

Written submission from Richard Wilson – [REDACTED]
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Until recently, I was a Green Party Councillor on Rutland County Council (not standing for re-election for personal reasons), so I am clearly behind the concept of renewable energy. During my campaign for the by-election, in March 2022, I was frequently asked why a Green Party representative would be against a solar farm and my answer was simple – “not just at any cost”. Each plan needs full scrutiny and the Secretary of State has a duty to make a responsible decision, not just to ‘rubber stamp’ something that might look good for future election purposes – this is going to substantially impact thousands of lives in a negative way, if approved.

There are several areas of concern with the proposed Mallard Pass plan and these will have already been submitted by many others. With that in mind, I shall focus on those that might not be so obvious to some and also those that concern me personally.

From the very outset, this project has been an insult to all the local residents, with no word at all until we all received a simple leaflet, which dropped through our doors like a take-away menu, late in 2021. The simplification of the project and the dumbed-down overview bore no resemblance to the detailed impact that this plan has on a whole community. We were all required to dig much deeper to find out all the nasty details – something many of us have had to find the time over and above our full-time, busy lives. The impact on the mental and physical well-being of all the residents has been substantial.

Communication with residents has been very poor, with examples of obstructive, heavy-handed behaviour during the official consultation meetings and pulling out of a public meeting set up by our MP, Alicia Kearns, at very short notice. Questions needed to be asked and answered, particularly about the sourcing of materials and labour, plus the matter of the global footprint of the manufacturing process, with so many panels being transported from the other side of the planet.

One thing in particular that struck me throughout the early process is that the concerns of individual, directly-affected residents were not being properly taken into account. On a personal note, one matter that concerns me greatly is any increased flooding risks due to more concentrated rainwater run off from the planned installations on the raised ground to the rear of the property. Since I have been living at my place of residence, we have suffered two instances of substantial flooding during heavy rainfall – in December 2011 and November 2021. This would only be exacerbated should thousands of panels be installed in the field above the house.

Planned to be situated in greenfield locations in rural Lincolnshire and Rutland, surrounding ancient villages and on the doorstep of historic Stamford, it is an inappropriate location for what amounts to an industrial-sized power station. The sheer scale of this development is outrageous and it will dominate the countryside around several rural villages, should it be allowed to go ahead. What is the justification for this scale? And has the real benefit in terms of a realistic output been properly taken into account as to whether or not the actual efficiency warrants this mighty destruction of thousands of acres of countryside?

Other major concerns for many of us are the conditions for residents during construction and wider road safety concerns due to displacement of traditional animal herds. One other, more recent development, is the plan to acquire compulsory access rights to the verges through the village to run high-voltage cabling – this really can’t be safe for residents! Plus there is the matter of crossing the main East Coast Main Line railway tracks. Presumably, due to the recent move for the access to the

verges, this is now planned to be carried over the small bridge in the village. The potential for disruption to rail services is going to be massive, should there be even a minor problem.

In conclusion, for all the reasons outlined above and all the others that I share with my fellow residents, I object very strongly to Mallard Pass Solar Farm. We clearly need a national strategy for the future transition to renewables, but such an inefficient and upsetting plan such as this is not the answer and should not be a part of it.