

Submission to office of the Independent Planning Commission NSW concerning Springdale Solar Farm Proposal

Thankyou Commissioners for taking the time to examine our case for the rejection of the Springdale Solar Farm Proposal. Although this document does not cover the multitude of reasons why the site should be rejected, I hope that each person giving their view and the reasons that are pertinent to them and the Sutton Community will convince you both that the Solar Farm would be better built elsewhere.

Sincerely

George (Andy) Hardwicke

Sutton Solar Action Group's first Public meeting in Sutton to counter the Springdale Solar Power Station proposal led to approximately 100 local Sutton residents joining together in Sutton Hall. What a shame we could not have a true Public meeting to truly express how the whole community feels, not just those who are tech savvy.



Community

Although we are so close to the city of Canberra we still live in the country and face common challenges and also enjoy close community. The Solar power station proposal has placed additional stress on the community with some giving up initially. Particularly when small farmers and retired residents are faced with 138 million dollar development, meetings with high powered solicitors and engineers.

Others residents banded together against the injustice. Living in the country we face drought,



Hay purchased during drought.



fires, floods, like the flooding of Tallagandra Lane in 2020, injured animals, dumping of rubbish, thieves breaking into properties, hoons doing donuts on the roads, stolen cars being dumped and torched or our landscape being ruined if a proposal for inappropriate development and use of farming land in a rural residential area is approved.



2/10/2020 5:57 pm, car lost control and wiped out my front fence at my gateway.

Neighbours stopped and checked on state of driver. Police were called, they could not attend from Yass for nearly an hour and as a result they did not attend.



11/04/2016 Thieves rammed one of my gates off its hinges (Corner of Tintinhull Road and Tallagandra Lane)



Thieves rammed roller door of shed.

Bringing 200 workers and trucks increases the risk of further destruction to life and property.



Tallagandra Lane 01/01/2021, a group of approximately 16 cars, staged a burnout on the road, “they called it a gender reveal”, disrupting traffic going both ways and damaging the road. Cars dispersed before Police could arrive. This sort of behaviour will occur outside the Springdale site if and when it is sealed.



Mental Illness

Sutton residents including myself have had to endure the stress and anxiety of this Springdale proposal since 2017. This has caused fractures in the community and ongoing disputes with neighbours. Personally I have had to endure the effects of prolonged stress (disturbed sleep, appetite changes, effects on physical health) with times of anxiety and depression. The same symptoms have been evident in some of my neighbours. I worked in Mental Health for twenty years and although retired I am currently registered with APHRA as part of the COVID 19 response, so I am competent to diagnose the signs.

NSW Government

The Sutton Community has had to battle the Departments bias towards the developer.

This proposal is like a mining company that came onto my land around 1970, drilling and testing for mineral deposits. We were unable to stop them because the laws at the time gave them free access.

Later the laws were changed so that the mining companies had to get permission from landowners.

Solar power stations are enjoying similar freedoms as the speculative miners did in the 1970's. We now have speculative Solar Power station developers, Renew Estate a group of Solicitors in Sydney in conjunction with a local solar business started this process with an ex smash repairer, who had purchased large areas of land in the area. The Springdale proposal (we were told in September 2017) by the developer, would be started in approximately June 2018. After a long wait The EIS was finally posted and the community had their chance to repudiate some of the lies and misconceptions that had been presented by the developer.

We then had the long wait with no contact from the developer, the Department then told us that Renew Estate were doing additional studies, which was apparently untrue. As a result the residents of Sutton were left in limbo. We felt that like a lot of speculators if the easy money became hard due to the community opposition then they may just give up and concentrate on their other developments.

The process of approval should be taken to the Ombudsman as the developer was allowed to sit on the Springdale proposal and the department took no action. This issue was raised with the Minister who then pressured the Department and as a result the proposal was sold off to RES. RES is also speculating that they can gain approval in an area that is plainly a poor location for an industrial sized solar power station.

The local landowners are against it, the wider Sutton Community is against it, The Yass Shire is against it, so please stop it.

Visual

Unfortunately the Commissioners were not able to see the site from my land and home as I overlook the whole of the proposed Springdale site.



From R5 looking North towards proposed Springdale Site.





Looking North from paddocks below R5



Dust storm over proposed site.



Flooding of Springdale area 2020.

