

I wish to strongly object to the proposed Mallard Pass Solar Factory.

I would like to start by saying the dictionary definition of “mitigation” is : **reducing severity, seriousness or painfulness of something**. The proposed mitigation proposed by Mallard Pass does in no way do any of this.

Having done quite a bit of research into solar panels during this process I question the figure of 350 megawatts that is claimed to be produced in the Mallard Pass solar factory, particularly as the UK’s sunshine is far from being “Spain” and consistent. Performances recently reported is more likely to be 11% of the published maximum as an individual how can I believe the figures proposed by the Developers?

I have read that the manufacturing process in mining, making and shipping the solar panels to the UK from China is considerable and by no means zero carbon. When the sun is very hot these solar panels do not work to capacity as they overheat, they also give an instability to the National Grid with their fluctuation in generation, sometimes causing additional gas powered stations to produce extra capacity to stabilize the grid. Also, the ethical production of these panels is somewhat questionable. I hope the Planning Inspector will scrutinise this process thoroughly.

At one of the public consultations, I questioned the loss of power generated from the further most area (North West) back to the substation. I was told that *“no power would be lost with distance”*. On further investigation figures show that a considerable loss of capacity generated the further the current travels aback to the sub sttion. I question the sites at the further end of the Pickworth Drift being a worthwhile addition to the plan, especially as some of this area is north facing also and on undulating countryside so very visible in the landscape. Every question I asked at the consultation was either batted away, or answered dishonestly. I feel very let down by the process and uninformed and feel uneasy at the information produced by the Developers is to be believed.

Project Design Principles - The solar panels are by far too much a ‘black overbearing block’ on the landscape. The map shows established wooded areas, however these green spaces will be very much hidden from view by the height and block nature of the solar arrays. This huge expanse reduces natural habitat corridors and the ability for ground nesting birds to breed but more importantly, it affects people and appears so stark black in the landscape with very little green being visible inbetween.

People - The general public’s enjoyment of the surrounding countryside is blighted by this blocked out landscape and given the essential need for people to exercise, enjoy the outdoors and improve their mental wellbeing in a calming green natural space this is very harmful to people and their mental health. Mallard Pass states they intend to enhance local recreational and amenity opportunities, however these are no way compensations to the vast block of black solar arrays will be on the overall visual landscape surrounding and bordering Ryhall Heath, Ryhall, Carlby, Belmesthorpe and Greatford village. Many people from Stamford use these villages, paths and quieter roads for their exercise and recreation also. I feel that the general public have not really taken on board the scale this factory will have on their everyday lives as the public information provided by the Developers has been very complex and ill illustrated.

The Drift in particular is a heavily used route for walkers, cyclists and runners, people on mobility scooters and horse riders. This area is included in several established walking routes, such as our locally produced “Wills Walks”, The John Clare Society, Strava data and local Ramblings and informal village walking groups. The Drift is a main link for circular walks from Ryhall, Carlby and Essendine.

Here are a few examples, but there are many more.

PICKWORTH HERITAGE & ARTS TRAIL



In 1851, London's Green Park was 100,000 acres, which is almost twice the size of the present-day park. Pickworth is the only place showing such a drift.



All the signs are here to tell us that this was for many centuries the route used by drovers taking animals from farms to markets in London. The route is the Drift.

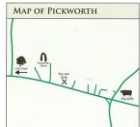
THE DRIFT - AN ANCIENT PATHWAY
All the signs are here to tell us that this was for many centuries the route used by drovers taking animals from farms to markets in London. The route is the Drift. It is a clear clue. Livestock needed to arrive in good condition, so beasts were 'drifted' southward at only 12-15 miles a day. The lane is usually wide. This is because herds needed wide grass verges to pass through, eating and tending to as they went. The Drift also follows the high ground. Drovers would always avoid areas where their animals might become bogged down.

