

## Rachel Tibbetts

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**From:** Planning  
**Sent:** 03 October 2022 09:51  
**To:** DC Support  
**Subject:** FW: Planning Application 22/02289/SO - Land At Stratton Audley

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**From:** Tim Good <tim.good@cherwell-dc.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 03 October 2022 09:37  
**To:** Rebekah Morgan <rebekah.morgan@cherwell-dc.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Planning <Planning@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Planning Application 22/02289/SO - Land At Stratton Audley

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Dear Mrs Morgan

### **Re: Application 22/02289/SO: Screening Opinion for proposed solar farm development**

Thank you for your e-mail of 27 September and for providing a copy of the EIA Matrix. Your assessment leads us to have serious concerns as to the accuracy of the information provided in the application and upon which the Council has placed reliance. A copy of the application and supporting documents is therefore requested.

The following areas of dispute should be noted:

#### **1. Screening question 7.2 – Pollution and nuisances**

The inverters required in the process of changing DC to AC generate tonal sound which can potentially be extremely disturbing to residential and business users. The transformers generate core and coil noise through the electromagnetic process. There may also be a need for fans to be used in cooling systems which again generate noise. The potential noise from inverters, transformers and battery storage should therefore be taken into account. There is also potential for significant adverse noise impacts to be experienced by people living and working in the locality during the construction period including through the piling of the solar array support frameworks. The level of noise and disturbance is also a serious potential problem for wildlife.

This rural setting has traditionally low background noise, especially at night, and there are no large intervening structures, hence sound will travel greater distances. The prevailing wind direction also needs to be taken into account. There is therefore potential for the solar farm noise to have a significant adverse impact on occupants of neighbouring residential and business properties due to the higher noise levels and the tonal nature (low frequency hum) of the sound compared to what they are typically used to.

There is a need to evaluate all noise impacts before significant effects can be ruled out. We are therefore concerned that the conclusion that the nature of the proposal would not result in noise has been reached without a complete and independent noise assessment being undertaken. This should have regard to the proximity of neighbouring residential and business properties and their gardens and other utilised areas (which adjoin the site) together with the site specific characteristics of the neighbourhood.

#### **2. Screening question 10.1 – Biodiversity (species and habitats)**

This is a particularly sensitive area in ecological terms with ancient woodland, grassland, mature hedgerows, and a water source (Padbury Brook) in close proximity to the site. The area, including the site, is both important and sensitive due to the terrestrial and avian ecological value that it supports. The development could potentially have a significant adverse effect upon this ecologically sensitive area. This should not be ruled out at this stage without first undertaking a full EIA investigation.

### **3. Screening question 10.2 – Biodiversity (species and habitats)**

We confirm that there are many protected species in the area including barn owls, tawny owls, little owls, herons, bats, fallow deer, water voles, hedgehogs, swallows, and many other varieties of wild birds which use the area for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting and migration. Whilst we note that ecology reports are required as part of the application, we do not consider this would be sufficient to provide appropriate protection for these important species. We submit that a full EIA assessment, including surveys over at least a 12 month period, should be required.

### **4. Screening question 11.1 – Landscape and visual**

Whilst we note that this is not a protected landscape, it forms an important part of the Padbury Brook river valley with long distance views across it which highlight the open, undulating characteristics of the surroundings. It currently makes a high quality contribution to the natural beauty and scenic qualities of the area. Although reference is made in the matrix to there being “some footpaths within the vicinity of the site”, that plays down the significance of the footpath network in the area and the views from other public highways and viewpoints. The very well-used public footpath that connects Fringford with Godington runs through the site for a considerable length. The development by its very nature would have a significant adverse effect upon the site and its role in the wider landscape including the appreciation of it by the public. Given the potential significance of the landscape and visual impact this aspect should be EIA assessed prior to submission.

