Dear Commissioner,

I am very grateful for the opportunity for the INPC to be able to listen to the residents of this community and hear our concerns.

I object to the Springdale solar farm development proposal. I have comments, questions and concerns, which I have noted below;

**It** **is not an appropriate location for a large-scale 260,000 panel solar development.**

**SOCIAL and COMMUNITY CONSIDERATION**

1. **Engagement process with the community** –for a proposed project investment of approximately $120,000,000 why was there no investment in collaborating with the local landowners and community members who have a wealth of local knowledge and understanding of the community, land and region? A well- designed and implemented project would have collaborated with and consulted the community from the concept. This was not the case with the Springdale Solar Farm proposal.
	1. Renew Estate’s approach to engaging with the surrounding residents was intimidating and oppressive. The company asserted their position of power from the first engagements such as reiterating to the residents their strong legal position and backing of ‘top’ lawyers working for them. The engagement encounters with RE created a feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness for many residents. There was also many arrogant comments and remarks from Renew staff members who have no local knowledge or understanding of the land or this community. They were not open to negotiating the proposal or listening to the concerns of the residents, some with generations of local knowledge of the land of Springdale. There was no empathy or regard for the locals concerns, who were speaking from a position of local knowledge and understanding of the site and the community.
	2. Overwhelmingly, the response to submissions from the local residents was that they were opposed to this development. Of the 110 objections, 75 were residents located less than 10 km from the proposed site, of the 114 submissions in support for this project, only 11 people lived within the 10 km radius of the site. There is no overwhelming support for this proposal from the local community, these statistics show that there is an overwhelming objection to this project from the local community ( DPIE assessment report 4.6.2)
	3. Elderly residents located within the 1 km zone, and also identified as one of the most impacted receptors, had not received a written invitation to the INPC public meeting. Due to their age and lack of computer knowledge and internet, were unaware of the meeting and subsequently missed the public meeting. They have also had no access to the DPIE report or recommendations.
	4. One resident who would be visually impacted by this development spoke at the INPC public meeting had never been approached or had conversations with the Renew Estate or RES.
	5. Residents have been insulted by the offers for compensation, which in no way reflect the impact that this enormous project would have on their property values and lifestyle.
	6. Roughly 18 months of complete silence following the Public response to submission, residents left up in the air with no communication or answers, anxiety and frustration build. No respect or dignity has been shown to the locals of this community. **Fifty six** **objections were made from residents living within 5km (DPIE Assessment report, 4.6.2).** These residents left unsure and uncertain of what the future of their rural neighbourhood may hold. My two brothers have been drafting house plans which will be approximately .5 km from the site to the south and east. The orientation of their houses etc depend upon this outcome.
	7. The online public meeting was very stressful for many community contributors with poor and unreliable internet reception, due to the rural location. Many residents were also unfamiliar with using the online platform. My parents drive into Canberra during the online meeting to connect to the internet as they internet was not connecting and my father had compiled a slide presentation that he had spent much time producing. As he had never used this online platform, he was unable to work the slide show during his time allotment.
	8. The effect on the wellbeing and mental health of neighbouring residents is concerning. This has already been a prolonged sustain stress for many locals. There has been much anxiety caused through this proposal process, feelings of uncertainty, potential risks, loss of quiet and aesthetic rural surrounds, frustration at the process and carrying the burdens of neighbour’s concerns and fears.
	9. The landowners surrounding Sprindale farm are mainly residents who have purchased lifestyle rural blocks close proximity to the ACT or through generational inheritance. R05 for example has been in the same family, which once also included Springdale, since the mid 1800’s. I am the 6th generation, my children, the seventh. My family have strong ties to this property, the history, the community, the natural environment.
2. **Bushfire/ fire-**
	1. Potential for one resident to be trapped if fire was to break out in the site, due to the location of the proposed site and their house and access road.
	2. At least three cars burnt out in the last five years– two on Mulligans Flat rd, one causing a grass fire on a Sunday night on Mulligans Flat Rd, another on Tallagandra Lane within a kilometre of the site.
	3. Fire deliberately lit on Mulligans Flat road, which burnt nearly to the Sutton Road in a north-easterly direction.
	4. Have the local Sutton Bushfire Brigade been consulted regarding the Springdale Solar Farm fire plan?
	5. The Static water supply of 20,000 litres would appear to be insignificant in the event of a fire. My backyard tank in my garden is 5,000 litres.
3. **Traffic**
	1. Tallagandra Lane is a very popular road for cyclists, my brother and I ride Mulligans Flat and Tallagandra Lane from the ACT to Sutton and then Sutton road. It is a popular route for cyclists from Canberra who use the Sutton Bakery as a destination. The road is however dangerous in several sections, it is narrow with no side shoulder; the road must be ridden with caution.
	2. The road currently carries a high volume of daily traffic from local residents, people accessing local businesses, and Canberrans trying to avoid peak hour traffic in Gungahlin
	3. I am concerned about the safety of my family members who use this road daily. The road is not safe enough to accommodate more traffic, trucks and heavy vehicles.
	4. I am concerned about trucks going through the township of Sutton. How is traffic going to be managed? Will there be a dedicated traffic control person onsite in Sutton?
	5. Where is the carpark going to be located for the workers?
4. **The welfare and health implications for neighbouring residents and community**
	1. Electromagnetic radiation due to the close proximity of some residents to the site- what is the effects of long term high levels of exposure.
	2. Change to the landscape and lifestyle, my mother is an artist and paints the surrounding views, vistas and vegetation surrounding the property (R05).
5. **Indigenous History and Artefacts**
	1. ‘Ngunnawal and Ngambri Elders of NSW and the ACT object to this project’ (DPIE Assessment Report, 4.7.2)
	2. There was 6 public submissions as well as the Ngunnawal and Ngambri Elders of the NSW and ACT who expressed concerns (DPIE Assessment report Table 6- 5.4.1)
6. **Heat island effect-**
	1. This issue was raised by more than one resident and there is no mention of this in the DPIE assessment report. This is a concern of the residents and I believe should be addressed by the DPIE to satisfy the residents that are in close proximity to the site.
7. **Property devaluation**
	1. This is a real concern for residents. There is not the evidence to prove that properties decrease according to the DIPE Assessment. I would like to hypothesis that there is not data available around this as is not good practice to place a 260,000 solar panel, solar farm in close proximity to highly sought after rural land 25 km from the city CBD.
	2. The solar farm of this size will transform the landscape and the many lifestyle properties will have their views from their houses and vantage points around their property affected. It will no longer be a lifestyle area but a commercial one.
8. **Large discrepancy between the landowners economic gains vs compensation for neighbouring residents**

