



Max Sanders  
Senior Planning Officer  
Hertsmere Borough Council  
Civic Offices  
Elstree Way  
Borehamwood,  
Herts WD6 1WA

Date: 1st February 2021

Dear Mr.Sanders,

## Re: Development Proposals by Elstree Green Limited, Reference 21/0050/FULEI

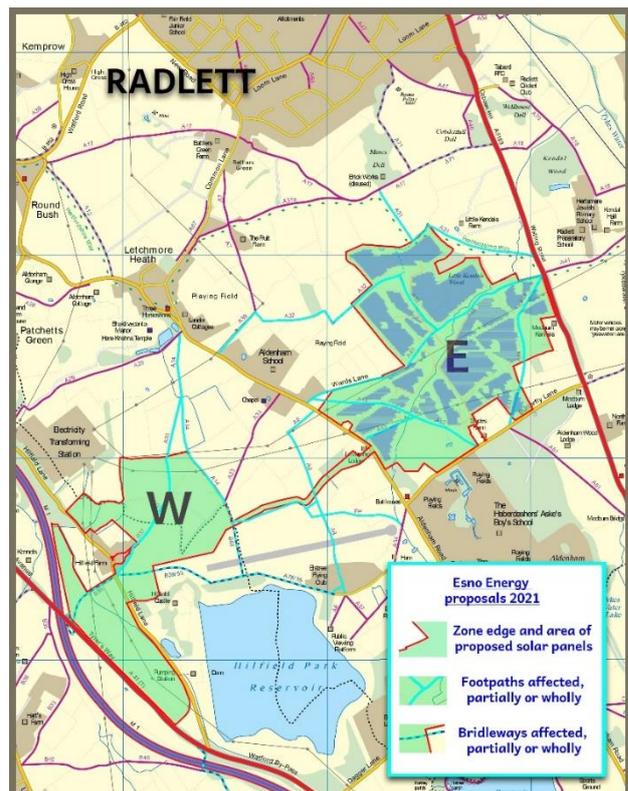
One of the stated aims of the Radlett Society and Green Belt Association (RSGBA) is *'to improve, protect and preserve for the benefit of the public, the countryside and the country around the village of Radlett, the village of Radlett and the green belt around Radlett.'* And, for many years, our defence motto for the Green Belt is *'Fields once lost – will never return.'*

It is with this objective in mind that we, the committee members of the RSGBA, are very concerned about the above proposals, for a solar farm on Green Belt land near Radlett. See draft map- showing, in the eastern area, the close proximity of solar panels to footpaths.

The proposals comprise two main areas of development, labelled E and W, covering over 300 acres of land, all of which is entirely in the Metropolitan Green belt. The land is in regular agricultural production. Defra rates the land quality in both parcels as Grade 3, 'Good to Moderate', with other fields, between the site and Radlett, being Grade 2 – 'Very Good'.

Except for part of the application site to the west of Hilfield Lane [some of which is not in CP Aldenham], the proposed site is covered by a network of rights-of-way, public footpaths and bridleways, which for years have been regularly walked by local residents, from Radlett, Letchmore Heath and Bushey, enjoying the year-round easy access to open countryside with distant views. The eastern fields also enjoy a real sense of peace by virtue of not being close to any busy roads. In the past year, the paths have attracted 'lockdown' runners and joggers, seeking essential exercise that's not available in gyms, pools and sports halls.

All of these users, each in their own way, derive a much-needed feeling of well-being from the openness afforded by the Green Belt countryside. In all, 12 rights-of-way would be detrimentally affected in both the E and W zones of the application.



MEMBER:



If permitted, the proposed development of a Solar Farm with its vast expanse of 3-metre-high solar panels, plus inverters, 2m high fences, CCTV cameras and barriers would, at a stroke, lead to the loss of any semblance of openness, freedom and any health-giving and well-being benefits that the path network currently offers.

While RSGBA appreciates the obvious benefits of harvesting solar energy, particularly in view of the government's 2050 target for zero carbon, but it does not have to be achieved in this way, or on these sites. Such installations would be much better located near motorways or main roads.

In any event, the Council could instead promote solar energy collection by homes, buildings and roofs in general, rather than permitting the loss of valuable crop-production land. Perhaps more could be done to save energy by restricting the excessive size of some new dwellings.

Other negative impacts of the proposed development:

1. **Food Security:** At a time when the UK needs to maximise the percentage of food grown locally, the loss of agriculture would be contrary to achieving those goals.
2. **Noise:** The likelihood of noise generated by inverters and associated generating equipment, as well as the ongoing traffic entering and exiting the site, for maintenance purposes.
3. **Dazzle:** There are concerns over the safety of flying activities at the nearby Elstree Airfield, due to possible upwards reflection of direct rays by the mirror-like solar panels. As it is understood that the proposed solar panels would be movable, in order to 'follow' the sun's apparent movement, this factor could aggravate the hazard of dazzle for pilots, both professional and trainees.
4. **Fire:** Any installation involving batteries needs to be very carefully located in order to minimise the potential risks of a very serious fire; which can result in the generation of a number of organic chemicals, including some highly toxic gases such as carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide.
5. **Biodiversity:** There would be a detrimental impact on the biodiversity in the land covered by solar panels. The growth of grass and other plants would be inhibited by the shade beneath the solar panels and, in turn, this will impact any wildlife living off of the plant life.

Overall, the Society is opposed to these proposals. The application for development in the Green Belt is not included in Hertsmere's SADM24 [Key Green Belt Sites] nor part of a village envelope SADM23 nor safeguarded land. The proposals would not comply with any of the terms of SADM26, Development Standards in the Green Belt.

We would question the applicants' claim that the development is to be 'temporary' would mitigate the loss of Green Belt, without citing very special circumstances. To many people, this would be tantamount to permanence: they would not see and enjoy this countryside again in their lifetimes. Also, the expectation that future generations would be expected to de-commission the site is hardly an argument for sustainability.

We therefore argue therefore that the application is totally inappropriate due to potential loss of openness and failure to respect permanence of the Green Belt, the harm to plant life, flora and fauna, and a highly detrimental impact on the public's enjoyment of local health-giving outdoor activities. We urge the Council to refuse the application and to take any necessary steps to prevent any similar proposals that would erode the Green Belt in the future.

**The Committee Members**

**Radlett Society & Green Belt Association**