I can see the wind farms on hills near Collector in the distance, I look over the hills near Goulburn and the hills of Lake George and Mack's Reef road towards the coast, I can see Canberra's Black Mountain tower and the beacon on Mount Ainslie used to flash in my bathroom window at night.





Living in the country you look at a wider perspective, cars stopped on the road a couple of kilometres away and smoke in the distance means quickly checking the Fires near me App.





From the lowest point of my property, looking North towards Springdale site, does this remind you of Renew Estate's photos?

It is a shame that the Springdale Proposal has limited its visual to 2 kilometres. While the visual amenity should be as far as the eye can see.





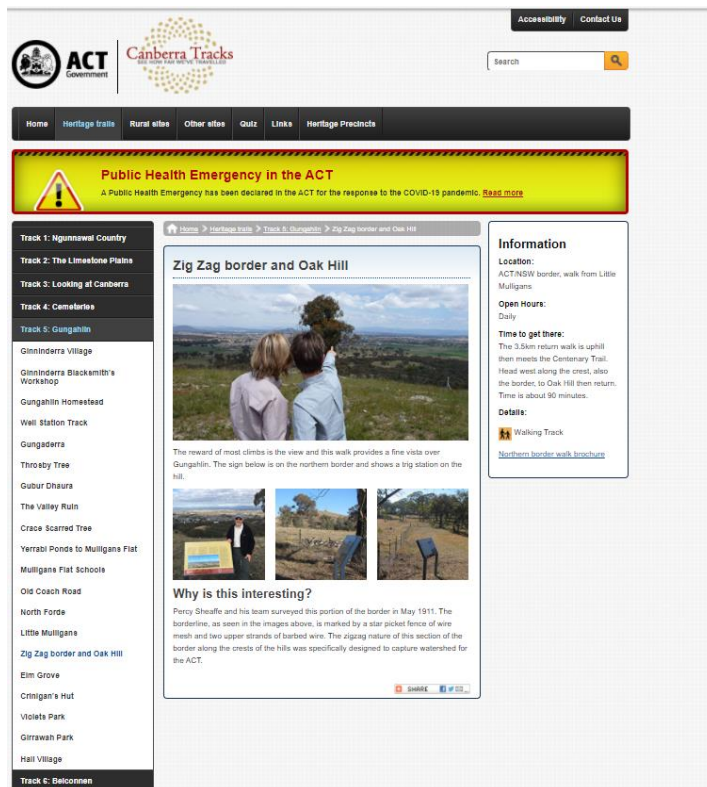
My shack in the foreground with windows that overlook most of the site.



Oak Hill Lookout from my back gate,



On the ACT Heritage trail, that has thousands of visitors each year, the sub station and some of the 260,000 solar panels would be clearly seen, not a country vista.



As the development is located in a valley and despite Renew Estate's photographs being taken to try and minimise impact of the Development it cannot be hidden by trees even if they do grow for the thirty five years of the development. This is because of the location is in a valley on undulating land, with surrounding houses and properties overlooking the Development. Certain areas cannot be hidden as trees and shrubs cannot be planted because of the Golden Sun Moth habitat. Tallagandra lane travels from the hills down through the valley with development visible from the road and then up the hill out of the development, as a result the huge development cannot be adequately screened therefore should not be allowed to be built in this area.



I will see an eyesore and so will my neighbours both near and far. We will also see it travelling on Tintinhull road and Tallagandra Lane. The traffic on Tallagandra Lane has increased dramatically over the past few years with tourism to wineries, Cat and dog boarding kennels, the horse arena and many other local businesses.

Since the amount of land required to get a building permit reduced from 80 hectares to 40 hectares there has been an increase in house building in the area. My two sons (the sixth generation on the land) are planning to build on the property and are now part owners of a block of land directly opposite the proposed Springdale site.



Photos near the proposed building site for my eldest son and his wife (East of R5). Tallagandra Lane on the right, (turn off to Tintinhull road at the end of the trees), going down through the valley, the proposed Springdale site, directly ahead.

They started the process of subdivision after a year of silence from Renew Estate. They have plans drawn up by an architect but are now awaiting the Commissioners decision on the Springdale proposal before submitting them to council. This proposal should be quashed as it is a poor location for so many reasons.

Glare

If I can see lights on far hills they will be seeing the glare of the Solar plant and other aspects of the industrial site.

