

Mallard Pass Open Floor Hearing 2 Greatford Parish Council.

The residents of Greatford have some significant concerns about the proposal to build the Mallard Pass Solar Farm over a large tract of land upstream of the village.

Greatford has been prone to flooding for many years, in the 1950's the Greatford Cut was built as a flood relief channel to take much of the water that used to flood the village away to the south and into river Welland at Market Deeping. Unfortunately the Cut cannot handle all of the excess water and in these situations the river overtops its bank at a point just outside the village and flooding occurs in the Greatford Hall and Greatford Gardens areas of the village.

Parishioners are very concerned that the covering of large tracts of land with impervious solar panels will concentrate runoff onto the soils below.

We are concerned that these clay soils will be compacted during the construction process and thus be unable to absorb the large volumes of water running off the panels.

If this is the case the water will not be steadily absorbed into the soil and instead will begin to run off the land potentially causing erosion.

The water will then find its way via drains and ditches into the West Glen river much more quickly than is currently the case with the uncovered land of the site currently in open field agricultural cropping.

The potential to generate more rapid runoff will lead to a quicker rise in river levels closer to Greatford with subsequently less warning of a flood happening than is currently the case.

We believe that there are opportunities to significantly reduce the flood risk posed by water running off from the panels by improving water infiltration rates into the soil.

This can be done by establishing good, long term grassland well before any construction takes place.

A well established long term grass ley will increase the soil's resilience to trafficking and compaction, which will help to improve infiltration rates and reduce the risk of water run off.

We are also of the opinion that construction should be limited to times when soils are dry enough to cope with trafficking and not be compacted and that measurement of soil moisture contents around the site should be used to ascertain if soils will be damaged by trafficking.

We will expand on these themes in our written representations.

The Parish is also very concerned that a large quantity of best & most versatile farmland is being lost to food production for an unspecified, or indefinite period of time when food security is becoming just as important as energy security.

The semi-detailed ALC survey cannot be relied upon to accurately determine exactly how much BMV is being lost across the site as it initially only sampled one quarter of the area required in the Natural England guidance to properly determine the area of BMV soils.

This initial survey was followed by a survey conducted at the correct 1 sample per hectare resolution (ie properly) with the apparent aim of reducing the area of BMV to below half of the proposed site area.

A full hectare by hectare sampling regime should have been deployed across the whole area, this is the standard to ascertain properly the quantity of BMV land that is present.

Our Parishioners feel that the sheer scale of the proposal is completely out of character for its rural setting.

It will not be possible to adequately screen the site in the gently rolling landscape in which it is proposed to be built, and will be visible from view points a considerable distance away.

There is concern that the main bridleway / footpath which crosses the site, and currently offers open views of gently rolling countryside will become a fenced in canyon passing through an industrial installation.

This represents a significant loss of amenity for our village and the communities in the wider area that are affected by this proposal.

The open habitats of the deer and hare which characterise the large fauna of the area will be lost and populations will be displaced from their current ranges across the site. They will be largely unable to access the solar panel areas as they will be fenced off and the proposed mammal gates will do nothing to improve this situation.

Fenced in wildlife corridors are not used by these mammals as they require open spaces, they will be lost from the environs of the site.

Greatford village has traffic problems with HGV's using the village as a shortcut, and cars frequently speeding through the village.

We know that some of the HGVs using the village as a shortcut are subject to existing routing agreements and that they are not complying with these agreements.

It is very difficult to police this aspect of traffic routing and we have tried (one of our parishioners actually stopped some tipper trucks to ask them where they were coming from or going to).

We fear that our situation will worsen with this development as the potential for road closures, roadworks and subsequent disruption will push traffic to use alternative routes through Greatford to the further detriment of the village.

We will be expanding on these objections to the proposed development in our written representation.