

The Planning Inspectorate reference is: APP/N1920/W/22/3295268

The address of the Appeal site is: Land North of Butterfly Lane, Land surrounding Hilfield Farm and Land West of Hilfield Lane, Aldenham

My Name is [REDACTED]

My address is [REDACTED]

1. I oppose the appeal proposals for the reasons set out in my grounds of opposition lodged with the Inspectorate dated 5th June 2022 and those already stated in my earlier letter to Hertsmere BC dated 15th February 2021. This letter was the Appendix to my grounds of opposition on this Appeal. I respectfully ask the Inspector to read and favourably consider these documents.
2. My original letter and grounds of opposition set out my concerns. These concerns were expressed as a long-standing resident and one who lives in, and loves, the area. There were over two thousand objections to the application, written in some form or another. This shows that the local residents love and care greatly for the area. They shared many of my concerns. The Councillors, who attended the Planning Committee, were unanimous in refusing permission. The huge number of representations, unprecedented in number in Hertsmere, and the unanimous views of the locally elected Councillors, deserve credence.
3. It was daunting to address the Planning Committee and it is even more so to speak at a public inquiry such as this. The biggest Hertsmere has seen in a long time. I express my own views, which are shared by many residents, with whom I have spoken.
4. As my letter and grounds of opposition show, my concerns include the effect of the proposals on:
 - (1) the Green Belt
 - (2) the landscape,
 - (3) Heritage assets,
 - (4) public footpaths,
 - (5) wildlife,
 - (6) the long-term loss of use of longstanding agricultural land,
 - (7) noise,
 - (8) construction and maintenance traffic and machinery,
 - (9) flooding,

- (10) the unlikelihood of the restoration of the site to agriculture,
- (11) the effect of glint and glare on pilots flying into, and out of, Elstree Airport.

- 5. All these matters now appear to be the subject of learned expert reports. These are written in terms that adopt the repeated use of adjectives like "the lower end of the scale", "limited", "moderate", "significant", "less than substantial" and "substantial". These adjectives are helpful, to a degree, to channel a rational thought process. That said, in my respectful view, we need to "get real" and see what the proposed means in real terms, not cloaked in a plethora of adjectives and expert jargon.
- 6. Barring a period of 12 years, when I lived just across the fields in Letchmore Heath but regularly came back to Hilfield, I have lived at Hilfield all my life. I have known the area and the application site all my life. I hope it will be helpful to the Inspector to have my evidence, which is given from that knowledge and background.
- 7. Why is local background so important?
 - (1) The local residents, including myself, are well placed to judge the effect of placing the solar farm in these fields. We can see just how damaging the proposal really is. For real. No desktop study. No application of assumptions and studies elsewhere. Just how it is.
 - (2) I can state from my own lifelong knowledge that the footpaths on either side of Hilfield Lane, those going to and from Letchmore Heath and those going to and from the airport, through the application site, have always been very well used, and highly valued, by local residents.
 - (3) I know that there are barking deer, foxes, squirrels, rabbits, pheasants and all manner of wild birds because I see and hear them all the time. We should care for them. We should avoid them being boxed in, or out, of fenced enclosures that are now part of their living, breeding and feeding grounds. I do not accept the expert evidence of alleged increased biodiversity. We should protect the long established local natural wildlife.
 - (4) I know that these fields have been farmed, as agricultural land, all my lifetime. We should not damage and preclude the use of these precious and irreplaceable assets, for 35 years or more,

particularly at a time of global need. The proposal may also affect the viability of adjoining farmland and lead to pressure for more development.

(5) The attempted mitigating measures, of vision blocking planting, will only hide something that should not be there and block the open, long, beautiful views that have long been there, for the public to enjoy from the footpaths and adjoining roads.

8. I understand that the Inspector has identified two main issues for the public inquiry, one concerning Green Belt and the other heritage assets. I shall address these in turn.

Green Belt

9. In my view, the proposal is outrageous in its size and effect on the Green Belt and Heritage and other assets. As for Green Belt, there can be no doubt in my mind that the proposal will destroy the openness of the Green Belt for 35 years and likely more. With the greatest respect to the Appellant's experts, one has to "get real". We are talking about placing tens of thousands, perhaps over a hundred thousand, solar panels, 16 inverters and 20 battery storage containers with high fences around them, in the middle of truly valuable area of Green Belt, which would otherwise serve its long-designated purpose. Of course, the proposal would destroy the openness of the green belt and challenge its permanence.
10. There are no very special circumstances. This development does not have to be here in open viable agricultural land, in the Green Belt. No case has been made for that. It can be placed anywhere in the country and still be connected to the National Grid. Further, government research and opinion is showing that wind and nuclear power are preferable energy sources than solar farms, especially on agricultural land. Finally, an approval, on appeal, could set a terrible precedent.

Heritage assets

11. As for Heritage assets, we are talking about wrapping solar panels and inverters all around the West, North and East side of the Hilfield estate, in place of land that has been open park or agricultural land for centuries. Of course, that will seriously damage the setting of the Listed Buildings. Close-up views are very important but one most

also consider the broader picture of long-distance open views and the setting of a tall hilltop asset.

12. The worst part of the proposal, from my point of view, is Field 1, where panels will be in the direct vista from the Castle, past the Gate House to the Lodge and vice versa. This was the view which Sir Jeffry Wyattville designed and implemented and which is still present to this day. Sir Jeffry Wyattville was the Architect to the King, who remodelled Windsor Castle. The appeal site would be intrusive and be in competition with the Heritage assets and a major distraction from the Heritage assets.
13. If there are any public benefits to be gained from a huge solar panel site, then they can be better gained on a suitable site that is outside the Green Belt and does not enjoy the benefit of so many proximate Heritage assets.
14. In all the circumstances, I invite the Inspector to recommend that the appeal be dismissed.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
19th October 2022