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**From:** Andrew McIntosh  
**Sent:** 29 March 2023 17:13  
**To:** Planning Comments (SMDC)  
**Subject:** Proposed Solar Farm at Upper Leigh - planning Ref SMD/2023/0059

**Categories:**

Dear Sir/Madam,

We write to register our Objection to the above application. The principle reasons for our objection are as follows:

1. At almost 50ha, the large scale of the development is out of keeping with the local landscape and irrespective of the proposed mitigation, will have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the local landscape. This is a rural landscape consisting of traditional mixed farming with small villages and scattered farms and residential properties. The applicant's own landscape assessment shows that the solar panels will be visible to varying degrees from much of the surrounding area. Individual properties will also be affected and suffer adverse affects on their amenity. The impact on the local community will be significant.

> 2. The development will result in the loss of arable land at a time when we are being encouraged to move towards more plant-based food. We would challenge the adequacy of the soil survey which relies heavily on historic soil/ALC mapping. That aside, we would point out that ALC Grade 3b although falling outside the definition of 'BMV' ('best and most versatile') land is nonetheless capable of productively supporting arable agriculture as indeed it already does. Furthermore, soils will be damaged during construction unless rigorous protection measures are put in place to prohibit construction during periods of heavy rainfall or when ground is wet (typically restricting construction to dry conditions during April-September only).

3. Notwithstanding the findings of the Phase One habitat survey and proposed mitigation, we are concerned about the impact on wildlife, especially during the construction phase. The LPA will need to ensure that it has the capability to ensure full compliance with all the wildlife protection measures both during construction and in the longer term (ie for the 40 year duration of the operational life of the site).

4. We have concerns about the potential harm to the environment and fire risks associated with the storage of batteries on the site.

5. There will need to be strict land restoration and remediation measures in place to address not only decommissioning and restoration measures at the end of the proposed 40 year life but also to prevent structural damage to the soils during construction.

5. We are regular users of Leigh Lane and know it well and cannot accept the applicants assertion as to the adequacy of Leigh Lane for construction traffic, especially HGVs. As local residents and users can attest, using Leigh Lane requires great care due to its narrow and winding nature which is made worse by the absence of verges and the presence of high soil banks and hedges at the road edge. Leigh Lane has steep gradients and tight turns not best suited to use by HGVs (the applicant has stated that lorries up to the permitted maximum weight on UK roads will be employed) and contains a number of blind bends with very restricted opportunities for vehicles to pass. The road presents difficulties for even two cars to pass in several places and far greater difficulties when meeting larger vehicles such as vans, tractors/trailers and commercial vehicles including HGVs. The road itself is in poor condition and will require repairs to the road surface and damaged haunching. To make Leigh Lane remotely suitable for construction traffic (including use by large numbers of 44t HGVs) will require a condition survey and significant measures including widening, hedgerow removal (for road widening and improved visibility) and the creation of passing places coupled generally with significant improvements to visibility. To not do so will give rise to risk of accidents and not just those involving vehicles but also presenting risks to vulnerable users such as pedestrians/dog

walkers, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders. The inevitable loss of hedgerows to facilitate the required improvements will need to be mitigated as part of any scheme.

6. Construction traffic will also cause considerable disruption to local people and have an adverse impact on the amenities of local residents living on Leigh Lane in Lower Tean and adjacent to the site.

7. We are also gravely concerned about the potential cumulative impact of this and other similar schemes (such as the current proposed Totmonslow Solar Farm) on the local area. Whilst acknowledging the general planning principle that individual applications should be considered 'on their merits', the potential cumulative impact of multiple large-scale schemes in such close proximity to each other cannot be dismissed.

Last but not least, we are concerned at the lack of meaningful consultation by the applicants with the local community prior to submission of their application. In recognition of local concern, the parish council called a public meeting which was held at Leigh Village Hall on 21st March 2023 and attended by around 80 local residents together with two representatives of Light Rock. In light of concerns raised, Light Rock undertook to review their scheme and make amendments to take account of concerns raised. We do not know whether the applicants have acted on that undertaking. We would urge that the application should not be determined until or unless the applicants fulfil their undertaking and make meaningful improvements to their proposals (and having done so, undertake further consultation with the local community about their revised scheme).

Leigh Parish Council will present its concerns on behalf of local people and we would stress the need to give full weight to local concerns when determining the application.

Please acknowledge receipt of this objection and notify us of your decision. For your information, please note that a similar letter of objection has also been sent to East Staffs Borough Council under their ref. P/2023/00217.

Yours faithfully.

Andy and Jacqui McIntosh,  
James McIntosh,  
Judy Johnson

'Greensnips'  
Withington Lane,  
Leigh'  
Stoke-on-Trent,  
ST10 4SX

Tel:

Sent from my iPhone