

Objections to Solar Farm PAP/2022/0544

Strong objections to Sole End Solar Farm were received from the residents present and via email to the Parish Clerk prior to the meeting held on 25th May 2023.

Whilst it is understood that updates have been made to the planning application to address previous objections, residents feel that the following issues are cause to object:

- Belief that the planning application does not accurately detail information about the history of the farming land on which it is proposed to be built.
- A feeling that the planners had only taken into consideration views from the road, and not taken into consideration the impact on residents who will have a direct view of the site (see image below).



- The impact on neighbouring farmers for moving cattle and carrying out tractor work.
- Despite most residents understanding the importance of solar farms, they felt that it was wrong to use green belt and farming land which can be used to grow food, for this purpose.
- Residents believe contradictions have been made in terms of the planners trying to promote the positive aspects, in particular by saying that wildflower meadow will be planted, but that sheep may be able to graze there. It was pointed out that sheep will most likely eat the meadow grass, thus reducing any benefits that are proposed by planting it.
- It was felt that there are no direct benefits to the residents of Astley Parish (e.g. a reduction in electricity bills for all residents due to the presence of the solar farm).
- Whilst it was explained that the type of panel used would prevent glare, there were still concerns and uncertainty as to whether this will really be the case.
- Concerns still remain that this project will destroy the views of the local land, not just for residents but for walkers.

- Whilst it is understood that a change has been made to the proposed access for the site, it is still considered to be a busy and dangerous road, and local residents feel that this will only be of detriment.
- Other concerns have been raised about the true environmental impacts of the solar farm.

Outcome:

The councillors present **voted unanimously against** the Solar Farm planning application, as they feel that it provides no direct benefit to Astley Parish.

Residents understand that the decision of Astley Parish Council does not mean that the planning application will be rejected. They have therefore asked The Parish Council to request certain considerations of the planning board on the 12th June 2023:

- Can anything further be offered to provide and improve screening for residents (to the South side of the site) so that they will not be impacted so much by the presence of the solar farm?
- Can any trees planted be tall enough early on to provide good screening from the start of the project?

The Community Fund

Residents were told that the community fund is offered if planning is to go ahead, and this offer still stands even if Astley Parish Council vote against the site.

Whilst residents still object to the site, they agree that this is at least something that is a little more positive and agreed that further discussions and consultation would be required, should the planning application be approved, so that ideas for how to benefit the parish could be discussed.

Overall, the feeling was that, should planning go ahead, it would be better for the Parish Council to receive an annual sum of £5,000.