by the increase in heavy goods vehicles. Access would inevitably be via Marden and/or Collier Street. Both of those communities are already blighted by heavy traffic and Marden, in particular, is already subject to severe congestion due to the increase in traffic in recent years; it would be extremely detrimental to both communities if the traffic were to increase further in order to construct and maintain this proposed solar farm.

The land is situated in a beautiful part of the Low Weald. A solar farm of this size would be intrusive, unattractive and completely out of keeping with the rest of this rural area.

The location is in close proximity to the Lesser Teise, which is prone to flooding in autumn and

winter. It is ludicrous to site an industrial facility of this size in an area which has a high risk of flooding.

A solar farm would have a detrimental effect on the local wildlife.

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 angus rorison

Address: Ryecroft, Lower Lees Road, Old Wives Lees, CANTERBURY CT4 8AS

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Other

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: My objections:

- The loss of prime agricultural land at a time when food security is increasingly important
- Biodiveristy loss. Land such as this is home to ground nesting birds, birds of prey, bats, snakes and many more, including of course all the insect, small mammal life and plants that support this
- These panels are non-recylcable and when they degrade can poison the land so it will not be fit for agricultural use again.
- Solar panels should be erected on roofs and brownfield sites (for the reasons above)
- Solar is not the best power for the UK. We need reliable sources of low carbon power such as tidal, geothermal and nuclear.
- The beauty of the countryside contributes to mental and physical well-being amongst local residents which will be severley compromised by this

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 Heidi Scott

Address: Bridgeland House, High Street, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9DS

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I object to this application on several grounds. Firstly, the size of this proposal is vast and out of all proportion to the surrounding area. The development is on an industrial scale and would be unsightly in the countryside of the Low Weald and on the edge of the High Weald AONB. Secondly, at a time when food insecurity is probably at its height since the second World War, we should be preserving high-quality agricultural land such as this. Then there is the adverse effect on wildlife and biodiversity, already negatively affected by considerable development in the Marden area over the past 6-7 years, with an additional 600 homes having been built in Marden village and more schemes currently being brought forward for planning approval. Another factor is the negative impact on the setting of listed buildings in the vicinity, which should be protected as part of our cherished Low Weald landscape and heritage. It is hard to believe that there are not more appropriate sites (brownfield or lower-quality land) for solar power generation in Kent.

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 Sally Sparrow

Address: East View, Pattenden Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9QT

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: The scale of this solar farm is way out of scale with the surrounding villages. Marden has lost a lot of countryside already to development for housing and a solar farm is already in place south of the village. The land is good agricultural land and not relatively low-grade - these are productive fields. I think most people are positive about solar energy but scale must be considered in relation to the village as well as proximity to residences. Would you support an application for a solar farm the size of Maidstone next door to Maidstone?

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.

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.

26 September 2022

Application Summary:

Planning Application Ref: 22/501335/FULL

Proposal: Installation of renewable energy led generating station on land north of Sheephurst Lane

Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details:

Mrs Sarah Springhall

Little Cheveney Farmhouse, Sheephurst Lane, TN12 9NX

Comment Details:

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer OBJECTS to the Planning Application

THE RESPONSES SUPPLIED BY THE DEVELOPER TO CONCERNS AND OBJECTIONS ARE INADEQUATE. IN ADDITION TO MY PREVIOUS OBJECTIONS, I OBJECT TO THE AMENDED PLANS AND WOULD LIKE TO REITERATE SOME OF MY PREVIOUS OBJECTIONS AND HIGHLIGHT THE FOLLOWING:

Reason	Detail	Relevant Regulation	Conclusion
1. BMV LAND			
Industrialisation of Best and Most Valuable land	9% grade 2 and 38% of land in question is classified as Best and Most Valuable.	Local Plan Review under Regulation 19 Policy LPRSP9 emphasises the importance to facilitate the efficient use of the Borough's significant agricultural land and soil resource. NPPF para 174b planning policies and decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;	Development on Grade 2 and Grade 3a land goes against Local Guidance and NPPF regulation because it removes a valuable soil resource from production.

Reason	Detail	Relevant Regulation	Conclusion
More than 74.5 hectares removed from agricultural production	There are 2 sizeable fields which are currently farmed by Eckley farms (illustrated on my previous objection) on the Sheephurst Lane site but do not form part of the development plans. One field is on the south west corner of the veteran parkland and the other is west of the ancient woodland. This land would be unviable as farmland and it is not included in any biodiversity or mitigating planting measures. What is going to happen to this land over the next 37 years? Has it been earmarked for other development by the landowner? No answer has been given by the developer or landowner.	Local Plan Review under Regulation 19 Policy LPRSP9 emphasises the importance to facilitate the efficient use of the Borough's significant agricultural land and soil resource. NPPF para 174b planning policies and decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;	The fate of these 2 plots of land should be considered as part of the land removed from production. It is not efficient use of the Borough's resources if this land is also taken out of production.
Productive land would be lost permanently	The site is promoted as being temporary and reversible. 37 years is more than a generation and should not be viewed as temporary. The millions of pounds required to install the infrastructure for this development would require millions of pounds to reverse it and restore it back to productive agricultural land. There is no incentive for the developer to restore this land, and no legal framework to ensure this happens. But there would be significant financial incentive to continue to use the infrastructure, substation and HV compound for industrial energy production.	NPPF 174a states that protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils be protected. Local Plan Review under Regulation 19 Policy LPRSP9 emphasises the importance to facilitate the efficient use of the Borough's significant agricultural land and soil resource.	This is not a temporary development. BMV land would be removed from agricultural production.

Reason	Detail	Relevant Regulation	Conclusion
2. UNACCEPTABLE HARM TO LANDSCAPE OF LOCAL HISTORIC VALUE AND RURAL CHARACTER			
Rural and Historic character would be harmed by the development	Heritage assets, including 9 grade 2 listed buildings, with ancient woodland and rare historic veteran parkland are either within or surround the site. This solar farm installation would cause unacceptable harm to the rural character of this historic farming land. Indeed in the Statkraft proposal, it is acknowledged that Sheepwash will have an adverse effect on the landscape.	Local Plan Review under Regulation 19 Policy LPRSP9 which places great importance on the conservation and enhancement of landscapes of local value and ensuring development will not result in harm to the rural character and appearance on the area	Plans would harm the rural setting of protected heritage assets and therefore goes against local policy Plans to enclose the veteran would cause harm to the setting of the veteran trees of The Little Cheveney Parkland.
Harm to heritage	<p>The settings and views of 9 heritage assets (Grade 2 listed houses and oasthouses) would be significantly harmed by the solar farm and associated infrastructure as is confirmed by Maidstone Heritage and Design Consultation. Views from public footpaths across to the oasthouses would no longer be across open countryside. Their rural setting would be destroyed.</p> <p>Maps from 1855 show the main house (the Manor which is now known as Little Cheveney Farmhouse) together with what is called Cheveney Wood. The parkland is very important in the historic rural setting of Little Cheveney House. The land has been successfully farmed for some 500 years.</p> <p>The panels would be clearly visible from the northern windows and gardens of grade 2 listed Little Cheveney Farmhouse, especially in winter months. Glint and Glare would without question be a problem.</p>	<p>NPPF Para 189. Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations</p> <p>. NPPF para 190. Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets</p> <p>. Planning Act (1990) states there should be due consideration to the preservation of Listed Buildings and their settings.</p>	Development would destroy setting of heritage assets and therefore does not adhere to regulation

Reason	Detail	Relevant Regulation	Conclusion
Cumulative effect of industry on Low Weald rural landscape within 5.6km radius	<p>The following industry exists or is in planning within a 5.6km radius</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Paddock Wood solar farm 39 hectares 2.9km from Sheepwash 2) Widehurst solar farm 14.3 hectares 2.25 km from Sheepwash 3) Marden industrial estate 1.2km from Sheepwash 4) Collier Street polytunnel farm 900m from Sheepwash 5) Bockingfold solar 69.23 hectares (in planning with TWBC) 700m from Sheepwash 6) Mathurst solar farm 27 hectares (in pre planning with MBC) 5.6km from Sheepwash 7) Sheephurst Lane substation (partially approved) 130m from Sheepwash <p>If all these were to go ahead, the low Weald would become a checkerboard of industry and glass panels, destroying the rural landscape.</p>	<p>NPPF para 155. To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:</p> <p>a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);</p>	<p>Development is contrary to regulation. Cumulative effect of all this industry, (especially if 2 huge solar farms 700m from each other are granted permission) in a rural area would cause unacceptable harm. Surely some communication between Boroughs is required to prevent this.</p>
AONB	<p>The High Weald AONB is clearly visible from the East side of the site and so the site would be clearly visible from the High Weald AONB. Statkraft claim that vegetation prevents this view from one viewpoint. It is a large area so there would be more than one viewpoint. Views of the site from the AONB would be intrinsically harmed if this development were to go ahead.</p>	<p>AONB and their setting are protected by law.</p>	<p>No industry should be permitted if they can be seen from the AONB High Weald.</p>
Footpath enclosed by fencing	<p>The footpath next to the railway line which currently overlooks open countryside to the south would become a tunnel with solar farm security fencing on one side and railway fencing on the other.</p>	<p>NPPF para 100. Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way</p>	<p>Solar farm and associated fences and industry damages local environment and its beauty. A tunnel footpath with fencing on both sides is not an enhancement of the beauty of the countryside and public right of way</p>

Reason	Detail	Relevant Regulation	Conclusion
3. PROXIMITY OF SITE TO RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES AND OAK WOODLAND			
Proximity of site to Residents	Statkraft seems to take their measurements from the buildings, not the boundaries of residential properties. The boundary of Willow Cottage which is in the Little Cheveney Parkland is less than 15m (probably 5m) from the perimeter fencing. Gardens of residences where time is spent to relax and enjoy being outside also must be taken into consideration. It is not just about the house itself. There is also perimeter fencing directly next to nos 7 and 8 Sheephurst Cottages, Willow Barn. Being directly next to such industry will affect those living in these properties. The current living conditions and quality of the lives of the inhabitants will be detrimentally impacted by the development both during and after construction.	NPPF para 185. Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should: a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life; b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise	Development goes against regulation.
Proximity of access road and HV compound to residents at nos 7 and 8 Sheephurst Cottages	The 7.5m high HV compound has been placed in an area least likely to flood, but this happens to be 85m from 2 cottages (measurement taken from garden). A large parking area is placed just behind this. The constant hum of the HV compound following construction would have negative impact on those living there. In construction period the presence of 80-100 workers plus 3,200 trips of HGVs would drive alongside these cottages making the lives of those residing the intolerable, and destroying privacy and enjoyment of life. Noise pollution, as well as mess and dust from the site would be horrendous.	NPPF para 185 - as above	Development goes against regulation. It is unacceptable that such industry be placed so close to residents. It is equally unacceptable for those who live there to suffer both during and after construction period.

Reason	Detail	Relevant Regulation	Conclusion
Proximity of site to historic veteran oak tree parkland	The perimeter fencing is surrounded veteran oak parkland. Oak trees are protected by law. The Little Cheveney parkland is part of the setting of Grade 2 listed Little Cheveney Farmhouse. The solar farm would cause unacceptable harm to the setting of the house and parkland. There is no landscaping or biodiversity buffer between the perimeter fencing of this development and its valued historic land.	NPPF Para 180c highlights that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.	The development goes against guidelines. The setting of the Farmhouse parkland would be harmed by being enclosed on three sides by security fencing. At the very least, a 15m biodiversity buffer should be placed between the parkland border and perimeter fencing.
4. INCREASED FLOOD RISK			
Increased flood risk	Land closest to the river Teise floods. Properties to the north and east of the site are also at risk of flooding. Solar panel runoff would compact soil underneath causing increase surface water and therefore increased flood risk for neighbours. Flood water hitting the perimeter fencing would gather debris forcing the water to flow towards residences to the north and east of the site. Flooding is predicted to increase. Measures put in place by developer are insufficient.	NPPF para 159. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). NPPF para 167 directs that any planning applications should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere	Increased flood risk is contrary to guidance
Flooding to footpath diversion and proposed new footpath	The footpath which has been pushed into the north east corner of the development has forced the footpath onto land that floods every year.	NPPF para 159. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). NPPF para 100. Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way	Unacceptable to site footpath onto land that floods.

Reason	Detail	Relevant Regulation	Conclusion
5. PRE-CONSULTATION CONCERNS			
Lack of Consultation	588 leaflets in a 2 km radius distributed. This included Marden village. Statkraft claims this was sufficient. However this pre-consultation was insufficient, especially when it is considered that 500 new residences alone have been built in Marden since 2015 and immediate neighbours to the site never received the leaflet. This is unacceptable.	NPPF paras 39 and 40 emphasises the importance of engagement with the local community	Development does not adhere to regulation
6. GLINT AND GLARE SURVEY REMAINS ADEQUATE			
Glint and Glare	The Glint and Glare survey remains inadequate as it was based on solar panels 1.84m above ground, not 2.47m as in the plans. Concerned residents remain concerned that the survey was inaccurate and would therefore negatively impact them. Statkraft response to previous concerns is to dismiss them, not address them.	Accurate Glint and Glare survey should be required	The survey should be remodelled with correct height of panels
7. DANGEROUS ROUTE OF CONSTRUCTION TRAFFIC			
Construction Traffic	1,600 deliveries on 18m long HGVs. So 3,200 trips on a country lane which is used by walkers and cyclists, which has blind corners, narrows to single track and has 2 small bridges. Current preferred access is through Marden village, directly passed the Primary School. Both ends of Sheephurst Lane have very restricted views, so turning in and out of the Lane at both ends is unsafe.	NPPF para 111. Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.	It is dangerous for this volume of HGVs to travel through Marden and onto Sheephurst Lane and therefore the proposal goes against guidelines.

Reason	Detail	Relevant Regulation	Conclusion
8. UPDATED PLANTING SCHEDULE REQUIRED			
Additional mitigating planting required following amendments on the plans	The solar array has been altered by Statkraft. Where is the amended mitigating planting schedule? Under current plans, Willow Cottage, Willow Barn, grade 2 Little Cheveney Farmhouse and the grade 2 listed oasthouses would directly overlook the infrastructure and in our opinion also suffer from glint and glare from the panels.	The solar farm goes against the principle of good design which highlights that development should be influenced by protecting views, vistas and settings.	Additional planting schedule required before planning be considered.
Mitigating planting currently placed behind security fencing	It seems counter productive for mitigating planting to be placed behind security fencing with associated cameras. This fencing negates any mitigation and causes harm to the countryside setting. It would be more in keeping if such planting were to soften the industrial outlook of this development. Contrary to their statement of responses to concerns, a woodland buffer would screen the security fencing. How can this be so if the fencing is in front of the woodland?	Local Plan Review under Regulation 19 Policy LPRSP9 which places great importance on the conservation and enhancement of landscapes of local value and ensuring development will not result in harm to the rural character and appearance on the area	Additional planting schedule required before planning be considered.
New planting maps required	On the planting schedule, mitigating planting is on a field directly to the east of Little Cheveney Oasthouse and Willow Cottage. This field does not belong to Eckley Farms. This should be removed from the plans, biodiversity measures recalculated and alternative planting be considered to mitigate destruction of views to the listed buildings.	It is simply not legal to apply for planning permission on land that does not belong to you.	The planting schedule should be amended and biodiversity measures recalculated.
9. POSSIBLE POLICY CHANGE IN SITING OF LARGE SOLAR FARMS			
Current Government Position	Prime Minister Liz Truss has vowed to increase green energy production, but to stop solar farm development on valuable agricultural land. This land is valuable productive agricultural land.	Regulation tbc in coming weeks	Any solar farm development that goes against Government Guidance should not be permitted.