One of the directors of Renew Estate told me in my living room that there would be no glare, this was quickly denounced by an engineer from Renew Estate who stated “that’s not quite true, the reflection would be equivalent to the reflection from a body of water”. What is the difference in glare from paddocks to solar panels.

RES would have the exact percentage reflection from each panel and could provide the exact angles and places the glare will effect using computer modelling on topographic maps of the area, if they knew where the panels would be exactly located on a 138 million dollar development. If this was a 138 million dollar building then everything would be planned to the millimetre. Speculators are reluctant to invest if they are unsure of a return no matter how big the windfall.

What is the glare of solar panels to flights, tourists driving Tallagandra Lane, Oak Hill Lookout and for local residents, not just two kilometres away. It is unfortunate that the Government doesn’t have independent studies rather than those paid for by the developer, which are inherently biased.

Fire

The disastrous fires of 2019/20 Summer brought to attention the incredible destruction wild (bush) fires cause. Although much of Sutton area was spared because of the severe drought, in seasons such as now as the Commissioners are aware the amount of grassland fuel to burn is immense.



Looking South East from R5 on 28/11/2019, one of the fires that spread towards the South coast.

In January 2003 a large fire swept through parts of Canberra four people were killed by the fires, more than 435 people were injured and there were approximately 488 houses destroyed and many more were damaged. The Insurance Council of Australia estimated the 2003 damage at \$350 million.

In February 2017, a **grassfire** in Carwoola, New South Wales (near Canberra) destroyed 11 homes, including the home of one of the firefighters battling the blaze; another 12 homes were damaged. The fire was started when two workers for the company Advanced Plumbing and Drains were using a power cutter which sent sparks into nearby grass at a Carwoola property.

I recently started a small fire while cutting steel on a cleared area of my property. Fortunately I had taken precautions and had fire tank 20 metres away with water, a pump and hose ready. The small fire was quickly extinguished.

The Hassells and other residents along Tintinhull road may face the same dilemma as the residents of Mallacoota faced in 2020, being trapped with one exit if a fire starts to the South.

In the past I have been a voluntary fire fighter for the Sutton Brigade and have had to cut through farm fences to access a fire and or escape when winds changed. Cutting through a 2.2 metre chain wire fence is far more difficult and potentially life threatening.



17/04/2019 11:56 am Tallagandra Lane, car dumped and torched, fire entered my property, voluntary members of Sutton Brigade, extinguished the fire.

There have been many other stolen cars torched in this area, some causing bush fires. If this was outside the proposed solar power station and it spread into the fenced off screening trees and grasses and then under the panels it would be very difficult to extinguish. The longer a fire is alight the more heat is generated and the fire can spread rapidly, particularly if there is a strong wind blowing, as the heat rises it increases the wind drawn towards the fire.

In 2017 after above average rain in 2016, we had fuel levels similar to what we are experiencing at present. My wife Sue looked out our Laundry window to see the start of a deliberately lit fire at the entrance of Reid road which spread quickly to the North East, with a neighbours shed exploding with black smoke against the grey smoke. Within minutes the fire had gone 1 km and another neighbour later reported sitting down to a cup of tea and seeing smoke and fire go around his house. The fire eventually was put out with the assistance of large planes bombing with fire retardant chemicals, helicopters (scooping water from dams including one on Spring Flat) and many NSW and ACT brigades.



Firefighters slow the spread of Mulligans Flat grass fire, near Sutton

James Hall

Latest News

f t e A A A

Firefighters were continuing to manage a fire at Mulligans Flat, eight kilometres north-west of Sutton, late Wednesday night.

NSW Rural Fire Service's Fred Nichols said 22 ACT Rural Fire Service units were on the scene supported by six bulk water vehicles, and eight aircraft attempting to hold the fire east of Sutton Road.

"They have plenty of personnel on that," he said. "There will be a lot of mopping up with 400 odd hectares there but there has been no property loss reported so far."

Residents should still be on high alert, but firefighters have slowed the spread of the grass fire.



Eight aircraft were involved in holding the fire east of Sutton Road Photo: Jamila Toderas

Earlier, police blocked Sutton Road and Mulligans Flat Road, while Shingle Hill Way was closed in both directions between the Federal Highway and Sutton Road and East Tallagandra Lane was closed in both directions between Mulligans Flat Road and Sutton Road.

