

## Church Lane Group Objection: Planning Application 22/00668/AS

Further to the comments made to date by this group (26.07.22 and 09.08.22) we regret to say that EDF (the applicant) still refuses to accept our proposed compromise involving only a relatively small adjustment in the solar panel footprint on the highly visible and protected Bested Hill or any of the other minor adjustments we have proposed to them. Despite our opposition to the scheme, we were trying to compromise and hoped to be in a position to talk to Ashford Borough Council (ABC) about something which we felt on balance could work. We have failed in that.

Because of this attitude from EDF we ask ABC to accept this further **OBJECTION** that takes our views beyond those set out in our earlier submissions which sought compromise. This application should now be refused not only on account of the failings detailed in our earlier submissions which they refuse to address but because most of this solar farm is proposed to be located on land which is unsuitable.

We attach an annotated Google Earth plan to clarify the central point we now wish to make. The applicant has in its Environmental Statement (ES) failed to provide adequate evidence of how it has arrived at the area of agricultural land it proposes to develop for its purposes.

Their ES at paragraphs 3.68 and 3.69 of Chapter 3 together with the plate number 3.5 highlights some alternative areas of land which the applicant says were considered for the solar farm but rejected. The following short paragraphs are taken verbatim from the ES:

*3.68: Landowners in the area were approached and their interest was ascertained. The area taken forward for further appraisal is shown at Plate 3.5.*

*3.69 The M20 was identified as a constraining feature to the proposal with adequate land available to the south to host the land required by the secured 49.9MW solar farm capacity. The land east of Partridge Plantation was discounted again as being beyond that which was required.*

There is no information provided as to why other land was rejected beyond what is stated here and we believe that there has been a gross failure by the applicant to properly research these areas and other neighbouring alternative land which is far better suited to accommodating the solar farm. Simply based on our collective long-standing knowledge of the area and in particular the topography and existing established woodland and hedging these alternative areas would have a much-reduced impact on the landscape as compared with the proposals being put forward by EDF.

The Google Earth plan shows verged red the approximate footprint of the whole EDF scheme.

Area 1 is an arable field which is mainly south facing and reasonably well screened. Area 2 is Bested Hill and as we have covered in considerable detail previously, installation of panels on this hillside is incapable of adequate mitigation to protect views in the landscape. Area 3 has been reduced in size following pressure from our group on the applicant to remove an area which (like Bested Hill) was unacceptably visible in the landscape.

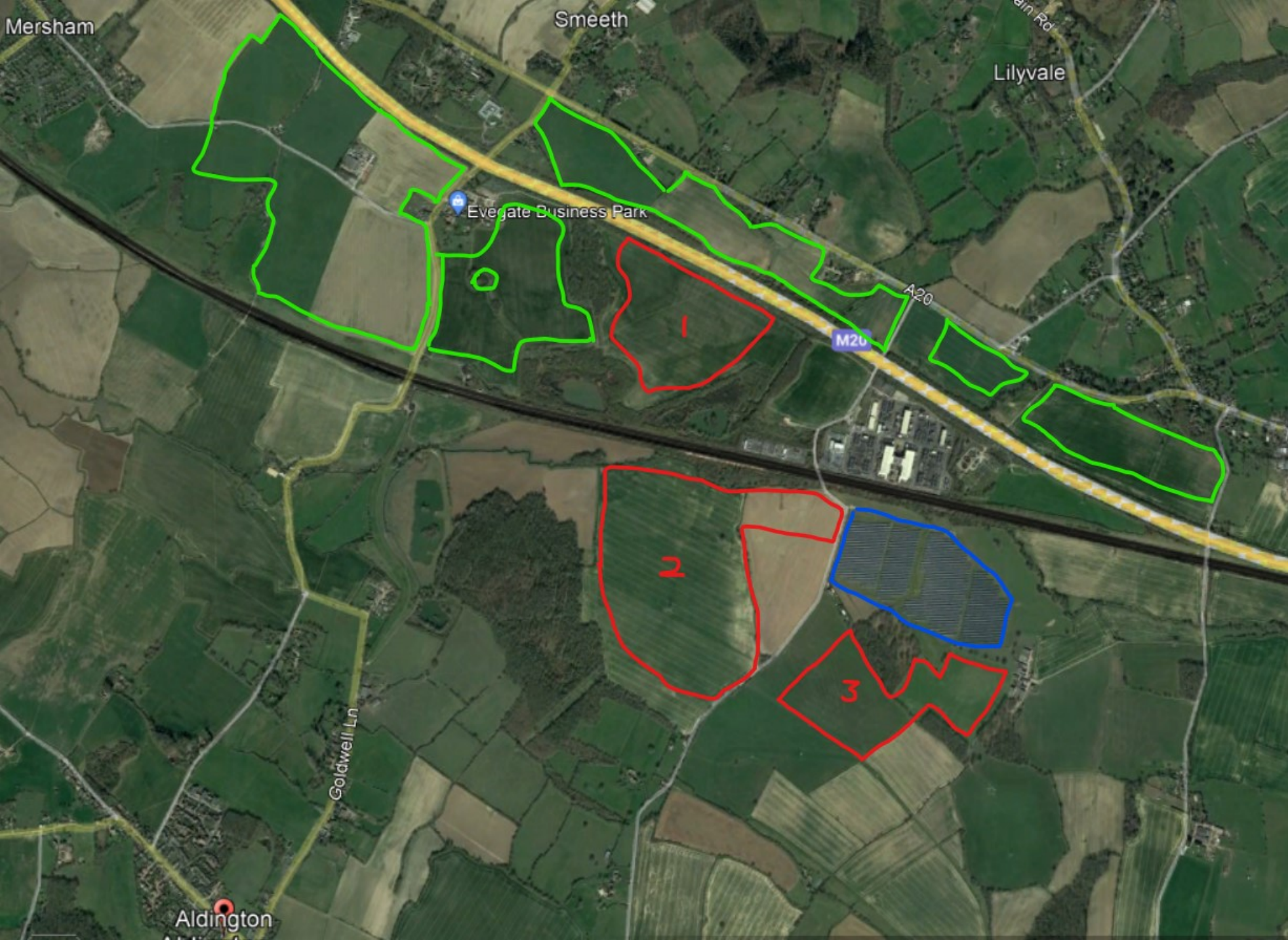
The area verged blue is the existing 50-acre scheme completed in 2015. This is in a naturally well screened location only visible from limited vantage points and on extremely poor agricultural land, close to the connection point.

The areas verged green are the alternative areas to which we refer which provide the opportunity to locate the solar farm on land which is largely already screened by existing mature vegetation and in those few areas where this is not the case, landscape planting can be provided that will hide the development.

Each of the areas verged green (and the area edged red and numbered 1) have, as a whole, much better access for both construction and operational phases as compared with the existing proposal – access logically being from either Station Road or the first part of Church Lane (the improved widened section) between the A 20 and the railway. Cable routing in Church Lane under the motorway bridge to the connection point at the Converter Station is entirely feasible and easier than that proposed under the present application.

The proposal in its present form is ill-conceived and unacceptable and should be **REFUSED**. The applicant should be asked to look again at alternative and more suitable areas of land, in the ownership of the *same landowners*, and having done that recast their proposal to provide something that is respectful of the topography and rural landscape which they propose to industrialise for the next 40 years.

Jonathan Tennant and Alison Baldwin  
Church Lane Group  
21.10.22



Merisham

Smeeth

Lilyvale

Evegate Business Park

M20

A20

Goldwell Ln

Aldington

1

2

3