
From: planningcomments@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk
Sent: 18 February 2024 21:59
To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Application Reference No. : SMD/2023/0523 Site Address: Land At Rownall Farm Rownall Road Wetley Rocks
Staffordshire ST9 0BT Comments by: Gail Missole

From:

21 Light Oaks Avenue, Light Oaks
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Stoke on Trent
Stoke-on-Trent
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Submission: Neither

Comments: I wish to object to the planning application SMD/2023/0523 on the following grounds.

In the first instance I would like to say that I am not against Solar Farms/other forms of renewable energy and agree to some degree with targets the government wish to attain. However, I do not agree with this application for 2 reasons. 1 - The land currently identified by the Solar Farm is Greenbelt not Brownfield (which does not comply favourably with the latest government report of 12/2/24 see below). 2 - The affect it will have on the mental health and wellbeing of the residents in nearby properties due to what I believe will be a change in their environment due to 'tonal noise' produced by the machinery on the Solar Farm, and the financial affect it will have on their homes and businesses.

1.The Government has just published a report on 'Planning for Solar Farms' on 12 February 2024. Planning for solar farms - House of Commons Library It states the following:

Solar farms with a generating capacity below 50 megawatts (MW) need planning permission from the local planning authority (LPA).

Solar farms with a generating capacity above 50 MW need development consent from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, because they are nationally significant infrastructure projects' (NSIPs).

This application is only just under the 50 MW needed for development consent from the Secretary of State and one can argue levied at that MW to avoid the application being considered as a 'nationally significant infrastructure' and should therefore be cautiously approached by the LPA as to the reason of this 'size' of application. However, as the applicants have declared this application to be a 'small sized application' I refer you to the following as stated in the report of 12 February 2024:

Policies for small-scale solar farms (below 50 MW)

LPAs in England will decide applications for smaller-scale solar farms in line with their local plan and the national planning policies. Government guidance advises LPAs to approve renewable energy developments whose impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

Government guidance states that there are no hard and fast rules about how suitable areas for renewable energy [developments] should be identified. It advises LPAs to consider their potential impacts on the local environment and the views of local communities when identifying suitable sites.

However, government guidance generally guides development away from the best and most versatile agricultural land and states that many renewable energy developments are not appropriate development for green belt land.

This application is planned for green belt land, currently agricultural land which clearly goes against the advice of the government report of 12/02/24. The Applicants Appeals appear to focus on the fact that power supplied from the solar farm would increase the boroughs power, however It will have no benefit to the local community as I understand the electricity produced is going direct to Stoke-on-Trent and not Staffordshire Moorlands. Staffordshire Moorland Council will obviously benefit financially from this application due to taxes etc but this should not be considered in my opinion as to the merits of this application.

2. Wellbeing of the residents nearby identified by the NIA of 27/11/2023. Affect on property prices and businesses in the local area.

There is no guarantee for residents nearby that their property prices will not be detrimentally affected by the installation of the nearby solar farm. The residents could be stuck with 40 years of prices falling and if the land is not returned to its former use after 40 years they could continue to suffer consequential longterm falling house prices.

Businesses that rely on the surrounding greenbelt will also be affected possibly destroying their business such as the nearby Glamping Site and holiday lets. Tonal noise could potentially affect the rate of visitors to the area notwithstanding the destruction of the greenbelt.

ROWNALL SOLAR FARM STOKE-ON-TRENT NOISE IMPACT ASSESSMENT has produced the following table as evidence that the noise impact will not adversely affect nearby home/landowners.

Receptor	Background Noise Level (dB LA90,1hr)	Noise Rating Level (dB LAeq)	Rating over Background (dB)
Wesi View House	31 28	-3	Rownall Cottage North
33 34	+1	Rownall View	33 29
-4	Ivy House Farm	33 32	-1
Rownall Farm Lakeside Barns	33 33	0	Rownall Cottage South
33 33	0	Rownall Hall Farm	33 29
-4	Bettaney Horseboxes	31 27	-4
Wood Cottage	31 25	-6	Longshutts
31 29	-2	Thorney Edge	31 32
+1	Thorney Edge Farm	31 30	-1

5.10 Table 5 shows BS 4142 rating levels for noise from the solar farm fall below measured background noise levels at almost all the locations which is an indication of a low noise impact. However, the rating level exceeds the measured background noise level at the closest residential properties by 1 dBA. This is considered acceptable for the following reasons: The difference is less than +5 dB, which is the level at which BS 4142 states as the likely level at which an adverse impact will occur (depending on the context)

But the applicants do accept that it is tonal, which is completely different to the noise you would find 'normally' in an area of greenbelt/farming land, such as machinery, animal noise, birdsong, etc. So how can the measured assessment have any bearing on what noise the nearby residents identified in this application will be subjected to. And if the applicants NUI is assuming there will be no affect on nearby residents due to tonal noise then why do companies such as <https://resonate-consultants.com/acoustic/solar-farm-noise/>

exist in countries where solar panel farms are the norm. And why do they offer their services and advice to companies putting in solar panel farms as follows and head up their advertising as follows:

'Solar farm noise needn't be a community problem'

Did you know there can be solar farm noise?

Solar farms can have acoustic issues, particularly with more sizeable ones, as they have more site operation noise. As renewables are coming in thick and fast, and solar farms have to produce more energy to replace coal and gas stations, more plant and equipment is required. As they grow to cope with demand, so does the solar farm noise. Predominantly, the noise emanates from the inverters and transformers and is similar to a tonal humming-like sound. Because of the low frequency, it results in sound with a longer wavelength.

These rural settings have traditionally low background noise, especially at night, and where there are no large intervening structures which allow sound to travel greater distances. The solar farm noise can adversely impact on people's lives because the noise levels are perceived to be higher than they are typically used to.

Common solar farm noise recommendations

The most common recommendations that we put forth to clients include:

Advice on site layout - where to place the inverters and other equipment, so it is positioned in a way that noise is mitigated. For example, setting the noise-producing equipment in the centre of the facility.

Noise barriers - which might include a noise wall or an earth mound, which surrounds the noisy equipment.

Site location - our advice might involve providing solutions to your site location for the best acoustics.

A noise wall can be a costly effort, so a more prudent alternative might be to conduct an assessment to determine the opportunity and feasibility for at-property treatment. The treatment recommendations are likely to include:

upgrade windows to double glazing

sound insulation installation in roof space

mechanical ventilation so residents can close windows

My point here is this - Predominantly, the noise emanates from the inverters and transformers and is similar to a tonal humming-like sound. Because of the low frequency, it results in sound with a longer wavelength. Surely this should be investigated during your considerations and if found proven some form of compensation by the applicants should be offered to those residents to adapt their homes and for the loss of equity of their homes due to the solar farm proximity. However, the long term affects on residents' mental health and wellbeing due to the potential constant tonal noise from the Solar Farm cannot be compensated for. I would ask that the LPA look into this more thoroughly whilst considering this application.

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