

Written Representation for objection to Mallard Pass Solar Array Development

Craig Huntbatch (IP ref no. 20035994)

I object to the proposed development for the following reasons:

1. The scale and industrial nature of the development is unsuitable for the area's rural landscape
2. Insufficient mitigation of the detrimental visual impact imposed by the development
3. Loss of important agricultural land, which is against the UK Government guidelines to protect Best and Most Versatile farmland from solar development.
4. Dangerous and inadequate transport routes to the site for construction traffic
5. The disruption caused to the community and environment during the construction phase
6. The inadequate and poor public consultation and engagement undertaken by the developer
7. Allegations of forced labour in Canadian Solar's supply chain
8. The unacceptable financial record of the Directors behind Windell Energy

The enormous scale of the proposed solar plant will totally destroy the agricultural landscape and harm the local environment. The mass industrialisation of the area will harm wildlife habitats and have a material adverse impact on the health and wellbeing of the local residents. There will be no benefit at all to local residents because the electricity produced will be fed into the national grid and not used to power local residential areas or businesses.

The Mallard Pass developer has stated that the solar panels will be set back from residential areas, roads and footpaths and new hedges/ green landscaping will be planted to screen the plant. However, unless fully mature hedges and trees are going to be planted, it will be 15-20 years before they have grown sufficiently to cover the plant. This means that the solar panels and industrial buildings will be visible for many, many years which will cause huge damage to the area.

Construction of the vast solar arrays will mean the loss of valuable agricultural land that includes Best and Most versatile farmland. This is against the Government guidelines on food security. Rather than building on key agricultural land, the plant should be built on a brownfield site which would more suitable to an industrial environment. There are also huge opportunities and benefits of installing solar panels on building and warehouse roofs.

There will major disruption and pollution caused during the construction phase, which is planned to last at least 2 years. In particular, the local road network and community environment are totally inadequate for the proposed construction traffic and planned workforce.

Mallard Pass have stated that there will be over 100 HGV movements every day coming through narrow country roads and busy junctions. On top of this will be Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) and daily traffic from the 400+ workforce.

The developer has identified two routes for the traffic accessing and exiting the site. The proposed Route 1 is inadequate and will present danger to both the local community and school children using the school on Ryhall Road. The junction at B1081 and Ryhall Road is not large enough to facilitate HGVs or AILs. It is bounded by the Primary School, housing and a Pelican crossing, which means that the junction cannot be widened. Visibility at the busy cross road junction is poor and the increase in large vehicle movements will create unacceptable danger and pollution. 500 metres further along the road is Casterton Community college which has speed bumps and a 20mph restriction.

The road between the the B1081 and A1621 is winding and narrow with several blind bends. It is totally unsuitable for the planned large number of HGVs and AILs and will create a dangerous hazard to other road users.

The junction at Casterton road has a "dog leg" onto the busy A1621. HGVs and AILs will find it difficult to access the junction and this could cause severe congestion for road users.

The section of the A1621 to the site entrance is a notorious local area for accidents, particularly caused by speeding motorists. There is a real concern in the local neighbourhood that the large number of HGVs and construction workers using the road will increase the likelihood of accidents on the route.

The public consultation by the developer has been inadequate, with a poor level of information detailing the impacts on local residents. For example, it was not mentioned that compulsory acquisition rights may be sought for the cable installations, together with the adverse impact this will have on local residents. It is also very difficult to ascertain the geographical layout and extent of the planned development and solar arrays.

The developers behind Mallard Pass have no track record of building and operating solar plants of this scale and I suspect that they are only doing this for financial gain. The Directors of Windell Energy have dubious financial records, including numerous defaults and bankruptcies of previous companies. Why should local residents have to bear the impact of this monstrous development when the only beneficiaries are developers who only have a financial interest?

Finally, I am very concerned that there is reported evidence of Uyghur forced labour being used in the supply chain of Canadian Solar, the primary developer of MPSE. We should not be supporting a development which has serious ethical and human rights concerns.