

Staploe Parish Council

Date: 30/09/2022

Application number: 22/01998/MAF (Bedford Borough Council)

Proposal: Solar Farm and associated development, to include perimeter fencing, access tracks, transformer stations and associated infrastructure. (Cross Local Authority boundary scheme between Huntingdonshire DC & Bedford Borough Council)

Location: Land North Of Bassmead Manor And Home Wood, Staploe Access Is From Kimbolton Road, Hail Weston

Response: Object

Comment:

Staploe Parish Council considered this application at our meeting on 29th September 2022 and resolved to object.

The Parish Council are grateful to the landowner and developer for listening to many of our concerns about their initial proposal for an environmental screening opinion (Hunts District Council 21/01837/EIASCR) . In response to our concerns they have modified their plans to:

- Reduce the size of the land take
- Avoid encircling High Wood ancient wood
- Plant more hedgerows and screening to maximise biodiversity.
- Keep the fence lines back from the Public Rights of Way (PROW).

However, the Parish Council do not feel that the following issues have been sufficiently addressed.

- We believe that this should not be considered as a separate entity to the existing solar farm at High Wood. As it is currently proposed it will be directly adjacent to and partially encircling the existing solar panels, the electrical substation will be adjacent to the existing one, they share an access track and the landowner and developer are the same. Therefore, the proposal should be submitted as a solar farm of >50mW and considered as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and subjected to the commensurate level of scrutiny required for a project of this size.
- We remain concerned about the number of solar panels around High Wood which is an ancient wood. We would like to see the panels between Huntingdon and High Wood removed.

- We are concerned about how the biodiversity features will be maintained. It appears to have taken a long time for the hedges to be planted at the existing High Wood site and many of the whips have fallen over / died. We appreciate that it has been very dry but we would like to see the biodiversity features maintained to a high standard over the life of the project. We are conscious that wildflower meadows need careful maintenance over a long period of time to be successful and would like to know who will cut them and maintain them and see a protected budget for maintenance of all the biodiversity features.
- We would like to see any noisy operations such as piling during installation restricted to Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm with none on Bank Holidays.

Best wishes,

Lucy Crawford

Clerk to Staploe Parish Council