

**Email sent by Nick Trew, Chairman of Long Sutton & Well Parish Council  
19<sup>th</sup> March 2021 @ 15.16**

Dear Daryl,

As you know, an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion request (20/02632/EIA) was submitted to Hart DC on 27th October 2020 by Fleet Solar Ltd in respect of a proposed solar energy farm of 105 hectares (260 acres) on farmland surrounding the village of Long Sutton, south of Odiham.

As you will also be aware, Long Sutton & Well Parish Council were very concerned about the potential impact of an installation of this scale and extent, which would substantially encircle this historic village and have a major impact on the surrounding rural landscape. We therefore submitted to Hart DC arguments in support of the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment, and were very pleased that Hart issued a decision letter on 25 January 2021 confirming that such an EIA was needed in this instance, and giving detailed reasons for their decision.

We supported in particular the comments in Hart's decision letter that:

*"it is considered landscape and/or visual impacts would be significant in EIA terms and would need to be fully assessed through a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment"; and*

*"taking into account the characteristics and location of the development and the types and characteristics of potential impacts, and with due regard to consultation comments, the scale nature and location of the proposed development and associated proposed assessments to accompany a planning application, it is anticipated that the development will result in significant environmental effects".*

We also strongly agreed with the comment in Hart's letter that:

*"at the present time of this screening opinion, there is another solar farm development proposed in the vicinity [i.e. 100 hectares at Chosley Farm, North Warnborough 20/03185/FUL, yet to be decided] that would trigger significant cumulative impacts when considered together with the proposed development. However, this development is currently not 'existing' or approved".*

You may imagine, however, that we were very concerned to learn that, unbeknownst to the Parish Council, the developer had also submitted on 13 January an EIA Screening Opinion request direct to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, while the District Council's opinion was still awaited. We only became aware of this when the Secretary of State issued his (delegated) decision on 26 February that an EIA was not required in this instance, thus effectively nullifying Hart's own decision.

It would appear that the EIA procedural rules allow such a direct appeal when the local authority has failed to give an opinion within a three week period, unless an extension has been agreed with developer. It is our understanding that such an extension was agreed with the developer, Fleet Solar, because the Ministry of Defence, on behalf of RAF Odiham, required more time to comment on the screening opinion request, but this does not appear to have deterred the developer from going direct to the Secretary of State in the meantime.

Be that as it may, the Parish Council is extremely concerned about the prospect of a planning application for a solar farm of this scale and extent, and in the proposed location. To gauge the views of our local parishioners we convened on 15 March an informal virtual village meeting, open to all, which was attended by over 50 largely multiple households. The views expressed were unanimous in voicing serious concern about what is proposed.

While no one disputes the need for renewable energy, including solar power, as a very important part of combatting climate change, the scale and extent of what is proposed in this instance, and in such a location, causes all our inhabitants very grave concern. The Parish Council remains of the view that the arguments in support of an Environmental Impact Assessment, as articulated by Hart in its

decision letter of 25 January, remain as valid and pertinent as ever, and that the issues involved require full and proper scrutiny and assessment. In addition, the “cumulative impact” of this and other proposals in the vicinity also seems to us a very important aspect requiring thorough and detailed evaluation.

The purpose of this letter is therefore to urge that, given that an EIA has now been ruled out by the Secretary of State, Hart nevertheless requests the developer to submit a pre-application in advance of a full application so that the local planning authority has an opportunity to examine and interrogate the proposal in the round, including the cumulative impact of this with other solar farm proposals in the vicinity. A pre-application would also enable local people, including the PC, to have the opportunity to study the proposals further and express their views before a full application is formulated and submitted to the council.

With best wishes,  
Nick

Nick Trew  
Chairman  
Long Sutton & Well Parish Council