



Mr. J. E. Hall  
Orchard House  
Godley Lane  
Dilhorne  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire Moorlands  
ST10 2PF

Mr. Arne Swithenbank  
Handling Officer for SMD/2015/0088  
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council  
Moorlands House  
Stockwell Street  
Leek  
Staffordshire Moorlands  
ST13 6HQ

Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2015

**Re: Proposed Installation of Standalone Solar Photovoltaic Modules at  
Heywood Grange, Tickhill Lane, Dilhorne**

**Planning Application Reference: SMD/2015/0088**

Dear Mr. Swithenbank,

Please find enclosed a letter of strong objection to the proposed installation of standalone solar photovoltaic modules and associated infrastructure at Heywood Grange, Tickhill Lane, Dilhorne.

Despite having twice submitted this letter electronically, once through the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Planning Portal website and once by e-mail to [planning@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk](mailto:planning@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk), I have yet to receive an acknowledgement of my comments, nor has my letter been uploaded to the planning application page for SMD/2015/0088. I find this very disappointing, since comments which have been submitted more recently seem to have already been uploaded to the Planning Portal, which leads me to question whether this letter has not been uploaded because of the opinions I have expressed therein. This would indeed be an affront to free speech and democracy, and would be very disappointing for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council indeed, especially given the forthcoming national elections in May.

I hope that this matter is raised with those in charge of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Planning Portal. I will nevertheless be submitting my comments to the local press in the hope that the people of Dilhorne are made aware of this proposal.

Kind regards,

Mr. James E. Hall

cc. Cllr. Edwin Wain, Planning, Development and Property

Mr. J. E. Hall  
Orchard House  
Godley Lane  
Dilhorne  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire Moorlands  
ST10 2PF

Mr. Arne Swithenbank  
Handling Officer for SMD/2015/0088  
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council  
Moorlands House  
Stockwell Street  
Leek  
Staffordshire Moorlands  
ST13 6HQ

Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2015

Dear Mr. Swithenbank,

**Re: Proposed Installation of Standalone Solar Photovoltaic Modules at  
Heywood Grange, Tickhill Lane, Dilhorne**

**Planning Application Reference: SMD/2015/0088**

I write this letter to object in the strongest possible terms to the proposed installation of standalone solar photovoltaic modules and associated infrastructure at Heywood Grange, Tickhill Lane, Dilhorne. This proposed development site is situated deep within the Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt and within a designated Special Landscape Area approximately 1.4 km northwest of Dilhorne, and there appears to be no valid justification whatsoever in its proposed change of use from arable pastureland to that of an out-of-character, over-bearing, and completely out-of-scale photovoltaic farm.

As Dilhorne is situated deep within the Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt and within a Special Landscape Area, any such development, even that of a significantly smaller scale, has been **consistently refused** in the past on the grounds that it 'would set a very dangerous precedent indeed for future development'. This is perhaps the gravest concern for local residents, as the precedent that such a development would set would undoubtedly encourage more local farm owners to thoughtlessly sell their land to these inconsiderate companies in times of financial hardship. To reiterate the very important point made by Ms. E. A. Plant in her letter of objection: **"Where will SMDC draw the line?"**.

The profound impact that the proposed development will have on the local ecology and biodiversity, in particular on the local wildlife, cannot be ignored, as there are numerous bats, barn owls, polecats, and water voles, as well as several badgers, known to be living in and around the woodland surrounding the proposed development site, which, as I am sure you are quite aware, are stringently protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, protecting the badgers' setts as well as the badgers themselves.

The Ecological Appraisal of the proposed development site seems to have somehow found little evidence of such protected species; however, I can happily provide several eye-witness testimonials to their presence and continued usage of the proposed development site and surrounding woodlands for habitation and as a breeding ground.

Furthermore, the findings of the Phase 1 Habitat Survey show that Stansmore Wood and Grassland Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is located immediately adjacent to the south-eastern boundary of the site. This Local Wildlife Site comprises an area of broadleaved woodland which supports a diversity of grassland plant species, as well as a pool and stream that support a diverse range of wetland plant species. Can there possibly be any guarantee from the developers that these species will be protected from the profound impact of this development? One must highly doubt this.

With regards to vehicular access to the proposed development site at Heywood Grange, which would be from a narrow turning off a single track lane with few passing places, the location of the proposed development site will inevitably cause a significant danger to many road users, especially given that the road is a national speed limit road and there would be little anticipation for slow moving heavy goods vehicles on such a country road. With the additional hazard of the sharp bend by Summerhill House, it is only a matter of time before a fatal accident occurs because of this development. Will there, therefore, be a speed restriction imposed around the development site, with adequate road signage to warn of heavy construction traffic?

Furthermore, the influx of heavy goods vehicles, without proper consideration for adequate road infrastructure to support this, will only serve to erode the already heavily potholed roads, leading to an even greater expense for SMDC in road maintenance costs, not to mention the significant cost to road users in vehicular repairs. It is highly doubtful that the applicant would have the consideration to repair the profound damage this development would undoubtedly cause to Tickhill Lane.

With many residents living in proximity to the proposed development site, the issue of the profound loss of visual amenity must also be addressed, as this proposed development site will overlook many neighbouring properties both in Godley Lane and in the High Street. It would also appear to be sited in the vicinity of two Grade II listed buildings, Heywood Grange and the barn approximately 50 metres to the south of Summerhill Farmhouse. This development would consequently have an adverse effect on their natural rural setting and important heritage, despite the findings of Ms. Gill Bayliss, Senior Conservation Officer at Moorlands District Council, in her somewhat terse conservation 'report'.

