

From: planningcomments@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk
To: [Planning Comments \(SMDC\)](#)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access
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Application Reference No. : SMD/2023/0639

Site Address: Land at Greenfields Farm Thorney Edge Road Bagnall Staffordshire ST9 9LA Stoke On Trent

Comments by: Pippa Blessington

From:

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Submission: Objection

Comments: It is a deep concern that this application wants to avoid the proper consideration these very substantial industrial developments deserve. If they don't want to carry out an EIA, the question is why not? Surely if they truly believed in their scheme they would absolutely want to prove that it passed all the necessary criteria, after all the local communities are going to be stuck with the results for many decades - and in reality lose this rural greenbelt environment permanently. This is the same greenbelt where others cannot get a modest extension in their back garden because of the Greenbelt restrictions. We are clearly being played here with 7 applications up till now (how many more to come?) which have a cumulative impact and really should be considered as one. They have already dodged having to carry out a proper biodiversity assessment using the official metric under the Environment Act 2021 which would have required them to prove a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain, whilst other applicants have been volunteering this for some time. If they had any confidence in their scheme they would have volunteered this too. The developers here need to stop hiding and prove their case. No surprise they won't though as taken all together this scheme is larger than any of the top five UK solar farms (see nxtgenenergy.co.uk), with all of them being on flat land where they are not overseen and very readily screened - mostly on airfield/ex-airfields and none to my knowledge on Greenbelt. The general argument in these applications seems to be each new application is justified by the previous one, and before that by the fact that in bygone age, with no interest in the environment or local communities, the CEEB imposed lines of pylons and large substation in just about the most visually obtrusive locations possible. The logical conclusion to this is that the whole of the greenbelt becomes one huge solar farm and collection of Battery Energy Storage systems (BESS). Presumably having made their money they would then have to stop at the edge of the Greenbelt, as outside where the planning restrictions are lower the land becomes correspondingly more expensive. With this in mind they should probably try SSSIs where planning restrictions are even greater and land prices even lower. This is a cynical use of the Greenbelt exploiting its development limitations for others, maximising private profit at the expense of costs to the community. Yes, connection to the grid is cheap here too in a further boost to private profits, but the grid is old and set up for a previous era and needs appropriately upgrading to bring on-stream all the great opportunities for offshore wind, solar where it should be, and the various other forms of sustainable generation which are not in the same locations as the old fossil fuel power stations. Yes we need sustainable energy, but good schemes in the right places. This is neither, poorly designed with no regard for the sloping elevated landform or local community and much of the detail on the likes of existing screening is also misrepresented. This will simply give green energy schemes a bad name and make it more difficult to get good schemes accepted in the right places. Planning needs to do its job here and balance private profit with public cost. The applicants need to play fair accept this piecemeal way of trying to sneak in a mega development without the necessary assessments is completely unacceptable and agree to the necessary EIA. By any standards 5 BESS applications here is surely pushing their luck, with these systems not being without their risks and these multiplied by the concentration here. Such a concentration would also make a tempting target for any with ill intent towards key infrastructure.

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