

Ramblers – Written Representation 16841

I am representing the Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings Ramblers' Group as an Interested Party. This is a group of around 100 members who regularly walk around the network of public footpaths and rights of way in the locality. This Group is also joined regularly by Ramblers from other Ramblers' Groups for walks in the area. This submission summarises concerns around the impact this project poses to Ramblers and may indeed apply to the many other walkers using the impacted paths.

1. Regular bus service to this area makes it a popular walking area with Stamford and Bourne residents

These paths are accessible by bus. If they become less attractive to walk, Ramblers will find it more difficult to access walks by public transport. Our members can take a bus from Bourne in the north or Stamford in the South and start a range of walks from Rhyall, Carlby and Essendine with the convenience and energy-saving advantages of not having to take a car. Not all members go by bus but the advantage of this network of walks is that it is serviced by a regular and reliable bus service. The Delaine 201 runs an hourly service from Peterborough to Bourne, stopping at Stamford, Rhyall, Essendine, Carlby and Bourne. Many of our walkers use their pensioners' free bus pass on this service.

2. Screening

Many of the paths run alongside areas to be developed, and the project proposes screening to reduce the negative impact. There are concerns around this proposal:

- Much of the screening would be in the form of hedges and trees that will take many years to grow into an effective screen. The developers suggest this could be 15 years or more given the height of the panels to be screened. This is far too long.
- Even when fully screened, some paths will become effective "tunnels" to walk through, and significantly less appealing for walkers.

Fields 30, 34, 31 would show solar panels as far as the eye can see



Looking towards Essendine from BR AW 1/1
This view would be lost to solar panels
Screening would block the solar panels but the beautiful views would be lost



- The current open landscape will become a network of “screens” and lose its open nature. This will also be to the detriment of views from paths not actually screened in.
- As an example: Carlby, Braceborough, Greatford, Macmillan Way, bridleway (BR AW1/1) from Banthorpe Lodge to Grange Farm Cottages grid ref 060107, passing through fields 35 and 34 would house solar panels completely on the left and field 36 on the right. The path runs around 2000 metres from the road to the Macmillan Way. The panels would cover most of this area. The Applicant has proposed a ‘tree belt planting along the bridleway for screening and G connectivity’. How long would it take the trees to grow to be an effective screen? And would Ramblers want to walk in a screened area, with views blocked left and right?

3. The proposed circular permissive path

The section which goes from the Carlby to Greatford road, starting at grid ref 057134 and runs down to and along the East Coast Mainline railway line, before meeting up with BR AW1/1, offers a circular route but its real purpose appears to offer improved connectivity as a G1 corridor. Would our walkers want to walk along a screened path for three miles with a half-mile section along the busy, noisy, East Coast Mainline railway track? No. There would be trees to ‘screen views of panels and break up the built form of the landscape,’ says the Applicant, but this would still not be attractive option to Ramblers.

4. The lower section of this proposed permissive path

The section on the south side of the East Coast Mainline railway line has proposed ‘otter, bat, and holt



boxes'. Why have they proposed them near the railway line? This path would do a loop down to the new 13-metre-high substation. The noise from this would not endear ramblers, nor indeed wildlife, to go anywhere near it.

5. The Macmillan Way

This is a recognised ancient, long distance National Trail, which crosses through the proposed solar farm. A one-mile section where it crosses the East Coast Mainline to Cobbs Nook Farm would have solar panels on both sides of the path for fields 53, 49, 25, 48, 47, 46, and 45. The Macmillan Way attracts walkers from all over the country and the presence of a solar farm would detract from the popularity of the walk with Ramblers. We believe the Macmillan Way needs to be protected as it is part of our heritage.



6. Essendine to Pickworth circular route

This route would be blemished by solar panels in fields 9, 13, 16, 14, and 15. Again hedgerow planting would spoil the rolling views.



Fields 9, 13 and 16 - the view from the bottom of the bridleway.

No screening is planned for this section, just existing woodland trees and hedgerow to the right

7. The 1.2km proposed permissive path between fields 7, past 2 and 13

The section of this path that joins up with the bridleway mentioned in my point above would offer a short route between Carlby and Essendine but it is very close to the East Coast Mainline in field 7, so how many people would enjoy using this route? Maybe dog walkers as 'needs must' but not Ramblers.

In summary, we frequent a network of about 50 miles around these villages. The joy of walking is taking in the beautiful countryside and observing the wildlife; it is a boost to both physical and mental health and the landscape as it exists today, makes walking an enjoyable and therapeutic experience. The topography around the region is one of rolling hills and green landscapes which are a joy to walk around. To be surrounded by solar panels, spanning the views, sometimes on both sides of a path derives no pleasure for the walker. The planting of screening will not compensate for the loss of the panorama that our fellow ramblers enjoy. The addition of five miles of extra permissive paths will not compensate for the losses made by building this huge solar farm. It has been outlined above that the screened paths, close to the East Coast Mainline railway station and the new substation will not compensate for what we would be losing. Our walkers would not walk in this area if the solar farm were built. We will be driving our cars further afield to areas of natural beauty, unspoiled by solar panels and strategic planting.

8. Flood Risk

A ford near Banthorpe Lodge grid ref 060110 (see photo on next page)



This area is on a flood plain and it regularly floods. Walkers can just get over a wooden bridge at the height of the water. If the ground in the area is compacted by the solar farm development, or other run off changes, this flood plain could become too waterlogged for walkers to pass through.