A final note: It may not be a planning concern, but I highlighted on my previous objection that it should be noted that the original Statkraft Summary Document is littered with fundamental mistakes as the NPPF is misquoted on numerous occasions. Most of the policies quoted do not correlate to current (July 2021) guidelines. The NPPF lies at the heart of all development. One can only assume that Statkraft is working from old version or their summary copied and pasted from previous applications with this application made to fit a template without consideration to current policy. Statkraft has made no attempt to rectify these misquotes. From the outset, there has been a total lack of professionalism, consideration and attention to detail which is deeply concerning. One can only fear what level of professionalism will be in place if this project were to be given permission. How can it be trusted that mitigating planting with suitable sized plants would actually take place? Indeed, how can it be trusted that any of their promises will be fulfilled if their proposal is so lacking in accurate detail?

26 September 2022

Application Summary:

Planning Application Ref: 22/501335/FULL

Proposal: Installation of renewable energy led generating station on land north of Sheephurst Lane

Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details:

Mrs Sarah Springhall

Little Cheveney Farmhouse, Sheephurst Lane, TN12 9NX

Comment Details:

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer OBJECTS to the Planning Application

I OBJECT to planning application ref 22/501335/FULL and would like the following to be taken into consideration.

Another large Solar Farm currently in planning is Bockingfold and is only 700m from this application known as Sheepwash. It has the same MW capacity (49.9MW) as the Solar Farm proposal on Sheephurst Lane, but is situated just outside the Maidstone Borough border and falls in Tunbridge Wells Borough (application reference 22/02773/FULL).

The Statkraft Alternative Site Assessment concludes that “there are no sequentially preferable sites (namely, previously developed land, non-agricultural land or greenfield land of lower quality) within a viable distance of the available grid connection.” This is not true because as is illustrated in the table below, Bockingfold is arguably a better proposal.

Although I, (along with numerous other objectors) support and encourage the move to green energy, we strongly oppose large solar farms being placed on productive agricultural land. Large solar farms are a relatively new innovation, and should rightly be judged on their individual merits. So being able to draw comparisons between 2 proposals of equal export capacity within such close geographical proximity of each other, illustrates best practice and gives weight to why so many local residents and organisations have objected so strongly to the Sheepwash proposal.

KEY ISSUES

	Sheepwash	Bockingfold
Proximity to Grid	0m	0m
Size	74.5 hectares 49.9MW export capacity	69.23 hectares. 49.9MW export capacity
Quality of land	2 (9%), 3a (38%), 3b (53%)	3b (82.5%) 3a (17.5%)
Grade 3a Land	Best and Most Valuable 3a land taken out of arable farming	The portions of 3a land form of small pockets on otherwise 3b land, so cannot be independently farmed.
Grade 2 land	Best and Most Valuable grade 2 land taken out of arable farming	Boundary of development altered by landowner to ensure protection of grade 2 land

	Sheepwash	Bockingfold
Communication with local residents	588 leaflets distributed in 2km radius. Immediate neighbours not included in the leaflet drop. No communication between landowner or developer to reassure concerned residents.	Leaflet drop to 750 neighbours within 2.5 km radius. Landowner and developer actively engaging with all stakeholders, concerned or interested parties
Preconsultation results	Of the 23 responses in pre-consultation only 1 person supported the proposal	Just under 50% objected
Residential properties in close proximity to the site which would be adversely effected by the development	Numerous residential amenities including 9 grade 2 listed buildings are on the borders of or very close to the site. 4 residences are directly on the perimeter fenced border	Two semi-detached cottages owned by landowner border the site.
Height of security cameras	5m	3m
Height of HV compound	7.5m	3-3.5m
Proximity of HV compound to residential properties	Approx 85m from garden boundary of the closest residential property	Approx 580m
Listed Buildings within 170m of the site	X4 grade 2 listed buildings	0
Listed buildings within 230m of the site	X8 grade2 listed buildings	X2 Grade 2 listed buidlings
Highways	Access on Sheephurst Lane. 7.5tonne HGVs would pose danger for other road users, including cyclists and pedestrians on any of the suggested routes. Sheephurst Lane is country lane which narrows to single lane in parts, with over single track bridges, dangerous restricted visibility on corners and also when turning in and out of Sheephurst Lane at both ends.	Access from wide B2162 road. Transport route has been designed to ensure sensitive receptors on local highway network such as small villages, narrow roads are avoided.
Highways flooding	Sheephurst Lane floods frequently and becomes impassable (almost every year). The country lane would be degraded as result of floodwater. This would be made significantly worse with the passage of 3,400 18 m long 7.5 tonne lorries	No flooding issues on planned route
Access to site	Construction traffic use same entrance/exit on narrow Sheephurst Lane and drive directly passed the border of Sheephurst Cottages 7 and 8.	Construction traffic use different in and out access routes away from residences. The route is designed to disperse traffic and minimise disruption.

	Sheepwash	Bockingfold
Woodland/Veteran Parkland	1 ancient wood on the site, 1 veteran parkland which would be encapsulated by the development and would cause unacceptable harm to their setting.	Ancient woodland 300m north of the development and would not be impacted.
Biodiversity	Landowner taken no steps to take advantage of Gov Grants to encourage biodiversity on this land.	Landowner already taking advantage of Gov grants to encourage wildlife with rewilding and bird conservation crop in place.
Proximity to river	On the bank of the River Teise (which regularly floods)	130m from the River Teise
Footpath	Footpath redirected and in North East corner of site. This redirection pushes the footpath onto land which floods every year and would be impassable. New footpath along the riverbank which regularly floods.	No change to footpaths
Footpath Buffer	Footpath which surrounds site on 3 sides and bisects with no distance or buffer between path and security fencing. Footpath on northern side of site would become a tunnel with the railway on one side and solar farm security fencing on the other.	Footpath which bisects the site has a 10m landscaping and biodiversity buffer between the public footpath and wooden post fencing so potential enjoyment of countryside is maximised as much as possible.
Increased flooding risk	75% of site is on highest flood risk 3, with remainder in flood zone 2. Flooding on the site will happen.	Flood zone 1, 2 and 3. Flooding is possible. Panels which had been planned on on flood risk 3b (ie the floodplain) were removed from the plan to secure habitat and biodiversity enhancement that benefit the function of the flood plain and support infiltration and dispersion of floodwater.

CONCLUSIONS

NPPF para 170b states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside - including the economic and other benefits of the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land, trees and woodland. Footnote 53 adds that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of higher quality.

Based on land quality, possible damage to heritage assets and their settings, impact on local residences, impact on flooding, impact on the highways, Bockingfold would appear to be a better/preferred proposal despite it being so close to Sheepwash.

Solar Farms deliver healthy returns on investment for developers who sell the energy gained back to the grid. Solar Farm developers advertise for landowners close to the grid across the UK, offering up to £1000 per acre pre annum to lease their land. Sheepwash solar farm was selected based on the fact that the site is next to the grid and the landowner was happy to rent his land

(183 acres), not because it is the best location for a solar farm. Motivation is return on investment. Sheepwash is not the best site when directly compared with Bockingfold. Arguments to promote the site by the developer have been shaped accordingly.

It should also be considered that if both proposals were given planning permission, Claygate and Sheephurst Lane would become a checkerboard of glass panels and would not be in keeping with the Low Weald rural landscape. The cumulative effect of both proposals going ahead would have a harmful and negative impact on the Low Weald landscape.

Date: 27 September 2022

Application Summary:

Planning Application Ref: 22/501335/FULL

Proposal: Installation of renewable energy led generating station on land north of Sheephurst Lane

Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details:

Mrs Sarah Springhall, Little Cheveney Farmhouse, Sheephurst Lane, TN12 9NX

Comment Details:

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer OBJECTS to the Planning Application

NPPF Para 189. Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

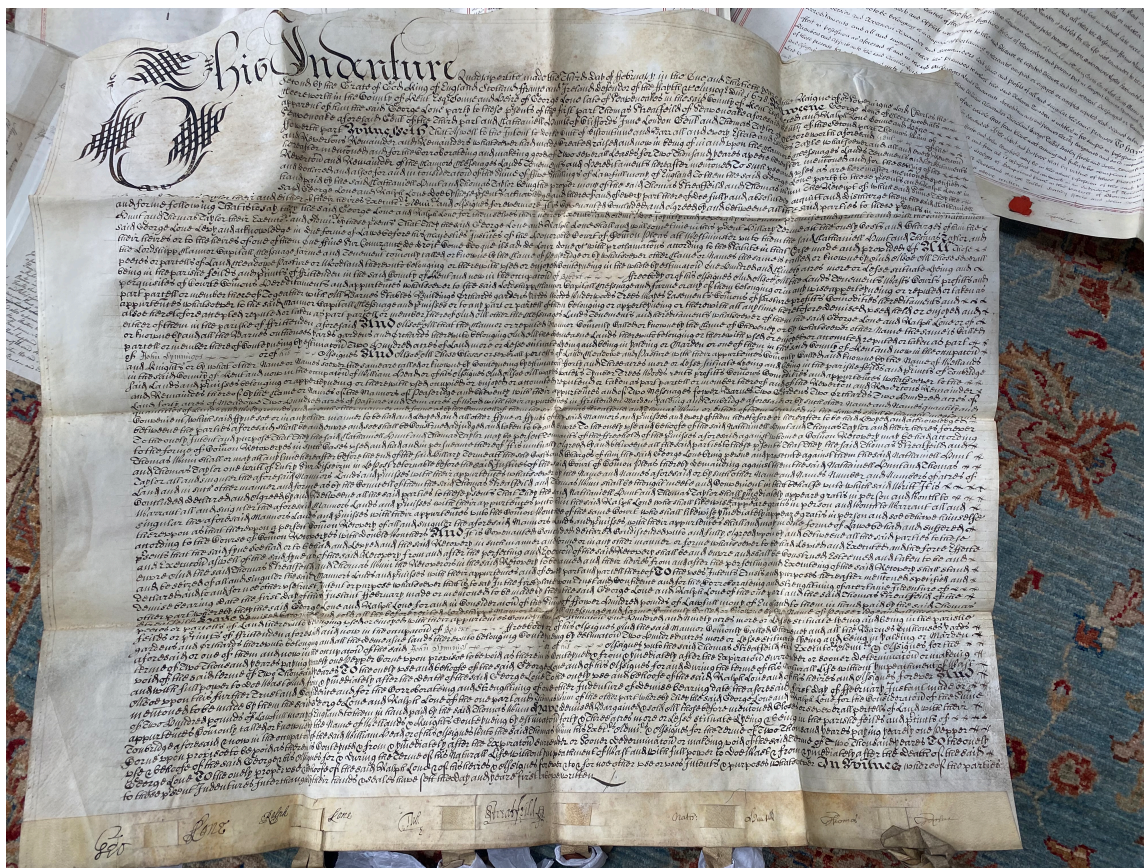
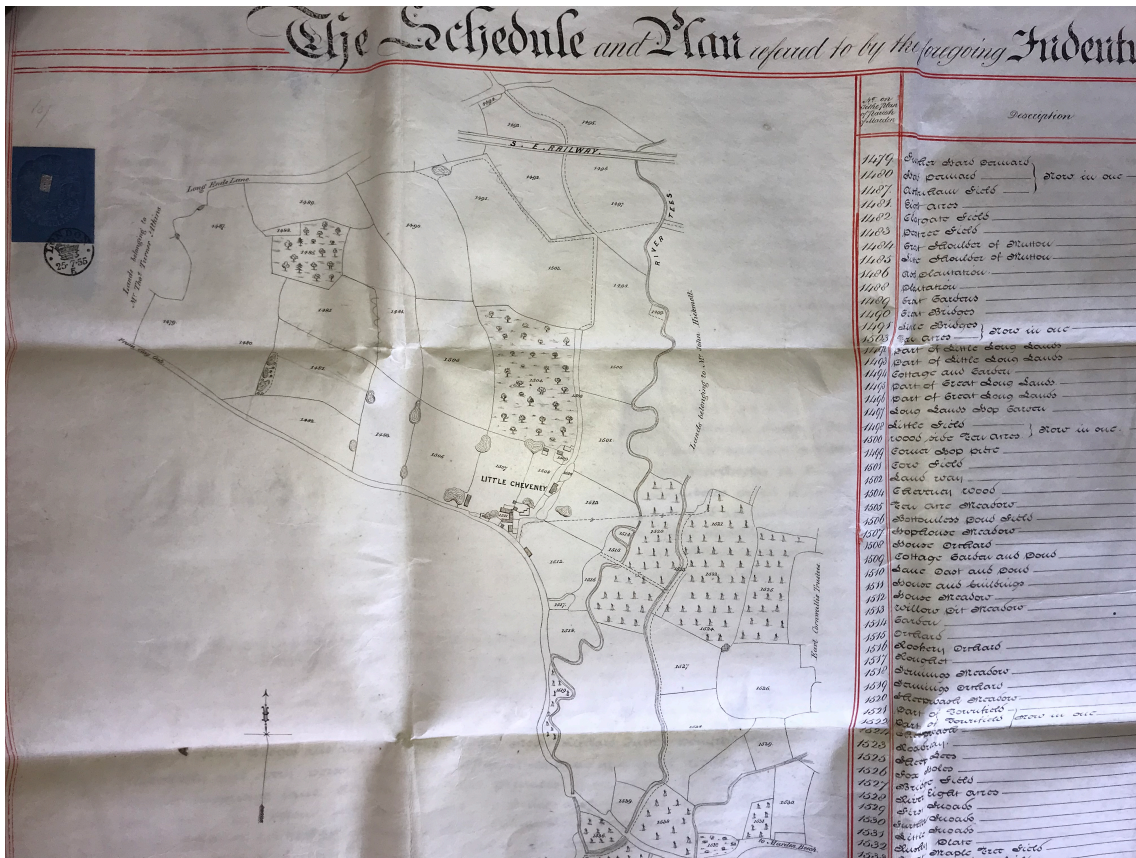
In addition to my previous objections, and to back up my objection on the grounds of this development causing harm to a heritage asset of the Borough, I thought I should share photographs of some of the historical deeds, indentures of release and settlement, leases and receipts pertaining to the land and buildings at Little Cheveney Farm and also to those that lived here and farmed this land. Documents date back to 1613, probably earlier. (Please note I have not untied and opened up all documents in order to protect them, and have kept the most delicate sealed, but the below photos should hopefully give a good idea of the style and type of document I refer to).

We believe that to have such a large collection of historical documents relating to one farm and being in such good condition is rare. This rarity gives Little Cheveney and its associated farm buildings a unique social and agricultural historical interest and relevance.

The map dated 1855 clearly shows the Manor (Little Cheveney Farmhouse) and its farm buildings, Little Cheveney Wood (now known as the Parkland), the Ash Plantation (the ancient woodland) as well as the productive farmland that surrounds the site. Under the current proposal, Little Cheveney Wood would be enclosed on three sides by the development with open rural views both towards and from the listed farmhouse and other listed buildings on the site being severely harmed.

