

My reference with Planning Inspectorate is 20049823

I would like to confirm my previous objection to this proposal and to elaborate on some points and add some new ones. The proposed project would cover an unacceptably high proportion of the area of the villages concerned. It would destroy the rural character of the villages and the landscape visible from the adjacent area of outstanding natural beauty. One of the beauties of the AONB is the rural view across the East Stour valley and this would be totally destroyed by the proposed industrialisation.

The construction phase would have a serious negative effect on access to the village since the principal route into the village is Station Road which is narrow and has some difficult bends to be negotiated. As a regular user of Station Road I know that it barely copes with current use and the intense use by construction traffic would make it almost impossible for locals to use. The access from the south is by Frith Road which is narrow and certainly could not easily handle heavy use by construction traffic. Locals and satnav users would then seek alternative routes into the village such as Church Lane. Church Lane is also under threat from a proposal by EDF and since much of it is single track, the result would be chaotic. Roman Road would be another alternative route but that is also too narrow to cope with heavy traffic. In fact, construction traffic for the current work at the convertor Station is not allowed to use Roman Road. So, basically, the construction traffic generated by the proposal would almost cut off Aldington. A recent report details how Kent has the highest incidence of fatalities on country roads in the UK and a much higher rate than on roads in urban areas. Placing such strains on our lanes could well make our villages fatality hotspots. Only last week, Station Road was closed because of a serious road traffic accident at its junction with the A20. Construction traffic could well increase the incidence of RTAs around that junction, a junction which has already claimed a number of lives.

A large part of the proposed installation is on land sloping down into the East Stour river, downstream of the flood defence scheme. That scheme has very significantly reduced flooding in the town of Ashford and the city of Canterbury. Increased run off from the proposed solar panels would probably undo some of that protection during periods of heavy rain resulting in the return of flooding in Ashford, Canterbury and the villages of Wye, Chartham and Thannington between them. This possibility was never discussed in the consultation but I believe it requires serious investigation by the Environment Agency. Especially since heavy rainfall is predicted, by the Met Office, to rise as a result of global warming.

The proposal covers land containing a number of public rights of way. These footpaths are used, not only, by residents of Aldington and Mersham, but also by walkers from across the county and beyond. They do not stop at the village boundaries but extend into a national network of public footpaths. The deviations suggested by the proposers are impracticable and would cost the villagers the income from tourism.

There are many equestrian properties in Aldington and Mersham and the presently quiet lanes are used by horse riders. Heavier traffic would present an increased hazard to horses and their riders.

The proposal includes 116 batteries dotted around the site, a factor glossed over or ignored by the proposers in their consultations. These batteries are hazardous. When they ignite, the fire is uncontrollable and produces plumes of toxic smoke thus presenting a serious health hazard to the residents of Aldington and Mersham and possibly further afield.

The proposers have said that there is no alternative to their scheme. I disagree. There are two obvious alternatives. Firstly, the Dungeness Power Station has all the infrastructure needed to take 3 Rolls-Royce mini reactors. It is on the national grid, the defences against radiation leakage will have to be maintained for a century so it would be better for the national economy to make the site productive again. Such use of Dungeness is supported by the local MP, Damian Collins MP. Nuclear reactors operate whether or not the sun shines and their output can be varied to meet demand without the need to use expensive and dangerous batteries.

Secondly, not far from the agricultural land in question, there are warehouses, retail outlets, factories, car parks, lorry parks, housing estates, an inland border facility etc. all of which could have solar panels on rooftops or on canopies over car/lorry parks. Putting solar panels on rooftops rather than agricultural land, would allow for production of both electricity and food. My view is that solar panels on rooftops should be a requirement for granting of planning permission. A recent debate on the subject in parliament also reached the conclusion that food security is important for our country. We live on an island and need to be able to feed our population ourselves. Furthermore, imported food adds to global warming because of transport and it is a factor contributing to our cost of living crisis.