PICKWORTH RUINS - DESTRUCTION OR DECLINE?
Pickworth in the 13th and 14th centuries was a flourishing community, but by 1581 the village was described as having no residents. One explanation is that the village was devastated following the battle of Losecote Field in 1470. Certainly, human skeletons have been found and traces of the old floors and fireplace have been discovered. Many villages have found fragments of ancient masonry in their gardens.
In 1720 the only part of the church at Pickworth which remained standing was the steeple. This was pulled down around 1730 and the stones transported to Great Casterton and used to build the bridge over the Great North Road.



Clare, who was born in Pickworth, lived in the village for most of his life and died in 1863.

JOHN CLARE - BETWEEN TWO WORLDS
John Clare, the peasant poet, spent his early working life in Pickworth working as a labourer at the limekilns. His diary records the moment the first star hit his walking across the fields nearby. He climbed a tree to get a better view and wrote later 'I was in love at first sight.'
Despite the support of aristocratic admirers of his work, Clare could not find happiness or stability. He was caught between two worlds. The peasant's life lived in Pickworth which inspired his poetry exhausted and distressed the poet but literary circles were alien to him.
He was never far from poverty and after years of mental distress he died in 1863 at the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum.



WHERE NEXT - 150 SHAPED YEW TREES
The livery 'New Year Assize, once the carriage drove to Clapham Hall, it now maintained by the Forestry Commission. The marker of 150 shaped yew trees stretches for 500 metres leading towards the hall, an 18th century mansion set in a landscaped park. A small car park, grass year round access.

Oh the driving days are done, And the Trovett's May is run,
For there's nothing but Lead, And they're taking the Trade,
And the driving days are done, Traditional folk song

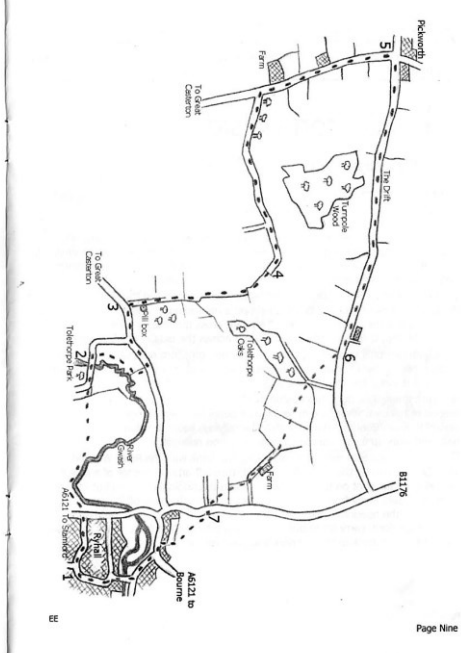
3 Tolethorpe Park

8 Miles 3 3/4 Hours

Park in the village of Ryhall, local shop, two local pubs the 'Millstone' and the 'Green Dragon'. No toilets.

- 1 Start from the village hall, face the library opposite, turn right and walk down the length of The Balk ahead. Cross the main road, go down the slight slope and along the farm road beside the trees. Turn right then left with the road, as it turns right again leave the road and follow the direction of the marker post across the field past the telegraph pole to the hedge. Turn left, then right through the hedge and over the stile. Cross the corner of the field, continue direction up the road past Tolethorpe Park and cross the bridge over the River Gwash.
- 2 Just past the bridge turn right into the field, walk slightly right following the course of the river. Go over two stiles and turn left at the fence, continue uphill to the road. Turn left along the road, past the junction with the road back to Tolethorpe, to a gateway on the right.
- 3 Go through and walk along the green brideway, past the ruined pill box and carry on past the marker post. (The next part of the walk has been re-routed and may differ from the Ordnance Survey Map). At the bottom of the dip bear right over a stile with a high wire gate above it. Go to the top of the slope and through a similar gate out of this enclosure.
- 4 Keep along the grass farm track and turn left onto the hardcore track. Fork right at the junction and walk with young trees on the left and the hedge on the right; go through the kissing gate, up to the road and turn right. Go up and then down the slope into Pickworth; at the green triangle turn right into The Drift.
- 5 Walk for nearly a mile and a half along this green lane past two blocks of houses and onto the tarmac road.
- 6 As the road swings left, turn right at the sign, over the footbridge and cross the field in the arrowed direction, a path should be visible, to the left hand corner of the wood. Go over the farm road and continue up the slope, left of the farm road, in the direction of the arrow. Go up the steps and through the gate by the yellow top post. Head for the top corner in front of the barn, bear right and walk up the track keeping the farm to the left. Bear left then right at marker posts and continue down the right hand side of the left hand field. Go through the tight hedge gap at the marker post just left of the corner, take a slight left hand diagonal across two stiles and turn left to the B1176 road.

