

These are issues I would like to add my further comments on:

Visual Impact: I am deeply concerned about ill planned/lacking proper thought location of the proposal (Aldington Ridge) making massive visual impact on both immediate local and wider areas (Kent Downs). I do not believe that successful screening of the solar panels on the high ground is realistic and I also do not think that it was given enough thought by the developer. Saying that it will change the character of the landscape is an understatement, it will scar and damage it beyond level that any benefit of solar power can justify.

An obvious issue at heart of the visual impact of this project is, apart from its location that suits the developer but does not make sense to anybody who knows the area, it's size. It will simply dominate the local landscape and change it from rural, agricultural, Garden of England to industrial wasteland equipped with security lights (polluting the normally dark night sky) and intrusive security cameras.

Although with all solar panel installation projects there is always a talk from developers about ground cover planting schemes with "happy sheep grazing and happy bees buzzing around", I am yet to see a scheme that is more than patches of land scarcely covered by measly weeds.

Biodiversity: Following on the above point on change of the ground vegetation, I am very fearful of other damage to the habitat of wildlife not only during construction of the site but primarily during years of its operation. There are several important species present at the area and the project will severely impact their roaming routes; there seem to be no appetite from the developer to address this issue. I also believe that adding significant number of artificial lights to the area will also have negative effect on them.

Once again, whilst I fully acknowledge the need for cleaner energy, I am strongly opposed to labelling a project that is guaranteed to destroy wildlife as "clean". Once these species are lost, they cannot simply be imported from China, unlike the solar panels.

Battery storage: this is a very particular issue that, I believe, was very much overlooked by the developer; it was brought over and over by the residents and somehow – one may say – conveniently ignored. In addition to unescapably industrial in their design (which flows back to the impact on the landscape), they are simply located too close to residential properties. I am not aware of developer addressing properly issues of fire risk, access to fire services in the worst case scenario and simply its impact on health and wellbeing of the residents if they were to be exposed to fumes and ground pollution but also, during normal operation of the site (noise – unlikely to be blocked by any boundaries hedges – these will require number of years to grow to some size anyway).

Loss of agricultural land/selection of the land: It is my understanding that the developer of this project based its design on the land that was made available to them and no reasonable (or very artificial ones) attempts were made to seek alternatives particularly that within the project, some not insignificant amount of BMV land is included. I must question the wisdom of damaging, or most likely destroying permanently, fertile agricultural land in times when food security should be taken very seriously. As with the risk of damage to the wildlife, this is yet another sacrifice too far. Our stomachs cannot be filled with electricity once the land used for food production produces food no more.

Flooding: I believe this was not addressed sufficiently (in fact not at all as far as I am concerned) by the developer.

Surface water flooding frequently presents a serious problem for some properties in the area with some badly affected being neighbouring properties for the proposed site. I would like to be convinced and reassured that the problem is not going to get worse but, without any assessment or proposals for mitigation from developer, I fear that current level flooding will be the thing of the past and it will only get more frequent and worse in its intensity.

Construction (particularly traffic related) and operational issues: It is my opinion that no sufficient attention has been given to these issues. It is obvious that the local roads that the construction traffic will be forced to use are either main points of entry/exit to the village and adding heavy construction traffic will simply create chaos in the whole area or are not suitable or dangerous (Smeeth Crossroads being prime example) for the type of traffic that industrial type construction would need to use. I do not consider proposed traffic management solutions to be satisfactory and would even risk a statement that it is very irresponsible to simply note this as just another issue and hope for the best, which is what I would say had been presented to the residents.

Consultation and relationship developer-residents: I feel very strongly that the required process has not been adequately completed and was simply a tick-box exercise. It was very obvious from when I was observing the meeting of 19th November, that we are simply an annoying obstacle in the project. Even with access to modern technology it may be quite difficult to visualise such a project and, I believe, presentations from developer were lacking in creativity and did not take proper care of addressing and discussing issues raised.