

# **Ryhall & Belmesthorpe Parish Council - Mallard Solar Pass** **Application Representation**

The position of Ryhall and Belmesthorpe Parish Council is overwhelmingly against this application.

We would all agree that we need to move forward with renewable energy, and thus are not against the idea of solar farms being part of a solution, along with wind farms, water related energy sources etc.

However, this project is quite simply of a scale, the impact of which will be absolutely devastating for those residents living here, for the loss of prime agricultural land, the loss of biodiversity. The area proposed is larger than that of Rutland Water, and unlike Rutland Water will leave a landscape of glint and glare solar panels that will directly affect the health and wellbeing of a large swathe of our community.

We are aligned with the Mallard Pass Action Group, Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Ramblers Association, our local MP Alicia Kearns and our neighbouring Parishes.

The main point coming back from our residents with regard to this application is as follows:-

1. People of every age group have complained of feeling completely overwhelmed, and unable to have their voices heard due to the complexity of the process, and therefore have expressed their views through their Parish Council.
2. The number of those who registered an interest is not representative for the reasons outlined above.
3. Consultation meetings have been of a very poor standard, with no clear guidance on the vastness of the site, continual evasiveness with regard to the size of the panels, and minimal information supplied on leaflets to the point where the villages of Ryhall & Belmesthorpe were actually blanked out.

- 4. There has been no alternative options put forward, and there is the general feeling that this project has been put forward with no other consideration than its location to a large recently upgraded electricity substation. The electricity sub station is the ONLY positive aspect of this application, all other considerations are entirely negative, and goes against all of the stated Rutland County Council Development Plans.**
- 5. It is felt that there are other brownfield locations within Rutland at Woolfox / Cottesmore / Edith Weston, old airfields that would have far less impact on communities, wildlife, highly productive farmland, biodiversity etc., and it would appear that these sites have been dismissed purely on the grounds on too far away from the substation, which suggests viability is of more concern than the environment. (Our whole country's infrastructure has been founded on underground tunnelling / cabling.)**
- 6. It is also felt that the many industrial buildings, ex quarry workings, and new housing schemes etc should all be considered for solar locations, or wind turbines, which would have a significantly reduced impact on the countryside, particularly at a time where food production is of a global concern.**

**The direct impacts of this project if approved will affect everybody and everything in this area for generations to come. People choose to live here to enjoy the countryside, to be able to walk or cycle along the many footpaths and country lanes in the area, to enjoy the abundance of wildlife. A project of this scale will have everlasting effects on the nature and diversity of our countryside, and for the health and wellbeing of those affected, who will no longer be able to enjoy the countryside in its present form. The visual all round visual impact will also have significant negative effect, as the screening will take years to generate.**

**The Ryhall and Belmesthorpe Parish Council consider that during the construction phase the following aspects of this application will have serious consequences for our communities as follows: -**

- 1. The number of HGV movements, heavy cranes, abnormal loads etc. This will no doubt potentially be in the thousands, and the risk to health and safety of local people out walking / cycling or driving along our country lanes will increase significantly.**

- 2. The damage to the road edges and verges will be immense, particularly over winter.**
- 3. Noise and air pollution as result of these vehicle movements six days a week over the proposed two year build time will have a significant impact on health and wellbeing.**
- 4. We strongly advise that Great Casterton should be NOT be considered as a recommended route for construction vehicles, in fact all construction vehicles should only be permitted via the main A roads from the Bourne direction, should this go ahead.**
- 5. There are other potentially large planning applications awaiting decision, which if all approved will also significantly add to the number of local HGV vehicle movements in our Parish.**

**We also have serious concerns with regard to the long term benefits outweighing the short term gain. The carbon footprint of this project is immense, and we are advised that the lifespan of the solar panels is at best 40 years. We would comment as follows: -**

- 1. What benefit is there to be gained by taking up prime agricultural food producing land over 40 years? What are the economic benefits of solar over production of food and maintenance of ecological biodiversity, particularly when brownfield sites or acres of massive warehousing is available?**
- 2. How can this balance against the health and wellbeing of local residents, where the impact will have enormous effect on the very fabric of their lives.**
- 3. How effective are the solar panel against other forms of clean energy in terms of lifespan, carbon footprint and environmental impact?**
- 4. Are the panels, recyclable, and what happens at decommissioning? What are the costs involved and what of the carbon footprint?**

5. **What are the benefits for local residents and the residents of Rutland? All the power produced will go to the National Grid?**
6. **We share the concerns raised by our local MP about Canadian Solar, and that this is overwhelmingly a project focussed on short term profit, followed by sell off for the sole benefit of shareholders. What protections are in place to ensure that this does not happen?**
7. **What plans are in place for decommissioning the site at the end of its useful lifecycle?**

**Finally, if it is the unfortunate outcome that this development proceeds against the clear wishes of the community it most affects, then adequate and appropriate compensation should be provided. This should take the form of an initial Community Interest Levy to cover the disruption during the installation phase AND a recurrent annual compensatory payment to affected Parishes. The annual payment could follow the precedent applied to other Solar Panel or Wind Farm developments [ see Good Energy's Dorset Solar Farm/ Neath Port Talbot Wind Farm/ [REDACTED] etc.] whereby an index linked cash amount per MegaWatt unit of electricity generated be paid to each affected Parish capped at an annual total commensurate with the scale of the development.**

**Alternatives to a recurring annual payment which could be considered are an Index Linked compensatory discount on every householder's electricity bill for the affected postcodes adjacent to the development ... or community part ownership where residents own shares in the company operating the solar farm and benefit from annual dividend/profit share arrangements.**