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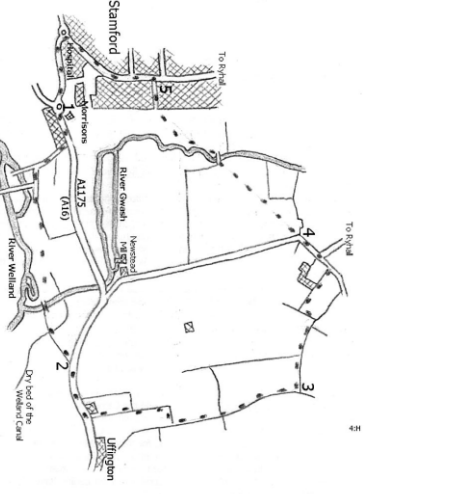
6 River Gwash

4 1/2 Miles 2 Hours

Start from the roundabout in front of Morrisons Supermarket on Uffington Road in Stamford. Large car park, toilets and refreshments adjacent for the use of Morrisons customers.

- 1 Turn left, over the old railway bridge and turn immediate right, opposite the signpost, down the hardcore brideway, bear left at the bottom and cross the stile ahead. Continue direction midway between the fence and the river and go over the footbridge across the River Gwash. Walk up the right hand field edge, with the fence right, to the footbridge over the dry bed of the Welland Canal. Carry on with the fence to the right over the stiles to the A1175 (was the A16).
- 2 Cross this busy road carefully and turn right, along the roadside path, past the houses to the signpost on the left. Turn left, past the black gate and carry on up the field edge with the hedge to the right. Go through the gap and continue with the hedge on the left and the track between fields. Follow the track right and left, carry on for two thirds of a mile to the marker post as the track veers right.
- 3 Bear left between fields, from the corner change sides and continue with the hedge to the right, across the footbridge in the far corner. Turn left and follow the field edge right, to the T-junction of paths; turn left between hedges and continue left/straight on to the signpost on the right.
- 4 Go through the trees, step over the stile and bear left along the track in the grass, past the signpost at the corner and into the dip. Cross the footbridge over the River Gwash and continue direction with the hedge then the river to the left. Take the path bearing right, away from the river, into the far corner. Carry on between the brick piers of the old railway bridge and up the track to Ryhall Road.
- 5 Turn left along the roadside path to the roundabout and take the path left past the hospital and the roundabout at Morrisons supermarket.

The source of the River Gwash is close to the village of Knossington west of Oakham. It soon flows into Rutland Water, providing some of its water capacity. The river continues through the Castertons, Tolethorpe and Ryhall before joining the Welland.



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I personally use the footpath from Ryhall Heath across to Essendine and into Ryhall for my work and recreation on a daily basis as do many locals.

