

Submission ID: 36141

Please find attached my Comments on Deadline 6 Submissions.

Sheila Garrard, Submission for Deadline 7, 8/5/25:

Following the Deadline 6 submissions, I should like to make three further comments, while reiterating all those that I have made previously.

1. The key area on which the Applicant cannot demonstrate that it has consulted either fairly or fully is the battery energy storage system (BESS).

The provision of any detail regarding the proposed scale and location of the batteries across the site was constantly kicked down the road during the public consultations. And yet, given the enormous size and number of the proposed battery storage units, dispersed across the site, this topic, perhaps more than the acres of solar panels themselves, is set to have major negative impacts on several other aspects of the Application that have been considered during the present Investigation in significant detail. For example: the impact on the visual amenity of walkers using the dense network of rural footpaths throughout the site. I am not aware that any in situ 'visualisations' of the groups of container-sized battery storage units have been provided by the Applicant. For another example: the impact on the health and safety of the residents of Aldington and Mersham from a major fire in or around one or more of these units. The recent dreadful fire at Handen Farm demonstrated how quickly the local fire brigade ran short of a local water supply. I fully endorse the submissions already made by the Aldington and Mersham Support Group regarding all the highly concerning health and safety issues surrounding the proposed BESS storage.

2. The compensation to local villages proposed by the Applicant, should this project be approved, is derisory and in no way commensurate with the expected negative impacts on the lives of residents.

The negative impacts include noise, dust and traffic disruption from the construction, and the constant, sheer devastating loss of the rural landscape from the project's mere 'being'. It appears that there are currently moves underway to ensure that residents facing disruption are better compensated, or share in some of the benefits of cheaper green energy. I would hope that residents will be protected from missing out if such changes are brought in after this Application has been decided.

3. It is highly likely that Goldwell Lane will be a separate, but overlapping, construction site, for 11 dwellings, during the Application's proposed construction phase, which itself involves construction traffic on Goldwell Lane.

Allocated site no. S52, Land South of Goldwell Court, in the Ashford Borough Local Plan 2030 has now come forward for approval by Ashford Borough Council, with a deadline for comments by 21 May 2025. Since this is already a site allocated for development, and the number of dwellings for this site has already been approved, it seems likely that construction would start within the coming year. I ask the Examining Authority kindly to take the overlapping nature of this site into account in his consideration of the Application.