

REPRESENTATION BY PETERBOROUGH RAMBLERS

RE: Application by Mallard Pass Solar Farm Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Mallard Pass Solar Project

SUMMARY

Locating such a huge industrial development to utilise spare capacity of a sub-station is treating the countryside as an industrial commodity. There is more to the countryside than simple economic efficiency. It's appalling that such a massive solar farm has even been considered as more important than the impact on the landscape and local communities. Shame on the money makers heading up these multi-national corporations for placing so little worth on the countryside and people who live here.

- 1. Perimeter Fence Screening** - The Peterborough Ramblers are particular keen to retain rural views in this area but there is no guarantee in the current proposal that the perimeter fence will have mature planting along the entire length to soften / screen the visual impact of a 2m high wire or wooden fence. By definition the CCTV towers of 3.5m will have to remain proud and visible for a long distance which will definitely be an unacceptable visual intrusion. Any mention of planting in the proposal has not confirmed that it will be mature specimens capable of providing adequate screening of the fence from the start of this development. If small, immature plants are used it will take many years before they are effective in screening a 2m fence.
- 2. Protecting Existing Hedgerows** – The following quote does not reassure us that the protection of existing hedgerows will have a sufficiently high priority, particularly in relation to the proposal's emphasis on security and security fencing:-
- 3. Habitat Creation** – there are no timescales for when the habitat creation and enhanced biodiversity will be achieved. These tasks / objectives need to be time bound to ensure they are delivered as quickly as possible and criteria agreed on how success will be measured and how failure will be penalised. Section 5.2.6 is directly related to this issue and is mentioned next.
- 4. Views from Public Rights of Way** - Peterborough Ramblers are strongly dispute that looking down “corridors” of 2m high fences will have minimal and insignificant impact on people walking and enjoying the countryside near this proposed development. Of all the assumptions in the report this one is the most offensive to the Peterborough Ramblers. If the authors cannot appreciate the difference between “views over open country” and “views along GI corridors” then we have little confidence in their credentials as stewards of the natural environment surrounding this project.
- 5. Land Usage** – there is no clear plan or commitment as to how the land under and around the PV arrays will be used. Peterborough Ramblers would like there to be a formal commitment to on-going agricultural use of the land and a penalty imposed if this is not achieved. The current wording in the proposal is weak and would allow the land to be underutilised. The word “could” needs to be replaced with “will”.
- 6. Public Rights of Way** - There is no comment on the impact on the ProW impacted by this

proposal during the construction phases. This needs to be addressed and plans agreed for any diversions or blockages.

- 7. Impact on Tourism** - Peterborough Ramblers are surprised and offended by the author's statement that this scale of development will have insignificant impact on tourism. This again demonstrates the lack of understanding of why this area is so well frequented by tourists and walkers - it's the natural countryside. We request that a more thorough and independent professional review be undertaken of the likely impact this proposal will have on tourism – the reputation of having fields and fields of solar panels will undoubtedly have an impact on the number of visitors and the tourism economy.
- 8. Local ecology and bird Life:** Peterborough Ramblers are very disappointed that the so called environmental studies have been for only a few months - there is no way you will fully understand the annual and season and long term issues that you will impact over such a short period of study.
- 9. Landscape and visual Impact:** Peterborough Ramblers are against using unspoilt, productive farming and wooded landscape to put sheets of plastic in? Why not look for brown field sites? The proximity to a sub-station should not be the only deciding factor in placing these panels in otherwise productive farmland.
- 10. Archaeology and local heritage:** Creating a single physical development with an exclusion zone in the middle of the open countryside which has several footpaths and places of interest and local heritage is a high price for the local communities to pay. These assets have little or no financial value so the developers are threatening to lay waste to them all. If we are seeking green energy for the betterment of the environment then please do not spoil the environment in so doing. The irony is too important to ignore!
- 11. Traffic, access and construction:** The imposition of perimeter wire fences (3m high!) is going to create a monstrous scar across the landscape - blocking views, disrupting access. At least when Rutland Water was imposed it had positive community value in the landscape - a solar farm is just a mass of metal, plastic and fences scarring the landscape!
- 12. Agriculture & Land Use:** We do not agree with removing perfectly good agricultural land when we still need to import food stuffs to the UK – current shortages can't go on. We should be preserving this good agricultural land and only using brown field sites, old quarries etc - land which has low value for agriculture for solar farms. It seems that the proximity of a sub-station is dictating where to put solar panels regardless of the negative impact on other land uses. The pressure to accept Europe's largest solar farm just to make good use of capacity in a sub-station is just lunacy. These panels should be distributed across the country to where the energy will be used, minimising the environmental impact of their placement.
- 13. Flood Risk:** The water catchment area of these solar panels will be several times that of the floor space they occupy therefore massively increasing the amount of rain water normally collected in this area. I doubt very much whether anyone from the developers has calculated the increased amount of extra water that these solar panels will collect and the impact on the water table and local flooding.

14. Tourism: Local tourism will be negatively impacted by having acres of fields covered in black solar panels? Stamford and the surrounding area is a beautiful natural landscape. The developer is however immune from this because they don't actually care about the impact on tourism and the related local economy.

15. Recreation & Amenity: Erecting high fences, creating huge exclusion zones, adding black lifeless sheets of plastic and steel to the landscape - these will only have massive negative impact on recreation and amenity. Footpaths diverted, high fences instead of hedgerows and trees, lifeless landscape, and these will have a huge negative impact on everyone's enjoyment of the countryside.

Simon M. Bradford
Footpath Secretary
Peterborough Ramblers
13th June 2023