

Mallard Pass Solar: Written Response: June 2023

Dear Sirs,

I am writing as part of the Statutory Consultation to express my views about the proposed solar farm called Mallard Pass.

I have a number of concerns about the development.

First and foremost, the sheer, unprecedented scale of the installation is just way out of proportion to the nature of the environment and the small villages which surround it. Its impact on the area would be immense, and it would constitute a scar on an essentially rural landscape which would be to the detriment of far more than merely live and walk in the area. The high fencing necessary to protect the site, the floodlighting and the solar panels themselves will all be totally out of keeping with the essentially rural character of the area, which is so much appreciated by the many who live here, who take recreation here and who pass through it, and is so vital to the wide biodiversity of fauna and flora that it now contains.

My wife, who has only recently recovered from [REDACTED], and I rely heavily on the paths which surround our village of Belmesthorpe for our health and well-being. We walk them daily, unless adverse weather prevents, and we are not the only ones so to do. The area proposed for the Solar Farm will severely intrude upon our walking routes on two of the four sides of the village, both audibly and visibly, as both lie within half a mile of our home. Its impact on the wildlife we regularly encounter on our walks and which give us so much pleasure will be dramatic. The attached photos of Green Lane in Spring and the field to the south of Green Lane - both taken in recent days - make clear just how attractive and vibrant a walking area this is: in addition, the second photo shows what a lovely wildflower corner will be lost if the Solar Farm is sited on this field.

Second, it is my understanding that this land is prime agricultural land, which is presently used for crops. It makes no sense whatsoever to convert this land to sterile usage, when, as a nation, we are over-dependent on imported grains and the like, a fact that has been highlighted by the recent war in Ukraine. There is the added concern over what will become of this land, once the solar farm has served its term, as it is by no means certain that it will be, or will be able to be, returned to agricultural use.

Third, there are associated risks which pose a threat to nearby communities. Flooding is one of which I am aware. Perhaps a greater one is the threat from lithium batteries used to store surplus electricity, which I understand can be prone to emitting toxic fumes. As someone whose home is situated within a half mile of the site, I am very worried about this aspect from a personal health point of view, and also because of the very real threat to the value of the property which I have lived in and extensively improved for more than forty years now. If the proposed site goes ahead in its present size, I calculate that I could easily be as much as £[REDACTED] out of pocket, should I choose to sell my property - and that is assuming a buyer would be willing to move so close to the installation.

Fourth and finally, I am extremely concerned about the potential fire risk which Mallard Farm would present to my and other neighbouring properties and indeed villages. A recent study by Firetrace International, a leading provider of fire suppression technology, indicates that solar farm fires are seeing a sharp rise, and highlights that the industry could possibly be misjudging the threat of fire and urgently needs to address the issue. There is a wide number of ways in which fires can be caused on solar farms, and some of them can be associated with the character of the Mallard Farm

development, including flooding, damage from wild animals and, in particular, faults occurring in sub-standard equipment, given that the solar panels in question are known to be sourced from China, where it is believed they are manufactured using labour from [REDACTED] population. A recent fire in California, which scorched 1,127 acres, started merely when a bird flew into a pair of wires, creating an electric circuit and a shower of sparks, and resulting in catastrophic damage. The company who wish to develop the Mallard Pass site apparently has no experience of building a site of this magnitude, and should not be given licence to experiment at the potential expense of the established local community.

Like many others who are against this proposal, I am completely in favour of the search for alternative sources of energy, and am not against solar panels in principle, although I do believe there are more efficient and productive options available, including, notably, off-shore wind, but also hydro and the relatively unexplored tidal. It is just that this development appears, to myself and to most if not all of the local community, to be palpably the wrong size in the wrong site. Moreover, as I have already mentioned, it is proposed by a new and relatively unknown consortium, which has no previous experience of a site of this magnitude and which, it appears, uses goods manufactured by [REDACTED] territories of China.

In view of all the above points, I feel strongly that this proposal should be rejected out of hand, and more suitable alternative sites be sought instead.

Yours faithfully

Adrian Gombault
Chairman, Belmesthorpe Neighbourhood Watch and
former Vice Chairman of Ryhall and Belmesthorpe Parish Council