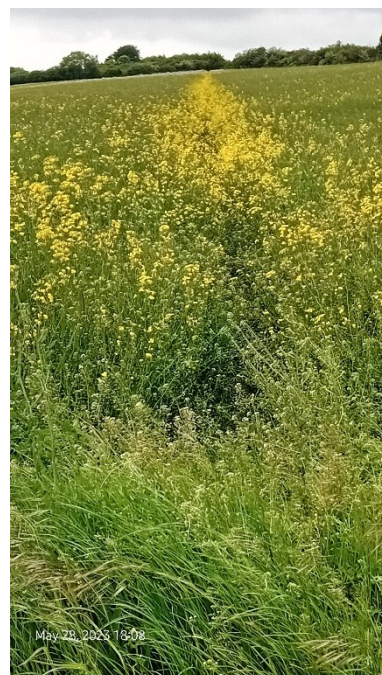
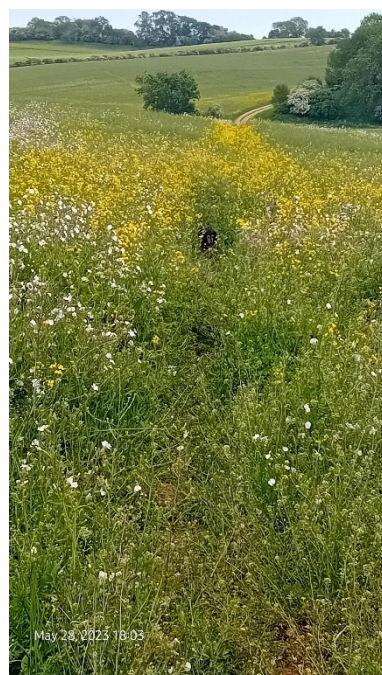
Mallard Pass are proposing a small link to an existing well used footpath, I cannot think anyone is going to want to walk for leisure and their mental health and wellbeing between chain link fencing with a view of a factory field of solar panels. Additionally, there is a proposal to put yet more clutter into the countryside in the form of information boards. As most of the wildlife will not be able to survive in this fenced off area, I wonder what there will be to see other than industrial waste land. Also should these permissive path not be classified as Footpaths and be kept for ever.

Environment and Mitigation – On the Pickworth Drift there is a badger set which has been established all the time I have lived here (some 30 years) I am not convinced that enough allowances has been given to several badger sets in this area.

The Drift wildflower grassland corridor. It was confirmed to me at the public consultation that a 25m edge from the hedgerow running the length of the Pickworth Drift, with a 4.5 m wide additional newly planted hedge, then a further 6m green space, before the fencing would start, however none of this was accurately shown on the maps and therefore I have concerns that this will be correctly actioned and adhered to. This area of the site is important being prolific with orchids and wildflowers. The Pickworth Drift, in particular, is a very important wildlife corridor for rare birds. Records of which have been kept for many years by wildlife groups. One black bird was ringed 8 years running on the very same week of each year, I find this amazing.

Visual Impact – Mallard Pass claim to be planting additional hedging to scene panels as mitigation. Given that the panels are 3.3 metres in height, I predict the hedging to take approximately 15-20 years to have any impact of helping to screen the solar arrays. Meantime a generation of people will have to endure this industrial scene in a rural landscape. Some of the land proposed is rolling countryside making it even more visible.

Maintenance I have further huge concerns in the maintenance programme of the new planting. There seems to be no assurances that once planted these will not be neglected, Throughout the site mitigation has been mapped however, I am very concerned that historically this type of planting is not adequately maintained. One of the farmers in the scheme cannot even maintain his footpath **now** for public to walk. This is not just now but for many years.