Whilst appreciate that we have to progress and move forwards with green energy solutions. But to cover and surround this site with an huge industrial energy plant of solar panels, HV compound and associated infrastructure would cause unjustifiable harm to this heritage asset of the Borough and should therefore be protected for future generations and remain as productive arable land. Simply put - this is the wrong development in the wrong location.





29 June 2022

Application Summary

Planning Application Ref: 22/501335/FULL

Site Address: Land North of Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane, Marden, Kent

Proposal: Installation of renewable energy led generating station

Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Sarah Springhall

Little Cheveney Farmhouse, Sheephurst Lane, TN12 9NX

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

I **OPPOSE** the proposed development for the following reasons:

1. LACK OF CONSULTATION

Engagement with the local community has been insufficient and in our case non-existent. Our home is at the at the epicentre of the proposed development. We along with others most directly affected by the development were not given the promotional flyer distributed by Statkraft, nor were we aware of the apparent meetings which took place at Marden Parish or Collier Street Parish. As a matter of courtesy the developer or landowner should have at least informed us of their plans. An online poll is barely a public consultation, especially when you consider that many who live here are not digitally minded. Enough time has lapsed since lockdown restrictions were eased and therefore Covid is no excuse not to engage with those who live in the area. The first time we had sight of the full plans and design of the Solar Farm was after it was posted on the Maidstone Planning Portal.

NPPF paragraphs 39 and 40 emphasises the importance of engagement with the local community. It is unacceptable to not engage with immediate neighbours and for the local residents to have only a 21 days to digest the vast amount of information on the plans and give an informed response to such a major development.

2. INDUSTRIALISATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

NPPF Para 170b footnote 53 state “that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of higher quality”. The Maidstone Local Plan echos this policy. The economic and productive impact of any development on Agricultural Land must be taken into account. The main objective behind this is to protect national food security and to ensure the efficient use of land with a preference for development on poor quality agricultural land. The report prepared by Bidwells for Statkraft confirms that the land is of good quality, 2, 3a (BMV) and 3b.

Due to the Ukraine crisis, the geopolitical landscape is changing faster than policy can be drawn up. A Westminster Hall Debate March 2022 considered large solar farms with the issue again raised on 29 June 2022 in Parliament during PMQ. It it was very clear that those on both sides of the bench agreed that whilst there is the need for cleaner energy production, it must not be at the expense of food producing greenfield land. Agricultural land is a finite resource and the National Food Strategy 2022 states that as a country we need to be Food Secure. This land has been successfully farmed for hundreds of years. It is good quality land, ideal for the production of wheat - a crop which is currently in dangerously short supply and will be for the foreseeable future. Food security is of paramount importance and therefore removing this productive agricultural land from the food chain does not make sense and would be wrong.

Solar has its place on disused airfields, brownfield sites, old landfill sites such as the one in Wednesfield, West Midlands, and on warehouses such as in Guernsey. The Maidstone Borough Council rightly is committed to a better, cleaner future whilst encouraging growth - but solar panels have their place on the roofs of houses, especially the roofs of all new developments, on the roofs of warehouses, not on food productive land.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT GOES AGAINST THE LOCAL PLAN

Paragraph 6.27 of the Maidstone Local Plan states, "The NPPF encourages the protection of valued landscapes. For Maidstone, these landscapes are identified as the Greensand Ridge, the Low Weald, and the river valleys of the Medway, the Loose and the Len, are afforded protection in policy SP17."

The sheer enormity of this site would be a sizeable scar on the Low Weald landscape.

Rows upon rows of glass like panels, associated energy generation infrastructure, security fencing, gates and access roads in a site would encase ancient woodland and historic parkland, displace wildlife, destroy the beauty of the countryside and ruin the setting of many listed buildings.

As is stated in the Marden Local Plan, the people of Marden and Collier Street place great value on their enjoyment of the local countryside. It is integrally linked to their health and wellbeing - as clearly illustrated during Covid. Rather than public rights of way with views across open farmland, footpaths at the site, which are used daily by local residents who can easily walk to them from the village, would be diverted and become corridors enclosed by security fencing, CCTV cameras or a wall of hedging if/when established after 10 years.

4. SCALE OF THE PROJECT AND PROXIMITY TO RESIDENTS

The footprint of the proposed solar farm is similar in size to the footprint of Marden. It falls just short of requiring Secretary of State approval. This is disproportionately large and over development of productive agricultural land.

The site is unacceptably close to some residential properties and in some cases there is no seclusion from the industrial development. No consideration or care has been given to the local residents by the developer. The 7.5m high HV compound along with items 5m tall CCTV cameras will loom over the cottages that it is placed next to. Siting the compound next to this property is unacceptable and contrary to the Principles of Good Design. It would not only destroy the living conditions but would be highly damaging to the quality of life of those who reside there both during and after construction. The noise during the construction period would be unbearable. Willow Cottage on the East side of the development is some 15m from the high security fencing and would also be detrimentally impacted by the development.

5. IMPACT ON HERITAGE SETTING AND HISTORICAL VALUE

There is much detail in the NPPF which requires development ensure the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes. Paragraph 189, "Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value....so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations". Paragraph 190, "Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment". Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) clearly states the within the Planning process there should be due consideration to the preservation of Listed Buildings and their settings. This is echoed in the Maidstone Local Plan 3.5 "Protection of the borough's distinct urban and rural heritage remains an important issue for the council".

The proposal goes against the above for the following reasons:

. There are numerous listed building dotted on the boundaries of the site, as well as some further afield. Their setting is protected by law. The setting of all of these heritage assets would be intrinsically harmed by this development.

. The land at the site has been farmed successfully since the 17th century, probably earlier, and as such has historical agricultural significance. We know this because we have sight of the deeds, (including a map) for the house and land at Little Cheveney Farm dating back to the early 1653. These historical documents are unique and give the house and associated farmland a significant historical value.

NPPF Paragraph 180c - "development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused."

. Parkland in Kent is rare, but is a prominent feature at the heart of this proposal. The Historic Parkland of Grade 11 Little Cheveney Farmhouse is a unique feature of the local area and is full of veteran oak trees which are legally protected. Oak trees are the UK's most important tree for biodiversity, supporting around 2,200 species. This is more than any other native tree species. This plot of land should therefore be regarded as an important ecological and heritage asset of the Borough. The Statkraft proposal fails to recognise this. The solar farm encloses the Parkland on 3 sides with 2.4m high security fencing and access roads with no buffer. Such close proximity to the border would not only cause harm to the setting of the Parkland but would cause deterioration of this green space. In addition, there the ancient woodland which is across the field from the parkland. The buffer that has been put in place around this protected space is insufficient.

6. GLINT AND GLARE and VISUAL HARM

. On page 15 of the study conducted by Page Power, it states that their Glint and Glare report is modelled on panels 1.84m above ground level. The panels in the Statkraft proposal are 2.47m high panels, a third higher than those in the report. Surely this report is therefore irrelevant?

. Views of the fields on the East side of the development are visible from the AONB High Weald. This has not been addressed by Statkraft in their reports.

. Despite hedging, the solar farm site would be clearly visible the North side of Little Cheveney Farmhouse, rendering the mitigating screening useless. When the deciduous trees of the parkland drop their leaves, the view extends to over the Eckley fields to the North West of the house as far as the railway. With no hedging around the parkland plus a gentle undulation of the land the panels will be very visible from the listed property.

. The photographic evidence to support the Statkraft development give excellent views of productive farmland, and what the site may look like from various spots on the sites boundaries. However, they are inadequate and do not give any idea of what the site would look like from the properties that surround and overlook it. The proposal cannot go ahead until the magnitude of the visual impact from local dwellings is clarified and as per the NPPF "not cause visual harm". In addition the photographs do not show what the 7.5m high HV compound would look like from the property which it abuts, the battery storage compound next to the river, or what the CCTV cameras would look like in situ.

. It would appear that high security metal fencing and 5m high CCTV cameras would be placed in front of the mitigating hedging. Therefore, views of prison style fencing complete with cameras is not in keeping with the local area and would cause an adverse effect on the views.

. The visual impact assessment does not mention what how high the solar panels are. Like the glint and glare study, were they working on an assumption that the solar panels would be 1.84m high?

7. SELECTION OF LAND

Planning requires that Statkraft has to set out why this site is the most suitable for a Solar Farm, that there are no better sites for such a development. It also argues that the development will help the landowner/farmer diversify.

Statkraft has only looked at possible sites along the power line because it provides the best return on investment for the developer. There appears to be a severe lack in looking at sites further away from the power line, which may be more appropriate land for a Solar Farm, away from residential property and on lower grade agricultural land. There is no technological barrier to connecting sites at a range of locations as illustrated by the solar development in Great Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire which is connected to the sub-station 11km from the site. In addition Eckley Farms has previously applied to place a Solar Farm on land

between Marden and Staplehurst which is not next to the grid. Finally on the border of the MBC and TWBC, there is another similar sized Solar Farm going into planning with TWBC. This illustrates that Statkraft has not met the requirements.

Statkraft states, "The site comprises only 4.6% of the arable land of Eckley Farms. Removing relatively poorly performing field has benefits to the Estate in terms of harvesting capacity and efficiency.... This will more than offset the limited lost income of crop output from the site where productivity is below average." With some 1000ha with associated farmyards and buildings, Eckley Farms are major landowners and benefit from economies of scale. As such they do not need to diversify in the same way that smaller landowners may do. Prior to Eckley Farms purchase of this land in 2010, the land has been successfully farmed for hundreds of years. There is no justification for the landowner to have to diversify to solar energy production.

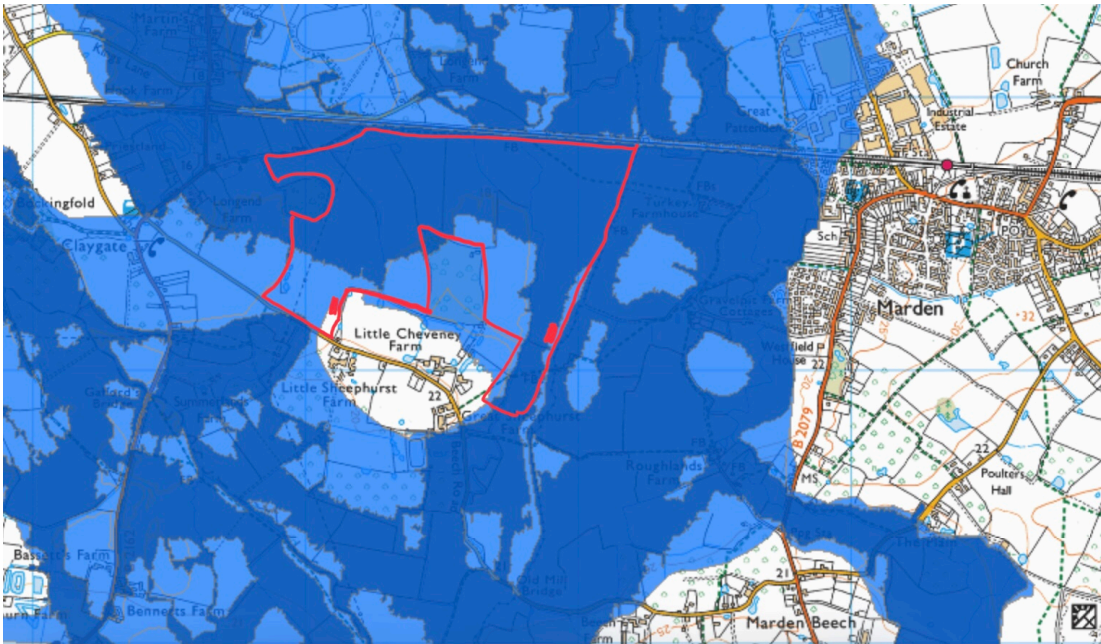
8.CUMULATIVE EFFECT

In addition to this proposal, there are plans for a large electricity switching station directly opposite the Marden Solar Farm on Sheephurst Lane as well as another similar sized solar farm fields away on the Maidstone Road. Planning for this site will shortly be going into TWBC . The cumulative effect of all this potential industrial infrastructure is excessive and would destroy the landscape and open countryside. See below map.



The Marden and Collier Street area has already lost much of its open orchards, farmland and countryside to poly tunnels, housing development and a solar farm (Widehurst solar farm). The cumulative effect of all this industrial development in such a small rural area is excessive.

9.FLOOD RISK



This map overlays the site onto the Kent County Council's flood risk zone map. The dark blue area is flood zone 3 and the lighter blue zone is flood zone 2. The Maidstone Local Plan rightly states in their plan paragraph 4.82 that there are "strict controls on the location of development within Flood Zones 2 and 3. This is also set out in NPPF Paragraph 159 which states that "inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future)". 75-80% of the site is in flood zone 3 with the remaining in flood zone 2. The HV compound is in flood zone 2/3 and the Battery Storage compound is in flood zone 3 next to the river. There is also no buffer between the river and some of the solar panels on the East side of the development.

We have lived in Marden since 2010 and in that time along we have known flooding to happen on 3 separate occasions. The most flood vulnerable properties are on the east side of the river and north of the railway line. Sheephurst Lane, Green Lane and Plain Road become impassable, sewage drains overflow in the village, with some houses and gardens on suffering from floods. We are told to expect increased flooding in future years as climate change worsens.

I believe the flood mitigation measures in the proposal are inadequate and would increase flood risk for properties on the East side of the River Teise and the North side of the railway line for the following reasons:

- 1) Solar Panels. Just like roofs, run off water from the solar panels could be as much as 10 times greater than that of evenly distributed rainfall. The water pours off the panels rather than seeping into the ground, causing compaction of the low Weald clay soil. The water cannot seep into the ground and would end up pooling, resulting in a speeding up process of any flooding. There is no plan to help ease this issue.
- 2) In wet months, land drains currently divert water from the saturated ground to ditches and the river, which prevents water logging and keeps the land fertile and highly productive. What measures have been taken to ensure the the 900mm deep land drains would not be interrupted by the 1.5m footings of the solar panels and cabling required to connect the battery storage across the land to the HV station?
- 3) Without aerating the soil by the drilling and ploughing farming processes, the clay soil would become impacted causing increased pooling and possible run off which would have an adverse effect on properties on the flood plains to the East and North of the development.
- 4) In the Flood Risk Assessment it was considered "appropriate to assess the development for the 1 in 100 year event with 35% allowance for climate change". I have known the area to flood 3 times in the last 10 years alone so surely there are grounds for these parameters to be changed to reflect actual risk, not theoretical risk.

10. FIRE AND PUBLIC HEALTH RISK

A battery storage unit is recognised as an inherent fire risk. There are examples of battery storages fires and explosions around the world and there has already been one such event in Liverpool in 2020. This concern was highlighted in the Government debate on solar farms in March 2022, and it was agreed that further investigation is required to understand the risks and what steps are required to prevent fires and educate firefighters on how to tackle such fires and explosions.

