

Government policy, as confirmed recently by George Eustice in the House of Commons in July 2022 states clearly the need to protect valuable farmland. George Eustice also confirmed in the House of Commons in July 2022 that Grades 2 and 3 land are rated as Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land, which reflects precisely the response he gave to a question in the Commons in February 2019. This is also confirmed in Ministry for Housing & Local Government guidance of 2015, stating that BMV is classified as Grade 3b and above.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012 clause 112 states the government's policy on land use. Decisions lie with the relevant planning authorities must consider account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Local planning authorities should use areas of poorer quality agricultural grade rather than higher grade. The site proposed for Longfield consists of high grade farmland: the ALC for the Longfield site confirms the entire site to be ALC grade 2 and 3. As such the entire site is categorised as BMV and in accordance with NPPF and all government policy, must be protected from development.

NPPF, updated in July 2021, strengthens the environmental objective “requiring sustainable development to protect and enhance natural, built and historic environment including making effective use of land and improving biodiversity. Using greenfield land for large-scale solar developments conflicts with NPPF Chapter 11 (clause 119) as it does not make effective use of land.

NPPF Chapter 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment), particularly clauses 174-175 & 183, where it is clear that the best and most versatile land should not be developed unless there are exceptional reasons and where the economic and other benefits of this land as it is currently used must be taken into consideration. This policy section also clearly states that planning policy and decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes. Environmentally, the proposed scheme is unsound. Longfield's publications make bizarre, laughable claims as to how the solar plant may encourage species such as nightingales and turtle doves, for which baffling claim there is neither evidence nor precedence. The area of the proposed site is already rich in flora and fauna. Hundreds of migratory geese gather on the site. It is a local stronghold for lapwings, protected and scarce. Protected species including water voles, otters and great crested newts. Larger mammals including fallow and roe deer are abundant on the area. All will be catastrophically disturbed by the infrastructure and fencing, both during installation and during the plant's operational lifetime.

The development will cause harm to the context and setting of local heritage assets and the application is therefore contrary to NPPF Chapter 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment), specifically clauses 189, 194, 195, 199 - 200. On this point, for those of us who live within the proposed scheme, the historical landscape will be destroyed utterly. On a personal note, my own home will be surrounded on three sides by panels within feet of my house. No amount of mitigation hedge planting will remove this impact. My house, a 17th century cottage, sits alongside another 17th century cottage and a 13th century barn. The adjacent houses are two further farms, 16th century and 15th century respectively. These buildings are part of a traditional agricultural setting largely unaltered since the late mediaeval period. Swamping this area with solar panels will rob the setting of its historical context and leave each of our houses as marooned islands, denuded of their context enclosed within high walls of steel and glass panels, surrounded by chain link fences, cameras and spotlights.

It conflicts with the updated NPPF's emphasis on preserving tranquillity: clause 185- (Identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason) and the Government planning guidance regarding noise and existing areas of tranquillity. On this point, for those of us who live within the proposed scheme, all existing amenity in the natural landscape will be lost. As stated above, my own home will be surrounded on three sides by panels within feet of my house, causing inmitigable loss of amenity. Under the current proposal, our houses will become little marooned islands imprisoned within high walls of steel and glass panels and chain link fences, cameras and spotlights. While I

accept that living in a property does not confer a right to a view over the surrounding land, I hope that the Inspectorate will consider most strongly the huge human cost in health and wellbeing that must unavoidably be the direct result if these panels are permitted to surround our homes as intended under the current proposal.