It is also rather disappointing that a senior figure like Ms. Bayliss only used Google Street View, which is known to be particularly outdated in rural locations, to determine that the proposed development will have no visual impact on these listed buildings simply because of a 'belt of trees' which, according to Mr. and Mrs. Brassington of adjacent Stansmore Hall Farm, is "managed woodland with an ongoing schedule of thinning and harvesting" and therefore the visibility of the proposed site is likely to only increase over time. Did Ms. Bayliss not think it prudent

to visit the site considering the scale of the proposed development, as she may have been able to speak to such local residents and realise the naivety of her very brief conclusions?

The proposed development would also have an adverse effect on the residential amenity of neighbours, by reason of, among other factors: increased and constant noise and photopollution (both from the numerous photovoltaic panels and substation building, and perimeter security lighting), disturbance of the peace and tranquillity of the village, significant devaluation of local house prices due to the substantial loss of existing views from neighbouring properties, and the utterly inconsiderate reduction in the primary water supply to Stansmore Hall Farm.

In reference to this last point, despite the findings of the PWS Impact Assessment by Matt Langdon of RMA Environmental Limited, one must question the dubious conclusions of yet another dissociated 'desk-based exercise'; does nobody see the importance of conducting an on-site assessment when there is potential for such complete and irreversible destruction of our beautiful countryside?

I would be very interested to know what the proposals are to cope with any damage to the primary water supply for Stansmore Hall and any compensation payable to Mr. and Mrs. Brassington in the event that their natural water supply were to be reduced or even cut off. This seems unlikely, given that the developers have already indicated that they will not compensate residents for any damage caused by the development.

The development would also significantly compromise the well-liked open aspect of the village and would have a significant visual impact for residents of and visitors to the village. As many letters of objections have already concurred, the proposed photovoltaic panels could quite easily be installed atop agricultural buildings or around industrial sites in urbanised locations, where their presence would be much more less 'out-of-character' and more readily accepted, perhaps even overlooked.

In addition to this, there is no clear indication in the planning proposal of how the copious amounts of electricity generated from this photovoltaic farm would benefit local residents. It is therefore to be assumed that there would in fact be little or no benefit to local residents, little or no reduction in the cost of electricity to local residents who would have to unreasonably tolerate such a grotesque stain on the beautiful landscape that surrounds Dilhorne.

The effect on local tourism is not to be overlooked either. There are several self-catering holiday cottages within the vicinity of the proposed development, and it is to be expected that holidaymakers would be horrified to have their 'escape to the country' blighted by such visual monstrosities. Our landscape is an important part of the local tourism industry and by installing these photovoltaic panels in such ill-fitting and over-bearing locations, it is likely that local tourism to the local area will be irreversibly damaged. Does the applicant not think it prudent to conduct a detailed assessment of the potential impact to local tourism as well? Evidently not.

It would also appear that the site of the proposed development at Heywood Grange is owned by a local resident, who one would reasonably expect to respect the village which has so happily tolerated the significant disturbance that the agricultural vehicles supplying his business have caused to the tranquillity and road conditions in and around the village over many years. I would like to think that his motives for wishing to sell this land to a supposedly 'environmental' company are to contribute to the improvement of the local area and provide an affordable power supply for local people, but unfortunately his acceptance of this lucrative proposal seems to suggest

that perhaps he no longer has any genuine interest in Dilhorne or its community whatsoever.

I recommend strongly that the views of Dilhorne Parish Council are not given significant weight in consideration of this planning application either, given that less than half of its current members are residents in the village. The Parish Council has previously supported planning applications without making residents aware of the meetings held to discuss these applications. The meeting itself was not very well attended and little information is ever circulated to residents regarding such matters. Could this be considered an underhanded attempt to mitigate the objections to such proposals, possibly due to vested interests of Parish Council members? Is it reasonable to respect the views of members for whom the development will have little to no effect on the visual amenity of their own properties?

Similarly, the application appears to have been submitted by a Mr. James Wallwork of Telford Huse, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire. It is highly doubtful that Mr. Wallwork has ever lived in Dilhorne, let alone for the entirety of his life, and therefore has no interest whatsoever in the community or visual amenity of our village. It is even doubtful whether Mr. Wallwork has ever visited the village at all given the amount of 'desk-based' assessments that have been undertaken as part of this application. Should we residents be reasonably expected to respect applications from those who will never have to bear the impact of their inconsiderate and entirely self-serving ventures?

One must further question why local residents have never been consulted for their opinions on the proposed development, as they have been as part of previous planning applications in the village. Evidently this indicates a complete lack of concern for residents' valuable and insightful input (vis. that of Mr. and Mrs. Brassington). This is perhaps to be expected from the applicant considering his complete dissociation from the village and its community, and an application process in which **nobody** is willing to invest the time and effort to really assess, first-hand, the real, long-lasting, and far-reaching impact that these proposals will have.

I would ask that the objections and points raised in this letter be registered and forwarded to any other bodies involved in the decision making process regarding this development, for them to take into account when they consider these proposals. I look forward to receiving your responses to the questions raised in this letter and trust that my concerns will receive your urgent attention.

**To conclude, a development of this scale and nature is neither required nor wanted by the residents of Dilhorne.**

Yours sincerely,

Mr. James E. Hall

cc. Cllr. Edwin Wain, Planning, Development and Property

