

June 15, 2023

Written submission from Joanne Carr – IP20034132 – [REDACTED]

My original objection wording is as follows (and I have subsequently built upon this to create my written representation as strong objection to Mallard Pass Solar Farm):

“This proposed project does not deliver any real benefits. The creation of the solar plant will destroy roads, fields, wildlife, potential archaeological artefacts, remove outdoor spaces, industrialise a beautiful rural landscape and bring chaos and misery to those of us living in their area both during construction and afterwards. There are elements of the build that were not previously disclosed therefore it is a misleading proposal. An example of this is the compulsory purchase of local areas outside of residences to dig them up and lay cables. I thoroughly approve of the need to move to more sustainable sources of energy, but removing vast tracts of fertile and BMV agricultural land runs contrary to any considerations for the environment.”

Written Representation : Areas of Concern

Before I commence my report, I would like to state that I am very unhappy that I - a lay-person with no knowledge of local planning, national infrastructure projects and finance – am expected to research and argue against this project application where the company behind it has financial resources which can take care of all that for them. I find it entirely inappropriate that we are expected to be able to articulate our arguments in the same level of detail and knowledge. This does rather feel as though we are being bludgeoned into submission.

Communications with Residents

The original “Stage One Consultation November 2021” document which was distributed across the area was misleading and did not get delivered to all impacted residents. Indeed, the visuals contained in the document bear very little resemblance to the reality of what we will be faced with, aside from one small illustration – not drawn to scale. In addition, there was no mention of compulsory purchase of resident land which has only in 2023 come to light. The document breathily describes an almost utopian world which will be created by the project however the road to getting there will be anything but and the impact of the installation will be disastrous. Page six of the document states that the area has been chosen as “the site is close to the Ryhall 400 KV station which is where electricity generated by the proposed solar farm would connect to the national grid. It now transpires that the Ryhall station will not be sufficient to cope with the output and that a new substation will need to be built. This again has misled the public as to the amount of disruption.

Finally, the artist’s impressions on pages 12/13 and 20/21 depict a dreamy, bucolic scene which – upon first inspection – gave the impression of a sympathetic installation. What was not visualised was the sheer size of the solar panels nor the fences nor the security equipment that would be needed. From my own perspective, my original reaction to the proposal – as it

was described above – was quite neutral inasmuch that we need to make a transition to renewables. I still feel that way but as I have learned more about the reality of this project, I feel we were misled.

Legal Ownership

At one of the early public engagement events, Gary from Windel was heard to confess that there was a strong likelihood that their main objective was to “flip” the project once it had gained planning approval in order to make money. This feels like a cut-throat way of ruining the environment for hundreds of people in order to profit. What guarantees do we have that everything “promised” will in fact be respected by new owners? What’s to stop them using the “I know you were told you were going to get nice paths, trees and walkways but the economic environment has now rendered those plans unviable”?

In addition, the capital for the project appears to be coming from China, via Canada. Does that mean that a piece of national infrastructure will be China-funded? Is this wise, given the current political climate around the world?

Infrastructure

Our local roads are in poor condition as things stand and therefore I do not see what possible benefit can be gained by damaging them further through constant HGV deliveries or materials and labour. This is a small, rural area – not built for this scale of use. In addition, there are local cycling groups and dog walkers who will be endangered by the increase and size of the traffic and this traffic will also run past schools in the area. Whilst there are promises not to have traffic go past schools in drop off/pick up times, I am not sure how this would be policed and teachers and learners also come and go outside of these times. This has all the hallmarks of being completely unsafe.

Benefit to local communities

As the output of the solar farm is lower than originally advertised and will also go straight into the national grid, there is no real benefit for the local communities. No cheaper electricity – that’s for sure.

Loss of Arable Land

The fields in this area contribute in no small way to the national diet, from grain to vegetables; they are of strategic importance to our food security. We have a war raging in Europe which has demonstrated just how fragile food supply is and how easily it can be interrupted. With more than a passing nod to the environmental impacts – in what way is decreasing food production going to help us? Since our exit from the EU, British farmers have already experienced a huge loss of free trade and the poor trade deals agreed in recent months have proven that our farmers are going to need support in order to remain productive. Promising them huge sums of rent per acre is counter-intuitive in this respect.

Environmental Impact

I refer not to the need to move to 100% renewable energy, but to the actual impact on the environment of the manufacture, shipping and installation of the solar panels themselves. There is no mention of CO2 emissions in the materials presented so far therefore I can only deduce that this has been overlooked. Why purchase and ship from the other side of the world? This feels like an entirely retrograde step.

Additionally, Mallard Pass will never “save” enough CO2 to cover the embodied CO2 as the manufacturing process uses fossil fuel 'hungry' power stations to make the panels, and then transports them across the world from China.

In short, were the facility were not built and the grid de-carbonised through other forms of low carbon production (Utility-Level Wind/Nuclear), there would be less CO2 released into the atmosphere. The idea of bringing these panels across the world seems foolish at best – no one objects to green energy and we must make the transition however – at what cost?