The fire report following the Liverpool fire stated “once water was applied, the resulting run-off contained Hydrofluoric Acid (HF) – a highly toxic substance which can dissolve concrete and whose fumes can be fatal to life”. Measures to protect the safety of public and water course should be of primary importance. If there were such a fire at this unit, then run off would inevitably end up the river with disastrous, far reaching consequences. It is also important to note that the footpath is close to the unit. The public need to be kept at a very, very safe distance from such potentially dangerous and life threatening industry.

11. CONSTRUCTION TRAFFIC

NPPF Paragraph 111 of the directs that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Sheephurst Lane is a country lane with 2 narrow bridges which already carries too much traffic. When large vehicles, for example the local bus, travel down the road, other vehicles are forced to the side of the road into the hedging. It is already not safe. The 18m long articulated lorries to carry goods to the site are significantly larger than the 12m long local bus. The lane would get jammed and impassable. Sheephurst Lane is also part of some very popular cycling routes, with a notable increase in cyclists since Covid. Updated Highway Code hierarchy gives cyclists greater priority on roads. The nature of the heavy goods traffic associated with the development would pose a serious danger to cyclists whose interests must be taken into consideration.

The road simply cannot safely carry the numerous articulated lorries required to deliver infrastructure and accidents are inevitable. The cumulative impact of articulated lorries on such small roads would be a severe and unacceptable impact on the local road network.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

. An ecology survey has been undertaken by the developer, but there is more wildlife in the area which has not been noted.. As local residents we have spotted many species of rare birds including barn owls, little owls, tawny owls, red kites, as well as kingfishers on the river and also on the ponds at Little Cheveney. Some bird species on the site are on the Red List and are protected under the Wildlife and Country Act 1981. We firmly believe that the massive construction process involved in the solar farm would cause huge disturbance to these species, displace existing wildlife with there is no guarantee of their would return. The process of driving piles to fix the solar panels into the ground would cause harm and disruption to the badgers on the site. Badgers are a protected species yet there appears to be little if any measures in place to protect them.

. Maintenance and management of the mitigating planting will be substantial. As will the maintenance of the footpath corridors. Who would be doing this? How do we know this will definitely happen? As is the case in so many developments, much is promised, yet little or nothing is delivered. Who is held to account to ensure this is done properly - the landowner (who currently does not sufficiently look after boundaries or footpaths) or the developer whose interest is in maximising profit?

. Trees and mitigating planting appear to be placed behind the fencing in many areas across the site. So in 10 years time when the planting has established, the view would be trees and hedges behind high metal security fencing with 5m high CCTV cameras. Contrary to the NPPF guidelines, this is not enhancement of the natural environment.

. The land under the solar panels is degraded with little potential for biodiversity around the solar panels as half of it will be in permanent shadow and rain water run-off creates set channels without proper dispersal. If sheep are to be grazed on the site then they would also prevent biodiversity from happening.

13. SOLAR FARMS AND THE ENERGY WHITE PAPER

In the rationale to permit planning, much is made of the need for solar energy in the Statkraft proposal so as such is a material planning consideration. The Government has specifically promoted offshore Wind Turbines as one of the best ways forwards for the UK to produce green energy. In the Ten Point Plan, there is little mention of solar farms but does place emphasis on wind farms, nuclear energy, fusion power with predictions that by 2030 offshore wind will supply 60% of energy requirements. So why is there little mention of Solar Farms in the Energy White Paper? Is it because:

- the UK has a finite amount of good agricultural land that shouldn't be replaced by solar panels which would be better positioned on inert ground and roofs?
- it is recognised that solar panels are not efficient in the North European Hemisphere. As Dr Benny Peiser, director of the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF) has pointed out - solar energy in the the UK makes no sense and the miles of panelling are likely to do more harm than good. There is simply not enough sun.
- large solar farms are NOT carbon neutral. The carbon generated to manufacture the panels, wiring, batteries, materials associated buildings, plus transportation required from China would mean that this solar farm would never be carbon neutral.
- The government recognises that as technology advances and our ability to produce home grown energy will improve, so as such Solar Farms will be Solar Graveyards and a huge scar on the landscape across the UK?

14. MORE THAN 74.5ha OF AGRICULTURAL LAND REMOVED FROM FOOD PRODUCTION

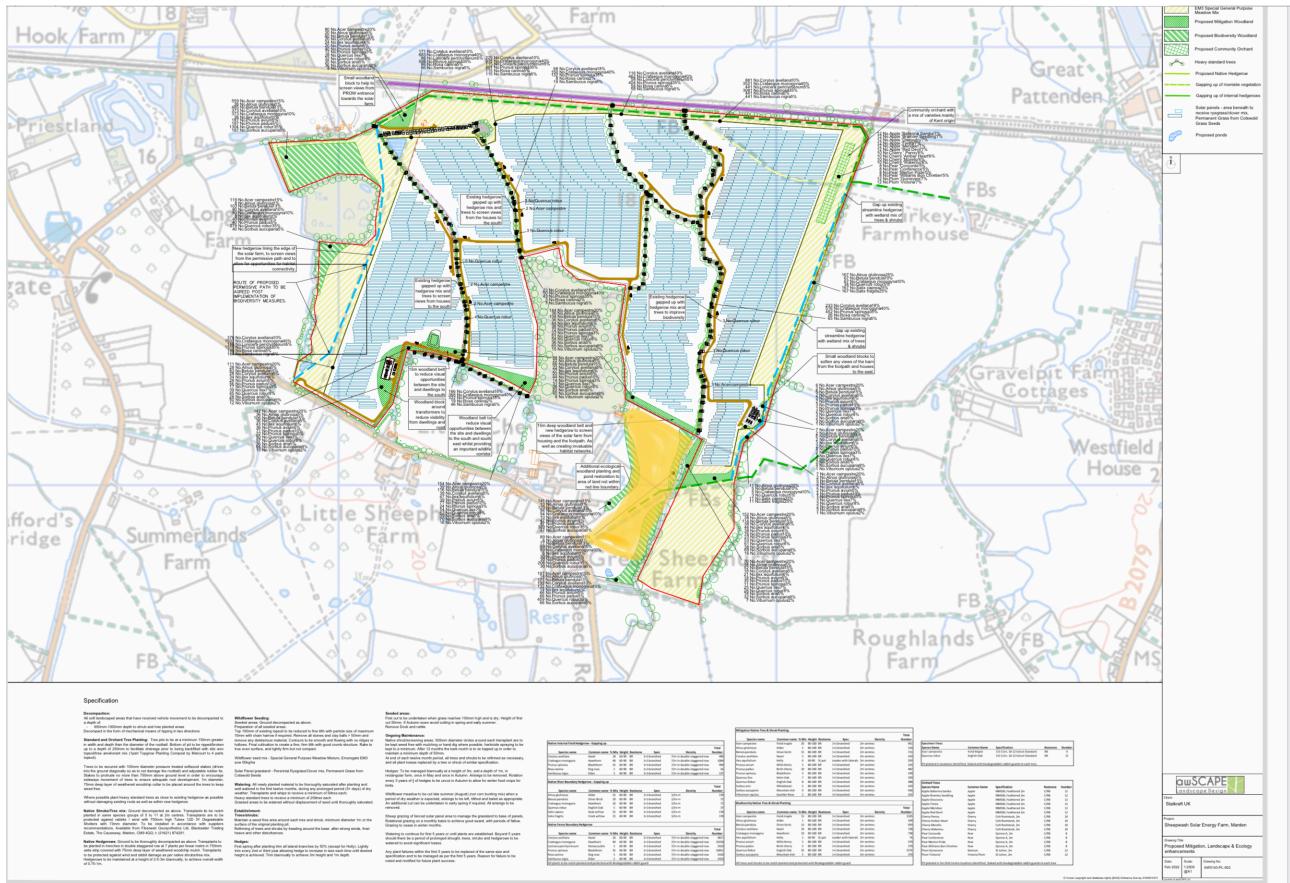
Two pockets of land as highlighted in yellow on the map below have been retained by Eckley Farms. This is currently productive arable land, but economies of scale would suggest that the acreage is unviable as productive land if the solar installation were to go ahead. Therefore more land than the 74.5hectares for the Solar Farm would be taken out of food production. This is deeply concerning in a time of food crisis.



15. ERRORS ON THE STATKRAFT PLANS

In addition to the miscalculated glint and glare report there are two notable errors in the Statkraft Plans:

A) The boundaries are incorrect. The planting scheme includes numerous trees on land that is not owned by Eckley Farms. To my knowledge no permission has been given by the actual landowner for mitigating planting to be placed on their land. The area concerned is highlighted in yellow below. This is a sizeable area. If taken out of the picture, then planned mitigation planting is even less effective and causing greater visual harm to the landscape.



B) In the Statkraft Executive Summary it states that “supporting reports fully addresses the key guidance in the NPPF, namely paragraphs 154 and 170”. Paragraph 170 states “In coastal areas planning policies and decisions should take into account of the UK Marine Policy Statement”. This is clearly irrelevant and the developer has clearly copied and pasted their arguments from one of their other 34 proposals across the UK.

If such little care and consideration is taken into the preparation of their proposal, one is led to question how much care and consideration would be given to the land and the residents both during and after the construction.

16. THE FUTURE

The solar farm is promoted as being temporary and could be reversed after 37 years. 37 years is a lifetime and should not be termed as temporary. Huge infrastructure is required on sites as large as this, including 12,000m² of permanent roads, a substation and an 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 would not be decommissioned. Indeed, in the Statkraft decommissioning document they state that, “The future of the electrical compound including the substation and the energy storage facility would be discussed with the distribution network operator and agreed with

the landowner and the local planning authority prior to commencement of decommissioning.” This statement is ambiguous and implies that the structures would be a permanent development. In addition, like the construction phase, the environmental damage caused by the decommissioning would be detrimental.

17. DEVELOPMENT CONTRARY TO NPPF PARAGRAPH 8

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that in “achieving sustainable development there are three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways”. I do not believe any of these objectives have been met by the developer as outlined below.

- A) *“an economic objective - to help build a strong responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity”.* This land is grade 2, 3a and 3b and as such is productive as agricultural land. To remove this land from food production in a time of food crisis, which is predicted to only get worse, would be contrary the economic objective set out in the Food Strategy White Paper. Best use of land was also highlighted in a Government debate in March 2022 and in PMQ on 29 June 2022. Both sides of the house agreed that sacrificing good agricultural land because it is the easiest way to develop solar farms, does not make it the right way forwards.
- B) *“a social objective - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities...by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe spaces that reflect current and future need and support communities health, social and cultural well-being”.* The site would be a visual scar on the landscape and would have a detrimental impact on the lives of the immediate neighbours. Mitigating plans to screen the site are insufficient and do not consider the negative impact on the wellbeing of neighbours or local residents who daily enjoy the open countryside and use these open spaces for their wellbeing. There is no benefit to the local community.
- C) *“an environmental objective - to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”.* A solar farm in this area does not enhance the natural environment - there is nothing natural about putting industrial glass panels, metal security fencing, CCTV cameras countryside. The environment and setting in which the site lies has historical value with heritage assets which would be detrimentally effected by the development. It is home to protected species who would be displaced by the construction process.

18. CONTRARY TO MAIDSTONE LOCAL PLAN POLICY DM24

The proposal is contrary to the guidelines as set out in the Maidstone Local Plan Policy DM24 Renewable Low Carbon and Energy Schemes for all of the reasons already stated in this opposition. In summary - it is good agricultural land; the development would be in conflict with landscape character and existing use; the cumulative impact would be unacceptable; the visual impact on this protected landscape would be adversely affected; there would be an adverse effect on heritage assets and their setting; the noise and disruption generated during the construction phase would be unacceptable; there would be negative impact on the local ecology particularly during construction phase.

CONCLUSION

We all recognise and support that the move to green energy is required and is rightly a priority across the UK. However, as the NPPF clearly states that development should be in the right type of land in the right place. Not only is this site productive agricultural land, it has heritage assets, is too close to dwellings, and is contrary to the Local Plan. This site is the wrong type of land and in the wrong place.

With all of these factors taken into consideration, I respectfully ask the Maidstone Planning Authority refuse planning permission.

29 June 2022

Application Summary

Planning Application Ref: 22/501335/FULL

Site Address: Land North of Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane, Marden, Kent

Proposal: Installation of renewable energy led generating station

Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Sarah Springhall

Little Cheveney Farmhouse, Sheephurst Lane, TN12 9NX

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

I **OPPOSE** the proposed development for the following reasons:

1. LACK OF CONSULTATION

Engagement with the local community has been insufficient and in our case non-existent. Our home is at the epicentre of the proposed development. We along with others most directly affected by the development were not given the promotional flyer distributed by Statkraft, nor were we aware of the apparent meetings which took place at Marden Parish or Collier Street Parish. As a matter of courtesy the developer or landowner should have at least informed us of their plans. An online poll is barely a pretence of consultation, especially when you consider that many who live here are not digitally minded. Enough time has lapsed since lockdown restrictions were eased and therefore Covid is no excuse not to engage with those who live in the area. The first time we had sight of the full plans and design of the Solar Farm was after it was posted on the Maidstone Planning Portal.

NPPF paragraphs 39 and 40 emphasises the importance of engagement with the local community. It is unacceptable to not engage with immediate neighbours and for the local residents to have only a 21 day period to digest the vast amount of information on the plans and give an informed response to such a development.

2. INDUSTRIALISATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

NPPF Para 170b footnote 53 state "that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of higher quality". The Maidstone Local Plan echoes this policy. The economic and productive impact of any development on Agricultural Land must be taken into account. The main objective behind this is to protect national food security and ensure the efficient use of land with a preference for development on poor quality agricultural land. A report prepared by Bidwells for Statkraft confirms that the land is of good quality, 2, 3a (BMV) and 3b.

Due to the Ukraine crisis, the geopolitical landscape is changing faster than policy can be drawn. Westminster Hall Debate March 2022 considered large solar farms with the issue again raised on 29 June 2022 in Parliament during PMQ. It was very clear that those on both sides of the bench agreed that whilst there is the need for cleaner energy production, it must not be at the expense of food producing greenfield land. Agricultural land is a finite resource and the National Food Strategy 2022 states that as a country we need to be Food Secure. This land has been successfully farmed for hundreds of years. It is good quality land, ideal for the production of wheat - a crop which is currently in dangerously short supply and will be for the foreseeable future. Food security is of paramount importance and therefore removing productive agricultural land from the food chain does not make sense and would be wrong.

Solar has its place on disused airfields, brownfield sites, old landfill sites such as the one in Wednesfield, West Midlands, and on warehouses such as in Guernsey. The Maidstone Borough Council is committed to a better, cleaner future whilst encouraging growth - but solar panels have their place on roofs of houses, especially the roofs of all new developments, on the roofs of warehouses, not on productive land.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT GOES AGAINST THE LOCAL PLAN

Paragraph 6.27 of the Maidstone Local Plan states, "The NPPF encourages the protection of landscapes. For Maidstone, these landscapes are identified as the Greensand Ridge, the Low Weald, and the river valleys of the Medway, the Loose and the Len, are afforded protection in policy SP17."

The sheer enormity of this site would be a sizeable scar on the Low Weald landscape.

Rows upon rows of glass like panels, associated energy generation infrastructure, security fencing, gates and access roads in a site would encase ancient woodland and historic parkland, displace wildlife, destroy the beauty of the countryside and ruin the setting of many listed buildings.

