

Objection to planning application SMD/2024/0055

The proposed site directly borders our site in which we operate our tourism-based business from, all of which is in greenbelt land. This proposal will cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt and the visual impact of this vast industrial site will undoubtedly be a blot on the landscape. We rely on the current unspoilt rural landscape that surrounds us to help attract visitors to our venue. There is no amount of landscaping that will ever counteract the negative effects of such a highly intrusive industrialised site such as this.

This proposal at 400 MW would make it one of the biggest BESS in the country. The council must reflect on the fact that they have already passed 580 MW of storage capacity over 2 BESS sites in the locality to the substation. This is a huge capacity given that some grid scale BESS sites are as low as 3 MW. There are an additional 4 BESS sites in the SMDC planning process at this moment in time; the cumulative effect of all these applications has to be given consideration that they are all decimating the greenbelt.

This proposal does not respect and enhance local landscape character and it would lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside. It would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. For these reasons there is conflict with Policy DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and the NPPF which says that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by amongst other matters recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The below is an extract from our website which substantiates the above.

“Based just outside Wetley Rocks, we’re lucky enough to enjoy panoramic views of the Staffordshire Moorland countryside – and so will you when you visit.

The Play Barn is perfect for a family looking for a few hours of fantastic fun in a gorgeous, rural setting.

We’re less than 15 minutes from the centre of Stoke-on-Trent, so indulge in a quick countryside escape that kids and grown-ups alike are going to want to rush back to!”

Impact on our Tourism business

We have recently won gold for ‘New Tourism Business of the Year’ in Staffordshire.

The SMDC released the tourism strategy 2022-2027 with the overall aim of making the Staffordshire Moorlands *“top of the list for people planning their precious holidays and days out. Day visitors, and those staying overnight or longer, are good for local businesses and the local economy too so it makes perfect sense to open our doors to everyone and show just what the Moorlands has to offer”*

Below are extracts taken directly from the Tourism Strategy for Staffordshire Moorlands highlighting the importance of family friendly tourism businesses within the Staffordshire Moorlands.

“Given how important the natural environment is to this destination”

“Families are the most prevalent visitor group to the Staffordshire Moorlands accounting for 51% of all visits.

“Visiting an attraction is the primary reason for 48% of visitors to Staffordshire Moorlands”

We are an award-winning, recognised tourism business with a great passion for the Staffordshire Moorlands and its delightful landscape, we care deeply about the service we pride ourselves on being able to offer and want to continue expanding our operation here at Round Meadows Farm bringing more tourism into the area and showcasing the beautiful countryside that surrounds us. We will be sharing our future plans and vision with the council which demonstrate our vision to grow the site. This is never going to succeed next to an industrialized battery storage site which currently stands as greenbelt agricultural farmland.

Noise

The noise concern from this proposal is of paramount importance and it should be noted that the noise assessment provided with this application seems to have missed out this site completely! We are one of, if not the closest property to this site. The only mention of commercial buildings is as below.

It should be noted that there are non-residential buildings adjacent to the proposed site and these will potentially have office areas, and Table 4.3 confirms the distance from the nearest façade to the nearest noise source. Receptor Distance from Nearest Noise Source (m) C1: Buildings to the west 200 – 250m

We are east of the site and from the nearest noise source, the distance would be circa 100m. Where are the predicted noise levels for this site? A very clear and concerning omission from the applicant.

As there are no given predications for this site and as we are one the closest, there is a very high chance of adverse impacts on health and the quality of life of our customers and employees.

Safety concerns

We have in the region of 40 - 50k visitors per year to this site, which include people with a wide range of disabilities. As time moves on there are growing concerns regarding the safety of these BESS sites, fire, explosion, thermal runaway and toxic clouds to name a few. There has been no contact with this business from the developer at all and in particular nothing regarding evacuation plans of our customers in the event of an incident. A frightening thought that an existing award-winning business, its customers and staff could be put at such risk.

For many reasons the location is simply, completely inappropriate for anything to be considered of this nature.