

Working to Protect the New Forest



PLANNING COMMITTEE

Reply to: -

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Sent as attachment to Email only

8 November 2015

Chris Nash, The Planning Inspectorate
Room 3/06, Temple Quay House
2 The Square, Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6PN.

Dear Sir,

PINS REF APP/B9506/W/15/3132171

Case Number Application 14/01004 LAND OFF LEPE ROAD, EXBURY, SO45 1AJ

Construction of a 9ha Solar farm to include solar panels (sic) to generate electricity; associated plant buildings; perimeter fencing; landscaping and associated works; internal access track

New Forest Association (NFA) opposed this application and makes the following additional comments.

1. There were peculiar reasons why the first application for a large solar array in New Forest National Park at Cadland was not opposed by NFA. Adjacent to that site is all the electricity paraphernalia associated with a main power feed to the Isle of Wight which is visually very intrusive. In an effort, a generation ago, to better the ecological value of the Estate, wide margins had been planted around the fields used rendering the site and its boundary invisible. NFA can arrange for the inspector to view the site if requested. NFA's attitude had already changed by the second application at Hamptworth on landscape grounds. Other than Cadland, NFA has opposed all applications including those withdrawn and since Hamptworth, none have been granted.

2. The Government's determination to build two million homes by 2020, means all land needs to work harder either to provide more homes and industry, or to grow more, or to provide more recreational opportunities or to become of higher ecological value. The role of the New Forest National Park is clear from NPPF 115 and all recent HM Inspector appeal decisions - it must work harder for the fauna and flora, it must work harder for commoners, and harder for recreation. It is the view of the NFA that solar farms do not represent an adequate or proper use of land in the New Forest National Park and are a backward step.

4. Development pressure for housing within and adjacent to the National Park continues to increase with a rumoured 1400 homes per year required from New Forest District (including the National Park) and plans for housing estates adjacent to the Park from Christchurch and East Dorset PA area. Recreational pressure on the National Park from the built up areas to the west (Bournemouth & Poole built up area is now the country's 16th biggest (census figures)) and South Hants built up area to the east (now the country's 7th biggest (census figures)) is immense. The latest claimant count for this part of the national park and the park as a whole is less than half a percent, and 0.6% for New Forest District in total; (September 2015).

These statistics are recorded to indicate the difficulties the park faces now; considerations for 30 years hence are not relevant. Use of the New Forest for solar arrays is a waste of its land and a waste of its landscape.

Yours faithfully

Graham Baker, NFA Planning Committee