As is stated in the Marden Local Plan, the people of Marden and Collier Street place great value on enjoyment of the local countryside. It is integrally linked to their health and wellbeing - as clearly illustrated during Covid. Rather than public rights of way with views across open farmland, footpaths at the village which are used daily by local residents who can easily walk to them from the village, would be diverted and become corridors enclosed by security fencing, CCTV cameras or a wall of hedging if/when established after 10 years.

4. SCALE OF THE PROJECT AND PROXIMITY TO RESIDENTS

The footprint of the proposed solar farm is similar in size to the footprint of Marden. It falls just short of requiring Secretary of State approval. This is disproportionately large and over development of productive agricultural land.

The site is unacceptably close to some residential properties and in some cases there is no seclusion from the industrial development. No consideration or care has been given to the local residents by the developer. The 7.5m high HV compound along with items 5m tall CCTV cameras will loom over the cottages that are placed next to. Siting the compound next to this property is unacceptable and contrary to the Principles of Good Design. It would not only destroy the living conditions but would be highly damaging to the quality of life of those who reside there both during and after construction. The noise during the construction period would be unbearable. Willow Cottage on the East side of the development is some 15m from the security fencing and would also be detrimentally impacted by the development.

5. IMPACT ON HERITAGE SETTING AND HISTORICAL VALUE

There is much detail in the NPPF which requires development ensure the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes. Paragraph 189, "Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value...so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations". Paragraph 190, "Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment". Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) clearly states the within the Planning process there should be consideration to the preservation of Listed Buildings and their settings. This is echoed in the Maidstone Local Plan 3.5 "Protection of the borough's distinct urban and rural heritage remains an important issue for the council".

The proposal goes against the above for the following reasons:

. There are numerous listed buildings dotted on the boundaries of the site, as well as some further afield. Their setting is protected by law. The setting of all of these heritage assets would be intrinsically harmed by this development.

. The land at the site has been farmed successfully since the 17th century, probably earlier, and as such has historical agricultural significance. We know this because we have sight of the deeds, (including a map) of the house and land at Little Cheveney Farm dating back to the early 1653. These historical documents are unique and give the house and associated farmland a significant historical value.

NPPF Paragraph 180c - "development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused."

. Parkland in Kent is rare, but is a prominent feature at the heart of this proposal. The Historic Parkland Grade 1 Little Cheveney Farmhouse is a unique feature of the local area and is full of veteran oak trees which are legally protected. Oak trees are the UK's most important tree for biodiversity, supporting around 2,200 species. This is more than any other native tree species. This plot of land should therefore be regarded as an important ecological and heritage asset of the Borough. The Statkraft proposal does not recognise this. The solar farm encloses the Parkland on 3 sides with 2.4m high security fencing and access roads with no buffer. Such close proximity to the border would not only cause harm to the setting of the Parkland but would cause deterioration of this green space. In addition, there is the ancient woodland which is across the field from the parkland. The buffer that has been put in place around the protected space is insufficient.

6. GLINT AND GLARE and VISUAL HARM

. On page 15 of the study conducted by Page Power, it states that their Glint and Glare report is modelled on panels 1.84m above ground level. The panels in the Statkraft proposal are 2.47m high panels, a lot higher than those in the report. Surely this report is therefore irrelevant?

. Views of the fields on the East side of the development are visible from the AONB High Weald. This has not been addressed by Statkraft in their reports.

. Despite hedging, the solar farm site would be clearly visible from the North side of Little Cheveney Farmhouse rendering the mitigating screening useless. When the deciduous trees of the parkland drop their leaves, the view extends to over the Eckley fields to the North West of the house as far as the railway. With no hedging around the parkland plus a gentle undulation of the land the panels will be very visible from the property.

. The photographic evidence to support the Statkraft development gives excellent views of the farmland, and what the site may look like from various spots on the site boundaries. However, they are inadequate and do not give any idea of what the site would look like from the properties that surround and overlook it. The proposal cannot go ahead until the magnitude of the visual impact from local dwellings is clarified and as per the NPPF "not cause visual harm". In addition the photographs do not show what a 7.5m high HV compound would look like from the property which it abuts, the battery storage compound next to the river, or what the CCTV cameras would look like in situ.

. It would appear that high security metal fencing and 5m high CCTV cameras would be placed in front of the mitigating hedging. Therefore, views of prison style fencing complete with cameras is not in keeping with the local area and would cause an adverse effect on the views.

. The visual impact assessment does not mention what how high the solar panels are. Like the glint and glare study, were they working on an assumption that the solar panels would be 1.84m high?

7. SELECTION OF LAND

Planning requires that Statkraft has to set out why this site is the most suitable for a Solar Farm, that there are no better sites for such a development. It also argues that the development will help the landowner farmer diversify.

Statkraft has only looked at possible sites along the power line because it provides the best return on investment for the developer. There appears to be a severe lack in looking at sites further away from the power line, which may be more appropriate land for a Solar Farm, away from residential property and lower grade agricultural land. There is no technological barrier to connecting sites at a range of locations as illustrated by the solar development in Great Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire which is connected to the power station 11km from the site. In addition Eckley Farms has previously applied to place a Solar Farm on its

between Marden and Staplehurst which is not next to the grid. Finally on the border of the M TWBC, there is another similar sized Solar Farm going into planning with TWBC. This illustration shows that Statkraft has not met the requirements.

Statkraft states, "The site comprises only 4.6% of the arable land of Eckley Farms. Removing relatively poorly performing fields has benefits to the Estate in terms of harvesting capacity and efficiency... This will more than offset the limited lost income of crop output from the site where productivity is below average. With some 1000ha with associated farmyards and buildings, Eckley Farms are major landowners who benefit from economies of scale. As such they do not need to diversify in the same way that landowners may do. Prior to Eckley Farms purchase of this land in 2010, the land has been successfully farmed for hundreds of years. There is no justification for the landowner to have to diversify to solar energy production.

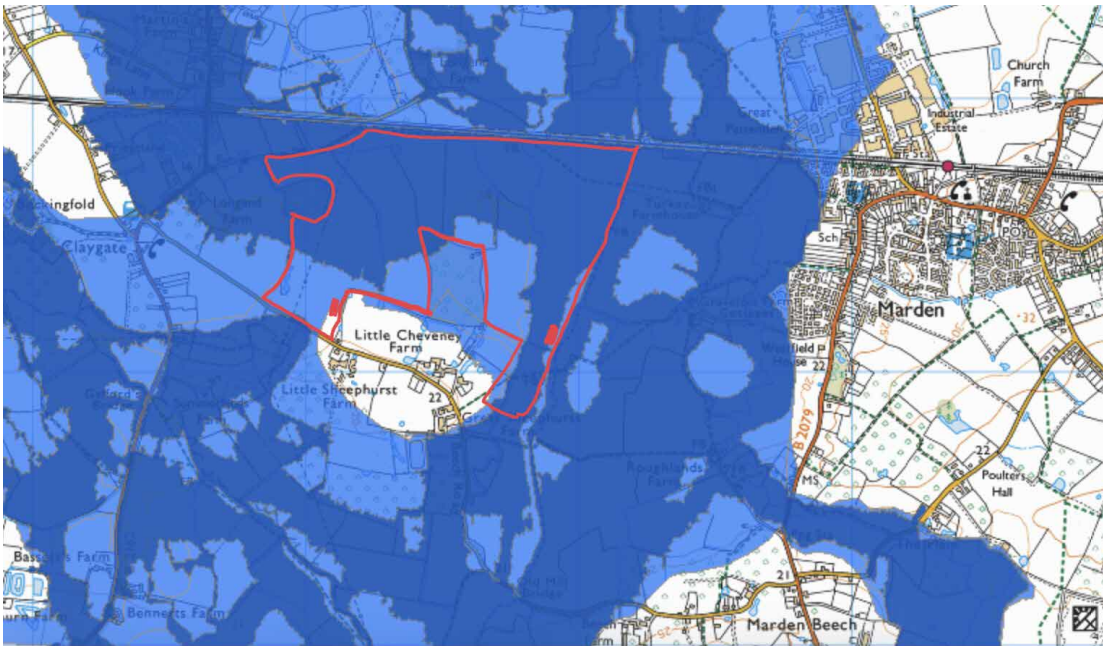
8. CUMULATIVE EFFECT

In addition to this proposal, there are plans for a large electricity switching station directly opposite Marden Solar Farm on Sheephurst Lane as well as another similar sized solar farm fields away on the Maidstone Road. Planning for this site will shortly be going into TWBC. The cumulative effect of all this potential industrial infrastructure is excessive and would destroy the landscape and open countryside. See below map.



The Marden and Collier Street area has already lost much of its open orchards, farmland and countryside to poly tunnels, housing development and a solar farm (Widehurst solar farm). The cumulative effect of all this industrial development in such a small rural area is excessive.

9.FLOOD RISK



This map overlays the site onto the Kent County Council's flood risk zone map. The dark blue area is flood zone 3 and the lighter blue zone is flood zone 2. The Maidstone Local Plan rightly states in their paragraph 4.82 that there are "strict controls on the location of development within Flood Zones 2 and 3". This is also set out in NPPF Paragraph 159 which states that "inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future)". 75-80% of the site is in flood zone 3 with the remaining in flood zone 2. The HV compound is in flood zone 2/3 and the Battery Storage compound is in flood zone 3 next to the river. There is also a buffer between the river and some of the solar panels on the East side of the development.

We have lived in Marden since 2010 and in that time along we have known flooding to happen on 3 separate occasions. The most flood vulnerable properties are on the east side of the river and north of the railway line. Sheephurst Lane, Green Lane and Plain Road become impassable, sewage drains overflow in the village, with some houses and gardens on suffering from floods. We are told to expect increased flooding in future years as climate change worsens.

I believe the flood mitigation measures in the proposal are inadequate and would increase flood risk for properties on the East side of the River Teise and the North side of the railway line for the following reasons:

- 1) Solar Panels. Just like roofs, run off water from the solar panels could be as much as 10 times greater than that of evenly distributed rainfall. The water pours off the panels rather than seeping into the ground, causing compaction of the low Weald clay soil. The water cannot seep into the ground and would end up pooling, resulting in a speeding up process of any flooding. There is no plan to help ease this issue.
- 2) In wet months, land drains currently divert water from the saturated ground to ditches and the railway line which prevents water logging and keeps the land fertile and highly productive. What measures have been taken to ensure the the 900mm deep land drains would not be interrupted by the 1.5m footings of the solar panels and cabling required to connect the battery storage across the land to the HV station?
- 3) Without aerating the soil by the drilling and ploughing farming processes, the clay soil would become compacted causing increased pooling and possible run off which would have an adverse effect on properties on the flood plains to the East and North of the development.
- 4) In the Flood Risk Assessment it was considered "appropriate to assess the development for the 1 in 100 year event with 35% allowance for climate change". I have known the area to flood 3 times in the last 10 years alone so surely there are grounds for these parameters to be changed to reflect actual risk, not theoretical risk.

10. FIRE AND PUBLIC HEALTH RISK

A battery storage unit is recognised as an inherent fire risk. There are examples of battery storage fires and explosions around the world and there has already been one such event in Liverpool in 2020. This concern was highlighted in the Government debate on solar farms in March 2022, and it was agreed that further investigation is required to understand the risks and what steps are required to prevent fires and educate firefighters on how to tackle such fires and explosions.

The fire report following the Liverpool fire stated "once water was applied, the resulting run-off contained Hydrofluoric Acid (HF) –a highly toxic substance which can dissolve concrete and whose fumes can be fatal to life". Measures to protect the safety of public and water course should be of primary importance. If there were such a fire at this unit, then run off would inevitably end up the river with disastrous, reaching consequences. It is also important to note that the footpath is close to the unit. The public need to be kept at a very, very safe distance from such potentially dangerous and life threatening industry.

11. CONSTRUCTION TRAFFIC

NPPF Paragraph 111 of the directs that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Sheephurst Lane is a country lane with 2 narrow bridges which already carries too much traffic. When large vehicles, for example the local bus, travel down the road, other vehicles are forced to the side of the road into the hedging. It is already not safe. The 18m long articulated lorries to carry goods to the site are significantly larger than the 12m long local bus. The lane would get jammed and impassable. Sheephurst Lane is also part of some very popular cycling routes, with a notable increase in cyclists since the Updated Highway Code hierarchy gives cyclists greater priority on roads. The nature of the heavy goods traffic associated with the development would pose a serious danger to cyclists whose interests must be taken into consideration.

The road simply cannot safely carry the numerous articulated lorries required to deliver infrastructure materials. Accidents are inevitable. The cumulative impact of articulated lorries on such small roads would be a severe and unacceptable impact on the local road network.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

. An ecology survey has been undertaken by the developer, but there is more wildlife in the area which has not been noted. As local residents we have spotted many species of rare birds including barn owls, tawny owls, red kites, as well as kingfishers on the river and also on the ponds at Little Chevening. Some bird species on the site are on the Red List and are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. We firmly believe that the massive construction process involved in the solar farm would cause huge disturbance to these species, displace existing wildlife with there is no guarantee of their would return. The process of driving piles to fix the solar panels into the ground would cause harm and disruption to badgers on the site. Badgers are a protected species yet there appears to be little if any measures in place to protect them.

. Maintenance and management of the mitigating planting will be substantial. As will the maintenance of the footpath corridors. Who would be doing this? How do we know this will definitely happen? As is the case in so many developments, much is promised, yet little or nothing is delivered. Who is held to account to ensure this is done properly - the landowner (who currently does not sufficiently look after boundaries or footpaths) or the developer whose interest is in maximising profit?

. Trees and mitigating planting appear to be placed behind the fencing in many areas across the site. So in 10 years time when the planting has established, the view would be trees and hedges behind high security fencing with 5m high CCTV cameras. Contrary to the NPPF guidelines, this is not enhancement of the natural environment.

. The land under the solar panels is degraded with little potential for biodiversity around the solar panels ; half of it will be in permanent shadow and rain water run-off creates set channels without proper dispersal. If sheep are to be grazed on the site then they would also prevent biodiversity from happening.

