

**APPEAL REFERENCE NUMBER: 6000932**

**LAND TO THE WEST OF FOSSE WAY (B4455) AND TO THE SOUTH EAST OF RADFORD SEMELE, LEAMINGTON SPA, CV31 1XJ**

**WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE W/24/1404**

**SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF OBJECTION BY RADFORD SEMELE PARISH COUNCIL**

c/o The Clerk to the Parish Council, 1, Lewis Road, Radford Semele, Leamington Spa, CV31 1UB

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Radford Semele Parish Council is submitting a supplementary statement in response to the re-consultation following the posting of additional documents from the Appellant.

### **Landscape**

The revised landscape report from the Appellant continually seeks to minimise the effect of the proposal especially in terms of the effect on the landscape and the cumulative effect on the landscape. Consequently, the parish council wishes to highlight the other two expert submissions on the landscape issues. It also wishes to comment on the basis of practical knowledge of the site.

The independent report of Richard Hodgetts of Enplan is part of the parish council's evidence submitted to the District Council on 29 November 2024 and referred to on page 1 of the parish council's original submission to the appeal. He concludes that the landscape effects and the cumulative landscape effects are under assessed.

Sue Harrison, the Warwickshire County Council Landscape Officer says in her response to the District Council :-

“..... the presence of the panels and other infrastructure would give the perception of an industrial, rather than agricultural, landscape. This is amplified by the scale of the

proposed development, the openness of the landscape, and the fact it is on rising ground rather than the flatter surrounding landscape where it would be more easily absorbed.”

The evidence on behalf of the Appellant seeks to minimise the effect on how the landscape is experienced and perceived within the site. There are many users of the PROWs and desire lines within and adjacent to the site. The essential and much cherished feature is the openness of the landscape with periodic long views in all directions. The erection of two metres high galvanised steel fencing and rows of solar panels over three metres high is a major harmful change. Planting corridors of vegetation to further hem in the paths and the views does not alter the fundamental nature of the change. At some vantage points all views will be curtailed. For others the views on one side will disappear.

Nor is it the case that the site will not be prominent when viewed from outside. In its earlier submission the parish council highlighted at page 5 the visibility of fields 8 and 9 from the village and from PROWs W122c and W123. The solar panels rise up the slopes of Crown Hill to a height which is within about 10 to 15 metres of the height at the top of Crown Hill.

Looking from the east the proposed site is prominent in the landscape. Examples include the view from the Centenary Way recreational footpath PROW SM26 to the south of Ufton.

The current much smaller Radford solar farm is clearly visible in the landscape from near the top of Crown Hill. If this much larger proposal and the already permitted Middle Road Farm site are also built solar farms will be the dominant use in the landscape on either side of the Fosse Way (B4455) between the A425/B4455 roundabout and the railway line.

Further along the Fosse Way the Chesterton Fields/Ashorne site is clearly visible despite being on much flatter ground. When compared with the two sites for which permission has already been granted at Chesterton Fields/Ashorne and Middle Road Farm the current proposal extends onto more prominent, more visible ground. It is also experienced far more widely, especially by reason of the network of paths on and near the site.

## **Capacity and Connection**

The parish council wishes to comment on the availability of a grid connection; the absence of a justification for the size of the proposal; and, the out of date capacity figures upon which the Appellant seeks to rely.

The parish council is aware that central government has recently undertaken a fundamental review of its approach to grid connections and wishes to know the effect of the change on this proposal. The Appellant refers at para.7.93 of its statement of case to approval in Q1 of 2026 for this site to achieve a 2027 operative date. The appeal hearing itself will be after Q1 of 2026. In the circumstances the parish council asks for written evidence of the current position regarding a grid connection.

The data relied upon at para.6.98 and 6.99 of the Appellant's statement of case in relation to operating capacity in the area is over 3 years out of date. The parish council does not have comprehensive data for all of South Warwickshire but it is clear that at least seven more sites on a significant scale have either become operational or have been granted permission since the out-of-date figures relied upon by the Appellant were calculated.

The parish council's view is that the proposed solar farm is too big, too intrusive and does too much damage. Further, the Appellant has not undertaken a robust assessment of alternative sites. There is no evidence that the size is determined by anything other than seeking to achieve the maximum capacity allowed under this particular approval procedure. It is not sympathetic to the landscape.

## **Planning Balance**

Whilst the parish council understands the grounds upon which the application was refused it notes that the Appellant mentions the other planning issues in support of its case. The District Council takes a different view to the Appellant on the weight to be attached to these various factors as can be seen from the Statement of Common Ground.

The parish council notes that on some of these issues there are third party submissions which question the evidence submitted by the Appellant. For instance, on the quality of the agricultural land. In relation to other issues, such as the effect on nearby properties some major effects are acknowledged. Richard Hodgetts of Enplan concludes that some residential effects have been under assessed.

The parish council has made representations about the term “valued landscape” at page 3 of its earlier submission to the hearing and notes the absence of the term in the revised draft NPPF. The landscape here is valued and is sensitive to change. As always, each case depends on its own facts.

There is a strong case to say that the wider area is already subject to permissions for more solar farms than it can sustainably and feasibly absorb. Richard Hodgetts sums it up very well :-

“In essence, we are concerned that the Vale Farmland Character Area is fast becoming an industrial landscape containing a number of approved and operational Solar Farms. This is in direct conflict to the key characteristics of the Vale Farmland Character Area which is described as a flat open hedged landscape with few roads or settlements and characterised by wide views to rising ground on one or more sides and its intrinsic value within this part of Warwickshire”

If this proposal were to be allowed alongside the existing Radford Solar Farm and the already permitted Middle Road Farm development the immediate area would be asked to absorb more solar farms than it can reasonably accommodate. The adverse effects would be significant and widespread.

RADFORD SEMELE PARISH COUNCIL

12.02.2026