

To: The Examining Authorities

To: The Planning Officer Darlington Borough Council

From Colin Taylor, Chairman of the Great Stainton Parish Meeting

27/11/2024

Cumulative effects: question for the ExA 26/11/2024

In the open floor hearing on 26/11/2024 I asked the following question and the ExA believed the issues were more applicable to being directed to the local authority:

‘Context: Great Stainton is a small hamlet on the boundary of the Darlington Borough Council (DBC) area. We enjoy minimal services from the DBC and have noted the increasing pressures on the budget of the authority over a number of years. An example of this is the authorities capabilities in relation to maintaining the public rights of way in the area surrounding Great Stainton.

‘My understanding of the provision of business rates revenue is that Stockton Borough Council will be the recipients due to the connection to the grid of the Byers Gill development being in their area. This appears also to be true of all the other solar developments within the Darlington Borough Council area.

‘The costs associated with the planning, development and ongoing maintenance of the solar developments for Byers Gill and others, appear to mainly fall to Darlington Borough Council.

‘Given the above, the cumulative effect of Byers Gill development and other solar farm developments within the DBC area, will impoverish residents within the DBC area by placing a greater burden of financial responsibility upon the authority without any additional budget to carry out those duties and responsibilities.

‘Can the ExA be assured that the DBC have sufficient resource to effectively carry out their responsibilities if this application is granted by the Secretary of State?’

I accept that the financial issues ensuing from this application are for the local authority to address, however I believe there is an issue that is relevant for the ExA’s attention.

It appears that, if granted, this application will place a financial burden on the DBC that is not included in it’s MTFP and will inevitably impact on either its ability to carry out its statutory duties in relation to this application, or will impact negatively on its other services to residents, without further funding.

It appears to be innocuous that business rates for this application should go to Stockton Borough Council who have a minimal costs associated with the application and ongoing responsibilities.

If the Secretary of State grants this application then one public body will be imposing a financial imposition on another public authority without providing any financial support to carry out those duties. Inevitably, it is the communities within the DBC area that will suffer a lack of service as a result. This also presents a real possibility that DBC will be unable to carry out its statutory responsibilities in relation to this application, again to the detriment of the villages and population within the confines of the solar farms.

I would, therefore, repeat my question to both DBC and the ExA: *‘Can the ExA be assured that the DBC have sufficient resource to effectively carry out their responsibilities if this application is granted by the Secretary of State?’*

Colin Taylor

Chairman Great Stainton Parish Meeting

27th November 2024

On 3 Dec 2024, at 12:44, Dave Coates <[REDACTED]@darlington.gov.uk> wrote:

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Hello Colin,

Thank you for your Email dated 27th November 2024 relating to the ongoing decision-making process by the Government. I note you have also copied in The Government Inspector.

Thank you for raising the legitimate concerns relating to potential additional financial burdens upon the Local Authority relating to ongoing matters such as maintenance of footpaths and other infrastructure should the Government decide to grant the application before them.

You will appreciate that the Council, like many Authorities is facing significant financial pressures to provide satisfactory services to its residents. This is normally addressed particularly in Darlington by encouraging a vibrant local economy which includes the encouragement of development, both business and residential, to meet local needs. The impact of such developments would ordinarily be addressed in part by the receipt of Business rates and Council Tax.

You are correct in this instance the development should the Government allow it; would result in a situation where an additional financial burden would be placed upon the Local Authority for the maintenance of surrounding infrastructure. This is brought into further focus as any business rates generated by it would be payable to an adjacent Authority where the connection would be made.

It is important therefore that this is considered by the Inspectors in their deliberations.

Kind Regards

Dave Coates

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