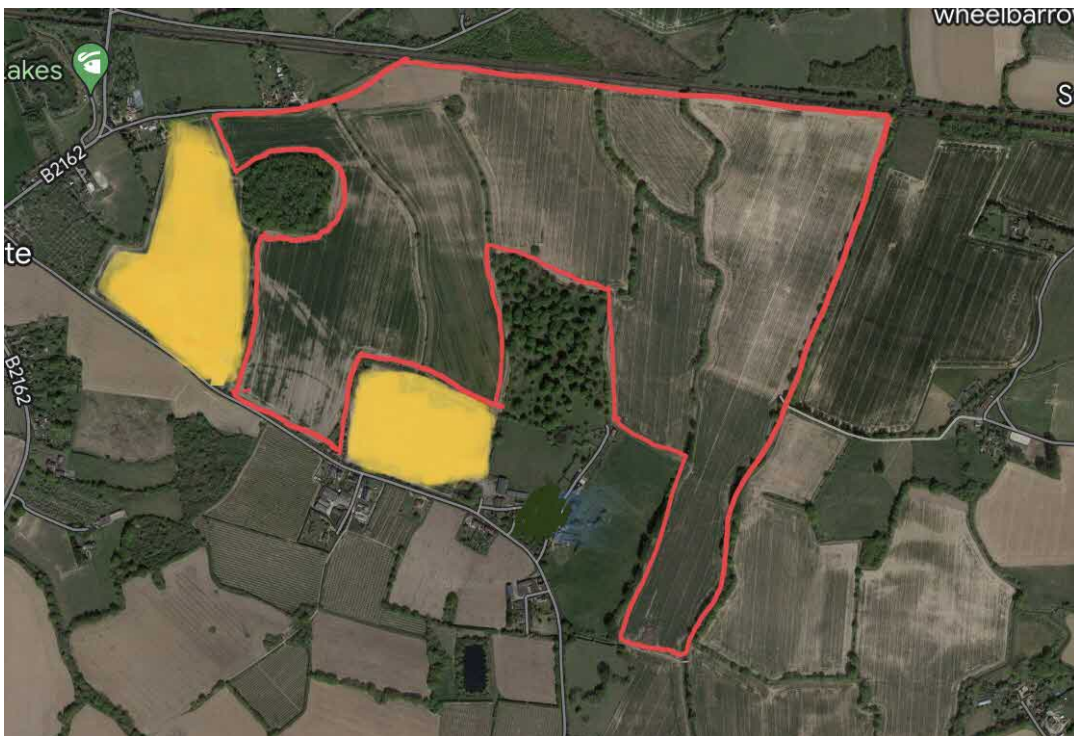
13. SOLAR FARMS AND THE ENERGY WHITE PAPER

In the rationale to permit planning, much is made of the need for solar energy in the Statkraft proposal so a such is a material planning consideration. The Government has specifically promoted offshore Wind Turbines as one of the best ways forwards for the UK to produce green energy. In the Ten Point Plan, there is little mention of solar farms but does place emphasis on wind farms, nuclear energy, fusion power. Predictions that by 2030 offshore wind will supply 60% of energy requirements. So why is there mention of Solar Farms in the Energy White Paper? It is because:

- the UK has a finite amount of good agricultural land that shouldn't be replaced by solar panels which would be better positioned on inert ground and roofs?
- it is recognised that solar panels are not efficient in the North European Hemisphere. As Dr Benny Peiser, director of the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF) has pointed out - solar energy in the UK makes no sense and the miles of panelling are likely to do more harm than good. There is simply not enough sun.
- large solar farms are NOT carbon neutral. The carbon generated to manufacture the panels, the batteries, materials associated buildings, plus transportation required from China would mean that a solar farm would never be carbon neutral.
- The government recognises that as technology advances and our ability to produce home grown energy will improve, so as such Solar Farms will be Solar Graveyards and a huge scar on the landscape across the UK?

14. MORE THAN 74.5ha OF AGRICULTURAL LAND REMOVED FROM FOOD PRODUCTION

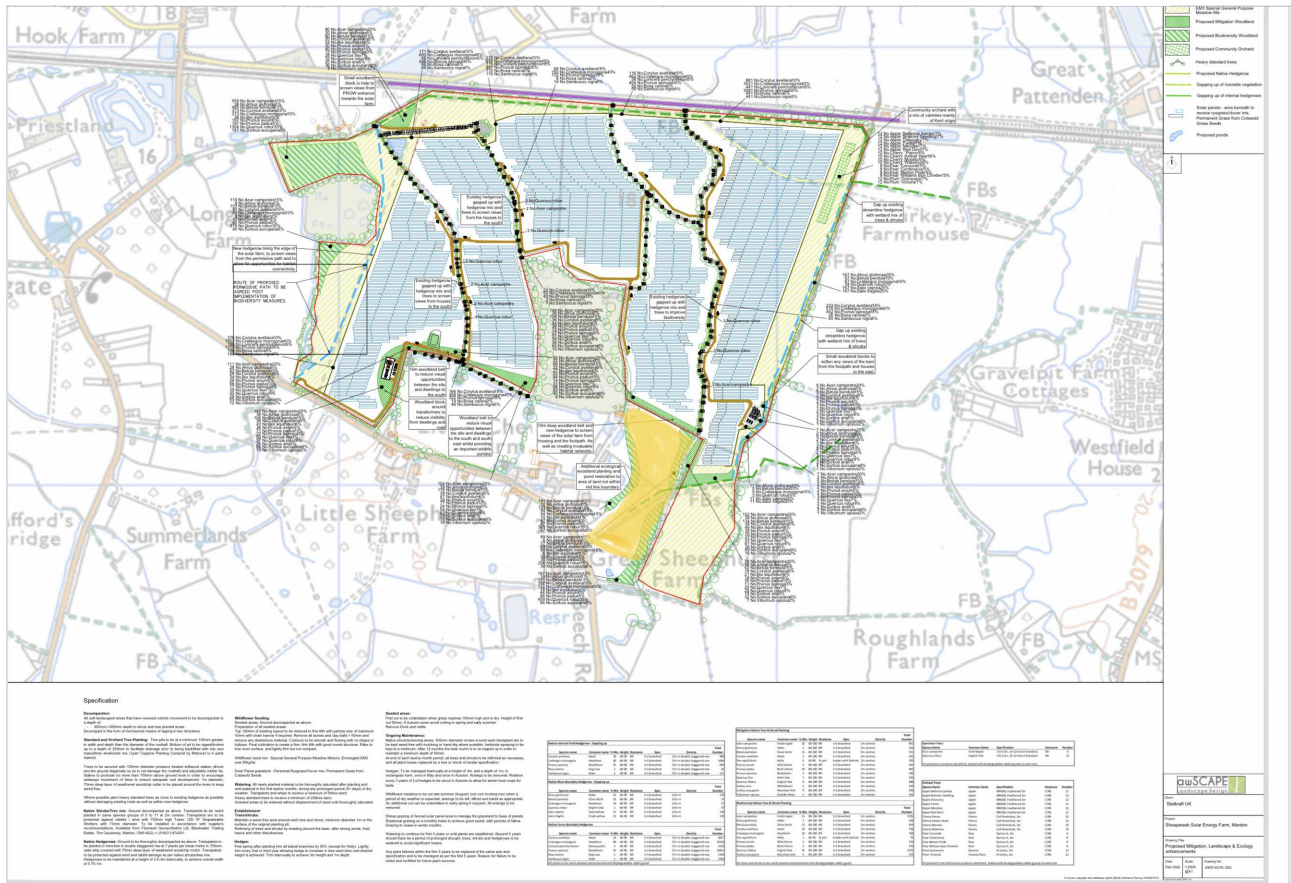
Two pockets of land as highlighted in yellow on the map below have been retained by Eckley Farms. This is currently productive arable land, but economies of scale would suggest that the acreage is unviable productive land if the solar installation were to go ahead. Therefore more land than the 74.5 hectares of the Solar Farm would be taken out of food production. This is deeply concerning in a time of food crisis.



15. ERRORS ON THE STATKRAFT PLANS

In addition to the miscalculated glint and glare report there are two notable errors in the Statkraft Plans:

A) The boundaries are incorrect. The planting scheme includes numerous trees on land that is not own by Eckley Farms. To my knowledge no permission has been given by the actual landowner for mitiga planting to be placed on their land. The area concerned is highlighted in yellow below. This is a sizea area. If taken out of the picture, then planned mitigation planting is even less effective and causing greater visual harm to the landscape.



B) In the Statkraft Executive Summary it states that “supporting reports fully addresses the key guidance in the NPPF, namely paragraphs 154 and 170”. Paragraph 170 states “In coastal areas planning policies and decisions should take into account of the UK Marine Policy Statement”. This is clearly irrelevant and the developer has clearly copied and pasted their arguments from one of their other 34 proposals across the UK.

If such little care and consideration is taken into the preparation of their proposal, one is led to question how much care and consideration would be given to the land and the residents both during and after construction.

16. THE FUTURE

The solar farm is promoted as being temporary and could be reversed after 37 years. 37 years is a lifetime and should not be termed as temporary. Huge infrastructure is required on sites as large as this, including 12,000m² of permanent roads, a substation and an energy storage compound. Significant capital expenditure and time would be required to remove structures and footings both above and below 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 would not be decommissioned. Indeed, in the Statkraft decommissioning document they state that, “The future of the electrical compound including the substation and the energy storage facility would be discussed with the distribution network operator and agreed with them”.

the landowner and the local planning authority prior to commencement of decommissioning. This statement is ambiguous and implies that the structures would be a permanent development. In addition, like the construction phase, the environmental damage caused by the decommissioning is detrimental.

17. DEVELOPMENT CONTRARY TO NPPF PARAGRAPH 8

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that in “achieving sustainable development there are three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways”. I do not believe any of these objectives have been met by the developer as outlined below.

- A) *“an economic objective - to help build a strong responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity”.* This land is grade 2, 3a and 3b and as such is productive agricultural land. To remove this land from food production in a time of food crisis, which is predicted to only get worse, would be contrary to the economic objective set out in the Food Strategy White Paper. Best use of land was also highlighted in a Government debate in March 2022 and in PMQ on 29 J 2022. Both sides of the house agreed that sacrificing good agricultural land because it is the easiest way to develop solar farms, does not make it the right way forwards.
- B) *“a social objective - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities...by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe spaces that reflect current and future need and support communities health, social and cultural well-being”.* The site would be a visual scar on the landscape and would have a detrimental impact on the lives of the immediate neighbours. Mitigating plans to screen the site are insufficient and do not consider the negative impact on the wellbeing of neighbours or local residents who daily enjoy the open countryside and use these open spaces for their wellbeing. There is no benefit to the local community.
- C) *“an environmental objective - to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”.* A solar farm in this area does not enhance the natural environment - there is nothing natural about putting industrial glass panels, metal security fencing, etc. in the countryside. The environment and setting in which the site lies has historical value with heritage assets which would be detrimentally affected by the development. It is home to protected species who would be displaced by the construction process.

18. CONTRARY TO MAIDSTONE LOCAL PLAN POLICY DM24

The proposal is contrary to the guidelines as set out in the Maidstone Local Plan Policy DM24 Renewal Low Carbon and Energy Schemes for all of the reasons already stated in this opposition. In summary - it is on good agricultural land; the development would be in conflict with landscape character and existing use; the cumulative impact would be unacceptable; the visual impact on this protected landscape would be adversely affected; there would be an adverse effect on heritage assets and their setting; the noise and disruption generated during the construction phase would be unacceptable; there would be a detrimental impact on the local ecology particularly during construction phase.

CONCLUSION

We all recognise and support that the move to green energy is required and is rightly a priority across the UK. However, as the NPPF clearly states that development should be in the right type of land in the right place. Not only is this site productive agricultural land, it has heritage assets, is too close to dwellings, and is contrary to the Local Plan. This site is the wrong type of land and in the wrong place.

With all of these factors taken into consideration, I respectfully ask the Maidstone Planning Authority to refuse planning permission.

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 Graham Tippen

Address: 2 New Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NY

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer made comments in support of the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: 2 New Cottages

Sheephurst Lane

Marden

TN12 9NY

22nd June 2022

The Planning Department,
Maidstone Borough Council

Dear Sirs,

Re: Planning Application Ref: 22/501335/FULL

I have no objection per se to the proposal to install a solar farm at Sheephurst Lane, Marden, as outlined in the planning application referenced above.

However, I have the strongest possible objection to the proposed construction traffic routing as detailed in the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), notably section 4 et seq and appendices, and the Design and Access Statement section 7.7.5.

OBJECTIONS TO PROSED ROUTE

My objections are based on the following points:

The Constructors claim that as the proposed route was deemed suitable for a previously constructed solar farm at Widehurst Farm is completely spurious. The access to that site was FROM Plain Road and, therefore, the only possible route to that site (as admitted in the CTMP

para 4.4.).

Whilst both Plain Road and Sheephurst Lane are bi-directional, both are narrow, extremely so for some distances, with no passing places. Sheephurst Lane is particularly winding with a number of bends having poor visibility to oncoming traffic. Each of these roads has a single-track bridge, that on Sheephurst Lane being a very narrow humped-back bridge, with signs of grounding by large vehicles embedded in the road surface, something that will occur with articulated low-loaders bringing in plant and machinery. Two HGVs have difficulty in passing each other for much of the length of the lane. It is also a bus route and has heavy and frequent usage by large farm vehicles, including combine harvesters, again causing regular problems for these vehicles passing other that can only be exacerbated by construction traffic using this route.

The route goes through the middle of Marden village. This is a very busy village with a significant built-up area along the proposed route, with a considerable amount of on-road parking by both residents and those using village businesses either as customers or suppliers delivering to them, these latter often, again, using large vehicles.

The junction of Maidstone Road, (B2079) and High St., Marden is a notorious bottle-neck with poor sweep lines especially for articulated vehicles. Over the past few years, properties at this junction (notably 'Cornerways') have been damaged by over-swing by articulated lorries; the same occurring at the junction of High St., and Albion Road ('The Farm Shop')

There has been a major housing development in Albion Road (110+ dwellings) since the solar farm installation at Widehurst Farm (CTMP 4.4) that has brought vastly increased traffic movement in this area, both vehicular and pedestrian.

The route along Albion Road, Plain Road and Sheephurst Lane also sees considerable usage by recreational cyclists, even on weekdays, posing them increased risks if faced with additional heavy traffic.

PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE ROUTE.

I propose that instead of the route described in the CTMP, construction traffic uses a different and far more sensible route that is far less invasive and intrusive on the local area, has a better, wider road system that is therefore safer and less hazardous for ALL road users. It is white-line marked for almost its entire length (unlike the CTMP route) and had no passing issues. It is, in fact, also shorter than that in the CTMP.

Taking the starting point as the A229/B2079 junction in keeping with the CTMP para 4.2, construction traffic would take the B2079 then turn right onto Underlyn Lane (this is already the officially signposted route for all HGVs wishing to enter the Marden industrial estate).

Continue along Underlyn Lane before turning onto Green Lane, along its entire length to the junction with the B2162 at Collier Street. Turn Left.

Continue along the B2162 to the junction with Sheephurst Lane. Turn left.

Continue along Sheephurst Lane, reaching the solar farm site from the West.

All of Sheephurst Lane, Green Lane and the B2162 between the junctions of these two roads are subject to a 7.5 gtw limit. However, this restriction is nullified using either route as the final delivery point is within the restricted area.

To reiterate:

- this alternative route is wider, with few bends and a good road surface and therefore safer;
- there are no narrow or humped-backed bridges or other pinch-points;
- there is ample width along the entire route for lorries to pass;
- it does not pass through any significant built-up areas and has fewer hazards such as parked cars;
- Swept paths at junctions are far better;
- this route, from A229 to site, is actually shorter (4.8 miles) than that outlined in the CTMP (5.4 miles);

CONCLUSION AND SUBMISSION

I ask that the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) part of this planning application ref: 22/501335/FULL is rejected in its current form in favour of the route I have described above.

Yours faithfully,

GRAHAM TIPPEN

A copy of this letter has also been sent by post.

2 New Cottages
Sheephurst Lane
Marden
TN12 9NY

22nd June 2022

The Planning Department,
Maidstone Borough Council

Dear Sirs,

Re: Planning Application Ref: 22/501335/FULL

I have no objection *per se* to the proposal to install a solar farm at Sheephurst Lane, Marden, as outlined in the planning application referenced above.

