

**From:** [planningcomments@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk](mailto:planningcomments@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk)  
**To:** [Planning Comments \(SMDC\)](#)  
**Subject:** Comment Received from Public Access  
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Application Reference No. : SMD/2023/0059

Site Address: Lower Tean Leys Tean Leys Lower Tean Staffordshire ST10 4NS Stoke On Trent

Comments by: Gary Johnson

From:

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Submission: Objection

Comments: Planning Reference SMD/2023/0059

Installation of a 49.9MW Solar Photovoltaic Array/Solar Farm with associated Infrastructure at Lower Tean Leys, Tean Leys, Lower Tean, Staffordshire, ST10 4NS

We wish to object the above planning application on the following grounds which I believe the Planners should take into consideration and on those grounds should refuse the planning application:

#### Hazardous Substances

The application states that no hazardous substances are to be stored on the site is incorrect, however, we feel this has not been considered as the battery storage unit (BESS) will house a number of lithium batteries which are potentially extremely hazardous to the neighbouring properties and infrastructure.

Rechargeable lithium-ion (Li-ion) and lithium-polymer (Li-poly) batteries have recently become dominant in consumer electronic products because of advantages associated with energy density and product longevity. However, the regulation of these batteries, the high rate of disposal of consumer products in which they are used, and the lack of uniform regulatory policy on their disposal means that lithium batteries may contribute substantially to environmental pollution and adverse human health impacts due to potentially toxic materials and without adequate controls would lead to serious environmental hazards and in particular to nearby water courses such as the River Tean and the River Blythe which provides a water supply to the nearby reservoir at Blithfield affecting hundreds of thousands of the population should contamination of these dangerous substances work their way to these water courses.

Lithium batteries contain potentially toxic materials including metals, such as copper, nickel, and lead, and organic chemicals, such as toxic and flammable electrolytes containing LiClO<sub>4</sub>, LiBF<sub>4</sub>, and LiPF<sub>6</sub>. Human and environmental exposures to these chemicals are typically regulated during the manufacture of lithium batteries through occupational health and safety laws, and potential fire hazards associated with their transportation are regulated through UK Regulations but there is inconsistent policy about the fate of lithium batteries in e-waste and the reports fail to address these issues.

It has been reported within the last several years that the batteries are very likely to encounter faults which results in fires. These fires can escalate into serious explosions. In September 2020, a fire at a solar farm battery storage unit (BESS) in Liverpool lasted for 59 hours and the explosion blasted debris 75ft away from the site compound. Local residents were instructed to stay in their homes and keep all windows and doors closed for an extended period of time, due to the toxic gas omitted from the lithium batteries. Furthermore, there were 23 fires of a similar nature reported in other countries.

It is not clear in the application document of how such eventualities/risks are to be mitigated and what effect a resulting explosion would have on the local infrastructure and neighbouring properties.

The site is located between the A50 main route between Stoke-on-Trent and Derby which acts as a major route linking the M6 and M1 motorways and main railway line between Derby and Stoke-on-Trent both road and rail line serves local areas of Blythe bridge and Uttoxeter.

The A50 is a vital link for the growth of Staffordshire and neighbouring counties with between 60,000 to 90,000 vehicles passing along it every single day. Disruption or closure of this essential road link would be catastrophic for the local area and neighbouring counties.

The location of the site compound (BESS) according to the proposed drawings appears to be located along the South West boundary closest to the neighbouring rail line, again I feel the occurrence of such a fire or explosion would disrupt the essential public transport between Stoke-on-Trent, Uttoxeter and Derby.

The Design and Access Statement has identified several heritage assets in the vicinity of the site noting Grade II listed buildings and scheduled monuments. The blast radius of an explosion would have a dramatic affect on the distinct features and heritage of these assets.

## Biodiversity

Item 4.1 Design Rationale of the Design and Access Statement says that a buffer zone of 10m has been provided to all ponds to avoid core habitat for Great Crested Newts, however, Great Crested Newts are proven to emigrate between ponds for breeding and foraging purposes. We oppose the proposal on the basis that the application fails to consider the true habitat of the Great Crested Newt and has not been fully considered or investigated properly.

## Ornithological Impact Assessment

Item 4.2.2 Schedule 1 ; Listed Bird Species ;Observations and/or evidence of two schedule 1-listed species were recorded during the breeding season: barn owl and red kite.;

Item 5.2 states 'One Schedule 1-listed species is likely to occur within the Site: barn owl. This species is classified as of low conservation concern 10,22; however, due to the greater level of legal protection (i.e., protection from disturbance when nesting), barn owl is considered here.

It is uncertain if barn owl breeds within the Site or immediate surroundings, and precautionary mitigation is recommended to minimise the chance of disturbance during the construction phase, which may constitute a legal offence. Details are provided in section 6.2.

Item 6.2 Schedule 1 'Listed Bird Species' 'Pre-works survey will be carried to update the baseline condition, and check potential nest locations (both artificial, such as barns, and natural, such as tree holes), to identify signs of presence or nesting.

Should barn owl be considered likely to be nesting:

- ' If construction is to start between March and August of any year; surveys will be carried out prior to commencement of works to identify the present status of barn owl within the Site. Surveys will be carried out by an appropriately licenced and experienced surveyor, adhere to guidance and seek to minimise disturbance.
- ' If barn owl is considered likely to be nesting within the survey area, an assessment will be made of the potential for disturbance and, if required, an appropriate exclusion area will be established to prevent disturbance.
- ' The extent of the exclusion area will be dictated by site-specific conditions, such as the location of the nest, habitats in the area and the nature of the planned works. It may be necessary to agree the extent of the exclusion area with consultees.
- ' The nest will be monitored, and the exclusion area will be subject to review. It may be modified or removed, subject to the breeding status of the birds, observed behaviour of the birds and/or the nature of the construction works being carried out.

No other Schedule 1-listed species are considered to be breeding within the Site or surrounds; however, if any species are detected during construction, works will cease and an ecologist will be contacted for advice.

The Report fails to identify other species of bird, such as the Northern Lapwing whose classification on the Red List for Birds is listed as threatened. The Northern Lapwings has been known to nest in the fields and is a regular visitor to the area.

The Barn Owl and Red Kite are classified in the UK as 'Green' under the Birds of Conservation Concern 4: The Red List for Birds 2021. Both are protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The Lapwing is classified in the UK as 'Red' under the Birds of Conservation Concern 4: The Red List for Birds 2021. It is also listed as threatened under the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List.

This item describes the procedure; however, it alludes to this information being provided prior to construction, not approval. We strongly oppose the proposal on the basis that this information should be provided prior to approval, not as a condition as the works, if approved, may not be fully adhered to, resulting in the disruption of the species' habitat and may never return to nest in the site or surrounding area.

#### Soil and Agricultural Quality

Item 6.5 of the Design and Access Statement refers to the Agricultural Classification (ALC) and, according to the assessment, the site falls under ALC Grade 3b 'moderate quality agricultural land'.

Figure 1 'Land capable of producing moderate yields of a narrow range of crops, particularly:

- ' Cereals and grass
- ' Lower yields of a wider range of crops
- ' Higher yields of grass which can be grazed or harvested over most of the year

We object to the proposal as the site has regularly been used for growing crops and not for grazing which appear contrary to the findings of the Agricultural Classification attached in the report.

We would express concern that the reports have only been prepared using a 'light touch' and fails to provide any evidence to fully support its assertions and often draws away from the reality of the site suggesting the land is of low quality and of not significant importance, when, in fact, the truth is the opposite.

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