9. Mallard Pass Solar Farm is too large

The sheer scale of the solar farm 1,052 acres means it may be very difficult to fully mitigate the impacts on the landscape's character. Much of the countryside is lightly undulating and solar panels of 3.3m high will completely change the landscape to a more industrial environment of 2,105 acres. It may be impossible to discreetly screen a solar farm of this size and doing so where there are supposed to be expansive views would not necessarily be the right thing to do. The rolling hills that have inspired poets such as Lincolnshire-born Lord Tennyson, would be lost. We would prefer the development to be located on a brown field site with less incremental detriment to the landscape.

10. Accident Risk during development

Closure and diversion of PRow's at various and prolonged times during construction would be disruptive and this may be for a prolonged period of two years. Walkers may be forced onto the road in some places which will inevitably be busier with construction traffic and therefore more dangerous to pedestrians. Ramblers walk planning encourages minimisation of road walking, so will avoid such routes.

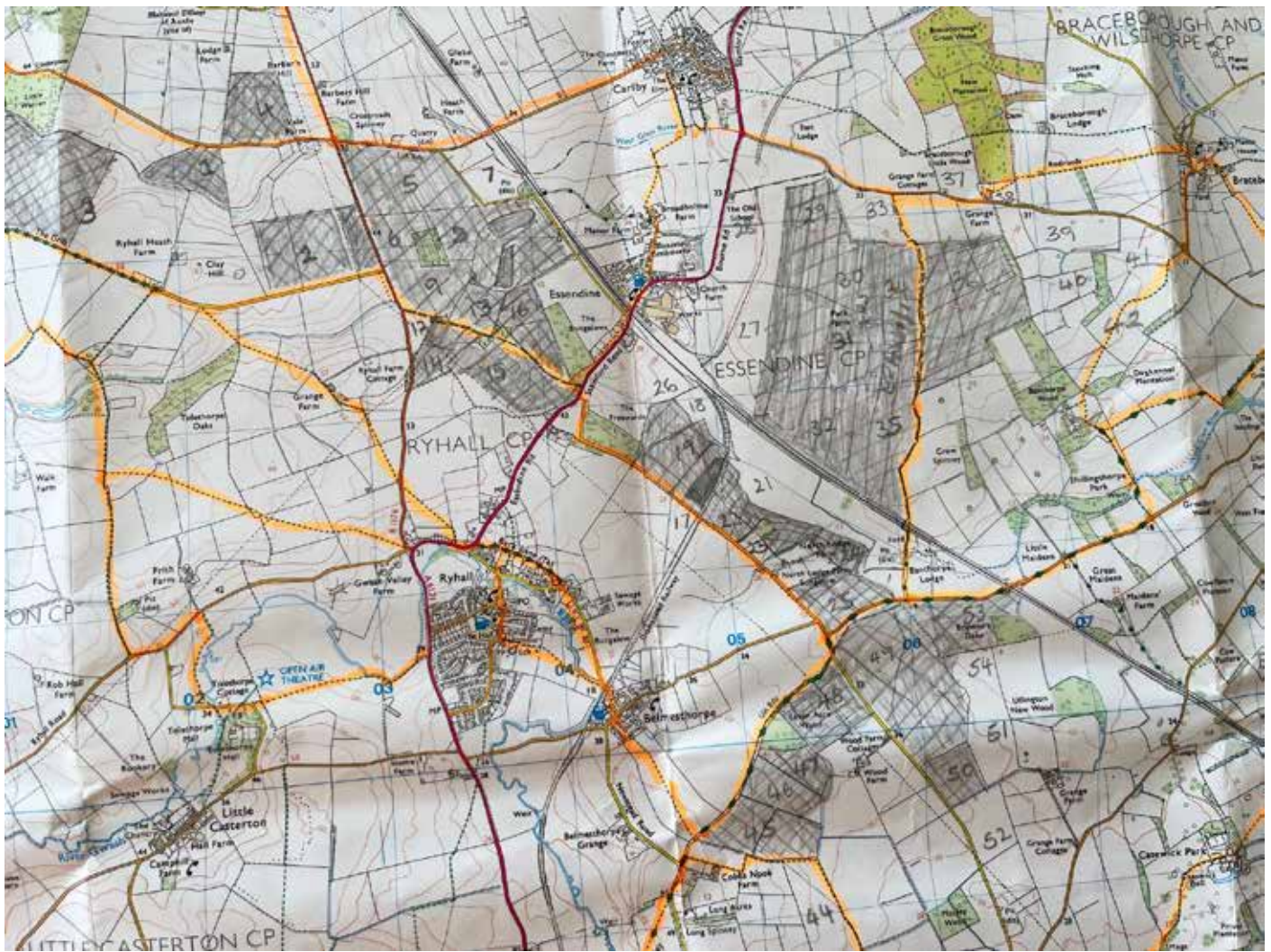
11. Endangering the Flora and Fauna

This project will impact habitats and wildlife corridors will be disrupted by the two-year construction phase. The extensive fencing of the solar areas on the site will disrupt the patterns of the flora and fauna; the site noise would discourage the wildlife and disturb their habitat. As part of Ramblers' walks, many walkers appreciate the flora and fauna to be found, particularly in the quieter areas where walks tend to be, so this is likely to be a further adverse impact.

12. OS Map View

The maps in the project documents are not easy to read or relate to.

The OS map on the next page shows the PRow's in orange. This is the network of popular paths used by our ramblers.



The OS map above shows the Public Rights of Way in orange. This is the network of popular paths used by our rambblers.

The grey shaded areas show where the solar panels will be sited in relation to the paths.

The fields are numbered as per the Applicant's plan shown here in grey pencil.



Photos sourced from existing solar farms

The Ramblers do not want to lose the beautiful Lincolnshire landscape to an industrial landscape. These photos show what the landscape would be like if the project were to go ahead.



**Report by Sue Mitchell, Secretary and Walks Programme Coordinator for
The Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings Ramblers**