

[REDACTED]

Graham Sword
Examining Authority
The Planning Inspectorate

By email to stonestreetgreensolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

6 December 2024

Dear Sir,

**Re application by EPL 001 Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for
Stonestreet Green Solar
Your ref EN010135**

We write to share our concerns in regard to the proposal to convert in excess of 160 hectares of productive arable land that is currently actively farmed into an industrial solar power station. Our family live at [REDACTED] and have done so since 1979. We are adjoining landowners to the proposed site and our concerns are as follows:

Our first objection to this proposal is the very real threat that flooding poses to our home. Historically, this has been an issue due to the location of our cottage. We are situated at the lowest point of the surrounding land and are directly in the path of the water course. This in itself would not be an issue if the ditches that take the water away from our home, and, most significantly, the River Stour itself, had the capacity to transport the immense quantity of water generated by even the shortest spell of wet weather. We are seriously concerned that should this proposal be granted, the quantity and speed of the surface water exiting the land will seriously exacerbate an already precarious situation. We have seen no acknowledgment from the developers that they appreciate the magnitude of this problem or any evidence of how they propose to negate the risk of repeated flooding of our home.

Continuing our concerns regarding the intensified flooding that would be created by this proposal, is that of the rerouting of the well-used, ancient footpaths within their perimeter. Suggesting that these could be relocated to run alongside the river is not only untenable it is also potentially a serious hazard to life. As mentioned above, the river frequently bursts its banks and, with the additional water volume it could be predicted that this will intensify in both frequency and volume. Footpaths beside the river would therefore not only become impossible to navigate, it is conceivable that, should an unsuspecting walker attempt to do so, that the strength of the current, together with the limited escape route created by the boundary fencing, could pose a threat to life!

A further very significant concern relates to noise pollution. The developer's propaganda suggests that once the construction works are completed, the operation will be benign and not intrusive. We appreciate that there is little empirical evidence available because of the relatively short period that the technology has been in use, but we are sure that as the installation ages, the ambient noise created by the converters and their cooling fans will increase, particularly at those very times, in mid and late summer, when one might legitimately expect to be able to live peacefully with one's windows open. An assurance that this would be no more than a distant background

“hum” from the proposed installation is neither acceptable nor simply credible. Peak solar input will require peak mechanical cooling of the equipment and will not be able to be shut down if it exceeds the noise limits that your Council might impose to safeguard neighbouring land owners. We are both [REDACTED] and desperately require the natural quietness of our home environment to maintain our mental wellbeing.

Also, in regards to the batteries, we have concerns relating to fire engine access along Laws Lane. For the much of the year, the verge of this single lane track is so waterlogged that cars, should they pull over onto it, can easily get stuck. Equestrians who regularly use the lane choose to avoid moving onto the verge to allow oncoming traffic to pass due to the depth of its boggy nature. During wetter spells, water flows down the lane from Haven Kennels to Bank road, which collects and submerges the verges at the lower end of the lane. To consider that this lane is suitable for a multitude of fully laden fire engines to use in emergency conditions seems ludicrous!

Additionally, it can be reasonably predicted that having two crossings across the lane, initially for construction and then maintenance of the installations, will consolidate the problems highlighted above. For the developers to suggest that there will be no problems with safety issues arising from mud on the road due to the additional traffic traveling from sodden heavy clay fields is also, in our view, totally ridiculous.

A final, but no less important concern relates to the ongoing existence of the badgers whose sett has been located above the track at the top of Spring Hill on Bank Road for more than 50 years. Although the proposal acknowledges their presence by affording undeveloped space around their sett, it does not address the issue of their survival requirements. The large clan require access to their foraging area, which includes the ancient woodland on the opposite side of the road to their sett, together with the surrounding fields and hedgerows. We are unaware of any consideration the developers have given to enabling the clan continued access to these areas, through the use of their long-established pathways.

We would like it noted that we are not motivated by the notion of “not in my back yard” because we feel very strongly that huge terrestrial installations should not be in anyone’s back yard. We are strong supporters of a mix of sources of electrical generation, including photovoltaic. If technology is able to rise to the challenge of enabling the safe use of DC current for lighting and power, then on the roof of every new industrial, commercial or agricultural building should be an absolute priority, though it will really only come into its own when the need to convert from DC to AC current, at 12% to 15% efficiency, is overcome.

Currently in Southern England, photovoltaic generation operates at an overall annual “load factor” (the fraction of the projected output over a period that is actually delivered) is as low as 11% and at best 15% (Ref: John Constable, Director of the Renewable Energy Foundation). No power is generated at night and minimal amounts in the winter months. As these are obviously the very times of peak demand and electrical energy cannot be efficiently stored, the need for gas and coal burning plants is not reduced, they are just operated less economically.

In summary, our objections to this proposal are as follows:

- The risk of flooding to our property will be increased in both magnitude and frequency to unmanageable and uninsurable proportions.
- The number of battery enclosures and their proximity to our property is a potential risk to health should they catch light. And most significantly, that the constant noise produce by

the inverters will remove our ability to maintain our mental health and wellbeing that is currently afforded by our home's countryside environment.

- That the River Stour is already unable to accommodate the volume of water created during 'normal' wet conditions. This significantly limits its capacity to reduce flood risk to Spring Cottage and this will become a magnified problem should the proposal be granted. River flooding also presents a risk to walkers and their dogs, committed to navigating footpaths re-routed along the river bank.
- The use of Laws Lane is unsuitable as an emergency access route for multiple fire engines. The need for two crossings and with no provision for cleaning the road of mud debris constitutes a risk to the traffic, equestrians, cyclists and pedestrians alike.
- The needs of the well established badger clan that has had a sett at the top of Spring Hill on Bank Road requires empathetic accommodation in order for it to survive.

Yours faithfully



Ally and Nikki Payne