The inequality between the financial gain of the land owner vs the loss to the surrounding land owners. An estimate of approximately $28,000,000 income to the owner vs $20,000 gift of solar panels to neighbours within 1 km of the development, with the bonus of property devaluation. European countries have much more equitable laws, if Australia in set to integrate Large Scale Solar developments into populate areas then are more equitable system must be considered.

1. **Migratory Birds-** What is the impact on migratory birds that follow a flight path in which passes over the Springdale site?
2. **Sound during construction-** The industrial level sound created through the construction process would be a continual stress to the many retired neighbours who stay at their homes all day would be subjected to, exaserbated by the fact that they are not used to living with noise. Days of light winds, the sounds carry for some distance. Vehicles travelling on the road are heard clearly from inside the family residence over half a kilometre away. What happens if the sounds go above the decibel limits noted in the DPIE? Does construction cease until noise levels can be maintained? Who ensures this happens?
3. **Glare-** Using example R05 which is elevated 60 m above the site and would have uninterrupted views of the Solar development on their northerly aspect. I would appreciate further explanation in the DPIE Assessment report statement (5.2.27) states that ‘some components have the potential to generate glare or reflection, including the galvanised steel used for the solar panel mounting framework, but that this diminishes over time.’
4. **The DPIE’s assessment of the visual impact for neighbouring properties-**

These are in underrepresented in the DPIE Assesment report. The visual impact just covers residents that are visually impacted from their homes ( 5.2.16). This is a rural landscape and residents enjoy its rural qualities from all aspects of their land. The visual impact should be assessed and considered from all other points that the residents reside such as cattle yards, orchards, gardens, vineyards, paddocks with horse arenas, dams and water courses. This would also result in many more residents being visually impacted that those that have been noted in the DPIE Assessment.

11.1 In reference to point 5.2.17, the solar panels will not all be positioned low (4 m) above the ground as the site is undulating; some panels would be positioned on elevated ground, making mitigation of visual impact even more difficult.

* 1. The DPIE says the sheds would be similarly sized sheds to agricultural sized sheds and will not add to the visual impact. The sheds will be also stationed between the vast rows of panels on undulating land.
	2. Mature vegetation screening will not minimise site views when R05 for example resides 60 m above the site. The visual impact assessments are under reported.
	3. I would ask that all the authors and assessors of the visual impact statement take a field survey to the 35 residents within the zone, sit in their living rooms, gardens, walk the places they spend their time outside their home and then assess the potential visual impact.
	4. The site is surrounded by rural properties on the surrounding hills, suggested vegetation planting is not going to minimise the views for many even in 35 years.

**11.5 The mitigation measures to decrease the visual impact are insufficient and unrealistic.**

1. **Jobs creation for the local NSW community or Canberra?**

The DPIE Assessment (pg 35) states that the workers would be sourced from the local community as to boost the local economy. ACT is far closer to the site than Yass, Murrumbateman, or Gundaroo. I believe this is misleading to state that the investment will be benefiting the NSW Yass Valley Region. The ACT unemployment rate is currently around 3.7% in comparison to NSW at 6.4% (IMIP.gov.au). The $120,000,000 could be better invested in boosting NSW jobs and investing within a NSW community. **This project will benefit the ACT and not the NSW economy.**

1. **The suitability of the site-**
	1. RU1 zoning would mean an exemption required
	2. The site is surrounded by 33 residents within 2 km of site
	3. The site is in a valley but is also undulating, which will make screening more difficult
	4. Many residents will be visually impacted.
	5. The solar farm size far exceeds any other solar development near or in the ACT. So much speculation is required as to its potential impact on the community.
2. **Liability-** Who takes responsibility if a fire breaks out on the Springdale Site and damages neighbouring properties.
3. **Decommissioning- (**DPIE pg 41) The ‘site would be returned to agricultural land after decommissioning’- this is unlikely after being used as an industrial estate for 35 years. Being located 3.5 km from the ACT border, it would not most likely not be farming land but more likely remain an industrial zone following the precedence of the solar development.
	1. RES should be required to put a yearly contribution into a trust fund which is set aside for decommissioning in the vent that the company goes bankrupt or for another reason and they do not uphold their obligations.
4. **Compensation for effected residents during the 10 months construction phase-**

What measures are in place or need to be considered to compensate the surrounding neighbours during construction due to excessive noise, dust, traffic and visual disruption?

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