### **5. Screening question 11.2 – Landscape and visual**

There is a fundamental disagreement with the response to this screening question. The footpath gives direct access to the site, and the development would be seen in close proximity by the many people who currently use it. This is an important through route and its ambience would be entirely changed. Furthermore, there are currently long-distance views into the site from the public footpath as it rises towards the Godington ridge, and also from the Godington Road and Poundon Road at various viewpoints. (These are notably absent from the photomontages we have seen which also do not reflect the position during winter months.) The site can also be viewed from land that is associated with and used by neighbouring residential properties and businesses. We therefore strongly disagree with your conclusion that there is unlikely to be a significant effect due to the location of the site. That is not an accurate reflection of the position which should be the subject of an EIA assessment.

### **6. Screening question 13.1 – Transport and access**

The conclusion that: “There are public footpaths within the vicinity of the site, but these are not anticipated to be affected by the proposal”, is not supported by the facts. As indicated above, the public footpath route that leads from Fringford to Godington runs through part of the site. It also connects to a wider footpath network at both ends. In our view, there would inevitably be a significant adverse effect upon users of that footpath network both during construction and operation. Although the route may continue to be open to the public, its visual appeal, ambience and experience of it would materially change making it far less attractive to users. It is a lengthy and particularly scenic section that runs through the site offering long-distance views across it in many directions. This valuable visual experience would be seriously impaired by the proposal and could not be overcome by landscaping. The noise generated would also detract from the existing tranquillity and ambience of the route.

### **7. Screening question 13.2 – Transport and access**

The response to this question overlooks the point that all routes to the site are historically very lightly trafficked and utilise narrow rural lanes that are inherently unsuitable for HGV traffic and increased usage. As such, any increase in use by construction and decommissioning traffic would be likely to have a significant adverse effect

upon the safety of users including non-motorised users. The Poundon Road is currently experiencing congestion due to use by East West Rail (EWR) construction traffic. This should not be exacerbated by traffic associated with this scheme in the event that the construction periods coincide, nor should the adverse local experience of construction traffic be prolonged by a new proposal. This concern could not be satisfactorily overcome by a routing plan.

#### 8. Screening question 14.1 – Land use

The response to this question does not reflect the existing business and residential land uses in the proximity of and adjacent to the site. The fact that no mention of such land uses is given in the response leads us to have real concerns that those other activities have not been properly taken into account in the screening process. This should be reviewed and fully assessed by EIA.

#### 9. Screening question 16.1 – Cumulative effects

As indicated above, the route to the site from the main road is currently being used by EWR construction traffic. In the other direction, beyond Oldfields Mill, there is traffic accessing the HS2 construction site at Chetwode. The latter site is also generating construction noise disturbance. Any noise assessment should have regard to the current temporary impact of this other development upon ambient noise levels. The cluster of residential properties next to the proposed site is therefore already experiencing the effects of those other construction sites. The adverse cumulative effects of this proposal together with those other schemes in the vicinity of the site should therefore be fully assessed. We are concerned that there is no mention of them in the EIA Matrix.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, we have highlighted many areas of disagreement and concern which we believe fully justifies the requirement for an EIA assessment to support any planning application. This is an extremely large development with potentially very significant effects. We do not consider that the potential significant adverse effects of the proposed development can be appropriately assessed without such an undertaking. We are particularly concerned that there is no mention of a noise assessment being required with the application, and that there seems to be an absence of recognition of the proximity to, and potential impacts upon neighbouring residents, public footpath users, and the various other effects which we have referred to above. Given those circumstances, we believe that the grant of planning permission in the absence of such a formal and full EIA assessment covering all aspects of the potential significant effects would be unsafe and open to challenge on those grounds. We therefore urge you to review your conclusions and opinion on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Good, Oldfields Farm

Wendy Smith, Oldfields House

Jonnie Wigmore, Pool Farm

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**From:** [planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk) <[planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** 27 September 2022 12:21

**To:** Tim Good <[tim.good@absolutetax.co.uk](mailto:tim.good@absolutetax.co.uk)>

**Subject:** Planning Application 22/02289/SO - Land At Pool Farm Mill Lane Stratton Audley

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please see attached, important correspondence relating to the above referenced planning application.

Regards

Development Management

Cherwell District Council

[planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

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