



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

RT HON KAREN BRADLEY MP
Staffordshire Moorlands

Mr Andrew R Batson
4 The Cottages
The Green
Bagnall
Staffordshire Moorlands
ST9 9JR

Our Ref: KB49881

22 April 2024 kab/eh

Solar farm proposals

I refer to our previous correspondence and your recent emails.

After raising the Parish's concerns Mr Adams did come back to me although I realise you and others were very disappointed to learn that this is not a matter he has any direct control over. I have copied his email below for your information:-

"[sic] There are a number of applications for Battery energy storage sites across Staffordshire and I understand the public concern about the fire risk that they pose given that lithium ion battery fires can be complicated to control although there have been very few incidents in the UK to date.

"Your concern is shared by other Staffordshire Members of Parliament and only last week I joined Sir Gavin Williamson at Staffordshire Fire & rescue Service HQ in order to discuss applications in South Staffordshire with the Chief Fire Officer.

"At that meeting the Chief Fire Officer, Rob Barber, provided me with considerable reassurance that Fire & Rescue Services across the country feel that they can manage fires, should they rise, on these sites providing the sites are appropriately designed to permit access from a suitable number of points by the service and there is hard standing for the appliances to work from and appropriate means for controlling water run off amongst other requirements.

"He explained that Fire & rescue Services were not statutory consultees on these applications but that the National Fire Chiefs Council, NFCC, recommended that those seeking to develop these sites contact their local Fire & Rescue Service in advance of making a formal planning application to take advice. Furthermore, I understand that council planning authorities have been encouraged to check that applicants have sought this advice before considering the application.

"Your constituent might wish to ask if the planning officers considering this application are assured that the applicants have sought the advice of Fire & Rescue professionals so that should an incident occur on the proposed site then it can be managed safely and effectively. I have copied the Chief Fire Officer in in case my summary is incorrect."

I would be happy to share these specific concerns with SMDC so perhaps you could let me know.

I did join a debate on large scale solar farms led by Dr Caroline Johnson MP (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con) in Westminster last week and have copied below what I said:-

"[sic] I apologise for not being here at the beginning of the debate; I was speaking in the Chamber. I will therefore not make a full speech, but I am grateful to be able to comment. My hon. Friend describes the exact situation that my constituents in Rownall face, with multiple applications being made for adjoining pieces of land, all of which are small scale and therefore to be decided by the local

district council rather than the Secretary of State. They feel that that is an abusive way of putting in solar farms that will cumulatively be a very large development.

"Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government need to pause the granting of all applications of this variety and urge district councils to have the appropriate training to identify and measure fully the cumulative impact of these developments?"

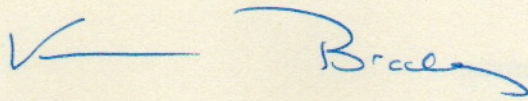
You can see the debate in full by accessing the link below:-

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-04-18/debates/4A1A0E90-C381-4465-B4C9-C028AFD63840/Large-ScaleSolarFarms?highlight=solar%20farm#contribution-DC4ED81D-97A2-494B-8A7A-4A712FABC8AB>

Since then I have also spoken in private to Ministers to reinforce both mine and residents' views.

I hope this at least reassures you that I will continue to keep an eye on this important local issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Karen Bradley', with a large checkmark to the left.

The Rt Hon Dame Karen Bradley MP

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