

HM Planning Inspectorate
c/o byersgillsolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk



12th August 2024

Clerk to Bishopton Parish Council
c/o 31 Langholm Crescent
Darlington DL3 7ST



Dear Sir

RE: SUBMISSION REGARDING PROPOSED BYERS GILL SOLAR FARM

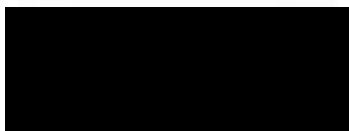
Bishopton Parish Council would like to submit the following questions and comments into the consultation regarding the development of Byer Gill Solar Farm following the meetings in Darlington the 23rd and 24th July 2024.

1. Bishopton Parish Council are opposed the development both in principle and also practicalities in terms of land assembly, design, disturbance, aesthetics and safety. The formal Conservation Status of the village, we thought, protected its historic integrity including 17th century buildings and ancient, Norman monuments. This status, approved by Darlington Borough Council and government, has been used to prevent local people developing their properties in the past – has it no status with this scheme?
2. The principle of more renewable energy development in the area where there are already a significant number of Wind Turbines and also other Solar Farms just seems unfair. The community live in a wider region of heavy industry and enjoy Bishopton because it is one of the few rural places – this development adds to the feeling that developers see the north east as irrelevant when it comes to maintaining the English countryside. To be clear, there are currently 2 large Wind Farms and 12 proposed Solar developments (3 approved) within a 4 mile radius of Bishopton. Does the Cumulative Effect of renewable energy developments in an area have no bearing on planning regulations?
3. The land assembly does not create a “farm” – it is a collection of fields scattered across a wide area that already either has or soon will have other solar production facilities. The development is purely opportunistic for the financial benefit of RWE and is not a properly planned and cohesive scheme. The scattered nature of the Solar Farm will make the development seem even bigger than it already is. Does a Solar Farm need to have a logical and compact size rather than sprawling across areas of habitation and amenity?

4. RWE are very loose with their terminology and not entirely consistent with their explanations – it has been reported on many occasions to the Parish Council that their business practices have put off land owners who have withdrawn their land from the proposals. RWE's responses that they had reduced the size after consultation is not true. Also, RWE use terms such as "try" and "it is hoped" on a regular basis which, to us, mean nothing. How specific do the developers need to be with their plans at this planning stage and how are they held to account if successful?
5. The Parish Council are also concerned about the increased flooding risk during and after any development. There have been many occasions in the past year where local roads have been blocked for days by flooding. We do not believe that the already poor drainage in the area has been taken into account. Has any proper assessment of flooding risk been undertaken – if so, why hasn't this been made available to residents?
6. The Parish Council is also clear that the irradiance levels in this part of the country are only a little over 50% of those in the south of England. Put simply, is there enough sun to justify this development and all of the disruption?
7. Design features including a 15m high structure are described as causing little effect – the Parish Council can think of no 15m high structure in a rural area that has no visual or environmental effect. Has RWE given detailed prospective elevations of planned structures and firm proposals of their location?
8. Concerns for biodiversity, in the wider area of heavy industry the impact of this and other developments is causing real damage to the biodiversity and healthy benefits of the rural area. The Parish Council is concerned that the wider environmental impact be included in the planning process. Where is the detailed analysis of the impact on biodiversity in the area when considering this proposal on top of all of the others being implemented?
9. Finally, we acknowledge that the developers have offered a small Compensation Scheme. The position of Bishopton Parish Council, based on all the representations from Parishioners, is to oppose the development in total and so no discussion has taken place about any compensation, however large it may become, for the total ruin of people's lives.

Thank you for the manner in which the Planning Inspector conducted his enquiries and we trust our concerns will be understood and questions answered.

Yours sincerely



Steve Rose
Clerk to Bishopton Parish Council