

To: Director – Energy Assessments
Development Assessment
Department of Planning and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Name: Belinda Fisher
Address:
Name of Project: Middlebrook Solar
Farm
Application No: SSD-10455

I do not require my details to be withheld.

I declare I have made no reportable political donations in the last two years.

I acknowledge and accept the Department's disclaimer and declaration.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTION

I object to the proposed Middlebrook Solar Farm development.

I am a farmer in the North West region. I often visit friends who own land on Marsden Park Road near to the proposed development.

General

The proposed location is unacceptable and outside New England Renewable Energy Zone. It is valuable agricultural land and highly productive. The nature of the landscape and road network in the valley means that there are many residences and farms that will be directly negatively affected by the development.

Wellbeing

I am concerned that this development will create inequality in the area, benefitting the landholders who own the land on which the panels will be placed while simultaneously reducing land values for neighbouring properties. I understand that the developers have made no serious effort to account for this or compensate neighbouring landholders for the serious disruptions and financial impacts they will face throughout the life of the project.

Farming is a way of life, and the impact on farmers of this kind of change is more significant than for similar developments in more urban areas, as their properties serve as both their homes and workplaces. The potential disruptions during construction, increased traffic, dust and other hazards make me worried for my friends in the area.

New England Highway

The extra traffic on the New England Highway during the project will cause delays and increase hazards for all of us in the region, as well as those who use the road to travel from the Hunter Valley north to Armidale and beyond. To put our minds at ease, there should be an independent study of the impact on traffic and road conditions (with more realistic assumptions on direction of travel, uptake of shuttlebus use and time taken to get from Tamworth to Middlebrook Road), and conditions should be put in place requiring the developer to fund and maintain upgrades to all relevant roads for the duration of the project.

Views

The industrial development would detract from the valley's rural character, as evident from the EIS indicating prominent visibility of the solar panels from many houses and from Middlebrook and Marsden Park Road. Details about the visual impact of the substation, internal tracks, and carpark, all of which will be substantial blights on the charming rural character of the area, are unsatisfactorily scant in the EIS and Visual Impact Assessment.

Population

The proposal seems to envisage that the workforce for the project will be drawn from outside the region. I am concerned that this will put strain on Tamworth's health and accommodation capacity. It is already difficult to access medical care in Tamworth as many doctors have closed their books and wait times for appointments are long. In terms of accommodation, rents have risen alarmingly in the area and additional demand would further hinder housing affordability.

Belinda Fisher