However, I have the **strongest possible objection to the proposed construction traffic routing** as detailed in the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), notably section 4 et seq and appendices, and the Design and Access Statement section 7.7.5.

OBJECTIONS TO PROSED ROUTE

My objections are based on the following points:

The Constructors claim that as the proposed route was deemed suitable for a previously constructed solar farm at Widehurst Farm is completely spurious. The access to that site was FROM Plain Road and, therefore, the only possible route to that site (as admitted in the CTMP para 4.4.).

Whilst both Plain Road and Sheephurst Lane are bi-directional, both are narrow, extremely so for some distances, with no passing places. Sheephurst Lane is particularly winding with a number of bends having poor visibility to oncoming traffic. Each of these roads has a single-track bridge, that on Sheephurst Lane being a very narrow humped-back bridge, with signs of grounding by large vehicles embedded in the road surface, something that will occur with articulated low-loaders bringing in plant and machinery. Two HGVs have difficulty in passing each other for much of the length of the lane. It is also a bus route and has heavy and frequent usage by large farm vehicles, including combine harvesters, again causing regular problems for these vehicles passing other that can only be exacerbated by construction traffic using this route.

The route goes through the middle of Marden village. This is a very busy village with a significant built-up area along the proposed route, with a considerable amount of on-road parking by both residents and those using village businesses either as customers or suppliers delivering to them, these latter often, again, using large vehicles.

The junction of Maidstone Road, (B2079) and High St., Marden is a notorious bottle-neck with poor sweep lines especially for articulated vehicles. Over the past few years, properties at this junction (notably 'Cornerways') have been damaged by over-swing by articulated lorries; the same occurring at the junction of High St., and Albion Road ('The Farm Shop')

There has been a major housing development in Albion Road (110+ dwellings) since the solar farm installation at Widehurst Farm (CTMP 4.4) that has brought vastly increased traffic movement in this area, both vehicular and pedestrian.

The route along Albion Road, Plain Road and Sheephurst Lane also sees considerable usage by recreational cyclists, even on weekdays, posing them increased risks if faced with additional heavy traffic.

PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE ROUTE.

I propose that instead of the route described in the CTMP, construction traffic uses a different and far more sensible route that is far less invasive and intrusive on the local area, has a better, wider road system that is therefore safer and less hazardous for ALL road users. It is white-line marked for almost its entire length (unlike the CTMP route) and had no passing issues. It is, in fact, also shorter than that in the CTMP.

Taking the starting point as the A229/B2079 junction in keeping with the CTMP para 4.2, construction traffic would take the B2079 then turn right onto Underlyn Lane (this is already the officially signposted route for all HGVs wishing to enter the Marden industrial estate).

Continue along Underlyn Lane before turning onto Green Lane, along its entire length to the junction with the B2162 at Collier Street. Turn Left.

Continue along the B2162 to the junction with Sheephurst Lane. Turn left.

Continue along Sheephurst Lane, reaching the solar farm site from the West.

All of Sheephurst Lane, Green Lane and the B2162 between the junctions of these two roads are subject to a 7.5 gtw limit. However, this restriction is nullified using **either** route as the final delivery point is within the restricted area.

To reiterate:

- this alternative route is wider, with few bends and a good road surface and therefore safer;

- there are no narrow or humped-backed bridges or other pinch-points;
- there is ample width along the entire route for lorries to pass;
- it does not pass through any significant built-up areas and has fewer hazards such as parked cars;
- Swept paths at junctions are far better;
- this route, from A229 to site, is actually shorter (4.8 miles) than that outlined in the CTMP (5.4 miles);

CONCLUSION AND SUBMISSION

I ask that the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) part of this planning application ref: 22/501335/FULL is rejected in its current form in favour of the route I have described above.

Yours faithfully,

GRAHAM TIPPEN

A copy of this letter has also been sent by post.

Mr Kevin Sykes
Associate Director
Rappor
Bedford i-lab
Stannard Way
Priory Business Park
Bedford
Bedfordshire
MK44 3RZ

2 New Cottages
Sheephurst Lane
Marden
Kent TN12 9NY

Dear Mr Sykes

Your ref 21 -0354

Planning Application at Land North of Little Cheveney Farn, Sheephurst Lane, Marden (ref 22/501335/FULL)

We have read your letter to Maidstone Borough Council ref the above application and ask that you reconsider the route for the Construction Management Plan for the above application.

With all due respect it would appear that you have not visited the site but merely conducted a desk exercise, using Google maps. A drive along your proposed route would very quickly show that the comments raised by Marden Parish Council are extremely valid and are of great concern to residents living along the proposed route. We note that you remain silent on the concern raised by MPC that Sheephurst Lane has a single track hump back bridge, that is deeply gouged by large vehicles grounding on the road surface, and is very narrow in places with virtually no passing places. There is a further single track bridge which has a blind corner to the north of it. The Lane is very popular with cyclists, heavily used by farm traffic, including extremely large tractors and trailers and combine harvesters are a common site in the summer months. The lane is on a bus route with at least 7 buses per day along the road. There are also many pedestrians who regularly walk part of the route, where there is nowhere to safely stand off the road when a large vehicle approaches. Please would you explain how your proposed route will protect pedestrian and cycle safety and how safe passing places can be provided for oncoming vehicles, where in some places it is not even wide enough for a car to pass a large vehicle.

You also mention that from your desk review of Google maps you note that there are tight bends on the route MPC has proposed. If you review both routes on Google maps and better still physically drive both proposed routes you will see that there are far more tight bends with very restricted visibility on your route than on MPC's proposed route. Google maps do not show you the reality of the situation, you need to physically see the challenges your proposed route brings.

We strongly suggest that there are very valid and serious safety concerns with your proposed route, which we will be raising with Kent Highways and Maidstone Borough Council Planning Department

Yours sincerely

Mr Graham and Mrs Kate Tippen

Cc Mr Guy Eckley
Statkraft
County Councillor Lottie Parfitt Reid
Borough Councillor Claudine Russell
Director of Kent Highways
Marden Parish Council
Maidstone Borough Council Planning Department

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 Sean Tolton

Address: 1 New Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NY

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Marden has already lost so much agricultural land to Housing and also the Widehurst solar farm and the scale of the above is verging on the size of Marden village. Kent is the Garden of England and this has been farmed for many years the scale of this solar farm should be on a brownfield site not on greenfield agricultural land.

This would destroy and displace local wildlife and would be a blot on the Weald landscape.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs Lynda Treliving

Address: 7 Sutton Forge, Marden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9DY

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Parish

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: The government is encouraging farmers to increase their food production. It doesn't make sense to use viable farm land. There are other choices.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr Raymond Walsh

Address: 7 Reader Drive, Marden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9FD

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:As much as I fully appreciate a need to drive self sufficiency in energy production, we do also need to drive and support self sufficiency for food production in these modern times, arable land is on the decline globally and we should be protecting each and every acre at all cost with our growing population. Utilising greenfield land when there is ample brownfield land locally is not a 'smart' use of limited land.

I am not oppose to solar in the countryside, and i am not oppose to wind generators either, but more careful consideration needs to be made to ensure the greenbelt countryside is not just maintained aesthetically for those who live and visit here, but also that it is able to support the local economies with agricultural jobs and supporting services. Another solar farm simply would be detrimental, not beneficial to our local community.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs sarah waters

Address: Ballards Court, Ballards Hill, Goudhurst Cranbrook, Kent TN17 1JS

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Parish

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I am objecting to this solar farm application as completely inappropriate for the following reasons.

*The land is fertile grade 2,3a and 3b which should be used to produce food as mentioned in the Government Statement.

*The danger to the environment of contaminated water flooding into the river during construction and beyond.

*The numerous listed buildings and ancient parkland that surround the site

* Wildlife misplacement

* The lane is too narrow for the construction traffic.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs watts pam

Address: Brook Farm, Green Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9RA

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I object to this proposal for the following reasons

Under the Government's Solar PV Strategy, it states that "issues such as visual amenity, land use and other environmental factors are important considerations" when planning solar arrays. This proposal rides roughshod over these considerations

This land is Grade 2,3 and 3a and therefore good quality agricultural land which should continue to be used for food production at a time when food security is vulnerable. Meanwhile, there is a large area of industrial warehousing in Marden with very little evidence of solar panels being installed on roofs. MBC should concentrate on promoting installation of solar arrays on roofs and brown field sites, rather than yielding to the greed of developers keen to take the cheapest option to optimise on profit and dividends.

There will also be a considerable visual impact on the local area. At a time when this borough, and in particular our village, has been put under immense strain from recent overdevelopment this is yet another degrading of our local countryside, which is so important for the health and enjoyment of those who live here

This point is further distressed by the proposal to reroute the public path which will then be fenced in with security fencing again destroying the visual impact on the area

Whilst the effect of solar panels on flooding may not be critical I have read the Flood Risk Assessment for this development and whatever gobblegook the data produces with its 1/20, 1/100, 1/+100 flood risk projections it has a major problem; being the hard photographic evidence that most local residents have of frequent flooding over the past 20 years of the Lesser Teise which runs along the eastern boundary of this proposal. Many houses have repeatedly been flooded with Sheephurst Lane, Green Lane and Longend Lane all frequently closed due to flooding. This isn't a 1/100 year event, it is happening to us almost every year now. Therefore, I would say the application is flawed with incorrect information and it may be that the mitigation solutions are not adequate

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr David West

Address: Roughlands Barn, Goudhurst Road, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NH

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: My wife and I object to this application on the following grounds:

1. Whilst we support the use of solar power, the size of the proposed solar farm is far too large. It will dominate the area.
2. The site chosen is in the flood plane. A 2.4m fence will collect debris in a time of flood and have a damming effect leading to water being forced into other areas including our land
3. Building in the flood plane should be prohibited, whatever the reasons for the construction
4. The area has considerable wildlife - deer, many owls including barn owls and little owls, buzzards, sparrow hawks, many wood peckers, wood larks, sky larks to name just a few of the species we see and hear regularly. Such a large solar farm will significantly impact the wildlife movement with restrictive fences, and feeding as birds will no longer be able to find prey animals under the panels.
5. A number of footpaths pass near or through the property. We have applied for planning consent on a number of occasions and have been refused with one of the reasons being given is the impact on the rural nature and outlook from the nearby footpaths. If this is a reason to stop minor development on our property it must be a reason to stop or restrict a development of such a size.
6. Another reason for the refusal of our planning applications has been our property is a "historic

farmstead" setting. A 75 hectare solar farm nearby is clearly detracting from the historic farmstead significantly more so than our planning applications.

7. The land is good grade farmland. Using it for a solar farm is not a sensible use of the land especially when the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia will reduce the availability of grain which has been grown on this land for many years.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr Michael Williams

Address: Top Oast, Little Cheveney Farm Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NX

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Planning Application Reference: 22/501335/ FULL

Site Address: Land North of Little Cheveney Farm Sheephurst Lane Marden Kent

I object to this planning application.

I support the need for alternative green energy but not on agricultural land. This is productive agricultural land, Grade 2, 3a and 3b - Why would you take this land out of production when the UK is facing food security issues not seen since World War Two due to COVID, Brexit, the Ukraine War and Climate change. Statkraft claim the land is no longer viable for agriculture but all the fields on Little Cheveney Farm are currently planted with crops.

I have lived on Little Cheveney Farm since 2007 and during my time living here the fields have always been planted. If the land is not suitable for agricultural why did the current farmer purchase the farmland in 2010?

Solar farms should be sited on brownfield sites, disused airfields, poor quality land, new buildings, office blocks, business parks and warehouses which are more suitable. Solar farms are not the most efficient form of green energy and this is the reason why the government favours offshore wind. The countryside is a sensitive location and Brownfield sites are the preferred location see Policy SP17 - Maidstone Local Plan p70

In the Virtual Consultation video which can be found on the Statkraft website Gareth Hawkins, Development Manager states "We are working through some proposals to put a solar energy farm on the fields behind me primarily for the reason that we can connect to this overhead pylon line you can see running across the field. It's very difficult to find places to connect solar farms and this is one of the few opportunities". This claim is not correct, solar energy farms do not have to be

sited close to overhead pylon lines. I refer to the Great Wilbraham Solar Farm, Cambridgeshire which connects to the substation 11km from the solar farm site. Behind Gareth in the video, you can also see the ancient wood which Statkraft intend to surround with high fencing which will prevent free movement for the wildlife living in the wood which includes deer and badgers. In the planning application the Glint and Glare report refers to solar panels 1.84m above ground level, Statkraft intend to use panels 2.7m above ground level which means the impact of glint and glare on 45 out of 49 homes will be greater and for a longer time period. This report is therefore inaccurate and flawed.

Statkraft have also submitted an incorrect boundary map which includes land not owned by the farmer.

What other mistakes and errors have Statkraft made in this planning application?

Statkraft disinvested from offshore UK wind power in 2018, if they were successful with this application, what happens to this site in the future should they disinvest out of UK solar energy farms?

Consultation with local residents has been practically non-existent and I was not aware of the application until I received the planning letter dated 10 June 2022. I had no knowledge of the Marden Parish Council meeting last August 2021 where Statkraft delivered a presentation. I have since spoken to neighbours on Little Cheveney Farm and Sheephurst Lane and have discovered like me, most residents were unaware of the solar farm application. This application should have been delayed until public meetings could have been held and the whole community properly consulted.

This application will not create any local employment (specialist contractors will be used) and it will be of no benefit to the local community. This is an opportunistic proposal motivated by financial greed and only benefits the farmer and the Norwegian investors

My objections to the application are outlined as follows:

Visual appearance

The solar farm will be extremely close, less than 15m to Willow Cottage and Willow Barn which has recently received full planning permission reference 21/ 503656/Full to convert to a residential property.

I find it absurd that a HV compound has been placed alongside 7 & 8 Little Sheephurst cottages on Sheephurst Lane and the second large structure sited near a river which can flood.

The industrial scale size of the solar farm will impact the outlook for many homes including Grade 2 listed properties and is not in keeping with an agricultural heritage setting.

The sheer size and industrial nature of the site is not suitable for a rural landscape. The solar farm will be surrounded by 2.4m high metal security fencing which means we will have a large industrial compound in the middle of the countryside seen by the residents of Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane and during the winter months by people living in Marden and Collier Street.

The two structures to be built on site including a 7.5m high electrical substation will be seen by most of the residents who live on Little Cheveney Farm and Sheephurst Lane. The photographs submitted by the applicants to support the proposal were all taken from public points and at a time

of the year when vegetation is dense. No photographs were taken from the properties which will be impacted by this industrial size development. What about the winter months when the existing trees and hedgerows lose their leaves? Statkraft have stated it will take up to 10 years to successfully screen the solar farm.

The 5m high CCTV camera poles will not only have a visual impact but will also cause privacy issues for footpath users, the residents in close proximity to the proposed development and the people who use Sheephurst Lane such as walkers, cyclists, runners and other road users.

Little Cheveney Farm and Sheephurst Lane have no street lighting. Will the proposed solar farm have lighting?

Little Cheveney Farm consists of nine residential properties and Willow Barn which has recently been granted planning permission to convert to a residential property. The farmhouse is the largest property and all the other properties are in close proximity with most previously agricultural buildings. Six of the residential properties are Grade 2 listed including the farm house, a barn and four oast houses. The Little Cheveney Farm entrance on Sheephurst Lane for seven of the properties is opposite another oast house. This is an agricultural setting of historic importance.

