



North Herts Planning Department

2nd October 2025

Dear Sirs

Re: 25/01947/FP: Application for battery energy storage system (BESS), ground mounted solar farm, associated infrastructure, access and landscaping.
Land south of A507 near Cumberlow Green, Clothall Road, Clothall.

I write on behalf of Ardeley Parish Council to object strongly to this proposed development which amounts to large-scale blatant industrialisation of the countryside and is wholly in conflict with the historic agricultural and pastoral character of the area as a whole. This proposal will be visible from Cromer and Luffenhall which are within the parish of Ardeley.

The parish of Ardeley is already facing an application for solar development of 200 acres in the Beane Valley from RES Ltd which was made earlier in the year and this one, which is double the size, will dramatically compound the negative effects of industrialisation if both applications were to be granted.

This area of North Hertfordshire, which is particularly green, quiet and attractive, is facing an onslaught of attention from the solar power industry, which amounts to full industrialisation within the area beyond the green belt. Not only is this an unacceptable blight on the lives of the people who have lived and worked and farmed here for generations, but it is a seriously deleterious proposal, the effects of which will impact widely on the county as a whole, which is under constant developmental pressure due to its proximity to London.

The size and scale of the application itself is massive and will engulf acres of functioning agricultural land which cannot be replaced for the development term of 40 years; this raises grave concerns for national food security. There is no way that the country's food requirements can be honestly predicted this far into the future. What seems viable today may in no way reflect the needs of the future, especially given the instability of the world's political situation and one only has to think back to the 'Dig for Victory' effort of the last war to realise how pressing the need for viable farmland could become.

The effect on wildlife and tranquility of the area as a whole will be devastating, owing to the full scale change of use from agricultural to industrial. The area features established use by deer, badgers, red kites, and hares. The pressure of development, especially for housing, in Hertfordshire is unrelenting. It was noted by those who attended the applicants' consultation exhibition that the emphasis was focused strongly on the supposed benefits to insects, butterflies and to biodiversity as a whole. This seems to be somewhat misleading in so far as the effects on the mammalian residents- especially badgers, hares and deer, will be catastrophic cannot be mitigated as the proposal is for a gargantuan, land consuming, fenced industrial compound.

The plant raises the risk of pollution which could affect the water course and the ground itself. This will occur during the course of construction, from the substances used in the course of maintenance, and from the industrial nature of the plant itself, particularly the batteries. There is significant fear of a fire risk which is particularly associated with battery type equipment and its resistance to fire extinguishment. The effect of the noise of the panels will necessarily impact on mammalian wildlife and the scale of the plant will amplify this to the detriment of walkers and the residents in the nearby villages of Cumberlow Green, Cottered, Rushden, Clothall and Luffenhall.

This proposal clearly conflicts with the ethos behind the North Hertfordshire Local Plan and associated policies which have at their heart the protection of the countryside; if the application were to be granted it would be at the direct expense of particularly attractive landscape and community and visitor well-being. This area is of particular value for its heritage, beauty, tranquility and leisure facility and consequently attracts visitors, walkers and riders who avail themselves of the many footpaths and walkways in the area. The fact that the proposal borders what is known locally as 'The Roman Road' is particularly concerning as this unmetalled pathway is reputedly said to have existed in its current state since medieval times at least.

It would seem that the application is an opportunist shot on the part of the developers; virgin agricultural land provides an easy option for development, offering reduced costs and thereby enhancing profit margins. It is in effect, a case of low-hanging fruit. An alternative proposal for location on a brownfield site or one combined with or added to an already industrialised location requires much more careful and complex planning and execution which would obviously impinge on commercial desirability.

The current tidal wave of government policy which is driving the implementation of renewable energy with the ferocity of a tsunami is a relatively recent development. The urgency of addressing climate change is not disputed, but the means of doing so needs careful balancing with the enduring sustainability of other resources, namely the land itself in the context of the national environment as a whole and the need to preserve areas that are unspoilt and as such, the process should not be rushed.

This application seems to have been submitted with unseemly haste. It is almost as if the developers are anxious to proceed before there is a change of attitude at the top of government, which there may well be, come the next election. We note the relatively short deadline given for submission of public objections and the fact that there has not yet been a decision on the application submitted by RES Ltd which seems somewhat inappropriate, if not bizarre.

For all these reasons, Ardeley Parish Council would urge the rejection of this audacious, unsuitable, deleterious application in the strongest possible terms.

Yours faithfully

L Ewen

Clerk to Ardeley Parish Council