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Our Ref:

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Thank you for your letter of 22 January to the Planning Inspectorate and National Planning Casework Unit in which you requested that the Secretary of State recover a planning appeal involving a proposed renewable energy facility at Washington, near Sunderland. I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Secretary of State.

The basis of the appeal is against the Council's refusal of the application due to the appeal site being within a Primary Employment Area safeguarded for other uses, its visual impact to users of nearby roads and public footpaths, and that its size, scale and massing would result in harm to or loss of the significance of the Grade I Listed Earl of Durham's Monument.

I understand the opening of the appeal inquiry on 18th February was attended by approximately 250 people and that the inquiry is now adjourned until 18th June pending commercial negotiations that may ultimately lead to the withdrawal of the appeal. The Inspector's decision to adjourn the inquiry was, I believe, endorsed by yourself and all objectors present.

I fully acknowledge and respect the local opposition to the proposed development, and note your own comments, but having thought very carefully about this I do not believe the issues raised are unusual for appeals such as this. I have therefore come to the view that recovery of the appeal is not warranted and it should be determined by the Inspector, who will, should the inquiry resume in June, take full account of local opinion, and the merits of the case, in coming to his decision.

I am sorry that this is likely to be a disappointing reply however I have every confidence that the Inspector will determine the case impartially.

I will ensure that you receive a copy of the Inspector's decision should the appeal reach that stage.

Yours ever,

LUKE HALL MP