Traffic and highway safety

I am concerned about the volume and the impact of construction traffic on a small narrow country lane with weight restrictions and a single lane bridge. The lane floods most years where the single-track bridge crosses the Lesser Teise river.

The fencing of the ancient wood and solar farm will force animals such as deer who move through the farm onto the roads which will cause road accidents and the animals will most probably be killed.

Sheephurst Lane is a major cut through to the A21. Increased flooding and increased water from the fields because of water run - off flowing onto Sheephurst Lane will impact traffic and also make the lane more dangerous for other road users.

Noise, smells and disturbance resulting from use

In addition to the noise and disruption from eight months of construction. My main concern is the noise from the fans cooling the battery storage facilities. Sound testing took place over one weekend in August with full foliage. How did this study factor in the noise from the fans and what about the noise during the winter months when trees and hedges have no leaves? Statkraft have stated it will take up to ten years for the screening to be in place.

The flawed Glare study has identified 45 out of 49 houses will be affected. This is an unacceptable impact on residents and based on a flawed hypothetical study the consequences for residents will be far greater.

Risk of pollution - Storage battery leakage and sulphur mist would both have a detrimental environmental impact on the river and land. I am also concerned about the materials used to construct the panels and the impact of the chemicals used to clean the solar panels.

Loss of trees or other important landscape features

This solar farm on an industrial scale is at odds with the countryside and a loss of landscape features.

Footpath users will be faced with fencing and CCTV cameras more appropriate to an industrial location not the Low Weald countryside.

Rain water run - off creates set channels without proper dispersal and greater potential for more flooding.

Permanent shadow will degrade the land with little potential for biodiversity.

Construction of the solar farm would displace existing wildlife and birds and ducks will perish flying into the panels.

Design, appearance and materials proposed to be used

Not acceptable for a rural setting and certainly not appropriate for productive agricultural land.

Can the materials used be recycled and what impact will these materials have on the environment and bio diversity? Who will be responsible for decommissioning the solar farm and will they actually remove the significant infrastructure and roads constructed. This I fear will be a permanent change of land use.

If planning consent is given this land will never again be used for agriculture and in future will most likely be used for housing.

Effect on listed building

This industrial complex will have a major impact on a heritage setting.

Layout and density of proposed buildings

The location of the battery storage facility by the river makes no sense, this area of the farm floods. Why have they decided to build next to the cottages on Sheephurst Lane?

Flooding

Constructing the solar farm would increase water run-off and this will enter a river already prone to flooding which is well known to the planning department at MBC. Increased water running off the fields during heavy rain could have serious consequences for Sheephurst Lane (both ends)

Marden village and properties along the B2162.

I am also concerned this will mean increased danger to all road users.

In conclusion:

- This application would harm the character and appearance of the countryside.
- Substantial screening would be required to hide this industrial complex which does not belong on productive agricultural land and would fundamentally alter the landscape.
- The solar farm including battery storage facilities surrounded by high fencing and CCTV cameras will be highly visible to many properties, local residents, walkers and visitors who enjoy the countryside.
- The views from the Grade 2 listed properties across the proposed site would impact on the setting of these heritage assets.
- I am concerned about flooding and pollution caused by this development and the impact on

wildlife.

- This application is too close to residential homes and the noise from the solar farm will be a major issue.

- Solar energy farms should not be established on productive agricultural land.

Finally, taking a break for lunch from writing this objection letter on Wednesday 29/06/22 I watched PMQ and heard a question from Sir Oliver Heald MP who raised the concern about food production and food security and argued productive farm land should not be covered with solar energy farms and suggested brownfield sites were more suitable. The government supports this view.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mr Michael Williams

Address: Top Oast, Little Cheveney Farm Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NX

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:Objection letter

Planning Application Reference 22/501335 FULL

Site address: Land North of Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane, Marden, Kent

Statkraft have not made any effort to address the many inaccuracies highlighted by local residents in the original submitted planning application. They have failed to communicate and engage with local residents.

Statkraft confirm none of their studies and impact assessments were conducted close to the grade 2 listed residential properties within Little Cheveney Farm. As a result they have excluded those residents who live on Little Cheveney or near the farm who will be most affected by the installation. How can these findings be regarded as accurate, fair and acceptable by the Planning committee?

The applicants fail to properly address concerns about the sheer scale of the proposed solar farm, the noise and glare issues, the amount and duration of construction traffic and the impact on birds and wildlife.

I was very concerned about how dismissive Statkraft were about incorrectly submitted solar panel specifications (regarding size and height of panels). The consequences of glint and glare and the visual impact are major concerns and I would suggest these inaccuracies are sufficient grounds to question any data submitted by the applicants and reject all related reports, supporting documentation and findings. I would therefore challenge the accuracy of this planning application which should be declined.

The latest suggested vegetation screening for my property (which will take at least 10 years to grow) includes private land not owned by the farm. My previous objection letter dated 30/06/22 highlighted private land which was incorrectly included in the application and once again the applicants continue to include land which is not owned by the farm.

Solar farms do not need to be close to pylons as claimed by Statkraft, (I refer to the Great Wilbraham Solar Farm). This is good agricultural land which has been successfully farmed for decades and with the current global situation should continue to be prioritised for national food security.

How can MBC accept an application which ignores and fails to address the concerns of those residents most affected.

This planning application will not benefit the community and will not deliver local jobs and reduced energy costs for local people. It will only financially benefit Statkraft and the farmer.

I request that this poorly presented and inaccurate planning application is rejected by the MBC Planning committee.

I object to this planning application.

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs Louise Wilson

Address: Laddingford House, Laddingford, Maidstone, Kent ME18 6BY

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I strongly object to the proposal 22/501335/FULL. to build a 75 hectare solar farm. I understand the need to build solar farms but fail to understand why such a huge site needs to be constructed on good quality farmland. The size of this solar farm, in addition, to the proposed neighbouring solar farm (Bockingfold solar farm) and the building of 1000's of houses in the surrounding area is resulting in loss of greenland of a large scale with severe consequences to existing wildlife, let alone the affect it has on the neighbouring houses. If built, the Solar farm will create an imbalance to the biodiversity of the area.

Why does the site have to be built on green space rather than on brownfield sites? The construction of the solar farm would have a significant impact to the local infrastructure with heavy plant deliveries impacting already busy routes around the site.

Our beautiful countryside is slowly being chipped away at by ongoing developments. The bigger picture needs to be looked at for the whole of the surrounding area as to how many developments have taken place and are being proposed in the area both by this council and neighbouring councils. The Weald is being destroyed!

-

Michael Cussons

From: Melanie Woodward <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 26 June 2022 09:25
To: Planning Comments
Cc: helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk
Subject: Formal Objection to Planning Application: 22/501335/FULL - Marden Solar Farm

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Categories: Michael

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Maidstone Borough Council Planning Committee

We are writing to formally object to the proposed Solar Farm on the following basis:-

The land is Grade 2, 3a and 3b; good quality food producing agricultural land - 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. Given the national food shortage crisis - it is obvious that the UK needs to be more self sufficient and huge areas of fertile farmland should not be sacrificed to industrial scale energy production, when there are other sites that are more appropriate.

The village of Marden area has already lost much of its farmland and countryside to housing development & the Widehurst solar farm. Any further major development is wholly 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 public rights of way with views across open farmland from footpaths at the site would be diverted and become corridors enclosed by high metal security fencing, CCTV cameras and a wall of hedging.

The construction of the solar farm would displace existing wildlife & animals such as deer will have their traditional routes blocked. The land would be severely impacted from a biodiversity perspective, with a major proportion left in permanent shadow. Rain water and rain water run-off will create set channels without proper dispersal. As a result the land will become severely degraded.

As long-term Marden residents in a Grade 2 listed property, we are cognisant with the importance of maintaining historical integrity; adhering to the strict rules imposed by MBC when renovating our own property. In accordance with MBC's own stance/rules - the numerous listed buildings, along with ancient woodland and historic parkland that surround the site must be protected.

We strongly urge MBC to decline this application.

Yours sincerely,

Melanie & Mark Woodward
Murzie Farm, Hunton Rd, Marden, Kent, TN12 9SH.

Sent from my iPad=

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 symon Wright

Address: 7 Little Sheephurst Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NZ

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: The fact that this is even being considered is a joke you want to take away decent farm land and cover it in solar panels our country needs to produce our own food and you have only got to look at the crops in these fields to see how good the fields are solar panels should be put on wasteland or land that is no good for growing crops to support our country and away from residents if the farmer is too lazy to farm his land then let someone else do it or sell it to another farmer and if he's that desperate for the money from solar then he can put the panels in around his house so he can shorten his own life, devalue his own property and look at them everyday without being selfish and affecting everyone else there are many endangered species of animals around here which will be killed off statkraft have lied through there teeth to get this to planning the majority of residents around here never received anything about it until it went to planning they have said that the land is no good when in fact it's probably got the best growing crops around here in it also it has a purpose built waterway around it to stop the houses and roads from flooding in the area which will become irrelevant and will probably cause the houses and roads to flood every year the batteries give off sulphur vapour which will be devastating for all the wildlife and people living in the surrounding area solar panels are not even that efficient so to lose land the country desperately needs, kill off endangered wildlife and to put peoples lives in danger is just stupidity there are plenty of wastelands for things like this away from everything and everyone that can be harmed

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs Alice Wright

Address: 7 Little Sheephurst Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NZ

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I object to the proposal of Little Cheveney Solar farm on several grounds. Our neighbor is on the direct border of the Solar Farm plan and our natural pond will also be bordered by the HV Compound containing 132/33kV Transformer. Not only this but our 2 cottages did not even appear of Statkraft's map of the Solar farm as if our being was non-existent. We have already experienced intrusive microphones and nature cameras on our border with no warning or agreement. Most neighbors we have spoken to were not even notified of these plans last year when they began the process which is highly indecent and deceitful of Statkraft and the current farmer of the land. We live in this location for the open country, piece, and tranquility. My in-laws have lived here for 45 years in open farmland for it to be destroyed by industrial grade traffic and light pollution. We are right in the center of this proposed Solar Farm. Should these Solar panels be right next to our garden hedge's?

The transfer and storage of Solar energy that will occur right on our properties can give off radiation into the area and water. Currently there is a system of ponds and ditches in the area to prevent flooding of our properties and other residents on Sheephurst Lane. The increase of trees planned to be planted to hide the Solar panels along the ditches that are already never maintained by the farmer will only cause the ponds to overflow and flood our properties. One of the ponds is personally owned by us which we have fish in that will be endangered and are likely to die as a result. The Lithium-ion battery storage also presents a HUGE fire risk which would spread quickly damaging the land and our properties. The piece and quiet will be drowned out by large noisy fans that are used to provide cooling of inverters.

There are many deer around us that will now be run off into the roads, causing them to die through car accidents as our speed limit is 50 mph on most of the lane. Our view which is currently open

landscape right through to Maidstone is going to be extremely visually harmed and industrialised by row and rows of Solar panels. There is a high possibility that of toxic chemicals leaching out of the panels into our land. This tells me Solar Panels are not in any way environmentally friendly. The boundary of our property is going to be invaded with high security fencing and intrusive CCTV cameras.

The National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities to protect and enhance valued landscapes and biodiversity sites, recognising the character, beauty, and heritage. They are also expected to place great importance on versatile agricultural land and food production with the current circumstances in the UK and a government aim to be self-sufficient. The grounds of Little Cheveney Farm are not of low grade agricultural ground coming in around 2a - 3 and therefore have a decent yield of crop added into food production each year that these plans will diminish completely. I thought our farmers that farm around 72% of UK land are supposed to be custodians of conservation, food alleviation and climate change mitigation but apparently not they have higher interest in the income potentials of a Solar Farm.

The local authority should be encouraging re-use of brownfield land instead of this wide area of greenfield land at Little Cheveney Farm. This does not comply with the frameworks objective to have effective use of land across the UK. We need our best land to be productive, 60% of our food is imported. Is this environmentally sustainable?

There are already 2 Solar farms and preparations for a substation (opposite) within a 5 mile radius of Little Cheveney Farm. The cumulative effect of these developments intensifies the harm caused to the area. Not only that but clustering of developments around a substation has disastrous consequences for the landscape, local amenity, and local wildlife. There will be further harm to character of public rights of way, having had various footpaths removed or relocated for developments in Marden and Collier Street in the last 5 years. Developers are simply looking for the cheapest solutions and do not consider the range of feasible options there are.

There have also been a few planning developments approved through Maidstone Borough Council on our local homes in the last 5 years (ours being one of them) which have been insistent on the biodiversity and heritage of the area having clauses of planning that are non-optional to protect bees with wildflower, birds with extra bird boxes and bats with bat boxes, yet we are considering a vast solar farm right next door. Hypocritical do you not think?

To top all these aspects off Solar Farms are MASSIVELY inefficient in comparison to other renewable energy. A 140-acre Solar Farm is said to be capable of supplying electricity to about 9,000 homes yet one wind turbine in the North sea can power 16,000 homes. In terms of efficiency i.e. the amount of power exported to the grid, Solar's rating is between 11 and 15% whereas for off-shore wind the figure is 50+%. On one day alone last year it was reported that 78% of the UK's Electricity came from off-shore wind. So why ravage our farmland?

It is highly un-likely that the land would return to agriculture in 40 years' time, there are better alternatives. I cannot help but feel our home as we know it will be shattered by this solar farm and there is a strong negative development on our health that we are to expect along with depreciation on our property value!

Comments for Planning Application 22/501335/FULL

Application Summary

Application Number: 22/501335/FULL

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Case Officer: Marion Geary

Customer Details

Name: Mrs Rosemary Wright

Address: 7 Little Sheephurst Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9NZ

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Apart from the obvious traffic problems, with Sheephurst Lane being a very busy road, it is obvious that we would have to have massive amounts of more traffic, causing all sorts of problems i.e.

Road being damaged by big lorries, the Lane is not the best road, as it stands and the mess that would be left on roads would be catastrophic to other road, users making it slippery and we have buses and other farm vehicles that use our Lane so there would be major problems with vehicles trying to pass one another etc.

The land in question is good quality food producing land, used for centuries ...not just a few weeks...and with the current food shortages in this world at present I find it quite incredible that these so called farmers, wish to use good arable land , for this purpose, when this problem of feeding people is not going to go away any time soon, why can they not use. i.e, disused air fields or other disused land.

As to animals that use these pastures, we have at present a very successful family of buzzards/kestrels, which I follow, and with all the solar panels it would definitely not allow them easy access to food.

I also note that there are trees etc. to be planted, on the property, if these are deciduous trees, the leaves will cause problems in the ditches, which at the moment are not very well cleared, and could cause flooding problems, which we do not need, as the road usually floods every year anyway.

Also the wood, where I believe they are planning to run the footpath, is a bluebell wood, so I thought had to be protected!

I therefore, feel that possibly farmers would be better growing foods to feed the world, and let

others put their solar farms on disused property, out of the way of people, also possibly on top of buildings, so that people are not bothered by it, I have nothing against renewable energy, I just think that it should be put where it does not irritate or annoy and affect peoples lives..ie.perhaps the farmer would like to put it in his garden...but I bet he won't .