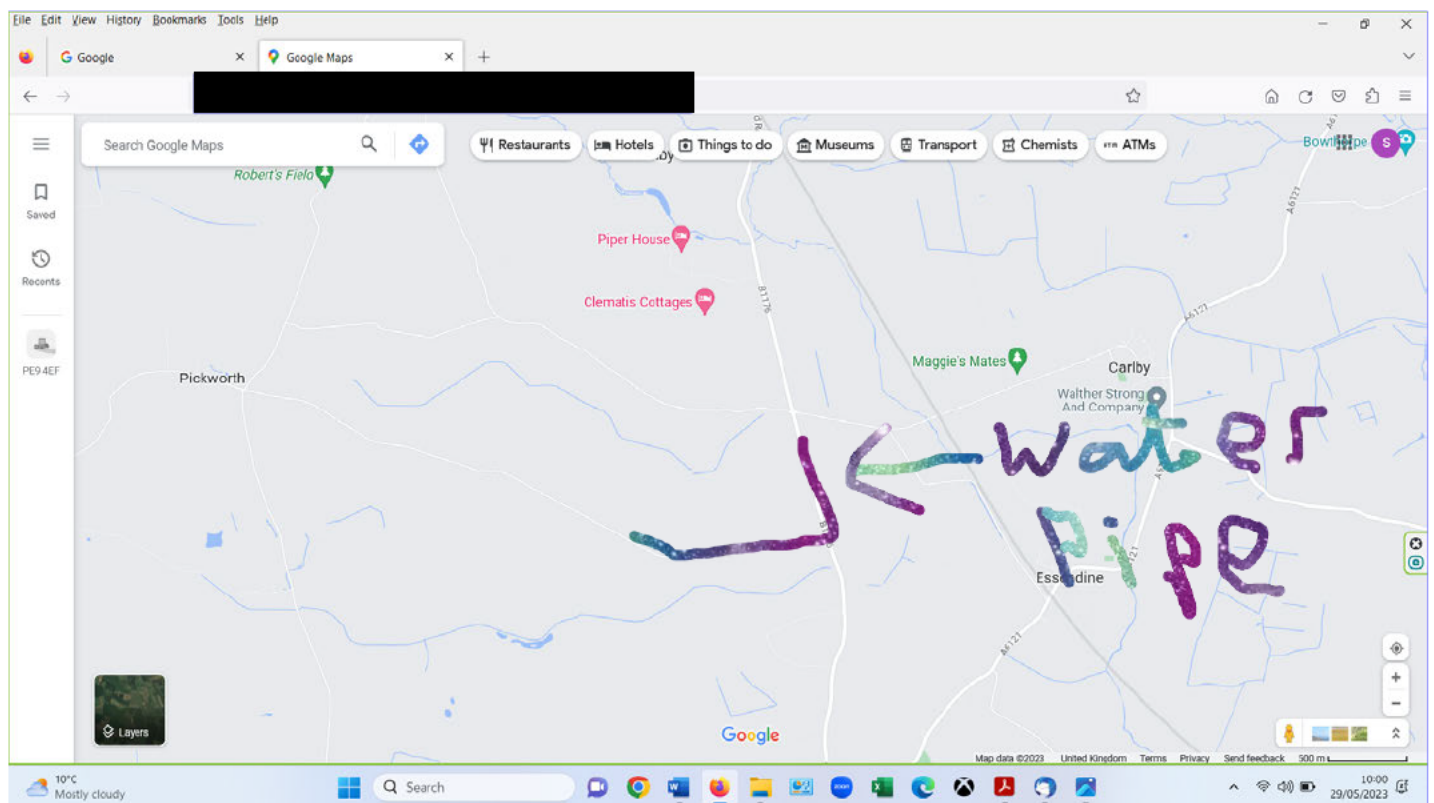
Photos taken from the Drift on the public footpath to Ryhall Village.

Who will resident defer to when areas are not maintained properly? There will be no one to address this. Rutland County Council and South Kesteven District Council have no resources to monitor and it will soon become an unkept mess and likely never to mitigate the panels. So how can I and other locals trust that these mitigation strips will be effective? I for one will not be alive to see (or not see!) the solar panels in their ugly, black glory softened for the rest of my life.

Manipulation of facts An example of being misled has been: Mallard Pass state that they have removed areas along the River Glen after listening to concerns, but I assume these areas would never have been in the final plan anyway, as I assume water logged and flood areas are not idea for electricity panels. Therefore to skew figures by saying these are now being removed is somewhat ridiculous and dishonest and I assume the Developer uses them to manipulate their data to their advantage.

Flooding - at Essendine Church is a huge concern. This Norman church is a very valuable asset to this village and further problems caused by rain run-off from solar arrays would be intolerable and I hope as a very important historic building that the Planning Inspector will take great care to preserve this at all costs.

Ecological Connectivity - On all the plans produced for the public by Mallard Pass none showed how and where the connecting cabling from one field to another would be installed. Some fields were shown surrounded by mitigating areas, this directly contradicts the areas that are shown as being undisturbed and mitigated. This was **very** misleading and dishonest approach to showing the intentions of Mallard Pass. We now see plans for the connectivity which I know for the villages especially in Essendine are proving to be a huge shock and inconvenience and worry. I personally have a private 2 mile long water pipe which I am very concerned about, with 2 compounds being sited in this area and assuming many cables crossing the road. (*I must apologise for my lack of being able to annotate maps properly!*)



The Site - There are brownfields sites 'Woolfox air field' within a 10 mile radius of this planned site, this is directly on the edge of the A1 with no housing to be blighted. I know the substation is the key to this site

but some of the extremities of the proposed Mallard Pass proposal are equal in distance back to the sub station. I am sure, the alternative 'Woolfox' site would cost more to connect, however if Mallard Pass are seriously looking to create a low impact low carbon footprint scheme rather than just cashing in financially, surely an old airfield concreted piece of land is preferable and more environmentally friendly than agricultural producing land taken out of food production.