A private contractor trucking water in to help the firefighting efforts on the ground told Fairfax Media he and other contractors had been called in to help deliver water to the firefighting trucks.

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In 1979 I experienced my family and my own property totally burnt out from an electrical fuse, falling from a power pole into dry grass near Hall. My Brother and I fought the fire in the ACT and on our property then at night taking shelter in my brothers' home, which filled with smoke, while the fire front passed.



1979 Andy Hardwicke looking East towards Sutton from my property R5



1979 Sue Hardwicke Looking North towards the Springdale site, note burnt area on Springdale site.

Renew/RES state that this is not a fire prone area!

I had to put down severely burnt cattle and bury dead sheep, I experienced the loss of the original Spring Flat slab homestead and shearing shed and sheep yards and the loss scrub areas. My house and sheds were saved.



If approval is given despite policies and Procedures, commercial contractors are not always going to take the necessary precautions required to prevent fires occurring and the consequences of this risk is potentially catastrophic. If this development is approved, then a manned fire tender should be permanently on site for the whole of the construction period to protect the Sutton Community.

Industrial Area

Like a lot of speculative enterprises they are based on minimal expenditure with maximum profits to the investors. The Inadequate planning for this proposal is evident with much of the detail depending on whether approval is obtained.

An Industrial area in a rural landscape provides a precedent for further industrial development which is counter to the Yass Shire Council's development plans. This land is within the 5km buffer zone from the ACT that the Yass Council was trying to implement to stop development.

My wife was recently talking to a man from Sutton area who had been harvesting Lucerne, he said that the Sutton area was now a bigger horse area than western Sydney. The proximity to Canberra will dictate the eventual development of this area. I am not against development as I am not against Solar. I enjoy solar hot water and eventually will have solar panels on the roof of my proposed shed. I am against waste and it is waste to build a solar power station in this area where it could bring much benefit if located further west in the excellent solar zones. My Grand Uncle Martin Reid owned the land and looked after it, always having some of the best looking cattle in the district.

Place the solar power stations on roof tops, brown field sites or out west in the designated premium solar sites not within 5 kilometres of the National Capital that will be visual pollution for the next 35 years.

Bird Life

Bird life is prolific around this area and we have had a few die from crashing into our windows. Solar Panels would be similar, causing a lake effect for migrating birds and local birds such as the endangered Superb parrot and Little Eagle. RES will think nothing of demolishing the stand of pine trees that were a source of food for black cockatoos during the drought or filling in dams so that native ducks cannot land. On Tuesday afternoon my wife and I saw Superb parrots in trees near our home. Mitigation doesn't cut it, with destruction of their habitat and 12 months of disturbance during construction.



Black Cockatoos feeding in my pine trees.







Ducks on one of my dams, RES are planning to fill in their dams.



Pelicans flying over property



Wedge Tailed Eagle flying over my property.



Some of the birdlife photographed from my property. So also resident or visiting Springdale site.



East Tallagandra Lane, Traffic from Proposed Solar Farm could threaten these wedge tailed eagles.

Hail

In January 2020 Canberra experienced its worst hail storm causing catastrophic hail storm damage to homes and 44,500 cars.



[January's catastrophic hail storm damaged 44,500 cars | The Canberra Times | Canberra, ACT](#)

What would be the effect if all of the Springdale Solar panels were damaged, would this be covered by insurance? Or would the solar “farm” cease to exist, with land covered with shards of glass.

Springdale in Sutton area is the wrong location for an Industrial Solar Power Station.

Fog

In my submission I took photos each morning when fog was filling the valley, this was during the drought. During a wet year the fog is more prolific.



Fog filling the valley, like many Autumn and Winter mornings.



Looking North from R5 towards proposed site, wrong location!



North towards the Proposed Solar Power station, not much energy generated that day!





Noise

Noise pollution, does not need to be rated in decibels in the country, on a still day or night noise travels long distances. When a light southerly wind is blowing we can hear traffic noise from Canberra suburbs or the explosions from canons fired by the army around Mt Majura. We also hear every truck that goes by or other machinery being used. This Peace would be stolen not only for the 10 months of construction but for the next 35 years with workers maintaining the Power station. Voices carry for over a kilometre, particularly at night. We used to hear a neighbour and his wife having a domestic 1.5 kms away. We can hear some motorbikes and cars with loud exhausts going most of the way to Sutton or to the ACT border. We take note of sounds in the country, not just the decibel rating.

