

WYMONDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

16 Cedar Avenue, Ickleford, SG5 3XU

Tel: 07733 853263

clerk@wymondley-pc.gov.uk

By Email To:

planning.control@north-herts.gov.uk

Dear Sirs

Reference 24/02455/FP

Full Planning Permission : Proposed solar farm measuring 35.5 hectares with associated battery storage and ancillary infrastructure

Land Opposite Wymondley Grid Station And To The South Of Sperberry Hill, St Ippolyts

I am writing on behalf of Wymondley Parish Council who were objectors to the original planning application for the Solar farm and, having now carefully considered the amendments produced by the applicant, would comment as follows.

We are extremely disappointed that the applicant has done little more than the equivalent of “moving the deck chairs on the Titanic”. The overwhelming objections to the original proposals were based on the extreme damage that the scheme would do to the area including impact on the Green Belt, Loss of BMV agricultural land, damage to the landscape views and the adverse impact on the communities’ businesses and residents of a whole area between Wymondley and St Ippolyts Parishes.

The revised scheme has adjusted a bund around Redcoats, added a few trees near St Ippolyts and changed the composition of some hedging. They seem to have completely avoided addressing the core issue that this scheme of 35 hectares is configured in the worse possible way so that it adversely effects

- Homes on Sperberry Hill
- Homes on the edge of St Ippolyts
- The Grade 2 listed Redcoats Farmhouse Hotel
- The listed Wyck
- Views from Little Almshoe
- Homes in Lower Titmore Green
- Views from footpaths crossing the site
- General views across some exceptional landscaping

It should also be put in the context of the overall development impact that the area is suffering at the present time. The Priory solar array impacts the east of the Parish and whilst likely to be ultimately refused by the Secretary of State, is currently a risk as it has the support of NHDC. The Local Plan has rolled back the green belt which could allow housing between Redcoats and Little Wymondley, where there is already a 300 plus house application. It is also likely that the west of Stevenage development will be brought forward,

which will impact Lower Titmore Green and Todds Green. All of these developments in an area which is essential green belt to stop the coalescence of North Herts towns.

The developer and his consultants have rolled out the same old arguments for energy security v food security, but what they fail to address is the fact that solar can be achieved on commercial roofs, of which there are 1.2m square metres in North Herts and Stevenage as well as on residential property. BMV agricultural land should not be sacrificed for the most advantageous economic solution. Government policy is moving towards protecting farmland so it is critical that the Councillors take account of emerging policy and pending legislation.

Government and indeed our local MP has put great importance on community consultation and benefit. Our Parish Council has had no interaction with the planners or the applicant, nor has there been any proposals for community ownership or community fund should the application move forward. The occasional text saying “do you support Solar” really does not meet the Government’s expectations nor ours.

We are also very concerned about the large trailers that have appeared at the rear of Redcoats Farm House. We are not aware of the reason or need of the landowner to do this, but if it emerges that it is effectively a means to pressure adjoining owners to withdraw objections, it does raise the serious question of the integrity of those involved with the application and therefore the likelihood of them complying with planning conditions and reinstatement. We leave that matter for the Council to review.

In summary we believe that the revisions do little to address the underlying issues that were at the heart of our and many other original objections. This scheme is ill-conceived and does enormous damage to residents, businesses, our agriculture, landscape views and residents wellbeing in an area of North Herts becoming overrun with development proposals.

We trust that this time our voice will be heard and taken seriously.

Yours faithfully

Sandra Weir

Sandra Weir

Clerk to Wymondley Parish Council