



**Application by Mallard Pass Solar Farm Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent  
for the Mallard Pass Solar Project – project ref. EN010127**

Submission by Mallard Pass Action Group (MPAG) – unique ID ref. 20036230

**Deadline 1 - Written Submission for Open Floor Hearing 1 on 17<sup>th</sup> May.**

Hi, my name is Sue Holloway. I am speaking as Chair of the Mallard Pass Action group today, not on behalf of myself, that I will be doing later tonight. The action group was formed in December 2021 after residents across all the local villages realised the sheer enormity and complexity surrounding this national infrastructure development, they decided they needed to form some kind of group to represent their views and become better informed. For the record the group is not against solar, we just believe it is better placed on rooftops and Brownfield land, and that there are other renewable technologies that are far more efficient with fewer impacts that would better deliver the energy need

We will be articulating our detailed arguments about all the key issues within our Written Representation, due in 4 weeks time. However today we want to focus specifically on the COMMUNITY and the importance of it when considering the benefits of the scheme vs. the harm and many impacts. We feel that often the community impacts can be overlooked whilst the more technical arguments are being explored.

The scale of this solar farm at 852 hectares, or put into laymen's speak at 2105 acres, is huge and unprecedented. There is no large scale ground mounted solar farm in the UK that has been installed to compare this by (yet). Shotwick Solar Park in Flintshire at 72MW compared to Mallard Pass's projected 350MW is a fraction of the output and size, is located next to a paper mill in an industrial setting, and is supplying energy to that paper mill. The proposed development is surrounded by 8 villages and in close proximity to over 20 villages in a rural environment. All the energy will be supplied into the National Grid with ***no direct or meaningful*** benefits for the local community.

So given the unprecedented scale of this development, it is understandable why there is so much community opposition to it. Despite residents being worn down, bamboozled by the long and complex process, their feelings are stronger than ever. There have been 3 key touch points for the public so far over the course of the 18 months. At stage 1 consultation there was hardly any time for residents to draw breath and realise what had hit them, but the initial reaction generated 978 responses. At stage 2 statutory consultation 6 months later there were 1,097 responses. Unfortunately for both these consultations Mallard Pass never calculated the % breakdowns of for/against the development from the email feedback

they received, they just provided statistics from people that filled in their questionnaire. Roll on another 5 months the public entered into the unknown domain of the NSIP process and registered as Interested Parties. Despite having to learn the language of NSIP and infrastructure planning, the level of feedback increased yet again to over 1,206 registrations from public and stakeholder groups, excluding consultees of course. We have been through every Relevant Representation and found 95.7% are opposed to this development.

So I think it is fair to say the public opposition to this development is overwhelming in the same way a 2,105 acre solar farm site is also overwhelming. The impacts of a more typical sub 50MW scheme compared to this 350MW scheme cannot be compared as directly proportional, the impacts on the community are that much greater where rural populations exist. Mallard Pass perceives the community to be the villages directly adjacent to the site which we agree is a starting point. They have a population of approximately 4,000 which equates broadly to 1,600 households. Remembering over 1,200 people registered as Interested Parties, I think it is safe to assume that the level of response was not just consigned to adjacent villages but stretched out across other rural areas that share the same issues and concerns and will also experience the many impacts. Had the consultation been targeted at a wider rural envelope, there would have been an even higher level of opposition. It is forecast that up to 2/3rds of the 13,000 leaflet distribution from Mallard Pass went to the market town of Stamford, to individuals that don't necessarily share the same values, way of life and recreational habits, and are therefore less likely to be affected.

Bringing this back to the point about community.

A community is not just a group of people from a similar location, but a social group whose members have something in common and share similar values. I want to explain a bit more about those values and the relevance to Mallard Pass. Just consider for a moment the choices people make when living in a city, a town or the rural environment. Their values and interests can be very different, especially when it comes to a way of life. We think there is an interesting parallel with a local issue to give context. Without getting into any politics, the local town of Market Deeping has recently fought hard to save an important facility, their local swimming pool and sports centre. There is huge opposition not just from the local community but also from others coming from outside the area using this important facility whether for health, recreation or competition needs. No one can argue that losing this facility would be detrimental to many people and they understood the impacts. In the same way it needs to be understood how carpeting the rural landscape with 530,000 solar panels will change the environment, landscape and everyday amenity and well-being of the local people living in and around it, and those currently coming from outside the area to enjoy and experience it.

The community's feedback is clear and unwavering. They not only care deeply about the countryside, the environment, a way of life, but are deeply concerned about many of the principal issues already identified by the ExA, and to be assessed in detail by ourselves in our Written Representation. They are not confident that extensive mitigation, by virtue of its meaning, addresses their real concerns and issues, and don't believe a development of this scale and nature is appropriate in this Greenfield environment and amongst rural communities. A development of this nature risks destabilising what is a thriving cluster of interconnected communities, ultimately leading to the isolation and confinement of those left living in and around this industrial landscape. We ask and hope that along with the many issues that will be reviewed, the examiner will carefully consider the level of public opposition clearly apparent from all the feedback over the last 18 months.