Consultation

Landowners were told what the developer would do, there was no real consultation. This was expressed to Renew Estate at one of their meetings and they said they were offended.

We have had little contact from RES, Initial handover from Renew Estate and then a visit to say that the Department had told them to move the substation. I had asked Renew Estate to move the Sub Station as it would have been in direct unimpeded view from my lounge room window. They were not interested, however RES had no qualms when asked by the DPIE. I asked them if the real reason was because they intended to build it on top of a National fibre optic cable as per the initial plans.

Screening Trees

I have permanently lived on my land since 1977 and have grown trees with various success. Initially pine trees for wind breaks which have to be protected from hares and kangaroos. I lost all of several hundred trees that I initially planted. Unless the trees are regularly watered particularly in drought conditions as we experienced in 2017 to January 2020 they will not survive. Most of my trees are protected in tree fences, either have irrigation drippers on them or did have them until they were established. I can see that if given approval the Developer would plant trees and depending on the season might have 50% success, if another drought occurs they may have 10%. Look to Canberra and there watering contracts for newly planted trees. If sheep are allowed to graze around trees they will climb and potentially ring bark the trees. If there are large gaps in the screening then you might as well not have screening. This is a wrong location for the site and impossible to adequately screen. Sitting in a valley with an elevation difference of 50 metres.

Microclimate

My neighbour Les has an arboretum of rare and exotic conifers, he is worried by the effect of heat gain particularly when we have heat wave conditions similar to earlier this week.

Renew/RES quoted in a study;

, and where a large solar farms have been measured **to result in minimal temperature increase of between 1.5 and 3 degrees Celsius in the immediate adjacent area** (Barron-Gafford et al 2016 and Yang et al 2017).

This is similar to what is forecast for climate change by the end of the century, this effecting the local microclimate.

This will affect the neighbours and may exacerbate dangerous fire days by heat gain in the area.

TRAFFIC



Cyclists on East Tallagandra Lane, every day there are many cyclist groups travelling from Canberra to Sutton via Mulligans Flat road, East Tallagandra Lane and Sutton Road. Sometimes there are groups of 30 or more. If this project would be approved it will put lives at risk.



Truck and Dog going past Sutton Primary School where two of my grandchildren attend.

Children out playing on the oval.

Children have to cross Tallagandra Lane when catching the bus in the mornings, for nearly one year they would have to avoid trucks and cars on 100 km per hour road with a hundred fold increase in traffic.

Indemnity



Spreading Sewerage Ash on my property, If this carried over to the Proposed Solar Power Station would I be liable for cleaning of their panels?

If a fire started on my or one of the neighbours properties and spread to the proposed Solar power Station, would we be held responsible and I am sure 20 million in Public Liability would not cover it. Can this be a stipulation in any agreement if approved.

Compensation

What a joke Many local residents have been overcome by the size of the development and the thought that the proposed development was inevitable, other local residents have not taken up the 30 pieces of silver offered by Renew/RES as it was grossly inadequate and we believe that the proposed site is in a wrong location and it should be fought to the end.

The value of the land in this area is increasing each year as evident by the increase in valuation for rates.

I am not sure what the loss of value to local landowners in a rural residential area would be if the development proceeds. RES would like to say it is minimal, so to prevent adequate compensation to landholders and the local community. If you ask a valuer or a real estate agent whether a block with sea views will sell for more than a block without sea views then you have the answer to whether a block with views of paddocks is more valuable than a block with views of 260,000 solar panels plus other infrastructure. Personally the change of landscape to me would markedly devalue my property and my enjoyment of the current visual beauty of the scenery that I see each day, both from my lounge room, working in the garden and while working outdoors on my farm. I have enjoyed that visual aspect from a child walking the paddocks with my grandfather.



Andy and Tom Hardwicke at Spring Flat.



In 2018 many local landholders assisted with demonstrating their objection to the proposed Solar power plant, photo taken just North of Sutton on Sutton Road.



Please reject this proposal, just because there is a company with money to invest, power lines and a willing landowner doesn't make it right to override other local landowners, Sutton Community and the Yass Shire Council and for the many other reasons that makes Springdale the wrong location.

I ask The Commissioners to let Justice prevail and quash this proposal.