Construction and Traffic- The increase in traffic through Great Casterton, Ryhall and Belmesthorpe will be considerable and the roads will be insufficient to take this heavy traffic and large vehicles safely. There are 3 schools on this route, with the Casterton to Ryhall road having some difficult corners as this is still a semi-rural road with very important hedging either side along its length. This hedging is very important in the country scene and for wildlife corridors and would be devastating to be lost in any parts along the roadsides, if some of this was removed to accommodate site traffic.

The village of Belmesthorpe suffers from speeding traffic at present and additional heavy lorry traffic and machinery would further blight the village and its residents.

Additionally, at this South Westerly side of the site plan there is a potential plan for 1300 houses on the north of Stamford which will be in the vicinity of this traffic area. If this is to go ahead, the North of Stamford will be seriously under stress on the highways and combined with the solar panels and additional housing will engulf the whole area and the character and appearance affected for the living conditions of all residents of Ryhall Heath, Ryhall, Belmesthorpe, Little Casterton and Great Casterton in particular.

Technology - If SAT arrays are used, I have been informed that these rotate back to their original locations through the night. Some of the housing through this site are in rural very quiet locations and the mechanism noise will be incredibly intrusive and will be heard by all residents. I asked at the consultation if they would make a noise the answer was '*no, well just a little*'. However, if each panel makes a little noise combined in a whole field full of panels this so called little noise will be multiplied and become considerable.

Battery Energy Storage Systems. Mallard Pass now say, they have removed battery storage, however, stated in the consultation document "**not to bring this aspect of development forward at this time**". Given that a lot of the information and surveys produced so far have been spurious I am concerned that this is a back door tactic by Mallard Pass and not one that can be trusted.

Land Use – with the current world crisis I am concerned that the loss of agricultural land potentially forever will have a collective detrimental affecting on life for UK citizen, I know we need to generate green power however there are other green options such as roofs and brownfields sites, redundant and closing coal power stations (such as Radcliffe Power station) that are beneficial sites for this purpose. With the recent government intention to build a nuclear power station in Suffolk will there now be such a need for vast swaths of food producing land to be sacrificed in such a large areas? At the preliminary hearing I learned that Lincolnshire alone has 19 solar planning application, surely a whole county cannot be blighted in such a way.

Consultation Process – I have been appalled at the lack of public engagement in this process. The design on the literature is designed to look like junk mail so people will not engage with it, also many leaflets were delivered to Stamford postcode that were known to be fighting another cause 'the Stamford North housing development' already mentioned, the timing of consultations were aimed so that a limited number of people could attend especially in Ryhall and Belmesthorpe village. A lot of these residents are very unaware of the impact on the village in real terms. The timing of the public consultation deliberately in the build up to summer holidays and children finishing school years when parents are at their most busy has, in my opinion been done deliberately, not to engage fully with residents. The graphics used have been very "creative" showing a view with grass nearly as high as the panels! VERY MISLEADING. The consultation in Stamford Town Hall was not even advertised outside the venue on the day. All in all, a good job at minimal public engagement.

Given all my thoughts above I am strongly opposed to this solar factory in the scale that it is being proposed as it is overbearing to the community and engulfs the whole area and will have a huge social detrimental impact of peoples living conditions and wellbeing.

If the Planning Inspectorate are mindful to allow this scheme, I would urge that provision is made for the upkeep of the mitigation planting for the whole length of the scheme by an independent body so that responsibility for maintenance, replacement and upkeep is managed fairly

Thank you for reading my submission.

Sarah Gresty

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