

Submission ID: 19481

Thank you for me the opportunity to speak at the hearing on Friday, the 14th of July, concerning the compulsory acquisition rights that the Mallard Pass Solar Farm applicants have paid for which affects Essendine Village Hall. As chairman of this facility authority important to explain how Village Hall could be affected through this CAB instigated should seek application for the development be approved. The document that I am submitting is the one in full, which I wrote, which I did not read out in full, as other participants had covered some of the important points I had wished to raise.

I have been chairman of Essendine Village Hall for more than 30 years. During that time we have built a wonderful community facility, which benefits all those that live in the village and in surrounding areas. Never was it a more important building, than during the Covid pandemic of 2020- 22. Mental health issues were of great concern in the village, and it became very apparent that many villagers were struggling to keep some degree of normality to their lives during this time.

It was this beautiful, peaceful and rural countryside, we had all chosen to settle around and call home, that helped so many of us, including myself, to live through all the lockdown restrictions and keep our sanity. Sadly the shadow of a potential solar installation around our village could soon mean we will again be fighting with mental health issues.

During Covid lockdowns we were able to take long walks along the bridleways and paths of this lovely area; where we were able to see all the wonderful wildlife that this part of the country has to offer. It is a proven fact that mentally, people are better for going out and exercising and obviously walking cycling or horseriding, were the safest ways of doing this. Government advice constantly encouraged us to embrace open and peaceful spaces through physical exercise. Throughout lockdown, we were able to offer the village hall facilities for forms of exercise and mental well-being as authorised by government regulations, I fear again, we will have to offer the facilities to run sessions to help people deal with the mental strain that they are going through, whilst trying to grapple with the enormity of this proposed solar installation.

Should permission be granted, our roads will be gridlocked for much of the day with heavy vehicles, which are too big and too wide to be on the small roads; beautiful areas of the roadside verges will be ruined by vehicles that have to mount them to pass this, or to access turning corners at different locations. We have been so lucky with the carpets of Cowslips which you can see around the verges with some of them being designated as SSSI sites. There have been glowworms sighted over the past few weeks up along the Pickworth Road, which runs parallel with the railway line, and this is one area where solar panels are planned to be installed. The narrowness of the road currently outlined for access to this site, would be ruined and the verges churned up. I note from earlier discussions during these hearings, that passing places would be created to allow vehicles to pass each other, but this proposal too would create large scale destruction of precious verges.

Compulsory Acquisition is a major concern to myself, the Management Committee and affected households. Should this permission be granted, contractors could:

1. Deny us full access to this facility and the adjoining open spaces, including the children's playground.
2. The main entrance to the village hall, is via Plover Road, the spine road to the estate of houses, numbering more than 70 properties; access to all these

properties would be severely compromised during the laying of 33KV cables through the village, for the connection of solar panels to the substation.

3. From my understanding, the cabling would run the complete length of the village from the church, to No 1 Stamford Road and from the edge of the site near Mallard Point vineyard, all the way back to the new substation location, opposite the current Ryhall 400KV substation, on the opposite side of the road, so there would be major disruption of long stretches of road network.
4. The depth of trenches required for this rating of cable is 850 mm, so the laying of cables after trenches have been dug, will not be a swift operation and will cause long term traffic disruption, to an already busy main road from Stamford to Bourne. There are more than three thousand vehicle movements daily. The children for both the local primary and secondary schools, have to cross this very busy main road to reach bus stops. There is no doubt that the buses would not be able to run to the timetable, due to delays from site traffic, compounded with the already high volume of peak times traffic.
5. The A6121 through the village is also the designated route for high load vehicles, to avoid low bridges on the Stamford A1 bypass and these wide and heavy loads would find the route along the A6121 between Mallard Point at the bottom of the village and the turning to Uffington particularly challenging during the works.
6. The applicant has asked for a licence for 30-40 years to be granted and during this time, they will have unrestricted access to properties including the village hall, and be permitted to dig up cabling to repair or replace it. Disruption therefore on this scale may be a long term prospect.
7. The law requires all cabling to be marked once laid and these way markers would be an unsightly addition to the roadside verges.
8. Remedial works to these cables, may affect other utilities to the village hall and other roadside properties and they could be disrupted for significant periods of time.
9. We need to consider the factor of further disruption for the accidental damage caused to utilities, when pipes and cables are damaged during trenching! Many of the residents rely on their fibre broadband cables to be able to work from home. The Village Hall itself would be directly affected by CA too, as it fronts the main road and needs access via Plover Road to our main vehicular entrance. It is quite likely that our booking and activities at the hall, would be severely affected for all the same reasons as residential properties. Noise too of trenching machinery and the general increase of construction traffic, would also be distracting for our quiet groups, such as Yoga sessions and Art Workshops and the Senior Citizens Lunch Club.
10. Many of our bookings at the village hall are childrens parties and I have no doubt that parents would not want to use a facility that is noisy, difficult to access and with higher levels of pollution from trench digging machinery.
11. Our village hall is regularly used to run training sessions by businesses, such as First Aid and machinery safety courses and NHS meetings which all rely heavily on good internet connection for their workshops; this could not be guaranteed with the period of cable trenching and when repairs or renewal of cabling is carried out, compromising our hirings.
12. Essendine Village Hall has always been used by the emergency services for a command centre and rest area, so 24 hour access and good utilities connection, is essential at all times.

There is no benefit to a solar farm being built around Essendine, to preserve the inhabitants mental well being and their choosing to live in a rural area should be their right. I hope that the Planning Inspectorate will see fit to recommend refusal of this request for Compulsory Acquisition and indeed the whole planning application.