

WERRINGTON PARISH COUNCIL



Clerk to the Parish Council:

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Staffordshire Moorlands District
Council
Planning Department
Moorlands House
Stockwell Street
Leek
Staffordshire
ST13 6HQ

Date: 18th April 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Appeal of Decision - Planning Application SMD/2022/0574 – Appeal ref APP/B3438/W/23/335922

Werrington Parish Council objects to the above appeal for the following reasons.

As well as this specific application, there is concern regarding the cumulative effect of other proposals for both solar farms and associated battery storage facilities, which are currently under consideration. This will represent a massive industrial complex some 1,000m from residential properties in our parish on Armshead Road, and the loss of agricultural greenbelt and its detrimental effect on the rural landscape.

Our objections mirror the surrounding Parish Councils and support for the original decision by SMDC planning officers to refuse this application.

1. Greenbelt

The proposed battery storage facility would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. When considered both individually and cumulatively with other similar approved developments in the area, the proposal would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and would conflict with the purposes of including land within it. It is considered that the benefits associated within the proposal would be insufficient to constitute “very special circumstances” to outweigh this harm. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy SS10 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and the NPPF.

The proposed development would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside outside of a development boundary, by virtue of introducing built energy infrastructure of an industrial appearance, in a manner not in keeping with the locally distinctive landscape character, with the site notably not being closely associated with the existing infrastructure at Cellarhead Substation. Additionally, the proposed development would be much closer to a residential area than any other similar development, which would harm the safety and attractiveness of the environment, and would impact on the amenity of residents via a greater impact arising from visual intrusion, noise and lighting (particularly resulting from motion-sensor lighting

being activated by wildlife at night time). For these reasons, the proposed development would be contrary to Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Policies SS1, SD2 and DC3, and the NPPF.

It is well documented that the lithium batteries used to store energy produced are not so benign and are at risk of fire, explosion and/or pollution. Werrington Parish Council would therefore ask that consideration is given to this development at some 400 metres to residential homes and acknowledge the dangers of multiple developments within a relatively small area pose, and contingency planning should the worse happen be in place; these fires must burn themselves out with the potential harm to people, animals and plants for miles around. Consideration should also be given to the cumulative level of noise emitted from several battery enclaves. The proposed site is on Green Belt land and is close to an area of SSSI with protected birds and fauna and this should be taken into consideration.

2. Visual impact for residents living adjacent to the site boundary

The visual impact of this development would be detrimental in the Parish and beyond being an industrial development clearly seen from the residential properties on Armshead Road, coupled with major light pollution from the required security for battery storage facilities.

3. Negative impacts on landscape character

The proposed development has negative impacts on the landscape's character. This is contrary to Local Plan SO9. To conserve and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, heritage, biodiversity and geological resources.

4. Extensive traffic and transport impact

During the development phase, the traffic impact will be unacceptable to the residents in the surrounding villages. Many of the roads within this area are single track with passing places, and congestion and air pollution are already high within the area, particularly Cellarhead crossroads.

5. Noise and vibration impact

With houses less than 420m away from the battery development boundary, the potential for noise pollution and the impact of vibration is high.

In addition to the above, there is the loss of productive arable land and a likely negative effect on tourism and local businesses to consider.

In summary, Werrington Parish Council do not feel that this application meets the required criteria set out in the Local Plan – Policy SD2 and the previous refusal should be upheld.

Kind regards

Zoe Grindey – Clerk