

**Planning Application WD/2021/2617/MEA**

**LAND TO THE NORTH OF LOWER CLAVERHAM FARM, BERWICK, BN26 6TJ, AND EAST OF MOUNT PLEASANT FARM, CHALVINGTON, BN27 3TB**

**CONSTRUCTION OF A SOLAR FARM, TO INCLUDE THE INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC PANELS TO GENERATE UP TO 49.9 MW OF ELECTRICITY, WITH SUBSTATION, TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION COMPOUND, INVERTERS, FENCING, ACCESS TRACKS, CCTV, LANDSCAPING AND OTHER ASSOCIATED WORKS**

Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council objects strongly to this application. This was a unanimous vote against this planning application. Although we are fully supportive of green energy (solar, wind, hydroelectric) it needs to be in the right place and it needs to be proportionate to the area in which it is placed. And we also need the support of nuclear energy to ensure a continuously available energy source.

The SW of Wealden has already punched well above its weight in terms of approving solar farms and we are now at the stage of the cumulative impact being saturation and highly damaging to the character and quality of the local environment. So far we have Berwick Solar Farm, Cuckmere Community Solar Farm, Wilbees, Natewood, Lower Mays Solar Farm, Kitty Hawk Solar Farm and Chalvington Solar Farm – all of these either built out or approved. We need to remember that the existing fields, trees and hedgerows in themselves absorb carbon and so provide an antidote to climate change. This proliferation of solar farms now forms a corridor under the South Downs.

The proposed solar farm is vast - 81.5 hectares which is 202 acres; that is the size of 152 premier league soccer pitches. This is way bigger than any existing solar farm in this part of Wealden. It will be larger than Arlington Reservoir and will dwarf it. It will form a vast swathe of photovoltaic panels on existing green pasture and agricultural land with ancient rights of way, ancient trees and hedgerows and it will damage this landscape irretrievably.

The site is visible from the South Downs National Park and from the High Weald which is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. What will be seen is a swathe of solar panels, not the green and pleasant rolling fields that it is presently.

The application states that after a 40 year period the land will be returned to farmland/agricultural land. This is an assertion with no evidence to back it up; most solar farms have been in existence for less than 10 years but if you can imagine rainwater falling off the slope of the solar panels and always falling in the same place and whole areas of green pasture getting no sun whatsoever (as all the sun goes into the solar panels) in what state is that land going to be in 40 years? It is maintained that sheep can graze around the solar panels but those sheep would get little nourishment from the land. The application paints a picture of farming as normal in amongst the solar panels but this is far from reality – in effect these solar farms will become industrial parks as there will be virtually zero agricultural value in the land after 40 years.

Let us now turn to the issue of employment. Whereas the current pasture land provides employment for local tenant farmers, the proposed solar farm will not provide any employment for local people so there is no gain to the local economy. What does affect the local economy is tourism; the site is heavily reliant on tourism and holiday lets will be badly affected as the area covered by the planning application contains some of the most beautiful walks used by tourists and locals: 2m high steel fencing, large CCTV cameras, a substation compound of 50m x50m and solar panels of 1.8m will be very unattractive to walkers and tourists who have deliberately chosen this area for its

beauty and wildlife. Important paths will be effectively denied with the construction of panels on either side. It will not be pleasant experience, nor will it resemble in any way what they experience now. They will not have, as they do at present, uninterrupted views of the South Downs, and the outcome will be a reduction in tourism lets and less income for Wealden.

Impact on heritage assets –We note that the heritage assets (listed buildings and ancient monuments) have helpfully been identified in the planning application; in our parish there will be an impact on the following heritage assets – Mount Pleasant Farmhouse, Mount Pleasant Cottage, Pollards Farm Cottage, Newhouse Farmhouse, Limekiln Farmhouse, Green Farmhouse, Low mound in field opposite Mount Pleasant Farm which maybe a round barrow; however we do not consider that the detrimental impact on these heritage assets has been measured, for example the views from these listed buildings and the damaging impact on their settings.

Scottish Power in their planning statement give no indication as to how they will feed their 49.9 Megawatts into the National Grid and this is because the capacity of the local grid has already been reached.

For the above reasons we respectfully ask that Wealden protect this unique landscape and reject this application.

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