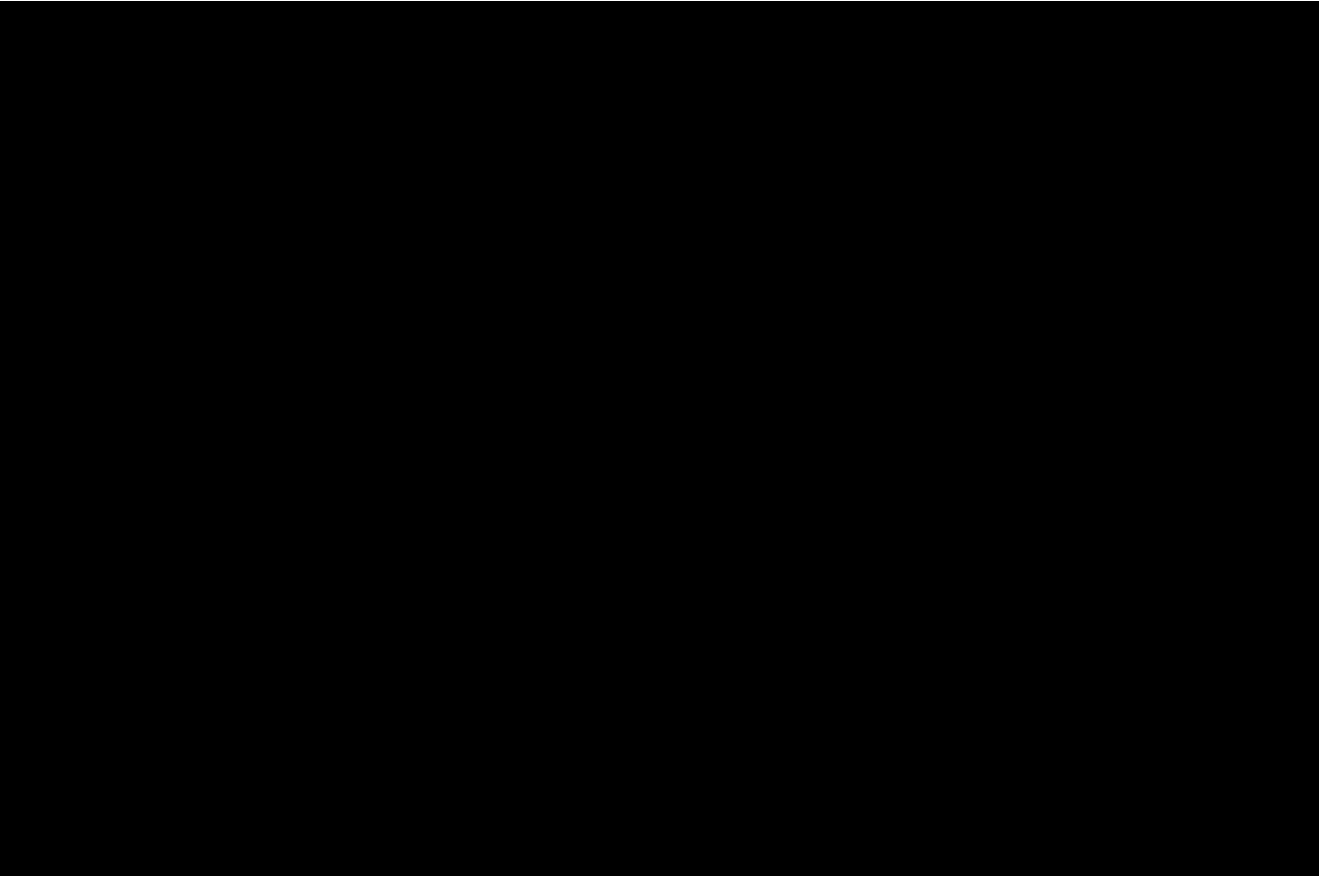
Finally, I have read a lot of industry articles about the challenges to disposing of decommissioned solar panels (example here : [Solar panels - an eco-disaster waiting to happen? - BBC News](#)) – there seems to be no real way of doing this with little cost to the environment. Absolutely have solar in the national energy mix, but on rooftops and in brownfield spaces which will allow us time and space to work out our strategy on recycling.

Wildlife

I have mentioned previously my grave concerns for the wildlife in the area. Aside from the avian population which will be impacted, we have a local herd of deer who will have been around for centuries as the area around Essendine was a deer park. Why should they be impacted? They currently roam freely through the fields and woods with no restrictions. With the fencing that will be put up, the result will be a diminishment of the herd as their food sources will be restricted potentially leading to them dying out and also, the pathways between the solar fields will drive the herds straight onto the roads, thus representing a hazard to motorists and deer alike.

Human Rights Violations

It is already widely known that the materials used in Mallard Pass Solar Farm will be from China and produced in an area renowned for use of Uighur slave labour and in fact, my local MP, Alicia Kearns, produced the below article as research. We cannot allow this to happen as this will surely be tantamount to blood money and the UK is better than that.



Might I also raise the issue of the [REDACTED] in this article? Whilst I clearly cannot substantiate this personally, it does seem strange that the developers already recognise that this project is incredibly unpopular and therefore we residents could be bought out with some sweeteners.

Health Impacts

As someone who has been diagnosed with Anxiety and Depression since childhood, I have noticed a distinct impact already on my sense of well-being. I moved from London to this beautiful part of the country 18 years ago – ostensibly for work, but largely because I craved space and quiet, which we largely get, aside from some local traffic noise. Talking to other residents, I know that I am not alone in noticing this. One of the benefits of living where I do is that I have access to green spaces and all research done on the benefits of this to mental and physical health is well documented. Our area will be changed forever and our ability to walk and enjoy the area will be restricted to pathways, flanked by high fences. The detriment should therefore be self-evident.

Conclusion

For all the reasons outlined above, I object very strongly to Mallard Pass Solar Farm. If ever there were a time to have a national strategy on how we transition to renewables, this is it. Simply bombarding local areas with incoherent application after application for solar farms as a replacement for working agricultural land is not a strategy. I conclude this with the heaviest heart for the younger people coming after me – they do not deserve to inherit the

climate crisis that they have however our transition to a better energy mix needs careful consideration and need not imperil local communities, the environment and food supply.

J. Carr